

Message #2

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Life of David

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## THE PREPARATION FOR THE DAVIDIC KING:

### GETTING WHAT WE WANT OR WHAT GOD WANTS

#### 1 SAMUEL 8-12

#### INTRODUCTION

Elections are much in the news of late. Hong Kong had municipal elections last weekend, in which pro-democracy candidates were overwhelmingly successful. This was widely regarded as a rebuke to Communist China's efforts to control what goes on in this territory. Romania had a presidential election a couple of weeks ago. Israel is still dealing with the results of recent national elections for the Knesset, its parliament. No party has been able to put together a majority to lead the country. The British are having parliamentary elections in a couple of weeks. Their campaign season is much abbreviated. Many of us Americans are jealous of that. The Brits are trying to figure out what kind of relationship they want to have with the rest of Europe.

Here at home we are dealing with what often seems to be an unending campaign season. Democratic candidates are raising important issues about what we want in a federal government. Do we want free health care for all? Do we want free college tuition? How will we pay for it? Can we afford it? Do we want a bigger government, or do we want a smaller government?

In a way that is not all that different, the Israelites were asking such questions about government three thousand years ago. They were not content with the governmental arrangement that they had. They demanded a change. We will look at those demands and see how God responded. In this we may find lessons for us.

I.

We had a brief introduction to David's life last Sunday as we looked at one of his Psalms of thanksgiving. Today we are going to look at the historical background that was the setting for David's arrival on the

scene of Biblical history. We are going to begin in 1 Samuel #8, which is p. 230 in the black Bibles (I. ISRAEL CALLS FOR A KING), as we see that ISRAEL CALLS FOR A KING: THE COST.

To understand the historical setting for our story, it may be helpful to put it into the overall chronology of the Old Testament. Here is a timeline that notes famous characters in the Old Testament. (ABRAHAM TIMELINE) Abraham lived around 2000 BC. Isaac was his son. Jacob was his son. Jacob had twelve sons who became leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve sons moved to Egypt and ended up in slavery for 400 years. Moses led them out of Egypt around 1400 BC. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Joshua led the people into the promised land of Canaan.

The Book of Judges describes the following 400 year period when God raised up judges to lead the people. There was a repeating cycle whereby the people strayed away from God, He raised up enemies to oppress them, the Hebrews called out to God, and God provided a judge to deliver them from their enemies. The last of these judges was Samuel. He appointed his sons to take over his leadership responsibilities, but they were corrupt. Samuel is old. Thus we come to #8.

Look with me at vv. 4-6: **“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.’ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’”** (RAMAH MAP) Ramah is just to the north of Jerusalem.

Notice that the elders of Israel say that they want to have a government like all of the other nations. This is a problem. From the earliest times when God chose to bless the descendants of Abraham, He told His people that they were not to be like all of the other nations. Until now, God had been their leader. (PROJECTOR OFF) When the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness, He led them by a pillar of fire and a cloud. The center of His presence was an ark that they carried around with them. When they settled in the Promised Land, God raised up judges as they were needed. But now the Jews want to be like everyone else. It tends to be a problem down through Biblical history when we who identify ourselves as followers of the true God want to be like everyone else.

According to vv. 7-9, **“And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.’”**

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, we humans have had a tendency to stray away from the true God. Even after the Lord delivered the Hebrews from Egypt, they kept complaining and asking to go back to Egypt. They resisted the leadership of Moses. In the time of the Judges, they kept straying away from God and getting into trouble. Eventually the Hebrews would reject their own Messiah who had graciously been sent to them by God.

Still the Lord anticipated the time when Israel would have a king as far back as the time of Moses. In Deuteronomy #17 vv. 14 & 15 (PROJECTOR ON--- DEUTERONOMY 17:14) Moses instructed his people, **“When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over you like all the nations that are around me,’ (DEUTERONOMY 17:15) you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.”**

Part of the challenge is that government always entails a cost. Back in our passage Samuel says that they government that the Hebrews want will be expensive. Beginning in v. 10 of 1 Samuel #8, the prophet warns (PROJECTOR OFF), **“So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, ‘These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.’ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, ‘No! But there shall be a king over us...”**”

This is always an issue in nations where citizens have a say in the government that they want. The bigger the government, the greater the cost. The bigger the government, the less freedom that the nation’s citizens have. If you want a standing army, free health care, free tuition, and green energy, there will be a cost. It won’t just be others who pay for it. Are we willing to pay the price in higher taxes and less freedom? The Jews at this point were only looking at the bright side of having a monarchy.

The problem with the Hebrew people here is not so much in asking for a king. It is the motive behind their request and the kind of king whom they want. They are expressing dissatisfaction here with the kind of government that the Lord has been providing them. They are also wanting a king like the other countries have. Their model was Gentile kings. The Gentile kings around them were often evil. They often were treated like gods.

In v. 4 it is the elders of Israel who bring this request to the Lord. But in vv. 10 and 19 it is clear that this is the general desire of all of the people. They will all find that the cost involved is much higher than they anticipated. They will also discover that the kind of leader whom they want may not be so great in the end.

II.

So in Chapters 9 & 10 we find that GOD PROVIDES THE KING THE PEOPLE WANT: THE PROFILE. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. GOD PROVIDES THE KING...) According to v. 1 of #9, **“There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth.”**

The word translated here as “wealth” is *hayil* in Hebrew. It is a word that we have studied in a couple of our Bible studies. It literally means “strength.” In some contexts it may mean “bravery.” In some contexts it may mean “wealth.” I suspect that a better translation in this context would be “power” or “influence.” Kish was an important guy in the community. He probably also was well-to-do. Benjamin was the smallest of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Verse 2: **“And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.”** Ironically, Saul’s name means “asked for.” This is the king whom the people have asked for. He is the all-Israeli guy. He is tall and handsome. He is the high school quarterback. He looks like the kind of guy whom people will follow.

The fact that Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes may have been politically advantageous. The bigger tribes might not feel like their position is being threatened by having a leader from the smallest of the tribes.

But there may be a hint of a problem in that the king comes from the tribe of Benjamin. A few generations earlier the men of one of their towns raped the concubine of a Levite. When the Levite informed the other tribes about what had happened, militias from these other tribes came to Benjamin and confronted this tribe with what happened. The men of Benjamin came to the defense of this town. The fighting men of Benjamin were almost all wiped out.

The town of Benjamin that was involved was Gibeah (RAMAH MAP). In #10 v. 26 we will find out that Kish and Saul are from Gibeah. They are thus descendants of rapists.

In #9 Kish sends his son Saul and his servant on a mission to find lost donkeys. They are unsuccessful in finding the missing animals. They end up coming by the town where the prophet Samuel is visiting. Thus we read in vv. 15 & 16 of #9, **“Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: ‘Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me.’”**

The prophet Samuel now knows that Saul is the guy. Notice that the biggest foreign policy challenge that exists for the Hebrews is the Philistines. (PHILISTINES MAP) They occupy the coastal area to the west of the Hebrews. They are in land that God has designated for the Hebrews. King Saul is going to have to deal with these Philistines.

So Saul and his servant show up, and Samuel welcomes him. He tells Saul that the donkeys have been found. He has a feast, and he has the two visitors stay overnight. On the next morning, as the prophet is sending the visitors off, he asks to be alone with Saul. (PROJECTOR OFF) In v. 1 of #10 we read, **“Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, ‘Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies.’”**

Samuel tells Saul that he will see three things happen to him that will verify that Saul is the guy. The third one is that Saul will encounter a group of prophets, and the Spirit of God will come upon him, and he will be changed. So it came about that when Saul encountered the group of prophets, he joined them in prophesying. According to v. 11, **“...the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them.”** Saul now has divine power and blessing from God.

Samuel then calls for a big meeting at Mizpah. (PROJECTOR ON--- MIZPAH MAP) Representatives from all of the tribes show up. Samuel starts casting lots, probably the holy dice that the high priest used, to get down to the tribe and the individual whom God wants to be king. When it gets down to Saul, they find that he is missing. It turns out that he is hiding. It is as if he does not want to be chosen.

According to vv. 23 & 24, **“Then 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. And Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.’ And all the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’”** So the people have the man whom they want. God picks him, but the man whom He selects is the kind of person that the people want to be their king.

Verse 25: **“Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord.”** This is the constitution that is to describe the basis of this new government. Back in Deuteronomy #17 Moses described additional restrictions that were to apply to the king. In vv. 18 & 19 (DEUTERONOMY 17:18) he said, **“And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. (DEUTERONOMY 17:19) And it shall be with him, and he shall learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them...”** Thus the king was to be reminded of the divine check upon his power.

When King George VI of the United Kingdom died in 1952, Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne. (PROJECTOR OFF) At her coronation the next year the Moderator of the Church Scotland presented the Bible to her. He said, **“Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.”** Such is the Christian tradition that comes from Samuel and from Moses.

Saul is now king. He seems to fit the bill for what the people of Israel want.

III.

In Chapters 11 & 12 we find that GOD ESTABLISHES THE KING IN OFFICE: THE GRACIOUS PROVISION. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. GOD ESTABLISHES THE KING...) In vv. 1 & 2 of #11 we read, **“Then Nahash the Ammonite went and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, ‘Make a treaty**

**with us, and we will serve you.’ But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, ‘On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel.’”**

(JABESH GILEAD) Jabesh-gilead is on the east side of the Jordan River. The Ammonites were from the country further to the east. Saul is thus faced with the first crisis of his administration. Down through history new leaders are often tested soon after they come into office by their enemies.

Word was sent to Saul in Gibeah about this situation. The text says that the Spirit of God came upon him, and he sent word to the other tribes that they needed to show up to fight the bad guys. Saul and the tribe of Benjamin had a personal connection to the city of Jabesh-gilead. When their earlier ancestors were almost wiped out as a result of the rape of the Levite’s concubine, the six hundred men who remained were left without prospects for wives. The other tribes had vowed not to give any of their wives to this sinning tribe. But they also felt bad that the tribe of Benjamin was in danger of dying away. The Israelites discovered that the only city which had not contributed troops to this battle against the tribe of Benjamin was Jabesh-gilead in the territory of the tribe of Gad. So the Israelites allowed the surviving Benjaminites to take wives from the women of this city. Thus Saul and his clan may have been descendants of the people of Jabesh-gilead.

Verse 8 in this chapter says that 330,000 Israelites showed up to fight the Ammonites. They beat up the bad guys, as Saul leads the troops into battle. This military crisis proves to be a blessing for Saul, as now he is seen as a successful leader. He is recognized by all of his people as a king who is worth following.

The prophet Samuel calls for a renewal of the kingdom at a place called Gilgal. (JABESH GILEAD- 2) According to vv. 14 & 15 of #11, **“Then Samuel said to the people, ‘ Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom.’ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.”** Everything seems to be good.

(PROJECTOR OFF) Samuel proceeds to address the nation, giving his farewell message as he turns over leadership of the nation to Saul. Samuel reviews Jewish history and reminds the people how too often they have forgotten God, especially during the recent period of the Judges. Then He presents Saul to the people. According to vv. 13 and 14 of #12 he declares, **“And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well.”**

Samuel then calls upon the Lord to send thunder and lightning. He does, which heightens the gravity of Samuel's charge to the nation. The people seem to recognize that their call for a king like all of the other nations have was not quite right. For in vv. 19 & 20 of #12 we read, **"And all the people said to Samuel, 'pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.' And Samuel said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.'"**

God has answered the request of His people. They have received the kind of king whom they have requested. The Lord has graciously provided a situation of conflict where Saul has shown appropriate leadership and bravery. While the people here recognize something of the error of their ways, God is gracious in promising to still be with them. He does not abandon His people, even when they mess up. Such is the encouragement that we have as well.

IV.

Consider finally THE LESSON FOR US. It is BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PRAY FOR. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE LESSON FOR US...) The Israelites got just the kind of leader whom they requested. He fit the profile of what they expected. We will find in coming weeks, however, that Saul proves to be a disaster. He will prove to be detrimental to the well-being of the nation. This, however, will set the stage for the coming of the king whom God desires.

Sometimes the people of God ask for things for which they should not be asking. Sometimes God grants our request anyway. The wisest course of action is to pray according to God's will. We are always on solid grounds when we pray for things for which God tells us to pray in the Bible. We know from the model prayer of Jesus that it is always good to pray for the coming and the advance of His kingdom. It is always good to pray for our daily bread. It is always good to pray for forgiveness. We have a solid Biblical basis for praying for the salvation of the lost and for the maturity of Christians. We know from the example of Jesus that it is good to pray for unity among Christians.

The words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians #4 v. 6 are another wonderful guide to help us in our prayer lives. (PHILIPPIANS 4:6) There Paul writes, **"...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."** So anything that is bothering us is fair game for bringing to the Lord in prayer. The point is that we need to leave open the possibility that our view, our desire, our understanding of the situation may not be quite right. We need to leave room for God to operate.



(PROJECTOR OFF) Years ago we had a friend named Jean who wanted to be married. On a missions trip to Central America, she made a connection with a single guy in a church there. They seemed to have initial interest in each other. Jean prayed that they might get together. One major difficulty was that he did not speak English and she did not speak Spanish. Jean prayed that these obstacles might be overcome and that he might come to the US. They worked at getting him a visa. He came here and got a job. It was tough because of the language barrier. He was faced with lots of challenges that came from living in a new culture. But they got married anyway.

It was a disaster. He began to drink. He became abusive. He broke the law and ended up in jail. Eventually he was deported, and Jean got a divorce. Jean got what she requested, but it was not what was best for her.

In James #4 v. 3 (PROJECTOR ON--- JAMES 4:3) the half-brother of Jesus tells fellow Christians, **“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”** Sometimes that is why God does not answer our prayers. But as in the story today, He sometimes gives us what we want. But it may not be what is really best for us. In our prayers we need to defer to God’s best view of the situation. It is fine to bring our cares and concerns to Him, but we need to leave room for Him to work.

We need to be careful what we pray for. What we think that we want, what we sometimes even demand of God, may not be best for us in the long run.