



Israel's First King: The Desire to be like other Nations (1 Sam 8 - 10)

Notes: Week Six

1 Samuel 8 - 10 (HCSB)

Israel's Demand for a King

8 When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. ² His firstborn son's name was Joel and his second was Abijah. They were judges in Beer-sheba. ³ However, his sons did not walk in his ways—they turned toward dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not follow your example. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have."

⁶ When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand sinful, so he prayed to the LORD. ⁷ But the LORD told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their king. ⁸ They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to Me, ^[a] since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning Me and worshiping other gods. ⁹ Listen to them, but you must solemnly warn them and tell them about the rights of the king who will rule over them."

¹⁰ Samuel told all the LORD's words to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, "These are the rights of the king who will rule over you: He will take your sons and put them to his use in his chariots, on his horses, or running in front of his chariots. ¹² He can appoint them for his use as commanders of thousands or commanders of fifties, to plow his ground or reap his harvest, or to make his weapons of war or the equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He can take your daughters to become perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He can take a tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give them to his officials and servants. ¹⁶ He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best young men, ^[b] and your donkeys and use them for his work. ¹⁷ He can take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves can become his servants. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you've chosen for yourselves, but the LORD won't answer you on that day."

¹⁹ The people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We must have a king over us. ²⁰ Then we'll be like all the other nations: our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles."

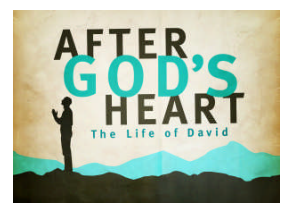
²¹ Samuel listened to all the people's words and then repeated them to the LORD. ^[c] ²² "Listen to them," the LORD told Samuel. "Appoint a king for them."

Then Samuel told the men of Israel, "Each of you, go back to your city."

Saul Anointed King

9 There was an influential man of Benjamin named Kish son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, son of a Benjaminite. ² He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man. There was no one more impressive among the Israelites than he. He stood a head taller than anyone else. ^[d]

³ One day the donkeys of Saul's father Kish wandered off. Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the attendants with you and go look for the donkeys." ⁴ Saul and his attendant went through the hill country of Ephraim and then through the region of Shalishah, but they didn't find them. They went through the region of Shaalim—nothing. Then they went through the Benjaminite region but still didn't find them.



⁵ When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to the attendant who was with him, “Come on, let’s go back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

⁶ “Look,” the attendant said, “there’s a man of God in this city who is highly respected; everything he says is sure to come true. Let’s go there now. Maybe he’ll tell us which way we should go.”

⁷ “Suppose we do go,” Saul said to his attendant, “what do we take the man? The food from our packs is gone, and there’s no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?”

⁸ The attendant answered Saul: “Here, I have a piece^[e] of silver. I’ll give it to the man of God, and he will tell us our way.”

⁹ Formerly in Israel, a man who was going to inquire of God would say, “Come, let’s go to the seer,” for the prophet of today was formerly called the seer.

¹⁰ “Good,” Saul replied to his attendant. “Come on, let’s go.” So they went to the city where the man of God was. ¹¹ As they were climbing the hill to the city, they found some young women coming out to draw water and asked, “Is the seer here?”

¹² The women answered, “Yes, he is ahead of you. Hurry, he just now came to the city, because there’s a sacrifice for the people at the high place today. ¹³ If you go quickly, you can catch up with him before he goes to the high place to eat. The people won’t eat until he comes because he must bless the sacrifice; after that, the guests can eat. Go up immediately—you can find him now.” ¹⁴ So they went up toward the city.

Saul and his attendant were entering the city when they saw Samuel coming toward them on his way to the high place. ¹⁵ Now the day before Saul’s arrival, the LORD had informed Samuel, ^[f] ¹⁶ “At this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over My people Israel. He will save them from the hand of the Philistines because I have seen the affliction of My people, for their cry has come to Me.” ¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, “Here is the man I told you about; he will rule over My people.”

¹⁸ Saul approached Samuel in the gate area and asked, “Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is?”

¹⁹ “I am the seer,” Samuel answered. ^[g] “Go up ahead of me to the high place and eat with me today. When I send you off in the morning, I’ll tell you everything that’s in your heart. ²⁰ As for the donkeys that wandered away from you three days ago, don’t worry about them because they’ve been found. And who does all Israel desire but you and all your father’s family?”

²¹ Saul responded, “Am I not a Benjaminite from the smallest of Israel’s tribes and isn’t my clan the least important of all the clans of the Benjaminite tribe? So why have you said something like this to me?”

²² Samuel took Saul and his attendant, brought them to the banquet hall, and gave them a place at the head of the 30^[h] or so men who had been invited. ²³ Then Samuel said to the cook, “Get the portion of meat that I gave you and told you to set aside.”

²⁴ The cook picked up the thigh and what was attached to it and set it before Saul. Then Samuel said, “Notice that the reserved piece is set before you. Eat it because it was saved for you for this solemn event at the time I said, ‘I’ve invited the people.’” So Saul ate with Samuel that day. ²⁵ Afterward, they went down from the high place to the city, and Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof. ^[i]

²⁶ They got up early, and just before dawn, Samuel called to Saul on the roof, “Get up, and I’ll send you on your way!” Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went outside. ²⁷ As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the attendant to go on ahead of us, but you stay for a while, and I’ll reveal the word of God to you.” So the attendant went on.

10 Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it out on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, "Hasn't the LORD anointed you ruler over His inheritance?"^[1] **2** Today when you leave me, you'll find two men at Rachel's Grave at Zelzah in the land of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you went looking for have been found, and now your father has stopped being concerned about the donkeys and is worried about you, asking: What should I do about my son?'

3 "You will proceed from there until you come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one bringing three goats, one bringing three loaves of bread, and one bringing a skin of wine. **4** They will ask how you are and give you two loaves^[k] of bread, which you will accept from them.

5 "After that you will come to the Hill of God^[l] where there are Philistine garrisons.^[m] When you arrive at the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place prophesying. They will be preceded by harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres. **6** The Spirit of the LORD will control you, you will prophesy with them, and you will be transformed into a different person. **7** When these signs have happened to you, do whatever your circumstances require^[n] because God is with you. **8** Afterward, go ahead of me to Gilgal. I will come to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice fellowship offerings. Wait seven days until I come to you and show you what to do."

9 When Saul turned around^[o] to leave Samuel, God changed his heart,^[p] and all the signs came about that day. **10** When Saul and his attendant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. Then the Spirit of God took control of him, and he prophesied along with them.

11 Everyone who knew him previously and saw him prophesy with the prophets asked each other, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

12 Then a man who was from there asked, "And who is their father?"

As a result, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" became a popular saying. **13** Then Saul finished prophesying and went to the high place.

14 Saul's uncle asked him and his attendant, "Where did you go?"

"To look for the donkeys," Saul answered. "When we saw they weren't there, we went to Samuel."

15 "Tell me," Saul's uncle asked, "what did Samuel say to you?"

16 Saul told him, "He assured us the donkeys had been found." However, Saul did not tell him what Samuel had said about the matter of kingship.

Saul Received as King

17 Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah **18** and said to the Israelites, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the power of the Egyptians and all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' **19** But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your troubles and afflictions. You said to Him, 'You^[q] must set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."

20 Samuel had all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the tribe of Benjamin was selected. **21** Then he had the tribe of Benjamin come forward by its clans, and the Matrite clan was selected.^[r] Finally, Saul son of Kish was selected. But when they searched for him, they could not find him. **22** They again inquired of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?"

The LORD replied, "There he is, hidden among the supplies."

23 They ran and got him from there. When he stood among the people, he stood a head taller than anyone else.^[s] **24** Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among the entire population."

And all the people shouted,^[t] "Long live the king!"

²⁵ Samuel proclaimed to the people the rights of kingship. He wrote them on a scroll, which he placed in the presence of the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each to his home.

²⁶ Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, and brave men whose hearts God had touched went with him. ²⁷ But some wicked men said, “How can this guy save us?” They despised him and did not bring him a gift, but Saul said nothing. ^{[u][v]}

Footnotes:

- a. [1 Samuel 8:8](#) LXX; MT omits *to Me*
- b. [1 Samuel 8:16](#) LXX reads *best cattle*
- c. [1 Samuel 8:21](#) Lit *them in the LORD's ears*
- d. [1 Samuel 9:2](#) Lit *From his shoulder and up higher than any of the people*
- e. [1 Samuel 9:8](#) Lit *a quarter of a shekel*
- f. [1 Samuel 9:15](#) Lit *had uncovered Samuel's ear, saying*
- g. [1 Samuel 9:19](#) Lit *answered Saul*
- h. [1 Samuel 9:22](#) LXX reads 70
- i. [1 Samuel 9:25](#) LXX reads *city. They prepared a bed for Saul on the roof, and he slept.*
- j. [1 Samuel 10:1](#) LXX adds *And you will reign over the LORD's people, and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. And this is the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you ruler over his inheritance.*
- k. [1 Samuel 10:4](#) DSS, LXX read *wave offerings*
- l. [1 Samuel 10:5](#) Or *to Gibeath-elohim*
- m. [1 Samuel 10:5](#) Or *governors*
- n. [1 Samuel 10:7](#) Lit *do for yourself whatever your hand finds*
- o. [1 Samuel 10:9](#) Lit *turned his shoulder*
- p. [1 Samuel 10:9](#) Lit *God turned to him another heart*
- q. [1 Samuel 10:19](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Vg read *You said, 'No, you . . .*
- r. [1 Samuel 10:21](#) LXX adds *And he had the Matrile clan come forward, man by man.*
- s. [1 Samuel 10:23](#) Lit *people, and he was higher than any of the people from his shoulder and up*
- t. [1 Samuel 10:24](#) LXX reads *acknowledged and said*
- u. [1 Samuel 10:27](#) DSS add *Nahash king of the Ammonites had been severely oppressing the Gadites and Reubenites. He gouged out the right eye of each of them and brought fear and trembling on Israel. Of the Israelites beyond the Jordan none remained whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were 7,000 men who had escaped from the Ammonites and entered Jabesh-gilead.*
- v. [1 Samuel 10:27](#) Lit *gift, and he was like a mute person*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

1 Samuel 8 - 10

8:2 The sons' location in Beer-sheba at Israel's southern edge suggests Samuel did not intend to abdicate his role in Ramah just because he had appointed his sons.

8:5 The elders still appreciated Samuel's leadership; in fact, they wanted him to appoint a king for Israel. However, Samuel was old and they knew they could not count on his leadership much longer. The words as all the other nations contradicted God's desire that Israel be distinct ([Lv 20:26](#); [Dt 4:6-8](#)), though the law of Moses did allow for the establishment of a king ([Dt 17:14-20](#)).

8:6 Samuel probably considered their demand sinful because it appeared motivated by a desire to conform to the pattern of other nations. Nonetheless, he prayed for the Lord's answer.

8:7 Samuel felt personal hurt and rejection because of the people's desire for a king, but God informed him the issue was much deeper.

8:8 Israel's rejection of Samuel's leadership was the logical outcome of centuries of the nation's rejection of God's leadership. They didn't want God to rule them, so they wouldn't want God's servant to rule them.

8:9 The words solemnly warn could also be translated "strongly testify"; they sound a somber note in the midst of a message of acquiescence. Explaining the rights of the king denotes a challenge to count the high cost the kingship would bring the people.

8:11 On rights of the king, see note at [verse 9](#). Chariots is actually singular both times, suggesting the duties mentioned in this verse pertain more to the king's personal honor guard.

8:12 The king would also need a strong military, and he would draft into service the sons of his subjects.

8:13 Daughters likewise would assume roles, oftentimes demeaning, that would support the royal lifestyle.

8:14 Subjects could expect to lose some of their assets to support the king's servants.

8:15 The law of Moses commanded tithes to support the priests and Levites, but a king would demand that much or more to meet his needs.

8:16 The king would want the best of human resources to accomplish his work (e.g., his various building projects), and he would take what he wanted.

8:17 The king's additional desire for a tenth of the people's flocks would impact the shepherds of the land as well as the farmers ([v. 15](#)). The heavy burden the people would have to bear to support the monarchy might well leave them feeling like servants instead of citizens.

8:18 On cry out, see note at [4:13](#).

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 8 -10".

8:19 To listen to could be translated "to obey." The people had heard Samuel's words, but they would not heed them. They were determined to have a king.

8:20 The words like all the other nations (see note at [v. 5](#)) again sound ominous. Furthermore, the people's expectation of their leader was too grandiose—they thought a king would do everything for them. They saw the potential benefit, but they had not counted the cost.

8:22 The Lord told Samuel to appoint a king over the people. The Lord's judge and prophet instructed everyone to return home to wait for God's leading on the matter.

9:1 The men in Saul's genealogy are not widely attested or known in Scripture apart from their relationship to Saul. Nonetheless, the careful way the text traces the family tree through five generations suggests Saul came from an influential family in the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's comment in [verse 21](#) notwithstanding.

9:2 As someone who stood a head taller than anyone else, Saul looked impressive—seemingly good leadership material according to human perception.

9:4 The hill country of Ephraim lay north of Benjamin and boasted fertile ground. Shalishah and Shaalim were districts northeast of Gibeah.

9:5 Zuph lay about five miles north of Gibeah, Saul's hometown.

9:6 The man of God was Samuel, though the text does not reveal this until [verse 14](#). Saul's attendant described him as highly respected (lit "honored") and as one whose word consistently proved true. The text may subtly suggest that Saul really did not know about Samuel, whereas his attendant and all Israel did. Some interpreters identify the city as Ramah, but this is uncertain.

9:7-8 Saul felt it inappropriate to approach the man of God without a gift. After all, the prophet's good counsel might result in the discovery of the lost donkeys, leading to his father's financial gain. Or perhaps Saul thought Samuel might expect a reward. At any rate, the attendant offered his own piece of silver (lit "quarter of a shekel").

9:9 Seer (Hb *ro'eh*) describes a person who sees the things of God; prophet (Hb *navi'*) means "called one" (i.e., by God). The text clarifies that the term "prophet" eventually replaced "seer," but the two terms described the same office.

9:11 Social customs restricted the amount of public contact between men and women; however, such a question was appropriate. The meeting of the women as they were coming out to draw water suggests a late afternoon or early evening time.

9:12 The women suggested the men hurry because of the impending sacrifice that Samuel would oversee. (Some interpreters see a connection between the high place and the altar Samuel built in [7:17](#).) Saul and his attendant would want to meet Samuel before the beginning of that ceremony.

9:13 Blessing the sacrifice was part of Samuel's priestly role.

9:14 The phrase entering the city is literally "coming into the midst of the city." The language may suggest Saul and his attendant were already inside the city rather than at the gate ([v. 18](#)) when they saw Samuel coming.

9:15 The word informed is literally "uncovered the ear," a common idiomatic expression ([20:12](#), "tell"; [2Sam 7:27](#), "revealed").

9:16 Anointing depicted setting someone apart for God's appointed service, especially kings ([10:1](#); [16:13](#)), priests ([Lv 4:3](#)), and prophets ([1Ki 19:16](#)). Ruler was an early term used to describe Saul ([10:1](#)), David ([13:14](#)), and Solomon ([1Ki 1:34](#)), though it also denoted others in authority ([1Ch 9:11](#); [2Ch 31:13](#), "chief official"). The phrases I have seen the affliction of My people and their cry has come to Me recall God's remembrance of Israel in bondage in Egypt, just before He used Moses to free them ([Ex 2:25](#); [3:7](#)). These phrases suggest God was beginning another day of redemption.

9:17 The Hebrew verb behind rule normally means "restrain" or "retain," and it may hint at the future negative consequences of Saul's kingship. Others suggest the term may imply Saul would gather a fairly scattered and disjointed group of Israelites into a nation.

9:18 Saul approached Samuel but did not recognize him, as his question reveals. The text may again provide a hint at the negative direction Saul's kingdom would take. All Israel knew Samuel was a prophet of the Lord ([3:20](#)), but Saul didn't even recognize him.

9:19 Go up ahead of me was a way of showing honor and respect. Everything that's in your heart was probably much more than Saul anticipated hearing; he had just wanted to see Samuel to inquire about the lost donkeys.

9:20 Who does all Israel desire but you may also be translated, "For whom is every desired thing in Israel? Is it not for you?" (The Hb word here translated "desire" is translated "treasures" in [Hag 2:7](#).)

9:21 Whichever rendering is best in [verse 20](#), the language was far more affirming than Saul anticipated. Smallest of Israel's tribes well described Benjamin, which occupied a relatively small territory and furthermore faced potential extinction after war with Israel's other tribes in the days of the judges ([Jdg 21:1-3](#)). Least important also may mean "smallest in size"; this may be the better sense in light of [verse 1](#).

9:22 The banquet hall was probably a room connected with the high place for sacrificial meals.

9:23 At Samuel's direction, the cook had set aside a choice portion of meat for a guest whom Samuel would designate.

9:24 The Hebrew term behind thigh also means "leg," and either way would constitute a large, choice portion of meat.

9:25 Presumably this was the home where Samuel was staying. The roof was typically flat, and it was a place where people could enjoy cool evening breezes. The subject of conversation is not known. The LXX adds the words "they prepared a bed for Saul on the roof, and he slept," a natural thing for a host to arrange for his guest.

9:26 Samuel would send his guests on their way, probably with a blessing.

9:27 As the three walked together to the edge of the city, Samuel revealed to Saul that he had a particular message for him. Perhaps Saul anticipated some sort of prophetic send-off in light of Samuel's words in [verse 19](#).

10:1 The act of anointing Saul with oil was anticipated in [9:16](#). The rhetorical question hasn't the LORD anointed you implies an affirmative answer. For other examples of such questions, see [Ex 4:14](#); [Jos 1:9](#). On ruler, see note at [9:16](#).

10:2 Samuel provided Saul a series of signs that would help Saul validate in his own mind that God had indeed chosen him to lead Israel. Rachel's Grave seems to have been located near the border of Ephraim. Based on a misunderstanding of [Gen 35:19](#), a Crusader tradition located the tomb near Bethlehem, where a shrine is dedicated to her.

10:3 The site of the oak of Tabor is uncertain, except that it was near Bethel in Benjamin. Going up to God probably is a reference to Bethel as the place where God appeared to Jacob ([Gen 28:15](#)), and hence a religious shrine where others hoped to meet Him as well.

10:5 The Hill of God (Hb *giv'ath ha-'elohim*) is probably Gibeah, Saul's hometown and eventually his capital city ([v. 10](#)). The presence of Philistine garrisons meant Israel's enemies were encroaching seriously on Israel's territory. If the Philistines controlled Benjamin, they could cut off Israel's communication between north and south and seriously restrict a major access route to the Mediterranean coast.

10:6 Control you could be translated "rush upon you," a meaning that might better fit the context. Transformed aptly describes a life God has changed ([Rm 12:2](#)).

10:7 Samuel's words do whatever your circumstances require indicate that when the signs came true, Saul would know what to do ([Mk 13:11](#)).

10:8 Gilgal lay in the Jordan Valley near Jericho. It was the site of Israel's base camp during the days of the conquest ([Jos 4:19](#)). Later it became a place where illicit sacrifice was offered ([Am 4:4](#); [5:5](#)).

10:9 The words God changed his heart demonstrate the beginning of God fulfilling Samuel's prophetic word. The confirmation of all the signs... that day further emphasize the truth of Samuel's word to Saul.

10:10 On the Spirit of God took control of him, see note at [verse 6](#).

10:11 The phrase everyone who knew him previously describes the citizens of Gibeah, probably Saul's family and friends. Their question, Is Saul also among the prophets? reflects their amazement, since they had never known him to prophesy before.

10:12 The unnamed man's question, And who is their father? reminded those who were puzzled by Saul's prophesying that it was God, not man, who determined who would be His prophet. The Spirit of God empowered the prophets (including Saul) for their ministry; their ancestry was irrelevant.

10:13 The high place was the place of worship from which the band of prophets had just come ([v. 5](#)).

10:14 Saul's uncle may be Ner ([14:50](#)), father of Abner, who later became Saul's general, but the text does not say for sure.

10:15-16 Saul was reluctant to share Samuel's words about the matter of kingship when he first returned home. Perhaps he felt relatives and friends would have a harder time believing he would be their new leader.

10:17 On Mizpah, see note at [7:5](#).

10:18 Samuel did not bring his own words, but the words of God. I brought Israel out of Egypt recalled God's dramatic deliverance of His people through the exodus ([Ex 14](#)). The kingdoms that were oppressing you described many peoples or nations that Israel encountered on the way to Canaan, plus all the enemies who continued to challenge Israel's right to the land.

10:19 Samuel suggested the people's request for a king was really a rejection of God's faithful care in favor of a human leader. The law of Moses established the terms for choosing a king ([Dt 17:14-20](#)), but Samuel's speech made it clear the people had sinned by asking for one at this time in their history. His command present yourselves called the people to stand together before the LORD so He could reveal His choice for Israel's leader.

10:20-21 These verses probably describe the casting of lots. God's guidance of the process would verify to the people and again to Saul His choice for Israel's king.

10:22 Interpreters generally believe the question, Has the man come here yet? was a request for Saul's whereabouts. Others suggest the phrase be translated, "Is anyone else here?" Hidden among the supplies probably suggests a place at the perimeter. Saul had been hesitant to reveal his destiny to his own uncle ([v. 16](#)), and now he appeared slow to accept the responsibility of the kingship.

10:23 On stood a head taller than anyone else, see note at [9:2](#). On the other hand, taller people were often viewed elsewhere in Scripture as threats ([17:4-5](#); [Num 13:28](#)).

10:24 At least according to the standards for kingship the nation entertained, Saul seemed like the right choice. The people's enthusiastic, Long live the king! signified the instant acceptance Saul received from many.

10:25 The phrase rights of kingship recalled Samuel's warning to the people about the cost of having a king ([8:11-18](#)). Samuel wrote them on a scroll as a lasting testimony or covenant between the people and Saul. Placing the scroll in the presence of the LORD meant in the tabernacle ([Ex 40:20](#); [Dt 31:26](#); [Jos 24:26](#)), which emphasized God's oversight of the process; He would hold Israel accountable for this decision.

10:26 Saul's hometown, Gibeah, then became Israel's capital. Brave men whose hearts God had touched were the beginning of Saul's army; the Lord was providing Saul the resources he needed to rule Israel.

10:27 The expression wicked men also describes Hophni and Phinehas ([2:12](#)). Although the text condemns their attitude, these individuals doubted Saul's abilities—probably because he appeared too timid to accept the kingship ([10:22-23](#)). They did not bring him a gift as custom dictated when approaching the king. The phrase Saul said nothing is literally "Saul was as one deaf," suggesting he chose to pretend his critics' objections had not been voiced. Others would remember the negative comments, however ([11:12](#)).

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

1 Samuel 8 - 10

8:1-22 Transition to the Monarchy. [Chapter 8](#) is a turning point in OT history, marking the transition from judgeship to kingship. The people want a change: up until now they had depended on the Lord to raise up judges to lead them as needed, but now they want a monarchy, “like all the nations” ([v. 5](#)). Why did they want a king? Of course, Samuel’s sons were causing problems, but instead of rejecting hereditary judges and demanding that Samuel’s sons be removed, they ask for a hereditary kingship. Probably they were feeling the threat of the Philistines and Ammonites ([v. 20](#); [9:16](#); [10:5](#); [12:12](#)), but the phrase “like all the nations” seems to be a key. Rather than following God’s way for them, they preferred to follow the ways of the world around them. It was ultimately a rejection of the kingship of God ([8:7](#)).

8:1 he made his sons judges. Samuel himself may have contributed to the problem (see note on [vv. 1-22](#)) by appointing his sons as judges. There had not been hereditary judges before; Gideon had rejected the idea ([Judg. 8:22-23](#)).

8:2 Beersheba was the extreme south of Israel in traditional descriptions (cf. [3:20](#)). It appears in stories of the patriarchs ([Gen. 21:31](#); [22:19](#); [26:33](#); [46:1](#)), and Amos denounced it, together with Bethel and Gilgal ([Amos 5:5](#)). A fortress has been discovered at Beersheba (Stratum VII) that belongs to the period of the judges. Its length is about 164 feet (50 m), and it is surrounded by a double fortification wall. It was destroyed in the second half of the eleventh century B.C. The remains indicate that Beersheba was an important administrative center at this time.

8:3 turned aside after gain... took bribes and perverted justice. When leaders use their office for self-enrichment, and as a result distort their decisions, they betray the fundamental purpose of judges and are a danger in all societies. Such practices are denounced over and over in the Bible (cf. [Deut. 16:19](#); [Ps. 26:10](#); [Prov. 15:27](#); [17:23](#); [Isa. 33:15](#); [Ezek. 22:12](#); [Amos 5:12](#); [Hab. 1:2-4](#)).

8:4-5 appoint for us a king... like all the nations. Samuel had appointed judges. The elders, recognizing his authority, ask for a king. (**To judge** can also carry the nuance “to govern.”) They want to exchange their unique glory as the people of the incomparable God ([2:2](#)), who had brought them out of Egypt ([8:8](#)) and was even now protecting them ([10:19](#)), for status in the world, in order to be “like all the nations.” The law had given permission, but not a requirement, to appoint a king ([Deut. 17:14-20](#)).

8:6 the thing displeased Samuel. Lit., “the thing was evil in Samuel’s eyes.” It was more than just a personal sense of rejection.

8:9-18 Solemnly warn them is a legal expression that implies giving someone full knowledge of an action. **the ways of the king.** The word translated “ways” (Hb. *mishpat*, “judgment, decision, rule, justice, custom”) appears frequently in Samuel. In [2:13](#) it referred to the “customs” or “rights” of the priest (see note on [2:12-13](#); also [Deut. 18:3](#), “this shall be the priest’s due from the people”). In [1 Sam. 8:3](#), Samuel’s sons “perverted *mishpat*.” In [10:25](#), Samuel writes the *mishpat* of the king in a book. Here one might paraphrase it as “normal kingly ways.” Some of these things were the normal cost of a central, standing administration, but others indicate a predictable abuse of power (see note on [8:14-15](#)). There is no reason to think this passage comes from a later writer disillusioned with the Israelite monarchy.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Samuel 8 – 10".

8:11 Chariots had long been known in Canaan as instruments of war ([Judg. 4:13](#) and Ugaritic texts). Later, David experimented with them, and Solomon used them regularly ([2 Sam. 8:4](#); [1 Kings 4:26](#)). Having men **run before his chariots** was a status symbol—both Absalom and Adonijah had a chariot and horses and horsemen and 50 runners to run before them ([2 Sam. 15:1](#); [1 Kings 1:5](#)).

8:12-13 The **commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties** were probably permanent officers over conscripted units—presumably military commanders were required due to the demand for a king to “fight our battles” ([v. 20](#)). To support this army, they need professionals to make weapons, provide food, and manufacture at least some comforts (**perfumers and cooks and bakers**; cf. “one of the perfumers,” [Neh. 3:8](#)).

8:14-15 **The best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards** goes beyond what is needed for the administration of a government and predicts the corrupting influence of a king’s power. Rather than serving the people without seeking self-enrichment (as Samuel did, [12:3-5](#)), the king would use his power to “take” the best for himself ([8:11-13](#)) and those around him ([vv. 14-15](#)). **Servants** refers to high-ranking officials, as can be seen by seals that have been found inscribed with “servant of [King] X.” As [22:7](#) shows, Saul would indeed make his “servants” commanders and give them agricultural properties.

8:17 you shall be his slaves. The climax of Samuel’s solemn warning. The Israelites and all their possessions are subject to the king’s use. Conscripted labor (cf. [1 Kings 5:13-16](#); [12:4](#), [18](#)) would probably be the most onerous form of this “slavery.”

8:19-21 “We,” “us,” and “our” appear frequently in this short speech. The king’s functions are (1) to give influence and status **like all the nations**; (2) to **judge us**—the fundamental function ([2 Sam. 14:4](#); [15:2-4](#); [1 Kings 3:16-28](#); [Psalm 72](#)); and (3) to **go out before us and fight our battles**—i.e., be a war leader (e.g., [1 Sam. 11:1-11](#); [14:47-48](#); [23:27-28](#); [2 Sam. 5:19](#)).

8:22 make them a king. The Lord acquiesces to the people’s demands, even though it means that they have rejected him ([v. 7](#)). By raising up David’s dynasty, God will bring good out of their errant desire.

1 Samuel 9

9:1-15:35 *The Story of Saul.* Saul, the first king over all Israel, rises from obscurity and starts out well, but proves himself unsuited to the role because he will not listen obediently to the word of God that comes through Samuel.

9:1-11:15 *Saul Made King.* This section starts with an ordinary family engaged in ordinary activities (similar to [ch. 1](#)), but it is soon clear that the Lord is working through these events. Here the story centers on Saul, who is told by Samuel that the Lord has chosen him to be the king to save his people. Saul is anointed, and the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him. Soon after, Saul is publicly chosen by lot. When Jabesh-gilead is threatened, Saul shows his leadership and saves the city. With this he is fully accepted as king, and there is a formal coronation ceremony at Gilgal.

9:1-27 *Saul’s Meeting with Samuel.* God uses circumstances to bring Saul to Samuel, and he informs Samuel of his plans to anoint Saul.

9:1 The scene suddenly switches from Ramah ([8:4](#)) to a seemingly unrelated story, that of a young man looking for some donkeys, who just happens to come to a certain city on a certain day.

9:2 handsome young man. Saul seems to be the ideal person, with excellent potential, particularly as a leader whom others would admire and follow. His physical appearance helps Saul to make a good impression on the people. **From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people** (cf. [10:23](#)). This probably means that the heads of most people reached only to his shoulders.

9:3 one of the young men. This could also mean “the first of the servants” (i.e., the head servant). The Hebrew (*na‘ar*, lit., “young man”) does not necessarily refer to someone who is young: Ziba, Saul’s steward, was a *na‘ar* who had 15 sons and 20 servants ([2 Sam. 9:10](#)).

9:4-5 The text states that Saul and his servant went **through the hill country of Ephraim** and then gives the names of three places in Ephraim where they did not find the donkeys—**the land of Shalishah, the land of Shaalim, and the land of Benjamin**—and then states that they came to **the land of Zuph**, apparently the land of Samuel’s ancestor Zuph in the hill country of Ephraim ([1:1](#)).

9:6-8 Just as Saul is about to give up, God intervenes through the words of Saul’s servant and through the fact that the servant just happens to have some **silver**. It was customary to take a **present** when seeking the help of a seer (see [1 Kings 14:3](#); [2 Kings 5:5](#); [8:8](#)). Gifts were an integral part of social dealings in the ancient world.

9:9 Inquire is a general verb used of legitimate inquiries of the Lord, either through a prophet or by lots (cf. [1 Sam. 10:22](#); [22:10](#); [23:2](#); [2 Kings 22:13](#); [Jer. 21:2](#)), though it could also refer to inquiring of pagan gods ([2 Kings 1:2](#)). **Seer, prophet,** and “man of God” ([1 Sam. 9:6](#)) are used almost indistinguishably in the OT.

9:12 Samuel was **just ahead of** Saul, apparently returning to Ramah from his circuit ([7:17](#)), because there was **a sacrifice today**. Again, God’s guidance is emphasized. Though later “high places,” even those where the Lord was worshiped, were considered places for apostasy ([2 Kings 23:15](#)), worshiping the Lord at a **high place** was considered legitimate before the time of the temple ([1 Kings 3:2, 4](#)).

9:14 they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. The full name of Samuel’s city, Ramathaim ([1:1](#)), means “two hills.” Presumably the city was on one hill and the high place was on another.

9:16 you shall anoint him. Various objects or persons were set aside for a divinely chosen task and anointed, such as the altar ([Ex. 29:36](#)), the tent ([Ex. 30:26](#)), the high priest ([Ex. 28:41](#)), or the king ([Judg. 9:8](#); [1 Sam. 15:1](#); [2 Sam. 2:4](#); [1 Kings 1:34](#)). The king was “the anointed one” or “messiah” of the Lord.

9:20-21 for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? As king, who would receive the choicest things of the land (see [8:11-17](#)), why should Saul concern himself with donkeys? However, Samuel’s question may be an implicit condemnation since it may also be translated, “For whom is all the desire of Israel?” In Saul, Israel gets what it desires ([ch. 8](#)). **Am I not... from the least... the humblest of all the clans?** Saul’s surprise at the sudden elevation of his importance by Samuel indicates that he understands this question in the former, positive sense.

9:24 the cook took up the leg. The leg was the priest’s portion ([Ex. 29:27](#)). Saul is told in [1 Sam. 10:4](#) to accept bread that probably was originally intended as an offering and would have been eaten by the priests (cf. [Num. 18:8](#)). These are indications of the sacredness of his kingship.

9:27 Samuel made clear to Saul in [vv. 20](#) and [23](#) that he had been given special knowledge, so now Saul would have no doubts that what he was to hear was truly the **word of God**.

1 Samuel 10

10:1-27 Anointing of Saul and His Election. Samuel anoints Saul privately, and then the whole nation discovers by means of lots that Saul is God's choice.

10:1 the LORD has anointed you. This is a private anointing. Later Samuel will demonstrate publicly by lots that Saul has been chosen by the Lord, not just by Samuel (see [vv. 17-27](#)). **his heritage.** Or, "his inheritance." The Hebrew term *nakhlah* appears six times in Samuel and can refer either to the Lord's land or to his people Israel, and sometimes to both. Here, it seems that "the people" is meant (see [9:16](#)).

10:4 The two loaves of bread were probably intended for the sacrificial meal, because the men were "going up to God at Bethel" ([v. 3](#)). See note on [9:24](#). Thus Saul's new position and authority as divinely anointed king is acknowledged.

10:5 group of prophets... with harp, tambourine, flute... prophesying. Though music may have been used in pagan worship to induce trances, these prophets were still able to walk and play instruments while prophesying. No practices such as self-flagellation or laceration are mentioned here, and the music was probably used to focus attention on the Lord. These same four instruments are mentioned as providing music for feasting in [Isa. 5:12](#). The "harp" was similar to today's concert harp. The "tambourine" was similar to the modern tambourine, but without the small cymbals. The precise nature of the "flute" is unknown. Various types of wind instruments are known from pictures. Most depict pipes being played vertically, more like a recorder than today's concert flute. Examples of metal and bone flutes have been found; wood and reed were probably also common. The **lyre** was basically a sound box, with arms in a U-shape supporting a bar across the top. Depictions of musicians playing the lyre in the ancient Near East are common, and some specimens of the instrument itself have been excavated. The lyre seems to have been considered the premier instrument. In [1 Sam. 16:16](#), Saul's servants suggest seeking out a lyre player.

10:6 In 1-2 Samuel, the phrase "the Spirit of the LORD" appears only in connection with his anointed ones, i.e., Saul and David ([1 Sam. 16:13-14](#); [2 Sam. 23:2](#)). The expression **the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon** (someone) appears only in Judges and 1 Samuel, ending with David ([Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 16:13](#)). It always speaks of God's Spirit coming suddenly on someone to equip and empower that person to serve the interests of God's people. The onrush of the Spirit of the Lord upon Saul is predicted, but not manipulated as in Canaanite practices; it is necessary in order to dispel any doubts Saul might have about his choice and as a public demonstration that he is now the "prince" ([10:1](#)). It is related to his election as king, and does not mean that he is becoming a prophet (cf. [v. 11](#)). **be turned into another man.** Not by losing self, but rather by being equipped with power to play a new role (see [Judg. 6:34; 11:29](#)). Cf. "another heart" ([1 Sam. 10:9](#)).

10:8 Samuel instructs Saul to **go down before** him to the worship center at **Gilgal**, and to **wait** for him there for **seven days**. The events at Gilgal described in [11:15](#) and [13:8](#) were probably other occasions.

10:9-10 In fulfillment of Samuel's prior predictions ([vv. 2-7](#)), Saul is given **another heart** and he prophesies, an action linked with the fact that the **Spirit of God rushed upon him** (cf. [v. 6; 11:6](#)). This might not be a permanent spiritual renewal or conversion, but Saul is confirmed as the one to deliver Israel (see [10:7](#), "do what your hand finds to do"; cf. [9:16](#)) and is reminded of God's presence by means of this visible sign (cf. [Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14](#)). Later the Spirit of the Lord "departed from Saul" ([1 Sam. 16:14; 18:12](#)).

10:11-12 What has come over the son of Kish? The fact that Saul is now “another man” ([v. 6](#)) with “another heart” ([v. 9](#)) is externally evident to **all who knew him previously**. A second question, **Is Saul also among the prophets?** (also [19:24](#)), became proverbial and was applied to situations where the participation or alliance of one person or group in the activities of another was unexpected. Saul’s inclusion among the prophets was shocking.

10:12 who is their father? The question may simply be about leadership, since “father” is elsewhere synonymous with the prophetic “leader” ([2 Kings 2:12](#); [6:21](#); [13:14](#)). If this is so, the implication may be either that no good leader would permit someone like Saul to join or that Saul is, in fact, the new leader of the prophets. There is some evidence that prophets were not always viewed positively, and so another possibility is that Saul’s presence with such “madmen” (cf. [2 Kings 9:11](#)) is suspicious. Finally, if Samuel is their leader then it is an ironic statement, since Saul will ultimately oppose Samuel’s authority (see note on [1 Sam. 19:23-24](#)).

10:14-16 Saul’s uncle, probably Abner (see [14:50](#)), asks where he had been and **what Samuel said** to him. Saul’s fate would be of great concern to Abner, since he was possibly next in line after Kish and Saul to inherit Abiel’s estate (see [9:1](#)).

10:17-27 This event is to show that the choice of Saul as king is not just Samuel’s, but God’s.

10:20-21 Lots are also used for identifying a person in [Josh. 7:14-18](#) and [1 Sam. 14:41-42](#), and for dividing the land in [Josh. 14:2](#); [18:1-19:51](#); [21:1-45](#). See note on [Acts 1:26](#).

10:22 Saul had **hidden himself**, perhaps for fear of accepting his new responsibilities.

10:24 At last Saul is publicly and officially presented and accepted by the people as the **king**. Samuel emphasizes the divine decision in Saul’s choice. Here he says that **the LORD has chosen**, while in [12:13](#) he says to the people, “you have chosen.”

10:25 The rights and duties of the kingship is lit., “the rule [Hb. *mishpat*] of the kingship,” i.e., the relationship between the king and the people, about which both the newly enthroned king and the people must have legal agreement. Legal agreements were usually written down and confirmed by the seals of the witnesses. Here **Samuel** was the intermediary and witness. He also **laid** the document **before the LORD**, i.e., deposited it in a sanctuary (cf. putting the Book of the Law or the covenant into or beside the ark; [Ex. 25:16](#); [40:20](#); [Deut. 31:26](#)).

10:26 Gibeah (“hill”), Saul’s home, was about 3 miles (4.8 km) north of Jerusalem, with a panoramic view and a north-south road nearby. This is probably the same as “Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines” ([v. 5](#)). A fortress with casemate walls and corner towers has been excavated there, but it is not certain whether it was built by the Philistines or the Israelites.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

1 Samuel 8 – 10

8:1-3 As an old man, Samuel appointed his sons to be judges over Israel in his place. But they turned out to be corrupt, much like Eli's sons ([2:12](#)). We don't know why Samuel's sons went wrong, but we do know that Eli was held responsible for his own sons' corruption ([2:29-34](#)).

It is impossible to know if Samuel was a bad parent. His children were old enough to be on their own. We must be careful not to blame ourselves for the sins of our children. On the other hand, parenthood is an awesome responsibility, and nothing is more important than molding and shaping our children's lives.

If your grown children are not following God, realize that you can't control them any longer. Don't blame yourself for something that is no longer your responsibility. But if your children are still in your care, know that what you do and teach can profoundly affect your children and lasts a lifetime.

8:4-9 Israel wanted a king for several reasons: (1) Samuel's sons were not fit to lead Israel. (2) The 12 tribes of Israel continually had problems working together because each tribe had its own leader and territory. It was hoped that a king would unite the tribes into one nation and one army. (3) The people wanted to be like the neighboring nations. This is exactly what God didn't want. Having a king would make it easy to forget that God was their real leader. It was not wrong for Israel to want a king; God had mentioned the possibility in [Deuteronomy 17:14-20](#). Yet, in reality, the people were rejecting God as their leader. The Israelites wanted laws, an army, and a human monarch in the place of God. They wanted to run the nation through human strength, even though only God's strength could make them flourish in the hostile land of Canaan.

8:5, 6 The people clamored for a king, thinking that a new system of government would bring about a change in the nation. But because their basic problem was disobedience to God, their other problems would only continue under the new administration. What they needed was a unified faith, not a uniform rule.

Had the Israelites submitted to God's leadership, they would have thrived beyond their expectations ([Deuteronomy 28:1](#)). Our obedience is weak if we ask God to lead our family or personal life but continue to live by the world's standards and values. Faith in God must touch all the practical areas of life.

| The Problems With Having a King | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| <i>Problems (warned by Samuel)</i> | <i>Reference</i> | <i>Fulfillment</i> |
| Drafting young men into the army | 8:11, 12 | 14:52 —"So whenever Saul observed a young man who was brave and strong, he drafted him into his army." |
| Having the young men "run before his chariots" | 8:11 | 2 Samuel 15:1 —"Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty bodyguards to run ahead of him." |
| Making slave laborers | 8:12, 17 | 2 Chronicles 2:17, 18 —Solomon assigned laborers to build the temple. |
| Taking the best of your fields and vineyards | 8:14 | 1 Kings 21:5-16 —Jezebel stole Naboth's vineyard |
| Using your property for his personal gain | 8:14-16 | 1 Kings 9:10-14 —Solomon gave away 20 towns to Hiram of Tyre. |
| Demanding a tenth of your harvest and flocks | 8:15, 17 | 1 Kings 12:1-16 —Rehoboam was going to demand heavier taxation than Solomon. |

8:19, 20 Samuel carefully explained all the negative consequences of having a king, but the Israelites refused to listen. When you have an important decision to make, weigh the positives and negatives carefully, considering everyone who might be affected by your choice. When you want something badly enough, it is difficult to see the potential problems. But don't discount the negatives. Unless you have a plan to handle each one, they will cause you great difficulty later.

8:19, 20 Israel was called to be a holy nation, separate from and unique among all others ([Leviticus 20:26](#)). The Israelites' motive in asking for a king was to be like the nations around them. This was in total opposition to God's original plan. It was not their desire for a king that was wrong, but their reasons for wanting a king.

Often we let others' values and actions dictate our attitudes and behavior. Have you ever made a wrong choice because you wanted to be like everyone else? Be careful that the values of your friends or "heroes" don't pull you away from what God says is right. When God's people want to be like unbelievers, they are heading for spiritual disaster.



Saul Chosen As King

Saul and a servant searched for their lost donkeys in the hill country of Ephraim and the territory of Benjamin. They went to Ramah, looking for help from Samuel the prophet. While Saul was there, he found himself unexpectedly anointed by Samuel as Israel's first king. Samuel called Israel together at Mizpah to tell them God's choice for their king.

Chapter 9

9:3 Saul was sent by his father on an important mission—to find their stray donkeys. Donkeys were all-purpose animals, the "pickup trucks" of Bible times. Used for transportation, hauling, and farming, they were considered necessities. Even the poorest family owned one. To own many donkeys was a sign of wealth, and to lose them was a disaster. Saul's father was wealthy, and his many donkeys were evidence of that wealth.

9:3ff Often we think that events "just happen" to us, but as we learn from this story about Saul, God may use common occurrences to lead us where he wants. It is important to evaluate all situations as potential "divine appointments" designed to shape our lives. Think of all the good and bad circumstances that have affected you lately. Can you see God's purpose in them? Perhaps he is building a certain quality in you or leading you to serve him in a new area.

9:6 The city where the servant said the prophet lived was probably Ramah, where Samuel moved after the Philistine battle near Shiloh ([7:17](#)). Saul's lack of knowledge about Samuel showed his ignorance of spiritual matters. Saul and Samuel even lived in the same territory—Benjamin.

9:21 "Why are you talking like this to me?" Saul's outburst reveals a problem he would face repeatedly—feeling inferior. Like a leaf tossed about by the wind, Saul vacillated between his feelings and his convictions. Everything he said and did was selfish because he was worried about himself. For example, Saul said his clan was "the least important" in the smallest tribe in Israel, but **9:1** says his father was "a wealthy, influential man." (The tribe of Benjamin was the smallest because they were nearly wiped out as punishment for their immorality—see **Judges 19-21**.) Saul didn't want to face the responsibility God had given him. Later, Saul kept some war plunder that he shouldn't have and then tried to blame his soldiers (**15:21**) while claiming that they had really taken it to sacrifice to God (**15:15**).

Although Saul had been called by God and had a mission in life, he struggled constantly with jealousy, insecurity, arrogance, impulsiveness, and deceit. He did not decide to be wholeheartedly committed to God. Because Saul would not let God's love give rest to his heart, he never became God's man.

Religious and Political Centers of Israel

**During the period of the judges, Israel may have had more than one capital.
This may explain why the Scriptures overlap with reference to some cities.**

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Gilgal | Joshua 4:19 ; Judges 2:1 ; Hosea 4:15 ; Micah 6:5 |
| Shiloh | Joshua 18:1-10 ; 19:51 ; Judges 18:31 ; 1 Samuel 1:3 ; Jeremiah 7:12-14 |
| Shechem | Joshua 24:1 |
| Ramah | 1 Samuel 7:17 ; 8:4 |
| Mizpah | Judges 11:11 ; 20:1 ; 1 Samuel 10:17 |
| Bethel | Judges 20:18 , 26 ; 1 Samuel 10:3 |
| Gibeah (political center only) | 1 Samuel 10:26 |
| Gibeon (religious center only) | 1 Kings 3:4 ; 2 Chronicles 1:2 , 3 |
| Jerusalem | 1 Kings 8:1ff ; Psalm 51:16-19 |

Samuel called the Israelites together at Mizpah, where he would anoint Saul as their first king. Up to this point, the political seat of the nation seems to have been the religious center of the nation as well. Above are the cities which probably served as both the religious and political centers of Israel since the days of Joshua. Saul may have been the first Israelite leader to separate the nation's religious center (probably Mizpah at this time) from its political center (Gibeah—[1 Samuel 11:4](#); [26:1](#)). Politically, the nation grew strong for a while. But when Saul and his officials stopped seeking God's will, internal jealousies and strife soon began to decay the nation from within. When David became king, he brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, his capital. King Solomon then completely united the religious and political centers at Jerusalem.

Chapter 10

10:1 When an Israelite king took office, he was not only crowned, he was anointed. The coronation was the political act of establishing the king as ruler; the anointing was the religious act of making the king God's representative to the people. A king was always anointed by a priest or prophet. The special anointing oil was a mixture of olive oil, myrrh, and other expensive spices. It was poured over the king's head to symbolize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God in his life. This anointing ceremony was to remind the king of his great responsibility to lead his people by God's wisdom and not his own.

10:6 How could Saul be so filled with the Spirit and yet later commit such evil acts? Throughout the Old Testament, God's Spirit "came upon" a person temporarily so that God could use him or her for great acts. This happened frequently to Israel's judges when they were called by God to rescue the nation ([Judges 3:8-10](#)). This was not always a permanent, abiding influence, but sometimes a temporary manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Yet, at times in the Old Testament, the Spirit even came upon unbelievers to enable them to do unusual tasks ([Numbers 24](#); [2 Chronicles 36:22, 23](#)). The Holy Spirit gave the person power to do what God asked, but it did not always produce the other fruits of the Spirit, such as self-control. Saul, in his early years as king, was a different person ([10:1-10](#)) as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in him. But as Saul's power grew, so did his pride. After a while he refused to seek God; the Spirit left him ([16:14](#)), and his good attitude melted away.

10:10, 11 A prophet is someone who speaks God's words. While God told many prophets to predict certain events, what God wanted most was for them to instruct and inspire people to live in faithfulness to God. When Saul's friends heard inspired words coming from Saul, they exclaimed, "Is even Saul a prophet?" This was an expression of surprise at worldly Saul's becoming religious. It is equivalent to "What? Has he got religion?"

10:19 Israel's true king was God, but the nation demanded another. Imagine wanting a human being instead of God as guide and leader! Throughout history, men and women have rejected God, and they continue to do it today. Are you rejecting God by pushing him aside and acknowledging someone or something else as your "king" or top priority? Learn from these stories of Israel's kings, and don't push God aside.

10:20 The Israelites chose their first king by casting lots—perhaps by using the Urim and Thummim, two plates or flat stones carried by the high priest. The fact that Saul was chosen may seem like luck, but it was really the opposite. God had instructed the Israelites to make the Urim and Thummim for the specific purpose of consulting him in times such as this ([Exodus 28:30](#); [Numbers 27:12-21](#)). By using the Urim and Thummim, the Israelites were taking the decision out of their own hands and turning it over to God. Only the high priest could use the Urim and Thummim, which were designed to give only yes or no answers.

Saul

First impressions can be deceiving, especially when the image created by a person's appearance is contradicted by his or her qualities and abilities. Saul presented the ideal visual image of a king, but the tendencies of his character often went contrary to God's commands for a king. Saul was God's chosen leader, but this did not mean he was capable of being king on his own.

During his reign, Saul had his greatest successes when he obeyed God. His greatest failures resulted from acting on his own. Saul had the raw materials to be a good leader—appearance, courage, and action. Even his weaknesses could have been used by God if Saul had recognized them and left them in God's hands. His own choices cut him off from God and eventually alienated him from his own people.

From Saul we learn that while our strengths and abilities make us useful, it is our weaknesses that make us usable. Our skills and talents make us tools, but our failures and shortcomings remind us that we need a Craftsman in control of our lives. Whatever we accomplish on our own is only a hint of what God could do through our lives. Does he control your life?

Strengths and accomplishments

- First God-appointed king of Israel
- Known for his personal courage and generosity
- Stood tall, with a striking appearance

Weaknesses and mistakes

- His leadership abilities did not match the expectations created by his appearance
- Impulsive by nature, he tended to overstep his bounds
- Allowed jealousy to overcome him so that he tried to kill David
- He specifically disobeyed God on several occasions

Lessons from his life

- God wants obedience from the heart, not mere acts of religious ritual
- Obedience always involves sacrifice, but sacrifice is not always obedience
- God wants to make use of our strengths and weaknesses
- Weaknesses should help us remember our need for God's guidance and help

Vital statistics

- Where: The land of Benjamin
- Occupation: King of Israel
- Relatives: Father: Kish. Wife: Ahinoam. Sons: Jonathan, Malkishua, Abinadab, Ishbosheth (and possibly Ishvi). Daughters: Merab, Michal.

Key verses

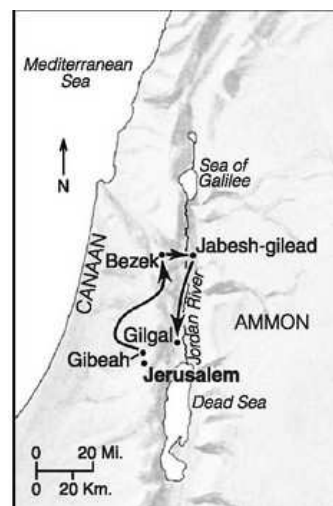
"But Samuel replied, 'What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king'" ([1 Samuel 15:22, 23](#)).

His story is told in [1 Samuel 9-31](#). He is also mentioned in [Acts 13:21](#).

10:22 When the Israelites assembled to choose a king, Saul already knew he was the one (**10:1**). Instead of coming forward, however, he hid among the baggage. Often we hide from important responsibilities because we are afraid of failure, afraid of what others will think, or perhaps unsure about how to proceed. Prepare now to step up to your future responsibilities. Count on God's provision rather than your feelings of adequacy.

10:25 The kings of Israel, unlike kings of other nations, had specific regulations outlined for them (**Deuteronomy 17:14-20**). Pagan kings were considered gods; they made their own laws and answered to no one. By contrast, Israel's king had to answer to a higher authority—the Lord of heaven and earth. The Israelites now had a king like everyone else, just as they wanted. But Samuel, in his charge to both the king and the people, wanted to make sure that the rule of Israel's king would be different from that of his pagan counterparts. "Placed it before the LORD" means that Samuel put the scroll, as a witness to the agreement, in a special place at Mizpah.

10:26, 27 Some men became Saul's constant companions, while others despised him. Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front. At this time, Saul took no notice of those who seemed to be against him, although later he would become consumed with jealousy (**19:1-3**; **26:17-21**). As you lead, listen to constructive criticism, but don't spend valuable time and energy worrying about those who may oppose you. Instead, focus your attention on those who are ready and willing to help.



Saul Defeats the Ammonites

The Ammonites prepared to attack Jabesh-gilead. The people of Jabesh sent messengers to Saul in Gibeah asking for help. Saul mobilized an army at Bezek and then attacked the Ammonites. After the battle, the Israelites returned to Gilgal to crown Saul as king.