

I. Intro

A. Text: **1 Sam. 8:1-5**

¹ Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. ⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵ and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Sam. 8:1-5)

B. Background

1. Israel (Jacob) was a person who had 12 sons and lived as travelers through the land of Canaan.
 - a. God's favor on Israel was so profound that there were 70 sons, grandsons, great-grands and great-great-grands running around the house by the time he checked out of his time on earth.
 - b. When Israel moved his family into Egypt to avoid the famine in Canaan, there were 70 males. But when they left Egypt (430 years later), the family numbered 600,000 males.
 - c. At least a million people were drawn out into the wilderness to meet with YHWH.
2. **Theocracy**: *God ruling, protecting, providing.*
 - a. For almost 350 years judges served as instruments/ vessels that God used for deliverance. But make no mistake about it: God ruled in His Kingdom.
 - i. 1394 BC – 1050 BC

b. Nation of Israel slowly drifted further and further away from loving God as Moses instructed (with all of their hearts, soul, and strength)

i. **Judges 21:25:** *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*

ii. By the time that Samuel popped on the scene, Israel had drifted so far away that God had shut the window of revelation in the land.

“... And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation” (1 Sam. 3:1b)

iii. Also, by the time Samuel popped on the scene, the Presence of the Lord had left Israel (**1 Sam. 4**).

c. Samuel was the last to serve Israel in the role national prophet/judge.

3. Monarchy: Almost 500 years of Kings Ruling

a. Dates

i. 1050 BC – 722 BC (Northern Kingdom)

ii. 1050 BC – 586 BC (Southern Kingdom)

b. Inception: Samuel grew old and attempted to relegate leadership to his sons as a group of judges to serve God before Israel.

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i. Corruption (bribes, perverted justice)

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- c. Instead of rejecting Samuel's sons as judges, Israel rejected the whole idea of a theocracy.
 - i. Make us like all the other nations of the earth: Give us a king (**v. 5**).
 - d. Samuel was devastated, but God gave him perspective. (**1 Sam. 8:6-7**)

*⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. (**1 Sam. 8:6-7**)*

- e. Our God is such a Good, Good Father that He allows mankind to choose their way (even if it amounts to us rejecting Him for a season).
 - i. Once we've encountered His love, there's not a lesser substitute that could ever satisfy.

II. Body: The People Desired A King and God Gave Them Saul

A. Saul Looked the Part

¹There was a man of Benjamin whose name *was* Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. ²And he had a choice and handsome son whose name *was* Saul. *There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. (**1 Sam. 9:1-2**)*

- 1. From good stock.
 - a. A Benjamite
 - i. Known for their skill with the sling and the bow and arrow.
 - ii. Known as left-handed (or ambidextrous) warriors.
- 2. Saul was so handsome that there was not a more attractive person in all the land.
 - a. Vanity Smurf Comparison

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- b. The tallest person in Israel only came to Saul's shoulders.
 - c. Saul (sha'awl #7586): *Desired, requested one, asked for.*
 - i. Soon after the people requested, Samuel anointed Saul with a bottle full of oil.
 - ii. *"On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?" (1 Sam. 9:20)*
3. God used Saul (even in Israel's rejection of His theocracy).
- a. Saul looked good on the outside, but he had serious issues on the inside (discussed later).
 - b. Yet God utilized Saul as an instrument to minister to Israel.
 - i. **Prov. 21:1**: The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes.
 - c. God worked with Saul.
 - i. **1 Sam. 10:6**: *"...The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophecy with [the prophets] and be turned into another man".*
 - ii. **1 Sam. 10:9**: *So it was, when [Samuel] had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave [Saul] another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day.*
 - iii. **1 Sam. 10:11**: *Change so dramatic that the people asked, "What is this that has come upon the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

B. Saul's Game Was Lacking

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1. In his 2nd year on the throne, Saul had attacked the Philistines and figured out that when you fight the Philistines, they fight back (**1 Sam. 13:1-5**).

- a. Israelites began to hide in caves, holes, etc. (**1 Sam. 13:6-7**)

⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. ⁷ And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. (1 Sam. 13:6-7)

- b. Israelites had great reason to hide: They weren't ready for war.

¹⁹ Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." ²⁰ But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle; ²¹ and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads. ²² So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son. (1 Sam. 13:19-22)

- i. No blacksmiths in Israel.
 - c. Not a single sword or spear in all the land except for in the hands of Saul and his son (**v. 22**).
 - i. Indictment on Saul's leadership acumen.

C. What Matters Most Is What Takes Place After Sin Is Exposed

1. **God**: "I will attack Amalek for the way that they attacked Israel when they were defenseless." (**1 Sam. 15:1-2**)
 - a. **Samuel**: "Attack Amalek and destroy everything that breathes. Do not spare a thing." (**1 Sam. 15:3**)
 - i. Destroy it all with no exceptions.
 - b. Saul destroyed everything that was associated with the Amalekites (if it was worthless or damaged).

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- i. But everything of value was spared.
 2. Instead of taking responsibility for his weaknesses as a leader, Saul blamed the people he was commissioned to lead.
(1 Sam. 15:20-21)

²⁰ And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. ²¹ But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." (1 Sam. 15:20-21)

- a. Soon found that there is no substitute for obedience to God.
 - i. *"Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22)*
 - ii. *"To listen is better than anything you try to give to the Lord." (1 Sam. 15:22)*
3. At the heart of Saul's compromise was the fear of man.

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. (1 Sam. 15:24)

- a. Saul feared the people more than he feared God.
 - i. More concerned with his reputation before man than his relationship with God.
 - b. We all have a fear of someone on the inside.
 - i. **John Piper:** *"The person(s) to whom we ascribe most authority — to define who we are, what we're worth, what we should do, and how we should do it — is the person(s) we fear the most, because it is the person(s) whose approval we want most."*
4. Saul feared the people, found his value in his appearance before the people.
 - a. Samuel informed Saul that just like Saul rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had now rejected him from being king.

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- i. Ripped the kingdom from you and given it to your neighbor.
 - b. Saul's response was not brokenness at the mere thought of being outside of the favor of God.
 - i. He did not repent.
 - c. Saul was only concerned about his public image.

³⁰ Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." (1 Sam. 15:30)

III. Conclusion

- A. Saul's leadership was not very different than the common modern leader: Terrible!
 - 1. Looked the part on the outside, but on the inside...
 - 2. Personally equipped, resourced, and armed while the people were unprepared for war.
 - 3. More concerned about public perception than how God perceives.
- B. God is such a good leader that He is well able to lead his people (even through bad leaders).
 - 1. His sovereignty doesn't diminish because of our foolishness.
 - a. Israel chose Saul. He was the desired, requested one.
 - b. God is so confident in His love/leadership allow it for a season, because human leadership (or the lack thereof) only highlights my incredible leadership.
- C. Clear difference between Kings ruling and God ruling.
 - 1. Things are so much better when God rules.
 - a. Samuel warned:

"This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will you're your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. ¹² He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your

daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. ¹⁶ And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. (1 Sam. 8:11-16)

b. When God rules He doesn't take from you, He gives to you (provides for you, protects you).

D. The Day is Coming When God will rule the entire earth as a theocracy.

1. Every other human attempt at leadership will be exposed as pathetic imposters.