

Saul's Baggage: The Hiding King (1 Samuel 10:17-27)

Summary: Our story so far of Saul is the remarkable commitment of the LORD to further His kingdom, despite the sinful motives of God's people in rejecting Him as their King. They asked the prophet Samuel to "give them a king" (8:5) so they can be like "all of the nations." (8:20).

1. The Public Rebuke at Mizpah (v.17-20)

- Once dismissed, the elders return to their hometowns (8:22), awaiting their king.
- The people are unaware that their king has already been chosen by the LORD (9:16; 10:24). Samuel assembles the people at Mizpah.
- Mizpah: the nation has already been there a decade ago. It was the place where they repented of their idolatry (7:3) and called out to the LORD to save them. It was also the location where Israel promised to exterminate the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20:1-11).
- Samuel's rebuke was a reminder to the people:
 - of how much the LORD has done for them (v.18). It was also a subtle link to the Sinai covenant; Israel has become idolators again.
 - of their failure to persevere and trust the LORD as their King (v.19).

2. The Casting of Lots and Location of Saul (v.21-24)

- Even before the casting of the lot, the king has already been selected. Saul was already on the move before the people requested a king (8:22). He has attended the pre-coronation meal (9:22-24), received the word of God (9:27), already been anointed (10:1) and filled with the Spirit of the LORD (10:10).
- Casting of Lots:
 - Either stones, sticks, boards, or dice were thrown or manipulated in a certain manner so that the will of God could be understood. They were often times binary in nature (yes or no).
 - Most likely, this process would have been in the winnowing category: tribes-clans-family-individuals. Somehow, the lot is able to identify Saul despite the fact that he was not present as his lot was cast.
 - The actual process of the selection (mechanism) to determine the "yes" or "no" we do not know. The Urim and Thummim may have been used since there was no High Priest.
 - Urim and Thummim: stones of some sort that were placed on the High Priest's breastplate, called the breastplate of decision/judgment (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8). These were also used in 1 Sam. 14:39-42. The Talmud indicates that the stones would illuminate if the lot was of the LORD. After Ezra 2:63, there is no scriptural proof that they were used again.
 - The casting of lots in its context was an act of judgment (Josh. 7; 1 Sam. 14; Jonah 1:7). The reason why this was a public event is because the people would have felt "cheated" if there was not "equal opportunity" in the casting of lots.
 - Clearly, whatever it was, it was understood and accepted as legitimate.

*Israel's next leader will be selected by divine prerogative; not human manipulation.

• Location of Saul:

- He was hiding among the baggage:
 - Baggage: the Hebrew can mean "vessel, utensils, or weapons of war."
 - When the people request a king, and Saul ("Asked For") is presented, he is hiding. The people "asked" the LORD where "Asked For" was.
 - Saul's vacancy at his own coronation foreshadows a reign that would vacate responsibilities associated with ruling in a godly manner.
- Once the people find Saul hiding, he stands, and Samuel notes that there is "none like him." The LORD has chosen Saul (10:24); not the people. Saul is the people's king (the "people shouted...").

3. The Job Description and Requirements of the King (v.25)

- Samuel has already given the rights and duties of the king (8:9-11). These were descriptions of what the king will do (within his assigned jurisdiction).
- Now, Samuel establishes the divine judgment (duties) of the kingship. In contrast to 8:11, this is the right of the kingship, not king; all of those who are kings will be regulated by the commandments of the kingship.
- Book: While we do not know what was written in this book (v.25), we can surmise that it has elements of Deut. 17:17:14-20.
- Israel's kings will be vice-kings; they will be under the law of the LORD and not sovereign. This is more of a constitutional legal description of the duties and prerogatives of the king. This would make Israel distinct.
- Even though they will now have a king, they will not be like other nations; all kings will be accountable to the LORD's prophet and His Word (10:8, 25).

4. The Reaction of the People (v.26-27)

- In changes of leadership, there are always supporters and detractors.
- Valiant Men: Once the shout is made "long live the King!" the LORD moves in the hearts of strong, fighting men. These men were not under any physical restraint. The LORD had touched their hearts. No surprise; Saul hid among the military equipment.
- Worthless Men (Sons of Belial): They brought no presents (celebration) and offered no encouragement; only scorn and contempt. It was not that they had a problem with the means and process of the lot-casting. They refused to submit. They were in the wrong because Samuel sanctioned the process, and the LORD providentially worked it out. Hence, why they are called "worthless men."
- Saul held his peace: Several options to why he held his peace: diplomacy, insecurity, strength, weakness, and/or humility.