

Can this man save us?

Text: 1 Samuel 10

Introduction: How many of you have a pet at home?

Many of you know that we have two dogs. Our standard goldendoodle is named Eliza. Our standard poodle is named Angelica, but we call her Jelly most of the time. They are named after the two most prominent of the Schuyler sisters from the Broadway musical Hamilton.

If you have a pet, what would you do if your pet got lost? You would go look for it, right? You might post a picture on social media so that others can be on the lookout. You might stick “lost” signs to all the stop signs in your neighborhood or stick flyers in your neighbors’ paper boxes. Maybe you would even offer a reward for anyone who can find your pet and bring it back to you.

But what if, while searching for the pet, you’re told to go to a particular neighbor’s house because that neighbor will be able to help you find your pet. What would you do? I think most of us would go. But what if, when you got to your neighbor’s house, they invited you inside. And they told you not to worry about the pet because it had already been found. And then they had you sit down for dinner. They bring you this wonderful meal, which you thoroughly enjoy. They encourage you to spend the night. You’re not sure what’s going on, but you reluctantly agree. And the next morning they tell you that you are going to be the next president of the United States.

As strange as that might sound, we’re dealing with something kind of like that in 1 Samuel.

We are making our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. In chapter 8, we saw that Israel demanded a king. They demanded a king because Samuel was old, and his sons were evil. But they also demanded a king because they wanted to be like all the other nations. The Lord saw their request as rebellion against Him, so He rebuked and warned them through Samuel the prophet. That didn’t matter to the people. They wanted a king. So, God determined to give them what they asked for.

Then last time in chapter 9, we saw that God sent Saul on a wandering donkey chase to bring him in contact with Samuel. It was really Saul’s father Kish who sent him to look for the donkeys. But God was sovereignly orchestrating things such that the donkey chase led Saul right to Samuel.

Samuel told Saul not to worry about the donkeys. They had been found. Then Samuel brought Saul in for dinner and served him the choice portion. After dinner, Saul was sent to Samuel’s roof to sleep for the night. And the next morning, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.”

And that’s where we left off the narrative. We know something is up. There’s a reason that God has sent Saul to Samuel. But the text hasn’t yet told us what that reason is. We have a suspicion. The people want a king. God says, “Okay, I’ll give you king.” And then we’re introduced to Saul. The suspense is heavy, and we’re about to find out what God is doing.

That brings us to 1 Samuel 10. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven’t already. We’re Bible people at Goshen, so we’re going to start out by reading the Bible. The whole chapter. All 27 verses. And then we’ll seek to hear from God through His Word as we make our way through the text.

(Read 1 Samuel 10...Pray)

The anointing of Saul as king of Israel is one big contradiction. Saul is set apart by God to save Israel from their enemies. But it’s clear that Saul is not the true king of Israel whom the people really need. I’ll explain that as we make our way through 1 Samuel 10 this morning.

What we see in 1 Samuel 10 is that...

I. God raised up Saul to save Israel from their enemies.

A. And that starts with Saul being anointed as king (vs. 1-8).

1. Verse 1 says, “Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies” (vs. 1a).
 - a. I do realize that there is a textual variant there in verse 1. Perhaps you have a footnote in your Bible alerting you to that. Unfortunately, there are no footnotes in the Scripture journals if you’re using that.
 - b. I don’t know whether the longer or the shorter reading is original, but either way, not a lot hangs on the outcome.
 - c. The point is that Samuel anointed Saul.
 - d. You’ll notice that Samuel makes clear that it is actually the Lord who is anointing Saul. As the Lord’s prophet, Samuel is doing the Lord’s work.
 - e. You’ll also notice that word “prince” or “leader” instead of “king.” It is likely another reminder to us that while Saul will be king, he will be subject to the Lord who is the ultimate authority.
 - f. Samuel also refers to Israel as the Lord’s “heritage” or “inheritance.” The idea is that even though the people had rejected the Lord in their quest for a king, they remained the Lord’s people.
2. After anointing him as king, Samuel gives Saul three signs that his anointing is from the Lord.
 - a. The first is detailed in verse 2. There will be two men by Rachel’s tomb who will tell him that the donkeys have been found and that Saul’s father Kish is now worried about him instead of the donkeys (vs. 2).
 - 1) *This is interesting because it doesn’t give us any new information. We already know that the donkeys have been found. Saul already knows that the donkeys have been found. Samuel has already told him that.*
 - 2) *Saul also predicted back in chapter 9 that his father would grow worried about him instead of the donkeys.*
 - 3) *And now Samuel is telling Saul exactly what these two men by Rachel’s tomb are going to say.*
 - 4) *Why? It’s a sign. To show Saul that Samuel is not just making stuff up. Samuel is the Lord’s prophet. And Samuel’s anointing of Saul is of the Lord.*
 - b. The second sign is seen there in verses 3-4. Three men with three gifts: goats, bread, and wine (vs. 3-4). That’s a meal right there, isn’t it?
 - c. The third sign is there in verses 5-6. A group of prophets at Gibeath-elohim coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, lyre, and prophesying (vs. 5). And Samuel tells Saul, “Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man” (vs. 6).
 - 1) *We might think here of Samson who also had the Spirit of the Lord rush upon him (Judges 14:6).*
 - 2) *The Holy Spirit did not indwell Old Testament saints as He does believers today. Instead, God would give His Holy Spirit to certain people at certain times to enable them to perform certain tasks.*
 - 3) *And that’s what Samuel is telling Saul is going to happen to him.*
3. Then after giving him the three signs, Samuel gives Saul two instructions.
 - a. The first is found in verse 7. (Read vs. 7) We’ll talk about this more later in the sermon.
 - b. The second instruction is found in verse 8. (Read vs. 8)
4. So, Samuel has anointed Saul. He has given him three signs and two instructions.

B. And now we see Saul confirmed as king (vs. 9-13).

1. First, verse 9 tells us that God gave Saul another heart or a new heart. While this kind of language is used elsewhere in the Bible as a metaphor for regeneration or what we might call being “born again,” that doesn’t seem to be the case here. But it does signal a change in Saul that is brought about by God.
2. Verse 9 also tells us that all the signs came to pass exactly as Samuel said that they would. The anointing of Saul is not from Samuel. It’s from the Lord.
3. In verse 10, we get a little bit more of a description of the fulfillment of the third sign. I’m going to say more about that in a bit because it doesn’t seem that Saul does what Samuel instructed him to do.
4. We also see the people’s reaction to Saul prophesying with the prophets. Look at it there at the end of verse 11: “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” (vs. 11b).
5. You can hear the incredulity in their voice. They know Saul. He’s Kish’s son! When did he become a prophet?
6. The end of verse 12 is funny: “Therefore it became a proverb, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’” (vs. 12b). It became a saying in Israel. If you wanted to express disbelief, instead of saying, “Well, I’ll be,” you might say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”
7. I wonder if there’s a New Testament echo that you pick up on here. Israel would eventually have another king whose identity was hard for the people to grasp. In John 6, after the feeding of the 5,000, “the Jews grumbled about [Jesus], because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’ They said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” (Jn. 6:41-42).
8. Just like the people couldn’t believe that Joseph and Mary’s son could be the Son of God, they couldn’t believe that Kish’s son was now prophesying.
9. But in doing so, Saul gave confirmation that he was in fact the one God had anointed as king of Israel.

C. Which being us to the point of chapter 10 where we see Saul proclaimed as king (vs. 17-25).

1. Samuel gathers the people at Mizpah (vs. 17).
2. And he begins by reminding them of what the Lord had done. The Lord had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. He had given Israel victory over their enemies (vs. 18).
3. But still, the Lord says, “You have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses” (vs. 19).
4. Rather than being content with the Lord’s leadership, they demanded a king. So, God is going to give them a king.
5. The people gather by tribe, and lots are cast. The lot falls on the tribe of Benjamin. Then lots are cast again and the clan of the Matrites was chosen. Then again and the son of Kish, who we know as Saul, was chosen.
6. But look at the end of verse 20: “When they sought him, he could not be found” (vs. 20b). We’ll talk about that more in a bit.
7. Eventually, Saul was found. He stood among the people. He was taller than anyone (vs. 23).
8. And Samuel said, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people” (vs. 24a).
9. And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!” (vs. 24b).
10. Look at verse 25. (Read vs. 25)
 - a. The point is that Israel could have their king, but the kingship was to be subject to God’s law and to the word of God’s prophet.
 - b. It’s likely that the things Saul read aloud and then wrote down were taken from God’s teaching on the kingship in Deuteronomy 17.
 - c. The primary takeaway from Deuteronomy 17 is that God is still in charge. The king was to govern God’s people according to God’s Word.

D. This apparently didn't sit well with some of the people because the chapter ends with Saul questioned as king (vs. 26-27).

- 1. There were some men whom the Bible calls "worthless fellows" (vs. 27a).**
- 2. And they said, "How can this man save us?" (vs. 27b).**
- 3. The text says that they "despised him and brought him no present" (vs. 27c).**
- 4. But Saul held his peace (vs. 27d).**

On the one hand, 1 Samuel 10 is very clear that Saul was set apart by God to save Israel from their enemies. But the chapter also shows us that...

II. Saul could never save Israel from their primary enemy.

See, the truth is that all merely human leaders are flawed. Some leaders are good at masking their flaws. Other leaders are so charismatic that their charisma seems to cover their flaws. But all merely human leaders are flawed. That was certainly the case with Saul as we'll see as we continue our journey through 1 Samuel. But we can actually see some of his flaws quite clearly here in 1 Samuel 10, even as he is being anointed, confirmed, and proclaimed as king.

A. In fact, the first thing we see is that Saul did nothing (vs. 7, 10).

- 1. In verse 7, Samuel says to Saul... (Read vs. 7)**
 - a. It may not be immediately clear to us what Samuel is telling Saul to do here.**
 - b. Samuel is not telling Saul to just do whatever he wants.**
 - c. "Do what your hand finds to do" is actually an idiom. We also find it in Judges 9:33, where it clearly refers to military action against an enemy.**
 - d. Samuel also tells Saul at the end of verse 7 that God is with him, which is a promise associated with battle against Israel's enemies.**

- e. So, commentators believe that "Samuel's words were a summons to Saul, once the Spirit of the Lord had rushed upon him, to act against the enemies of Israel" (Woodhouse, 173).**
- f. If you look back up at verse 5, Samuel tells Saul that there is a garrison of the Philistines at Gibeath-elohim.**
- g. And you remember from verse 1 that Saul is to "save [Israel] from the hand of their surrounding enemies."**
- h. So, verse 7 is the instruction to defeat the Philistines. And verse 8 is the instruction of what to do once the Philistines are defeated.**

- 2. In verse 9, we see that all the signs came to pass.**
- 3. Then in verse 10, we're given details concerning the fulfillment of the third sign. The Spirit of God rushes upon Saul.**
- 4. And if we've understood verse 7 correctly, this is the moment when Saul is supposed to attack and defeat the Philistines.**
- 5. But there's no mention in verse 10 of the Philistines. There's no mention of any kind of military action. This seems to indicate Saul's failure to do what he was supposed to do. Namely, save Israel from her enemies.**
- 6. Saul did nothing. What kind of king would he be?**

B. We also see in 1 Samuel 10 that Saul said nothing (vs. 14-16).

- 1. We skipped over these verses when we were working through the text initially. (Read vs. 14-16)**
- 2. This conversation between Saul and his uncle seems to be included here to again show us the passivity of Saul.**
- 3. This whole thing started out at the beginning of chapter 9 with Saul looking for his father's donkeys. But a lot more than that had transpired since then.**
- 4. Yet, Saul says nothing of any of it. All he wants to talk about is the donkeys.**

5. Even when Saul's uncle pressed him saying, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you," Saul says, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found."
6. But he said nothing about the kingdom. Some king, huh?
7. Now, what is the author of 1 Samuel talking about when he writes "the matter of the kingdom"?
 - a. The most obvious answer is that he is talking about Saul's reign as king of Israel.
 - b. But I think it's likely that there is a double meaning intended here. Because the word "king" has not been used since chapter 8 when Israel was asking for a king. You'll remember that we noted the fact that the word "prince" or "leader" is used in verse 1 instead of "king."
 - c. The Word of God to Saul through Samuel was about more than just Saul's kingdom. It was about the kingdom of God. It was about God's purposes in the world. Yes, God was anointing Saul as the earthly king of Israel, but God would remain Israel's true king.
 - d. And in this, we can see the text pointing forward to a day when the true King of the Jews would come announcing that the "kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15).
 - e. John Woodhouse writes, "The kingdom of God, which was the real concern of the word of God spoken by Samuel to Saul, eventually came into this world in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Before long the whole secret would be out. A message that became known as 'the word of the kingdom' or 'the gospel of the kingdom' would soon be proclaimed through[out] the Roman Empire and then to the ends of the earth" (Woodhouse, 179).
8. Saul couldn't have possibly understood all of that then. But even of what he did understand, when given the chance, he did not speak. Some king!
9. We've seen that Saul did nothing and said nothing.

C. Now we see that Saul showed nothing (vs. 21-22).

1. This is comical!
2. Samuel goes through this process of casting lots to reveal Saul as the man God has chosen to be king over Israel (vs. 20-21a).
3. But when he gets to the end of the process, Saul is nowhere to be found (vs. 21b)!
4. The text says, "So they inquired again of the LORD." They wanted to know, "Is there a man still to come?" (vs. 22a).
5. And look at the Lord's response in the second half of verse 22, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage" (vs. 22b).
6. What?!? He has hidden himself among the baggage?!? Sure enough, there he was! Some king, huh?
7. I love what I think is Samuel's sarcasm in verse 24, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people" (vs. 24a).
8. The Lord has raised up Israel's very best, and when it came time for him to be revealed, he was hiding among the baggage. Some king!
9. Saul did nothing. He said nothing. He showed nothing.

D. And ultimately, Saul could save no one (vs. 26-27).

1. The chapter started with God anointing Saul as king over Israel. The Lord said to Saul through Samuel, "And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies" (vs. 1c).
2. But the chapter ends with some men, who the author calls "worthless fellows," asking, "How can this man save us?" (vs. 27a).
3. In some sense, their question seems legitimate. Remember, we've said that Saul has done nothing, said nothing, and showed nothing. It seems reasonable to wonder, "How can this man save us?"

4. **But the worthless fellows likely have a different reason for asking this question. God has gone to great lengths to make clear that He is still the true king of Israel. Saul will be their earthly king, but he will be subject to the authority and kingship of God over His people.**
5. **That’s apparently not what the worthless fellows wanted. Remember, they wanted a king like “all the other nations.” They are getting their king, but he is not going to be a king like all the other nations.**
6. **So, “they despised him and brought him no present” (vs. 27b). They rejected the king that God gave them. And for that reason, the Bible calls them “worthless.”**

Conclusion: Now, we’ve seen that the worthless fellows asked their question for the wrong reason. Their question revealed their hearts. They were not ready to submit themselves to God and His authority over them.

But I don’t think their question was such a bad question for us to ponder: “How can this man save us?”

Yes, Saul would save Israel from her enemies at various times throughout his reign as king. We’ll see his defeat of the Ammonites next week in chapter 11. So, it’s not all bad with Saul.

But the truth is that Saul could never save God’s people from their primary enemy. Because their primary enemy wasn’t the Philistines or the Ammonites. Their primary enemy was sin and death. And not the sin of the Philistines and Ammonites. But the sin inside their own hearts.

And the reality is that we have the same enemy. Sin rages in our hearts. And if left unchecked, it leads to death. Not just physical death. But spiritual, eternal death as well.

The good news is that God raised up another king. A king who did something. A king who said something. A king who showed something. A king who still saves every someone who will turn from their sin and place their trust in Him.

When we ask about Saul or any other earthly ruler, “How can this man save us?” the answer is clearly and simply, “He can’t.”

But when we ask about the Lord Jesus, “Can this man save us?” the answer is just as clearly and just as simply, “He can!” He can because He has. He lived the sinless life that you and I have not and could not live. He died the death that you and I should have died. And He invites all men, women, boys, and girls, to turn from their sin and place their faith in Him. See, it is through repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that salvation comes. How can this man save us? Through His life, His death, and His resurrection.

Hebrews 7:25 says, “He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him.” Would you draw near to God through Christ today? Only He can save you.

The worthless fellows rejected the king God gave them. It’s why they were called worthless. Let us not make ourselves worthless by rejecting the King God has given us. Let us trust Him. Let us submit to Him. Let this man, the Lord Jesus, save us. Because only He can.