

1 SAMUEL 10:17-27 - A LOST KING?

Study 11

THE TRUTH MUST PREVAIL

I was once at a Christmas service, during one part, an aspiring virtuoso pianist was reciting for us a piece that he had written. We were all enthralled! During the piece, a dog had entered the church auditorium, ran up the middle aisle and onto the stage. As I recall, those in attendance kept their composure out of respect for the pianist. The dog clearly didn't understand etiquette.

The passage before us lacks the etiquette that you would expect at a formal ceremony. Samuel bluntly calls the Israelites out for their sin, and then, the king-to-be goes missing!

The Israelites are at Mizpah once again. Samuel doesn't call them to repentance, instead, he declares "But today you have rejected your God..." God has been faithful, Israel has been faithless! Sometimes truth must come before niceties.

READ 1 Samuel 10:17-19

QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. 'His word may pursue us relentlessly until we hear it.' Has God ever had to speak to you twice—or even uncountable times—before you have been willing to hear his Word? If so, what does that tell you about him and about yourself?

GOD'S CLEAR CHOICE

Next, Samuel begins a selection process by lot. The Israelite were not told this was to select a king, and instead, would have reminded them of the selection process that identified Achan (Joshua 7) as the one who had sinned against God, and was hence executed.

This process had two purposes. **First**, the parallels to the selection process of Achan seems to indicate that while God was here selecting a king, it was still nonetheless His judgement on Israel. **Second**, The process publicly displayed that Saul's was God's choice (Prov 16:33).

Saul however, is nowhere to be found. But who could blame him, he most likely thought that he was going to be judged like Achan. Saul hid in fear, this wasn't a good start to his kingship.

Saul displays the self-serving cowardice that they would have to get used to under the leadership of a sinful man.

God reveals that Saul is hiding among the baggage. The people run to get him. Surprise, Saul is tall and handsome! The very qualities that the Israelites would've expected from a king. External presence and power mattered, there was no consideration for character or faith. The people cheered "long live the king." The divine irony is that God chose for Israel, the very person that they would have chosen.

It seemed to be lost on the Israelites that God had chosen this king for them. No matter how much they wanted to escape their God, God was inescapable. As creatures in a created world, we cannot escape the creator. He will be the sovereign king whether we respond in belief or unbelief.

READ 1 Samuel 10:20-25 and Joshua 10:10-26

QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. What comparisons do you see between Saul's selection and Achan's judgement?
3. Our first introduction to Saul emphasizes his appearance: he is the handsomest, tallest Israelite (9:2). Even Samuel finds Saul's appearance impressive (10:23–24). But why is this emphasized? How might chapter 8 and Hannah's prayer (2:1–11) shed light on the emphasis on Saul's stature?

God and Government

Was Israel's new system of government to be a law unto themselves? Of course not, He was under the authority of a higher king (10:25)! The rights and duties were given not simply to the king, but to the kingship. All of the kings were subject to god's rule. Most likely, these rights and duties would have come from Deuteronomy 17.

This verse has played an important role in church and state government ever since the kingship of Saul. This verse was used by John Knox (the founder of the Presbyterian church) to remind the monarchy of his day that they were not laws unto themselves.

Samuel Rutherford, another Presbyterian pastor, used this passage and Deuteronomy 17, as the foundation for his influential book ‘Lex Rex’ (“The law is king” as opposed to the king is law!) Rutherford asserted that the kings of Scotland did not have the right to make laws that were contrary to Scripture and declared that when a king conducted himself lawlessly his rights over the people were forfeited.

This verse reminds us that government has been ordained by God, but is to remain within its area of God given responsibility, especially matters of justice (1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13:1-17). Likewise, God has ordained the family to be his ministry of education, care and welfare (Gen. 2:24) and the church to be his ministry of grace (Eph. 4:10-12). These three governments are not stacked in a hierarchy (i.e., the state is supreme over the church), but rather exist equally, side-by-side on an equal plane. Each area of government has an area of responsibility that God has assigned to them.

READ 1 Samuel 10:25

QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Why did the kings of Israel need to have “rights and duties?” (consider the doctrine of sin)
3. Does 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Romans 13:1-17 suggest that the government is to have absolute authority? Consider Acts 5:29, as well as the fact that Peter, Paul and Jesus were executed by the Roman government for being apparent lawbreakers

GOD’S GOVERNMENT IS DIVISIVE

Sometimes what happens after the meeting is as significant as what happens at the meeting. We heard those outbursts of acclamation (24); but now as folks straggle home we see two distinctly opposite reactions to the newly chosen king. There were some “mighty men whose hearts God had touched” (26b). But then there were the worthless men, who kept asking, “How can this fellow save us?” The point should not be lost: the king causes division; the king suffers rejection even within Israel.

This reminds us that the offices that God has ordained always cause division. Especially when we look to God's perfect king, Jesus. What man has caused greater division in our world? In fact, Jesus states that he came to bring division (Luke 12:51)

People continue to despise Jesus today. After all, can a Jew, executed as a criminal two thousand years ago, have to do with my final judgement? My marriage? My fears? My disasters? "How can this fellow save us?"

READ - 1 SAMUEL 10:26-27

QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Why do we sometimes resent legitimate authority? What does this tell us about ourselves?