

## “The People’s Choice” (1 Samuel 9:1–11:13)

Have you ever wondered how God orchestrates certain events? Have you ever pondered how God could be glorified in adverse circumstances? I think every believer wrestles with such questions. Those who don’t are either in denial or dead. Oh, I’m sorry, allow me to introduce myself. I’m a common person like you. The Bible calls me a “servant.” However, I prefer to see myself as more of a consultant.<sup>1</sup> My name is unimportant, but my role is critical. I served as the side-kick and right-hand man of Saul the Benjamite throughout his reign. I’d like to tell you from my eyewitness perspective how Saul became Israel’s first earthly king.<sup>2</sup>

However, before we get to Saul, I must first tell you about Samuel. After decades of successful judgeship, Samuel grew old and appointed his two sons to be judges. Unfortunately, Samuel’s biological heirs didn’t follow in his footsteps. On the contrary, they pursued dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. As a result of his declining years and rebellious sons, the great Samuel was ousted by his own people. Before Israel gave Samuel his walking papers, they demanded that he find them a king. Samuel immediately sought God’s perspective on this matter. Yahweh surprised Samuel by telling him to give the people exactly what they wanted. Samuel then began seeking God for His kingly selection.<sup>3</sup> This is where my master Saul and I enter the story.

**1. The selection of Saul (9:1–10:16).**<sup>4</sup> Let me begin by saying that Saul was tall, dark, and handsome.<sup>5</sup> I’m not exaggerating. You’ve heard the expression, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” right? Well, when it came to Saul, “Beauty was *not* just in the eye of the beholder.” *Everyone* agreed that Saul was a stud! He was the tallest man in Israel. He stood head and shoulders above his fellow Israelites.<sup>6</sup> His mere presence brought stability and security to those around him. Not only was Saul tall, he was also dark with bronzed skin from his work as a farm hand. His darkly tanned skin accentuated his physique which was already muscular and ripped. He had barnyard shoulders that seemed to go on endlessly. His pecs were large and striated. His biceps looked like they contained Israeli boulders. When he worked in the fields his triceps revealed the shape of horseshoes. Saul had a six-pack abdominal wall that was a fleshly suit of armor. His thighs were like cedar trees and his calves like shapely diamonds. To top it all off, Saul was handsome!<sup>7</sup> I mean real good looking. In fact, he was the most handsome man in all Israel. He had a full set of jet black hair, dark brown chestnut eyes, perfectly shaped facial features, unblemished skin that any woman would want, and a flawless well-kept beard. Saul was everything that Israel wanted . . . and more. Ironically, Saul’s name even meant, “Asked for.”<sup>8</sup> I find this significant in light of the fact that Israel was “asking” for a king.<sup>9</sup> God was giving His people the precise person who would fulfill their kingly expectations.

All the action began one day when some donkeys that Saul’s father, Kish, owned got loose and ran off. Kish ordered Saul and me to go on a “search and rescue mission” to find his donkeys. You may think, “Who cares about a few donkeys?” However, as beasts of burden, donkeys were very valuable.<sup>10</sup> They were a sign of wealth and were often used by royalty. In my day to lose donkeys would be akin to you missing several paychecks.<sup>11</sup> So, Saul and I looked far and wide over the course of three days to find Kish’s donkeys. We didn’t want to go home empty-handed. Yet, Saul finally said that we should return home because he didn’t want his father worrying about us. (Saul always was a thoughtful and respectful son.)<sup>12</sup> But I wasn’t about to give up so easily. So I told Saul about an honorable “man of God” (i.e., a “seer”/prophet)<sup>13</sup> who could see into the future and tell us where our donkeys were hiding.<sup>14</sup> Saul liked this idea, but he was concerned that we didn’t have any money to pay the seer for his time and expertise. (You see, prophets received a *profit* to make their living.) Suddenly, I realized I had three grams of silver in my hand.<sup>15</sup> (Coins hadn’t been invented yet.) I don’t know where the silver came from. I don’t even remember having any money with me!<sup>16</sup> “What good luck,” I thought to myself! I told Saul, “Today is our lucky day! I have some money . . . let’s go see the seer!”<sup>17</sup>

On our way to see God's prophet we came upon a group of women drawing water.<sup>18</sup> Believe it or not, we asked these ladies for directions! Yes, there was really a time when men asked for directions, but *only* in utter desperation.<sup>19</sup> We asked these ladies if the seer was in town that day. Lo' and behold, the ladies said that he happened to be in the city offering a sacrifice for the people. What a remarkable coincidence! We rushed like mad into the city and almost barreled over an elderly gentleman. Saul immediately stopped and asked directions, *yet once again*. He said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is." The wrinkled man responded: "I am the seer. Go up to the high place and we'll eat together. In the morning I'll tell you all that's on your mind. As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, don't worry about them, for they've been found." Oh my! I couldn't believe what had just happened! We had run headlong into Samuel the seer who was on his way to the high place of worship.<sup>20</sup> Imagine that! He even informed us that our donkeys had been found before we even inquired! This was truly amazing! Even more surprising was the greeting that Samuel gave Saul: "Who does all Israel desire? Is it not you and your entire family?" These were shocking and perplexing questions. I wish you could've seen the expression on Saul's face. He had a blank, expressionless, duh-look. We had no idea what Samuel was talking about.<sup>21</sup> (Perhaps you feel this same way when certain preachers speak.) However, it quickly dawned on us that Samuel was prophesying that Saul was going to be Israel's first king. I couldn't believe my ears. My boss Saul—the king of Israel?! HA! It couldn't be! I knew all of his weaknesses, shortcomings, and sins. I just couldn't imagine Saul being king.

While I was deep in thought, Saul interjected before Samuel could speak another word: "I'm just a Benjamite from the smallest tribe of Israel,<sup>22</sup> and my family is the least of all the families in our tribe. You wouldn't want someone like me."<sup>23</sup> I assumed that this admission would stop Samuel in his tracks. But it didn't! Saul's expression of humility only caused Samuel to want him more. Samuel took Saul and me into the dining hall and gave us a place at the head of the table.<sup>24</sup> He then told the cook to set aside the best portion (the leg) and give it to Saul.<sup>25</sup> We had an incredible meal and concluded our time with worship. After we had worshiped at the high place, Samuel spoke to us on the roof. We then retired for the evening.

The next morning Samuel did something I just hate: He asked Saul to send me on my way back home so that he could have a personal conversation with Saul. Now seriously, don't you just hate it when your spouse, your parent, your sibling, or your friend wants to have a conversation with someone and excludes you from it? That really burns me up! Samuel said the purpose of his one-on-one time with Saul was to proclaim God's Word to him. So when my master asked me to head home without him, I sulked off. But I have to ask you: Do you really think I went on my own merry way? Of course not! This was history in the making!<sup>26</sup> I feigned as if I was headed home and then backtracked within earshot and eyesight of the dining hall roof. I functioned like a member of the Israeli paparazzi. I was able to get a visual and attempted to hear everything I possibly could or at least read lips. Anything that I missed, I knew that Saul would fill in when we talked.

During this secret rendezvous, I couldn't believe what I saw: Samuel took a flask of oil,<sup>27</sup> poured it on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, "Has not the Lord anointed<sup>28</sup> you a ruler over His inheritance?" Samuel then promised Saul three signs that would authenticate Samuel's authority to anoint him king and to confirm God's will in his kingship.<sup>29</sup> The power of these signs lies not only in the fact that Samuel predicted them in advance, but in each case there was an astonishing echo of something that had happened earlier, before we had met Samuel. First, Saul would meet men who would tell him that his donkeys had been found. The implication was that God could solve Saul's problems. Secondly, Saul would meet two men who would give him food. God is more than capable of providing for Saul's daily material needs. Lastly, Saul would prophesy with a "band of prophets."<sup>30</sup> God can transform and empower for service. After predicting these signs, Samuel told Saul to be obedient because God was with him. Samuel then told Saul to go down to Gilgal where they would offer sacrifices and offerings. Samuel told Saul to wait seven days until he showed him what he should do.

As Saul turned his back to leave, something supernatural occurred: God “changed”<sup>31</sup> Saul’s heart and all the signs that Samuel predicted happened on that very day. Of course, the most impressive sign was Saul’s new heart. God gave Saul another heart. Samuel did not give it. Saul did not even give it to himself. The new heart was a gift from God. Now I don’t understand a lot of spiritual truth, but I’ve been told that we can have a new heart from Yahweh, but we must receive it from *Him* and from no one else. Saul received a new heart from God and the change in Him was immediate and dramatic. Furthermore, people who knew Saul before his “conversion” were amazed at his spiritual transformation. The people said to one another, “What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”<sup>32</sup> One local man said, “Now, who is their father?” I understood this cryptic question to suggest that the Lord was the father of the prophets. In other words, the people were excited about the wonder that God performed with Saul.<sup>33</sup>

After these miraculous events, Saul and I went back home. When we arrived, Saul’s uncle said to us, “Where did you go?” Saul replied, “To look for the donkeys. When we couldn’t find them, we went to see if Samuel could help us.” Saul’s uncle responded, “Please tell me what Samuel said to you.” Saul looked at me and I looked at him. What would Saul tell him? Saul skirted the issue altogether and just told him that the donkeys had been found. When I asked Saul why he didn’t divulge more information, he said, “Do you honestly think my uncle would have believed what I would’ve told him? ‘I went out looking for lost donkeys and found a kingdom.’ How plausible would this explanation sound?”<sup>34</sup>

**2. The public announcement of Saul (10:17–27).** Shortly thereafter Samuel called Israel together at Mizpah and reminded them of how God brought them out of Egypt. Yet, Samuel also informed his people that they had rejected God and opted for an earthly king. Then Samuel called the twelve tribes of Israel to present themselves before the Lord by their tribes and clans. The tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.<sup>35</sup> From the tribe of Benjamin, Saul the son of Kish was taken. Once their king had been selected, the people of Israel looked everywhere for Saul, but they couldn’t find him. They began to ask the Lord if Saul was even in their midst. It was then that the funniest thing happened: The Lord spoke to Israel and said, “Behold, Saul is hiding himself by the baggage.” I must admit this is very amusing and a bit ironic. This story began with Saul being sent to look for missing donkeys. Now it is Saul who is missing, and the people go looking for him. They find him hiding by the baggage.<sup>36</sup> Who would ever come up with such a crazy and embarrassing scenario? This is good stuff! Honestly, I love telling a story when there is such great material to work with.

After learning where Saul was hiding, the people ran up to him and ripped him away from the luggage. When Saul stood up he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. Then Samuel said to Israel, “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!” “Long live the king!” “Long live the king!” The thunderous chant echoed in my ears and reverberated throughout the land. Samuel then reminded the people of the ordinances of the kingdom, wrote them in the book, and placed it before the LORD. The “ordinances of the kingdom” were the regulations of the king prescribed in Deut 17:14–20. In this section of Scripture, God commanded Israel what to look for in a king. First, he must be an Israelite. Secondly, he must not multiply horses for himself. Thirdly, he must not acquire many wives for himself. Fourthly, he must not acquire excessive silver and gold. Finally, he must write for himself a copy of the law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must keep this scroll with him and obey all its contents. After making these ordinances clear, Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and, the valiant men, whose hearts God had touched, went with him. But certain worthless men said, “How can this one deliver us?” And they despised him and didn’t bring him any present. There are critics in every bunch, aren’t there? I was ready to give these naysayers a piece of mind. But Saul kept silent. This was yet another impressive demonstration of Saul’s humility (or his cowardice).

**3. The divine confirmation of Saul (11:1–13).** Although Saul has to this point demonstrated great humility, he is about to be thoroughly tested. A wicked man by the name of Nahash comes on the scene. His name sounds rather sinister, doesn't it? This is because Nahash means "snake." Nahash had thinning black hair, a large, broad nose, and a menacing salt-and-pepper goatee. He was relatively thin and short in stature. He reminds me of someone, but I can't place him. Nah, never mind! (This was a humorous reference to this narrator.)<sup>37</sup> Nahash was an Ammonite. Now, there is bad blood between the Ammonites and the Israelites. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with one of his daughters.<sup>38</sup> They had joined Moab in invading Israel and taking Jericho in the days of Ehud (Judg 3:12–13). They had also warred with Israel in the days of Jephthah and had been defeated by him, losing a number of their border cities to him (Judg 10–11). Now they are back! The city they will attack is Jabesh-gilead.<sup>39</sup>

After Nahash besieged Jabesh-gilead the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you." But the snake man countered with a diabolical plan. He said, "I will make a covenant with you only if you allow me to gouge out the right eye of every Israelite. The sole desire of Nahash was to bring disgrace on all Israel."<sup>40</sup> He was a sadistic monster! The elders of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Leave us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you." The messengers then traveled to Gibeah of Saul and told the people of Nahash's evil proposal. After hearing these words, all the people lifted up their voices and wept. About that time Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and he said, "What's wrong? Why do the people weep?" The messengers told Saul what had transpired. When Saul heard these words the Holy Spirit came upon him mightily, and he became very angry. He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout Israel,<sup>41</sup> saying, "Whoever doesn't join forces with Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as one man. Saul and his army thoroughly defeated the Ammonites. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. Thus, Saul rescued the people of Jabesh. Needless to say, Israel went *bezerk* over this victory!

Then the people said to Samuel, "Didn't some of our people say, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Let's put these men to death." But Saul said, "Don't put a single man to death, for today the Lord has accomplished deliverance in Israel." What self-control! I would have lopped some heads off. But not Saul—once again, he showed incredible humility and grace. He began well!

Although the people celebrated Saul's victory over the Ammonites, as I've reflected on this story, I've recognize that it was God's Spirit who won the battle. He was the One who saved and delivered throughout the story (10:19; 11:13; cf. 9:16; 10:27; 11:9).<sup>42</sup> My account begs the question: Where is salvation found? The answer is rather simple, yet profound: *Salvation is found in God's rule as King*. We must not trust in human power structures. We must not trust in kings, military might, worldly wealth, or abilities. If God brings salvation through a human king it's because the king relies upon Him. If God brings salvation through you or me, it's because we are relying upon Him. *Salvation is found in God's rule as King*.

Where does your trust lie today? Are you depending upon a president, a political party, or a democracy? Is your confidence in your spouse, your children, or your friends? Are you counting on your health, your wealth, your education, your job, or your abilities? *Salvation is found in God's rule as King*. We must, therefore, not choose human power structures to solve spiritual problems. Who do the people who know us think we trust in? Do we really behave like we trust in Christ for all things? *Salvation is found in God's rule as King*.

### **Scripture References**

1 Samuel 9:1–11:13  
Deuteronomy 17:14–20  
Isaiah 53:1–3  
1 Samuel 16:7  
Psalm 8  
Matthew 6:33  
John 15:5

### **Study Questions**

1. How have I been guilty of looking at outward appearances? What lessons have I learned from this sin? Why does God look at the heart? What notable observations have I made when I have looked upon the inner person rather than the exterior? How can I change the way(s) I perceive people? How would I like others to see me? What inner character quality would I like others to know about me?
2. Do I view all the details of my life as part of the tightly woven fabric of God’s providential leading and guidance? Do I respond to my “chance” encounters with others as though they were divine appointments? How does the doctrine of providence increase my trust in God? How will this change the way I think about the future?
3. What does this passage teach us about the compassion and patience of God in dealing with our stubbornness and poor decisions? How gracious was God to Samuel to provide such clear revelation and confirmation of how the transition in leadership should take place? How has God shown similar compassion and patience amidst my stubbornness and rebellion?
4. How strong is my resolve to fight against the tyranny of sin and enslavement? How quick am I to draw upon the resources of God rather than just throwing in the towel? Do I really understand the power of the Spirit-filled life? When has the Lord stirred me up to righteous anger so that I took action against some particular sin or injustice?
5. Are there people in my life who seem to have something against me? What are they saying, and is there any merit to their words? How do I respond to my critics? Am I out for revenge? Do I want to make my enemies pay and experience humiliation? Do I have self-control in how I respond to them? Do I look to the Lord to exalt me in His timing? Read Matthew 5:23–24 and Romans 12:14–21.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Smith notes: “The servant is not identified, but it is clear that he was no slave for (1) he is on familiar terms with Saul throughout the narrative, (2) he is in charge of the money (v. 8), (3) he offers wise advice to Saul at times (v. 8), and (4) he was treated as an honored guest by Samuel later in this chapter. Tradition identifies him as Doeg the Edomite who later will be such a ruthless partisan for King Saul (1 Sam 22:18).” James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 129.

<sup>2</sup> In 1 Sam 8 we saw the rejection of Yahweh as King and the demand for a human king. Now in 1 Sam 9–11 God reveals to Samuel that Saul is to be king. Sailhamer notes a threefold pattern in Saul’s selection: “First there is a divine selection (9:1–10:16); then there is a public announcement (10:17–27); third, there is a divine demonstration of approval (11:1–11), followed by public acceptance (11:12–15).” John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 224.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel’s godly perspective was remarkable. After being rejected by the people (1 Sam 8), he didn’t show any resentment when God told him about the man who would replace him as king of the nation. Instead, he exhibited a readiness to further the plan and purpose of God. Such obedience is both noteworthy and praiseworthy!

<sup>4</sup> Milton originally said, “He who was seeking asses, found a kingdom.” Quoted by Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 59. Hence, Klein labels 1 Sam 9:1–10:16: “Asses Sought, a Kingdom Found.” Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 80.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold correctly notes: “A future warning against putting too much value on the appearance or height of a particular candidate for the throne (cf. 16:7) may indicate that Saul’s appearance is a major factor in his selection as king.” Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 162. Waltke follows up further: “The emphasis on Saul’s physical and social imminence functions as a foil to David’s introduction, which features his social insignificance but emphasizes his bravery, musical abilities, and excellent speech as well as his good looks (16:6–7, 10, 12, 18).” Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 633.

<sup>6</sup> Saul’s height was impressive! However, it identified him with “the other nations” who were known for being tall: the Canaanites (Num 13:32–33), the Anakites (Deut 2:10), a Philistine (1 Sam 17:4), an Egyptian (1 Chron 11:23), the Sabeans (Isa 45:14), and an Amorite (Amos 2:9).

<sup>7</sup> The NASB reads: “He [Kish] had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome *man*.” Alter translates *bachur* (“choice”) as “chosen one.” Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), 68. Cf. 1 Sam 8:18: “your king, whom you have *chosen* yourselves.”

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Samuel means, “The one asked for from God.”

<sup>9</sup> See 1 Sam 8:10, where the people were “asking” (*shaal*) for a king.

<sup>10</sup> Donkeys fulfill the role of trucks in a traditional society. John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 50.

<sup>11</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*. Focus on the Bible (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000 [1988]), 74 n. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Saul’s immediate obedience to his father was a good sign since Eli’s sons and Samuel’s sons had been disobedient (1 Sam 2:12–17; 8:3).

<sup>13</sup> Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone*, 51 explains: “In the Old Testament, the phrase ‘a man of God’ doesn’t refer to someone marked by a deep spirituality. Rather, ‘a man of God’ is someone with mysterious powers and capacities (e.g., a ‘seer,’ or prophet).”

<sup>14</sup> Woodhouse aptly states: “The journey that had begun as a search for lost donkeys had become a search for a word from God.” John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 158.

<sup>15</sup> Literally the servant said, “There is found in my hand a quarter of a shekel . . .”

<sup>16</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 633 notes that in 1 Sam 9 God works almost entirely behind the scenes.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 129 n. 5 remarks: “Twice in these verses it is the servant boy who is wise and discerning not Israel’s future king. The fact that this servant had more creative imagination than Saul is an early hint of the leadership inadequacy of Israel’s first king.”

<sup>18</sup> Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 159 writes: “Anyone familiar with biblical history will recall that there have been a number of occasions when an encounter with young women at a well turned out to be very significant. The stories of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses each include a scene like this that was a defining moment in each life (Gen 24:10–61; 29:1–20; Exod 2:15–21; cf. John 4:1–42). We cannot help wondering what this encounter will mean for Saul.”

<sup>19</sup> Years later, at the end of the story of Saul’s reign, the king asked directions from another woman, but she was a forbidden witch (1 Sam 28).

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<sup>20</sup> Eaton notes: “God’s sovereignty is evident throughout this section: The servant ‘happens’ to have a silver shekel with him. Some girls just ‘happen’ to know exactly where Samuel is (9:7–11). Samuel just ‘happens’ to be in town that very day (9:12). It just ‘happens’ to be the right time to find him (9:13). When they go into town Samuel is first person they meet (9:14).” Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 42.

<sup>21</sup> Proverbs 16:9: “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.” Proverbs 20:24: “Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?” Davis, *1 Samuel*, 76 writes: “God is sovereign and providential! However, unlike 1 Samuel 9, he may not let you in on the secret. You may see traces of what He has been doing much later as you look back, but in the present you may be just as much in the dark as Saul was.”

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes of Israel. It had nearly been wiped out in the civil war some years earlier (Judg 20–21).

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 127 writes, “Saul was a virtual nobody before Yahweh made him a royal somebody.”

<sup>24</sup> We might imagine that Samuel was very interested to see how Saul would react when he was honored this way. Often, the way one reacts when they are honored shows what kind of person they really are. If they receive the honor humbly, without regarding it too much or becoming proud about it, it says something good about them. But if they show a false humility or a proud heart in the way they receive the honor, it shows something bad in their character.

<sup>25</sup> The cook brought out the reserved thigh (the right thigh was reserved for priests, so most likely the left thigh). Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* identified this piece of meat as the “royal portion.”

<sup>26</sup> Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 166 writes: “The contrast between the beginning and the end of this chapter is astonishing—from donkeys to the word of God, from the utterly mundane to the infinitely significant.”

<sup>27</sup> Youngblood thinks this oil was the distinctive formula prescribed for use in anointing priests (Exod 30:23–33), the so-called holy oil (Ps 89:20). Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

<sup>28</sup> Saul is called the Lord’s “anointed” twelve times in this text. It is worth noting that the Hebrew term *messiah* is derived from “anoint” (*mashach*). From this point on the king became known as “the Lord’s anointed” or “the Lord’s messiah” (1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23). David would also be known as the Lord’s anointed (2 Sam 19:21). Ultimately, Jesus, the Messiah, came from David’s lineage. The Hebrew word translated “messiah” translates into Greek as “Christ.”

<sup>29</sup> In 1 Sam 9:15–17 the narrative stops and there is an interlude in the story: “Now a day before Saul’s coming, the LORD [In Heb. *Yahweh* is put first for emphasis] had revealed [lit. “uncovered the ear of Samuel”] *this* to Samuel saying, ‘About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me.’ [These words repeat Exod 3:9.] When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, ‘Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people.’” Verse 15 makes it clear that Saul is *first* the one chosen by Yahweh. It emphasizes the primacy of Yahweh’s choosing over any public acclaim (Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 163). The triple use of “people” in 9:16 discloses that God had not renounced his role as King. This was no chance meeting. It had been planned by God. The Lord was not sending Saul because the people had asked for a king, but because He had seen their need (Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 163). I love how Davis, *1 Samuel*, 77 puts it: “But surely, if you are a child of God, you rejoice to see that your God is ‘mule-ish’ on mercy, that your sin does not dry up the fountain of his compassion, that his pity refuses to let go of his people.” It is also worth noting in 9:17, the Hebrew word translated “rule” or “govern” (*asar*) usually means “restrain.” Nowhere else in the entire OT does this word mean “rule” or “lead” (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 123). The more common words for “rule” may have been avoided to indicate that Saul is to be a ruler-deliverer who operates under the direct authority of Yahweh and his prophet (Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 163–64). Saul would not be given the title king until 10:24.

<sup>30</sup> Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 224 suggests: “The words of Deborah the prophetess in Judg. 5:2–31 give an insight into the nature of what Saul might have said as he was prophesying.”

<sup>31</sup> The verb translated “changed” (*haphak*) is the same that is used for the “overthrow” of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25). The old personality of Saul would be completely overthrown by God’s Spirit. New thoughts and emotions would take possession of him. Brueggemann, remarks: “‘Another heart’ (10:9) suggests a total revisioning of the world in a way that shatters all perceptions, invites new commitments and requires new actions. In the old wilderness memory of Israel, Caleb is marked as a man with ‘a different spirit’ who will therefore live and prosper in the land (Num. 14:24). In the exilic prophecy of Ezekiel, it is asserted that those with conventional ‘business as usual hearts’ will not save Israel and will not return home or enter the land. The only possibility of a future for exilic Israel is that God will give a ‘new heart’ and a ‘new spirit’ (Ezek. 11:19). A new heart and spirit will replace the

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heart of stone (Ezek 36:26).” Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 77. Davis, *1 Samuel*, 79 n. 11 argues: “I do not think we should construe this change as equivalent to regeneration of the Ezekiel 36 for John 3 variety.” Davis goes on to argue that the change in 1 Sam 10:6 comes as a result of the Spirit “rushing” upon Saul. This “rushing” of the Spirit indicates his equipping for the task of leadership. The verb is used of the Spirit “rushing” upon Samson, in each case, not regenerating, but giving power to meet a crisis, such as knocking off Philistines (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). The same is true of Saul in 1 Sam 11:6 (cf. David in 16:13). It is quite possible that Davis is correct. Most scholars do not see 1 Sam 10:6, 9 referring to conversion. Eaton, *1 Samuel*, 45 argues that “Saul is already a believing man” before this Holy Spirit empowerment.

<sup>32</sup> It is quite possible that the prophets were prophesying about Israel’s Messianic hope.

<sup>33</sup> Davis, *1 Samuel*, 81. Others see this expression as a derisive and degrading attempt to question the circumstances of Saul’s birth (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 129–30).

<sup>34</sup> Saul’s divine selection remained a secret until God revealed it publicly later. A two-stage pattern of God’s call is established here. David’s confirmation to the kingship would also follow this same “two-stage beginning” (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 131). First, God privately called a leader and then publicly set him apart for his service.

<sup>35</sup> As Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 132 has pointed out, the important fact is that the king was chosen “by divine prerogative, not human manipulation.” The only other individual identified by use of a similar method was Achan, who stole from the Lord (Josh 7:16–18).

<sup>36</sup> Remember, being a king was not something for which Saul had been seeking. He had come on the scene seeking nothing but a pair of lost donkeys. And now that he is chosen, he is still reluctant to take of the mantle of kingship. There will come a time when that mantle of kingship will be taken away from Saul and he will be equally reluctant to give it up.

<sup>37</sup> I took creative narrative license and described Nahash as myself.

<sup>38</sup> The name Ammon means “my father.” The Ammonites occupied the territory north of the Arnon River and east of the Dead Sea.

<sup>39</sup> By strange coincidence, this is the same city which had been destroyed by the Israelites for not joining in the punitive attack against the tribe of Benjamin following the incident at Gibeah in which a Levite’s concubine was raped and then dismembered (Judg 19–21).

<sup>40</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), Electronic ed.

<sup>41</sup> A similar act was performed by a Levite in Judg 19:29.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel* 176 remarks: “Deliverance is the driving question of the elders of Jabesh-Gilead at the beginning (11:3), is the promise of the new king at the center (11:9), and is the happy conclusion of the matter (11:13).” See also Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 82–83.