

1 Samuel 10

- So now Israel will receive a king, a man that perfectly suits their desire to be ruled like all the other nations
 - And as we enter Chapter 10, the prophet Samuel anoints this new king

1Sam. 10:1 Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"

- Last week we learned Saul is young, strong, tall, handsome and seems to have a good heart
 - But in a sense, he's too perfect for the job
 - Historically speaking, Saul's selection runs contrary to God's usual pattern
 - God usually selects the least obvious option, the one you didn't see coming
- But Saul is the obvious candidate according to human expectations
 - He's the Ishmael in this story, not the Isaac; he's the Esau, not the Jacob
 - And it's Saul's perfect suitability to the job that becomes our first clue that the Lord is up to something unusual here
 - That the story of Saul is bigger than merely giving Israel a king
- Our second clue came also last week, when we learned that Saul is a Benjamite
 - Back in Genesis 49, at the end of Jacob's life, the Lord spoke prophetically concerning the future kings of Israel
 - Speaking of the tribe of Judah, the Lord declared:

Gen. 49:8 "Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.

Gen. 49:9 "Judah is a lion's whelp;
 From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
 He couches, he lies down as a lion,
 And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"

Gen. 49:10 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
 Until Shiloh comes,
 And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."

- The prophecy for Judah was that this tribe would have dominion over the other tribes
 - Judah's reign was compared to a lion, the king of the beasts
 - And a scepter, the symbol of royal authority, would not depart from Judah's hand
 - Neither would a king's ruling staff be relinquished by Judah to another tribe
 - In simple terms, Judah – and Judah alone – would rule over Israel
 - And that rule would continue from generation to generation within Judah until Shiloh comes, that is the Messiah comes to rule forever
 - In v.10 Jacob said once the tribe of Judah receives the right to rule, it can never be taken away
 - The Messiah Himself must come from Judah for that reason, to continue the reign as Jacob prophesied
- But when the time comes to anoint the first king of Israel, the Lord selects a Benjamite not a member of Judah
 - Does this mean that Saul is somehow an illegitimate king?
 - Or perhaps the Lord is making a mistake?
 - Or going back on His word?
 - None of those conclusions are correct, of course
 - Saul is very much a legitimate and anointed king
 - Saul will rule with the full authority of any other earthly king

- And the Lord is certainly not making a mistake in selecting the man
- But the Lord has selected Saul as king as an exception to prove the rule
 - One day the Lord will anoint a member of Judah as king as He promised
 - And when that day comes, only Judah may rule from that point forward
 - But that day hasn't come yet...so the Lord may appoint a Benjamite as the first king without breaking His word
- But why start outside the tribe of Judah at all?
 - Saul's reign will serve as an epilogue to the time of Judges and prologue to the kings of Judah
 - Judges was the time in Israel when men did what was right in their own eyes
 - And the final act of that period was to demand a king like all nations
 - They don't want the Lord to rule over them
 - They want to experience ruling by one like them
 - And that's who God gives them
 - A man who, like all the Israelites, was called into a special position with all the advantages God could give
 - And in the end, he will squander that opportunity in idolatry and greed – just as the Israelites did as a nation
 - We're watching the Lord conclude the time of Judges with a final example to the people
 - This is what follows from acting according to their own desires
 - Saul will be anointed and equipped to rule with the power of the Spirit
 - But his life will serve as the example of what comes of seeking to live according to the flesh rather than Spirit

- In v.1 Samuel anoints Saul as king with a flask of oil
 - This moment comes in the morning Samuel sends Saul off after their rooftop conference
 - Saul's head is still spinning with the news
 - But Samuel presses on, symbolizing the empowering of the Holy Spirit by pouring oil over Saul's head
 - Prior to this moment, only priests and the tabernacle were anointed by oil in scripture
 - Now we see a new office being anointed, that of king
 - The use of oil is merely symbolic
 - The Spirit of God will empower this man to serve as king, but that moment hasn't come as yet
 - So to picture the Spirit's arrival, the prophet used oil
 - Still Saul must have been wondering if all this was to be believed
 - How could he know Samuel was telling the truth?
 - Samuel says Saul will rule over God's inheritance
 - But this is probably a truncated version of Samuel's actual words
 - In the Septuagint, the full statement is:

1Sam. 10:1 Then Samuel took a small container of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head. Samuel kissed him and said, "The LORD has chosen you to lead his people Israel! You will rule over the LORD's people and you will deliver them from the power of the enemies who surround them. This will be your sign that the LORD has chosen you as leader over his inheritance. (NET Bible)

- As we see at the end of the LXX version, Saul is told he will receive signs that the prophet's word is trustworthy
 - Each sign Saul will receive involves a set of circumstances
 - Each circumstance is so specific that when they come to pass, they can only mean that the prophet has access to the mind of God

- And in that way they validate the prophets' word concerning Saul's anointing as king
- But each sign carries its own symbolic message to Saul concerning his new mission
- So even as they provide confirmation, they also offer counsel

1Sam. 10:2 "When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'"

- The first sign is connected to Saul's search for his lost donkeys
 - As Saul journeys home, he will encounter two men who tell him that the donkeys have been found
 - And he will find that his father's concern will have turned to Saul himself, just as Saul suggested earlier
 - Saul's father will say, "What shall I do about my son?"
 - But in Hebrew, the question is, "What of my son?" meaning what becomes of my son?
- Saul will encounter these men near the place Rachel was buried
 - Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob
 - She bore Jacob's two favorite sons, Joseph and Benjamin
 - Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, who became the father of the Benjamites
- So what's the lesson here?
 - Saul's responsibility for his father's estate are no longer his concern
 - The Lord will care for Saul's father
 - This was an important relief for a son, who bore special responsibility to care for his father
 - Instead, the Lord has appointed this Benjamite to guard the Lord's inheritance

- Remember Benjamin was the only son of Jacob to be born in the Promised Land, which is Israel's inheritance
- The other eleven sons were born outside the land and only entered when Jacob returned
- So the Lord has selected a Benjamite to steward the inheritance in which his tribe was born
- In a sense, we can say that Saul was the natural heir of the land, since his forefather was born in it
 - But does the Lord's inheritance come by natural means?
 - Is it made available to those who qualify by earthly, human means?
 - Or does it require faith in the promises of God?
 - Even the number of men Saul meets reminds us that this is the dividing line among all men (2 is the number of division)
 - So Saul will be the exception to prove the rule
- Then Saul receives his second sign

1Sam. 10:3 "Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine; **1Sam. 10:4** and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand.

- Journeying farther, Saul will come to the oak of Tabor where he will meet three men going to worship at Bethel
 - They carry items for the sacrifice including goats, bread and wine
 - When they encounter Saul, they will give him two loaves of the bread unsolicited
 - This he will accept from their hand
- These foods were reserved for the sacrifice to the Lord, but they will be given into Saul's hand
 - Obviously, this indicates a blessing for Saul in that the people will support his needs

- But the fact that this provision was intended for the Lord before being redirected to Saul is a dark cloud over his reign
- Saul will turn the opportunity to guard the inheritance of the people into a chance to enrich himself
- He will abuse his power and seek to glorify himself
- Finally, Bethel is the place where Jacob saw the ladder coming down from Heaven
 - In that moment, Jacob made a “deal” with the Lord

Gen. 28:19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.

Gen. 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,

Gen. 28:21 and I return to my father’s house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

Gen. 28:22 “This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

- Jacob made his willingness to obey and follow the Lord conditional on the Lord’s willingness to care for him
- But the Lord’s faithfulness to Jacob had nothing to do with Jacob’s faithfulness
- It was because of a promise the Lord made to Abraham, Isaac and then Jacob
- Saul’s second sign indicates that while Saul will ultimately be unfaithful, nevertheless the Lord will remain faithful
 - Saul’s life is a story of shipwrecked faith
 - But Saul is nevertheless a man saved by faith
 - And the Lord remains faithful to him
- Finally, Saul’s third sign

1Sam. 10:5 “Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying.

1Sam. 10:6 "Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.

- Saul eventually travels a little further to the southwest to Gibeon, the hill of God
 - There he is met by a group of prophets prophesying and Saul will join them
 - The Spirit of the Lord will come upon Saul and he will also prophesy
 - The simple message confirms to Saul he will receive the anointing of the Spirit, which is the ultimate confirmation of his selection as king
 - And by that Spirit he is equipped for every good work in serving the Lord
 - But as with the first two signs, the location foreshadows the sorry end to Saul's reign
 - Gibeon was originally a Hivite city
 - After the Israelites entered the land under Joshua, the people living in the city tricked Israel into forming a covenant with them
 - The covenant prevented Joshua and subsequent generations from conquering the city
 - And it required that Joshua defend the city
 - Joshua still enslaved the people to serve Israel
 - Later Joshua designated Gibeon a Levite city
 - At some point in Saul's reign he decided to break the covenant and conquer the city, attempting to put all in the city to death
 - We hear about this in 2 Samuel

2Sam. 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death."

- So this town becomes a legacy to Saul's greedy ambitions

- Ultimately, the Gibeonites get to name their retribution for Saul's violation of the covenant
- They call for seven of Saul's descendants to be executed as retribution
- David agrees, and then later buries the bodies of the seven plus the bones of Saul in Benjamin
- So Saul receives the Spirit of the Lord in the beginning, but in the end he dies without the Spirit
 - And he's back in the place he started
 - The tribe of Benjamin has its time as king
 - And then it's buried
 - Once again, Saul is the exception that proves the rule that 'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD
- And so it comes to pass as Samuel said

1Sam. 10:7 "It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.

1Sam. 10:8 "And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do."

1Sam. 10:9 Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came about on that day.

1Sam. 10:10 When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them.

1Sam. 10:11 It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

1Sam. 10:12 A man there said, "Now, who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

1Sam. 10:13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

- Samuel tells Saul that as he encounters these moments, particularly the final sign, do what the occasion requires
 - After these experiences, Samuel tells Saul he will meet him in Gilgal and they will offer sacrifices
 - With that Samuel dismisses Saul

- And all that Samuel prophesied took place
- But as Saul sets out on this journey, an important moment takes place near the beginning
 - We're told that the Lord "changed" Saul's heart
 - The wording here leaves little doubt concerning what happened
 - To "change" a heart means the Lord takes a person's spiritual natural and brings it to life
- Why did Samuel include this statement in the narrative at this point?
 - First, it explains what's coming next
 - Saul is about to prophesy showing the presence of the Lord's Spirit
 - The man is being prepared for that intimate experience with the Lord
- More importantly, this detail prepares us to interpret an event that comes later in Saul's story in Chapter 16
 - The Spirit of the Lord will depart from Saul at that point
 - We'll look at the significance of that moment when we get there
 - For now understand that the coming of the Spirit on Saul follows his heart change
 - So we know he has been made new by God's Spirit
- When Saul reached the point of prophesying with the prophets in v.11, we're told that the people were amazed to see the son of Kish suddenly among the prophets
 - Their shock was probably a result of Saul's stunning appearance
 - Prophets were generally not a glamorous lot
 - Hebrews describes them as men who struck a rather pathetic pose
 - And rightly so, since they were usually mistreated by the very ones they came to inform

- But then you have this really tall and really handsome young man working with the old, scraggly prophets
 - It must have been a striking sight
 - And the people are incredulous
 - So they ask if Saul is indeed one of the prophets now?
- Saul prophesying is clear evidence to Saul and everyone else that the Lord's Spirit was present and working in him
 - This was an outward display intended to demonstrate to the people that Saul was indeed selected by the Lord
 - This display is in keeping with how the Lord typically works by His Spirit
 - The Spirit of God works with the flesh of men to demonstrate the anointing and approval of God
- Notice in v.12 that someone asks "Who is their father?"
 - This question means where is this power coming from?
 - And the answer is the Lord in Heaven
 - He is prompting this display, which was the point
 - The people are supposed to see this display and make that conclusion
 - The people come to the wrong conclusion, however
 - They assume Saul has become a prophet
 - Time will soon tell that he hasn't become a prophet
 - He's become a king
 - But since this is the first time someone other than a prophet has been anointed by the Spirit, their confusion is understandable
 - Still, their mistake is memorialized in an idiom asking "Is Saul among the prophets??"
 - The question is ironic, because Saul will turn out to be the last person you might consider to be a true prophet

- So the fact that some mistook him for a prophet later becomes ironic humor
 - After this moment, Saul proceeds to the high place to await Samuel as instructed, and a conversation begins

1Sam. 10:14 Now Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they could not be found, we went to Samuel."

1Sam. 10:15 Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you."

1Sam. 10:16 So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned.

- Naturally, Saul's uncle asks what happened to him while he was away
- Saul could have told him the whole story
- Instead, he decides to only mention the donkeys
- We could see this as an example of Saul's humility
- Or we could see this as an example of his duplicity
- Now the time comes for the king to be revealed to the people

1Sam. 10:17 Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah;
1Sam. 10:18 and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.'

1Sam. 10:19 "But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

- Samuel gives the people the reminder of why they are receiving a king
 - He reminds them that the Lord has been faithful to bring them out of Egypt and into the land by His own hand
 - Nevertheless, the people rejected the Lord's authority over them
 - And demanded a king to rule them
 - Nothing good can come from a decision forged in a desire to end the Lord's rule over His people

- So we know that whatever comes next will necessarily be a problem
 - And so Samuel says to the people, with an ominous tone, that it's time to stand before Lord and get what they asked for

1Sam. 10:20 Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.

1Sam. 10:21 Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found.

1Sam. 10:22 Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."

1Sam. 10:23 So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

1Sam. 10:24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

1Sam. 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house.

1Sam. 10:26 Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him.

1Sam. 10:27 But certain worthless men said, "How can this one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.

- At this point, we might expect that Samuel would just point to Saul and announce he was the king
 - But that's not how the selection took place
 - Saul rises to king in three steps
 - First, he was anointed by Samuel, indicating that the Lord had determined to elevate him to that position
 - But this anointing was entirely a private affair between Samuel and Saul
 - Now that the time has come for the people to recognize their new leader, the Lord orchestrates a public moment to designate Saul
 - In v.20 a lot is taken to designate which tribe would produce the king

- And Benjamin is chosen by lot
- Then the Matrite family, which was Saul's family
- Finally, Saul is named by lot
- Clearly, this shows that the Lord was working to ensure the process of lots arrived at the proper person
 - The process may have looked random to an outsider
 - But the people of Israel understood instinctively that the outcome was a reflection of the Lord's will
 - And it's still a truth today, that no outcome in life is outside the control of the Lord
- When it fell to Saul, they couldn't find him
 - So the people inquired of the Lord, through Samuel, has this man come yet?
 - In other words, they wonder if perhaps he has yet to be born
 - But Samuel answers that Saul is hiding among the baggage
 - The word for baggage is a general Hebrew word for armory or furniture or jars
 - So it's likely Saul was hiding behind vessels used in the sacrificial worship at this altar
 - It's comical, of course, but why is Saul hiding?
 - It seems to be a combination of fear and humility
 - Saul is not seeking to elevate himself at this point, which is admirable
 - And so the people go looking for him
 - And when they find him, they realize he is a head taller than anyone else in Israel
 - Certainly, this man must be the one God has chosen, because... well, just look at him!
- This is the first confirmation that the Lord's plan to appeal to the fleshly desires of the people has been successful

- The people are taken by Saul's physique
 - Samuel feeds their fleshly response saying, "See, there is no one else like this guy"
 - And to that we get the predictable response, "Long live the king"
 - In other words, the people are convinced that Saul is a perfect match because of his appearance
 - To be fair, they know he was selected by lots too
- But I wonder what their response might have been if the lots had fallen upon a weak, short and comely fellow
 - Would the people have been so quick to embrace him?
 - Probably not
 - And in time their fleshly impulses will prove their undoing
- Samuel tells the people the ordinances of the king, which are the rules that guide a king in Israel
 - These were probably similar to the rules Samuel gave the people in the first place
 - The king will do whatever he wishes
 - And the people will have no recourse
- Saul then retreats to his home in Gibeah, which is only about three miles north of the Old City of Jerusalem
 - You can stand on Gibeah today, a suburb of the city of Jerusalem, and see the old city clearly
 - In that sense, we could say that Saul was close
 - But he misses the mark
 - He was God's choice, yes
 - But it was a response to the people's sinful desires
 - And so he is the exception that will ultimately prove the rule
- God knew that Saul needed more than merely popular support to reign

- He would need military might to ensure he could consolidate power as king
 - So the Lord inclines the hearts of valiant men to support and defend their new king
 - These men accompany Saul to his home
- But all is not well in this new kingdom
 - Some worthless fellows decided that this man couldn't be the right choice
 - So immediately Saul is faced with opposition
 - As we'll see, the Lord was committed to Saul, even though He's appointed a man of the people's choosing, not a man after God's heart
 - He will defend Saul against these worthless fellows
- Saul was not without wisdom however
 - So he was wisely overlooked their opposition for the time being
 - There would be a time to consolidate his power
 - And now was not that time