

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 455

1 Samuel 8-10, Part 2

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Episode Summary

In 1 Samuel 8 the people of Israel ask Samuel to choose a king to rule them, a king that would be like the kings of other nations (1 Sam 8:5). Samuel opposes the idea, interpreting the request as a rejection of his own leadership. God has an equally negative view of the request, but informs Samuel that the people have actually rejected Himself, not the prophet, in making the request. Nevertheless, God tells Samuel to anoint Saul in response (1 Sam 9, 10). In the previous episode of the podcast, we talked about how Scripture outside 1 Samuel 8-10 articulates a positive view of kingship, even marrying it to the messianic vision. In this episode we discuss how this perspective dovetails with the selection of Saul.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 455: 1 Samuel 8-10, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How ya doing?

MH: Not too bad, not too bad.

TS: That's good.

MH: Fantasy Football Season is winding down, Trey.

TS: Yeah, it is, and as we record this with one week to go, we just looked at it and you're still in it. We've got 8 teams fighting for 4 playoff spots. So you're not out of it quite yet.

MH: It's not looking good, though.

TS: No, no.

MH: My quarterback, Russel Wilson, tanked me this year.

TS: Yeah, all you Denver Bronco fans out there, I don't know what's going on. But it's been a rough year for them.

MH: You're stuck with them for real life.

TS: Yeah, it's been pretty rough for them. I feel ya. But I can't complain because my Cowboys are cruisin' so it's all peaches and cream over here. [MH laughs] Unlike your Green Bay Packers.

MH: I wasn't expecting much from them during the year. They just go into this...

TS: Did you get any more voting shares?

MH: I have two.

TS: Well, maybe you can write them a letter and say, "As a shareholder I demand this and that."

MH: Yeah, there you go. I demand more intelligence at draft time. Yeah.

TS: [laughing] Well, you always get like an A+. You always do the best on the drafts, according to the software, which I find funny. They love you on draft day.

MH: Yeah, well everybody was liking Russel Wilson on draft day, and that pretty much got torpedoed about a third of the way through the season.

TS: It did. It's crazy. It's been a strange year of football, Mike, but you know, for our non-football-loving fans out there, let's tell them about another piece of software that you love, which is Logos 10. They've graciously sponsored us again on this episode and we want to do what we can to get y'all on the new version. That is Logos 10. Whether you're going to do word study or prep a sermon or understand a difficult passage or you name it, you want to start a reading plan... You can do all of that in Logos 10.

MH: Yeah, I certainly had a better year with Logos 10 than I have in Fantasy Football. [laughter] No doubt about that! At least that doesn't disappoint me on a week to week basis. [laughs]

TS: Maybe you could use some of their biblical insights on the software to translate that to Fantasy. I don't know if that's possible. Maybe you could talk to them about that.

MH: Yeah, come up with some filter.

TS: Well, again, we want to give them a shout-out. We appreciate Logos 10 sponsoring the Naked Bible Podcast. To live in the Word with Logos 10, go visit www.logos.com/nakedbible to find that best Logos package for you. We appreciate their sponsorship very much.

MH: Absolutely.

TS: All right, Mike, I'm excited about Part 2! I assume this is going to wrap up chapters 8-10?

MH: Yep, that's correct. So let's just jump in here.

This is a Part 2, so if you haven't listened to Part 1 yet, you need to get with the program and listen to Part 1 first because we can't spend the time to repeat things we talked about in Part 1 that are important for Part 2. The wider context of what we're dealing with here (I can glean this much from Part 1) is that we talked about the positive view of kingship attested in the Torah and in the Psalms, in Numbers, the book of Ruth, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and places like that that would either predate or be contemporaneous with the authorship of the Deuteronomistic History. Again, 1 and 2 Samuel are part of the Deuteronomistic History. This is the notion that this whole block of scripture (some would include Deuteronomy and others would not), but at least parts of Deuteronomy all the way through 2 Kings was authored by either one person or one particular group of people because of the way themes in it are unified. Kingship is one of those themes.

5:00

So you have positive assessments of kingship in the Torah, outside the Torah in part of the Deuteronomistic History. But then you get this little snippet in 1 Samuel 8 where it looks like kingship isn't a good idea because Samuel objects to it. We argued last time that that needs to be set in context. It has a certain context. We talked about that, and we built off the work of Gerbrandt and then Dave Howard's summaries of his work in two articles in Part 1. And it was concluded that we need to ask, "What kind of kingship did the Hebrew Bible envision?" We positively presupposed not whether Israel was supposed to have

a king at all... Per Gerbrandt, the king was to lead Israel by being the covenant administrator, then he could trust Yahweh to deliver. At the heart of this covenant was Israel's obligation to be totally loyal to Yahweh. Again, this whole thing of believing loyalty fits right in here with what's going on with the kingship.

So we need to ask what kind of kingship God was looking for, as opposed to what the people were asking for. Gerbrandt reached this conclusion by first studying the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah—two unique Judahite kings. They were unique because they alone were assessed as "turning to the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might," which mime the words of the Shema. Those are the only two kings this was said about.

So the fact that you have kings that this was said about and that were positively assessed in the Deuteronomistic History shows that the Deuteronomistic History doesn't have an exclusively negative view of kingship. There's something else going on. The goal of kingship all along was to lead the nation in believing loyalty. That's what the king's job was supposed to be. That's part of what we concluded in Part 1. God wanted someone to be the *par excellence* example of trusting in Yahweh. This is why Deuteronomy 17:18 required each king to write out his own copy of the law. (You recall that from Part 1.) The king was to be invested in a relationship with Yahweh that would be an example to everybody else. The law was to be his focus, not the normative interests of kingship, like acquiring wealth, expansion of territory, entangling alliances through political marriages, exaltation of his own dynasty. That's not what the king was supposed to be about. Rather, the king was supposed to be the premiere example of believing loyalty. [audio breaks up] ...Joshua believing that Yahweh would fight for Israel and soliciting Yahweh's direction in battle. Of course, this is not what they're going to get.

The request for kingship in 1 Samuel 8 was viewed negatively because of the way it was sought and why. To ask for a king like all the other nations had was not at all to want to be a king who would be loyal to Yahweh. They had a permanent judgeship in mind—the people did anyway. It's obvious the people... When they asked for a king, they didn't say, "Give us a king and we'll be loyal to Yahweh all his days." It was, "Give us a king to be like the other nations." So they had a permanent military judgeship in mind with that sort of focus, not a permanent spiritual leader.

And you have to wonder, just by analogy... I was looking for an analogy with this and this is the one I came up with. What if we chose pastors specifically with their spiritual life in view—that this was preeminent over everything else? What if it was more important than their speaking ability or their administrative ability or where they went to school or something like that—that you actually judged your pastoral candidates by whether their lives were convicting YOU, that the way they live was a model for the way you wanted to live? What if it was criteria like that?

That's what was going on with the kingship. This is what Yahweh wanted. He wanted someone to follow in the steps of Moses and Joshua. In their example, they were looking to him. Really, the ultimate leader of the nation was supposed to be God himself. But that's not what they're going to get and it's not what they asked for. They're going to get exactly what they asked for, as it turns out, which turns out to not be a great thing in Saul's case.

10:00

So if we take this to 1 Samuel 8-10... Let's read the request in 1 Samuel 8:1-6.

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ 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." ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us."

The point here is that they weren't asking for spiritual leadership. They wanted national security, not spiritual leadership. They wanted someone who would get rid of the Philistines, for example. They could have asked, "Appoint for us a king who won't be corrupt, or a king who will do justly, a king who will rule us justly" or something like that to the real problems of Samuel's sons. But that's not what they ask for. They want a king so they can be like all the other nations. They want permanent national security over the peoples who were oppressing them—who had been oppressing them in the period of the Judges. God's response comes in 1 Samuel 8:7-9.

⁷ 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.

God was supposed to be the king, ultimately.

⁸ 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. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

The point here, of course... The request shows the impetus is not spiritual leadership. Again, they aren't asking for another Moses or even another Samuel. They want a king to be like the other nations. It's tantamount to a rejection of Yahweh being their leader. Samuel's message to the people comes in 1 Samuel 8:1-18, where he basically warns the people that having a king will come at a cost, especially given the military orientation of what they want. A king must build and maintain a strong standing army. And the word "king" isn't synonymous with democracy. This is something the people are going to have to learn. Standing armies aren't just about head counts of people—soldiers and support staff. Armies need property, buildings, a stable food supply, etc. Full-time soldiers aren't going to be doing work that men would otherwise do for family and clan and larger society. A standing army is to be maintained. They don't do that themselves. Whatever jobs the soldiers formerly did now have to be done by somebody else. Think of World War II here and how WWII changed our economy. It brought women into the economy to take the place of men because the men were full-time soldiers now. In verses 10-18 in 1 Samuel 8, Samuel tries to warn them about what's going to happen here. He warns them of the cost that they're going to incur.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.

15:00 So Samuel warns the people that having a king will come at a cost, especially given the orientation they want. Basically, the people are going to be at the mercy of the king, and Samuel says this point-blank. As we just read, "This is what's gonna be the result. If you want the Lord to do this, he's going to do it and it's going to cost you all these things.

¹⁸ 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."

The point is, you'd better be careful what you ask for because God's going to give it to you and this is what it's going to look like. But the people reject Samuel's warning and persist, so they will get what they ask for in chapter 9 when we get there. But that's essentially chapter 8: their request and Samuel's warning. He says, "Okay, be careful what you ask for because you're about to get it.

Now, a few observations about chapters 9 and 10. There are items in the narrative that strongly suggest that the Lord, in one respect, is giving the people just what they've asked for. But on the other hand, there are indications that Yahweh is thinking ahead and working his own agenda. That is, Yahweh manipulates circumstances that will expose Saul, the people's choice, and ultimately lead the people to David, who is going to be Yahweh's choice of king that Yahweh desires for Israel. In 1 Samuel 9:1-10... We're just going to go through a few observations here.

The way the narrative begins in Hebrew is paralleled in only three other passages in the Hebrew Bible. It starts out:

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish,

A very plain opening. But Chisholm writes this of that line:

This story begins the same way as the stories of Samson (Judg. 13:2), Micah (Judg. 17:1), and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1) do.

So it begins the same way.

Though it might appear to be a standard way of beginning a story, a closer look reveals that this introductory formula [MH: that there was a Benjamite whose name was... whatever] occurs only in these three passages and here in 1 Samuel 9:1, where Saul's family is introduced. The parallels between these texts indicate that the formula links the stories together by design... There are several parallels between Samson and Saul: (1) The Lord intends to use both individuals to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judg. 13:5; 1 Sam. 9:16). (2) The Lord's Spirit rushes on both, empowering them for physical conflict (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 11:6). (3) The Lord removes his enabling presence from both of them following disobedience (Judg. 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14). (4) Both expire with a death wish on their lips (Judg. 16:30; 1 Sam. 31:5–6) and are humiliated by the Philistines, Samson before his death and Saul afterward (Judg. 16:21, 25; 1 Sam. 31:9–10). The parallels cast Saul in the role of a second Samson. Both are physically impressive and seemingly possess great promise, but both die tragic deaths after disobeying the Lord... By linking Saul with Samson, the narrator distances Samuel, who is unlike Samson, from Saul and paves the way for linking the prophet with David. This is a literary feature of the story that facilitates the narrator's goal of presenting David, not Saul, as God's chosen king. The negative portrayal of Saul also contributes to the narrator's goal of presenting David, not Saul, as God's chosen king. Saul, ostensibly chosen because of his physical attributes, proves unfit to rule for a variety of reasons. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the Lord chooses Saul by using the people's standard, perhaps to discipline them for their rebellion (see 10:17–19; cf. Hosea 13:10–11) and in the process to demonstrate the limitations of the human perspective they embrace when they demand a king like other nations. However, when it comes time to replace Saul, the Lord picks David on the basis of his own standard, which gives priority to inner character rather than physical attributes (1 Sam. 16:7). When the time comes to act decisively on the Lord's behalf, David demonstrates no hesitancy (1 Sam. 17).

20:00

Secondly, there's the name of Israel's choice of king: Saul—Sha-ul. The name itself in Hebrew means "asked for" or "requested." Chisholm writes:

This is ironic in that the narrator has already described the people as "asking" the Lord for a king (1 Sam. 8:10). Later, in his so-called farewell address to the nation, Samuel twice refers to Saul as the one the people "asked for" (1 Sam. 12:13, 17), and the people acknowledge that they have sinned by "asking for a king" (12:19). Saul's very name is a reminder of the people's sin of rejecting the Lord: it suggests that he has been chosen according to their standard, not the Lord's.

They asked for him and they got what they asked for.

Thirdly, there's the missing donkey story in 1 Samuel 9:1-14. There's some irony here, as well. Chisholm notes:

Saul's quest to find the donkeys leads him to Samuel,

If you remember the story here in 1 Samuel 9... We should read a little bit of it, verses 1-14. It begins, of course:

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. 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.

So they're majoring on physical characteristics. Then we get this story about the donkeys of Saul's father, Kish.

³ Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, "Take one of the young men with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." ⁴ And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them.

So they're looking all over the place for these donkeys. Then eventually, Saul winds up meeting Samuel. It's not a chance occasion, it's something that's engineered by the Lord. "This is the kind of king they wanted, we're going to give it to them." It's really the Lord who sends Saul to the prophet. Chisholm:

Saul's quest to find the donkeys leads him to Samuel, seemingly by chance, but it is really the Lord who sends him to the prophet (v. 16). On a more negative note, the episode begins to paint a portrait of Saul that is less than flattering... In contrast to his servant, Saul appears hesitant and passive. He is a follower, not a leader.

When we get to the story, picking up in verse 5:

⁵ When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us." ⁶ But he said to him, "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honor; all that he says comes true. So

now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go.”⁷ Then Saul said to his servant, “But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?”⁸ The servant answered Saul again, “Here, I have with me a quarter of a shekel of silver, and I will give it to the man of God to tell us our way.”

So basically, Saul is the one who appears hesitant. He appears unsure of himself and he appears uncertain. His servant seems to be the one with all the answers. The servant is the one who comes across as more of a leader than Saul does. This is intentional. It raises objections about Saul's ability to lead.

He tends to impede action rather than move it along. Furthermore, the story depicts Saul as one who is spiritually insensitive: he seems ignorant of Samuel's presence, he does not take initiative in seeking divine guidance, and then he views such insight as something that must be purchased.

So again, the whole narrative raises questions about Saul's fitness.

Fourth observation: there's the wording of chapter 9:15-18, especially verse 16. So I'm going to read those, starting in verse 15.

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel:

¹⁶ “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.”¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, “Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people.”¹⁸ Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, “Tell me where is the house of the seer?”¹⁹ Samuel answered Saul, “I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind.”²⁰ As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?”²¹ Saul answered, “Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? [MH: Maybe Saul has some sort of inferiority complex; who knows?] And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?”

25:00

He's uncertain, there's no assertiveness about him, there's no taking action or taking things as they're given. There's nothing you would look at and say, "This guy's a born leader!" The wording here is interesting because the word translated "prince" (*nagid* in Hebrew)... in the ESV in verse 16:

...and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel.

This is not the normative word for king. The word for king is *melek*, which appears in chapter 8 when they ask for a king. Basically, they're going to get a prince, they're going to get a *nagid*, the wording shows. And there's something up here already with what's going on with the choice of Saul and God manipulating the circumstances of it. And of course, Samuel is going to be following what the Lord tells him to say. Chisholm writes of this terminology:

The sudden appearance of this word (*nagid*), which is not used in chapter 8, and the total absence of "king," which is used nine times in chapter 8 (vv. 5–6, 9–11, 18–20, 22), indicates that the Lord is not going to give his people what they want after all, despite his apparent decision to do so in chapter 8.

What they're going to get is the reality. They're not going to get this imaginary person that they thought would lead them in battle. It's because of his appearance, if you want to be honest about it. The choice of Saul is an outward one only and has nothing to do with his inner characteristics, which are going to become important when you're ruling people.

The term *nagid* is used elsewhere of leaders in a variety of contexts, including tribal leaders, military officers, religious officials, and palace officials... In verses 16–17 the Lord calls Israel "my people" four times, whereas in chapter 8 he refers to them simply as "the people" (v. 7). This is an additional signal that the Lord, who regards their request as a rejection of his kingship (8:7), is not going to reject them.

They're going to get what they asked for and they're going to suffer for it, but the Lord is not going to set his people aside. He's not going to go that far with it. In 9:17, the verb is of interest. The text has God saying that Saul will "govern or restrain my people." The Hebrew word is *'atsar*. He does not use the verb of rulership for kings (*malak*). So the verb "to reign over people as a king" is *malak* and the noun is *melek*—king. This terminology does not appear in chapter 9. And Chisholm notes this absence of vocabulary and writes:

Its absence here is striking, supporting the idea that the Lord is not intending to give the people exactly what they want. The verb *'atsar* means "restrain, detain, withhold," suggesting that the appointed leader will hold the people in check.

In our vernacular, basically he's going to be a babysitter. This is what they're getting. Frankly, this is all Saul is capable of because he lacks the inner characteristics of a king. These distinctions in the wording (*prince/nagid* vs. *king/melek*) continue into chapter 10, though this depends on what text your English Bible translator has or was following when he did his translation. Most translations, like the ESV, in chapter 10 do not follow the Masoretic Text (the traditional Hebrew text). Instead, many translations follow the text underlying the Septuagint, which aligns with the Dead Sea Scroll text of Samuel (it was among the Dead Sea Scrolls). So we're going to get a textual difference that we can read about if we compare Bible versions. It's going to be consistent with this absence of the "king" terminology, Chisholm writes once again:

30:00

The text should read: "Has not the LORD anointed you as ruler (*nagid*) over his people Israel? You will govern (*'atsar*) the LORD's people, and you will deliver them from the hand of their enemies who surround them. This will be your sign that the LORD has anointed you as ruler over his inheritance."

And that's what the Septuagint has, so this is what the text should read. The Septuagint along with the Dead Sea Scrolls aligning with each other against the traditional Hebrew text tell us very clearly what the original should have said. This wording is very consistent with what we get in chapter 9, but not consistent with chapter 8 when they request a king. What they're going to get is a *nagid* who is going to lord it over them. He's going to govern the people, not rule them as a king should or as a king would. Rather, he's going to rule them in such a way that they're going to be under his thumb. He's going to restrain them.

Within this quotation, as reconstructed from the Greek into Hebrew by Klein, Saul is twice called the "ruler" (*nagid*), not "king," of Israel (cf. 9:16); the verb "govern" (*'atsar*), not "reign," is used (cf. 9:17); and three times the people are identified as belonging to the Lord (cf. 9:16–17)

Sixth observation: Saul fails his first test of obedience to Yahweh by the word of the ministry of Samuel. Saul receives three signs to validate the authenticity of his anointing as king. I'm going to read 1 Samuel 10:5-16 here. Basically, Saul is told what's going to be happening to him. Samuel takes the flask of oil and in verse 1, he anoints Saul on his head as king and kisses him and then says, "Okay, here's what's going to happen to you."

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 [MH: *nagid*, not *sar*] and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

² When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'

³ Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. ⁴ And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand. ⁵ After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. ⁶ Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷ Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. ⁸ Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."

"So when all this stuff happens," Samuel tells Saul, "That's when you need to spring into action. You need to do what your hand suggests that you do." He's given him a series of signs. He has here, "You're going to meet certain men who are going to have certain things. They're going to give you certain things." And all of this comes to pass. He runs into these prophets. "You will prophesy with them and be turned into another man." Once all this happens, Samuel tells him, "Now it's time to do what your hand finds to do because God is with you." And THEN (crucially, after all this,) "after you do what you're supposed to do"... And Samuel is deliberately vague here: "Do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you." We'll talk a little bit about why in a second. But "After you do that..."

⁸ Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait,

until I come to you and show you what you shall do.”

"All this is going to happen to you, and when it does, do what's in your hand to do for God is with you. And then after you're done with that, go down to Gilgal." So when Saul turns to leave, Samuel in 10:9...

⁹ When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰ When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. ¹¹ And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” ¹² And a man of the place answered, “And who is their father?” Therefore it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” ¹³ When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

35:00 So what happens here? Basically, everything that God through Samuel says is going to happen to Saul happens to him. But there's a problem. He goes up to Gibeah where he meets these prophets and he's somehow "changed into another man" (whatever that means, and we'll get to that in a second). And then instead of going to Gilgal, where Samuel had instructed him, he doesn't do that.

¹³ When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place. ¹⁴ Saul’s uncle said to him and to his servant, “Where did you go?” And he said, “To seek the donkeys. And when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel.” ¹⁵ And Saul’s uncle said, “Please tell me what Samuel said to you.” ¹⁶ And Saul said to his uncle, “He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.” But about the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

So we actually have two signs here that there's something going on with Saul that isn't right. He doesn't go to Gilgal as instructed, and when he's asked by his uncle what Samuel had to say, he won't tell him. And he wasn't charged with keeping this a secret, he just doesn't tell him. The first two signs are sort of signs of God's Providence ("you'll meet two men here, they'll do this or that, so on and so forth, and then you'll go further to the oak of Tabor and you'll meet three men going up to God at Bethel; they'll meet you there...").

So the first couple of these are signs of Providence, then the third sign is, "You will come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of Philistines." That's what we're told about the place. Here is where commentators tend to think Saul goes astray. Basically, Saul is going to wind up in his own home territory of Gibeah. This is where he's from. People know these prophets, and somehow after meeting the prophets he's going to be a different person. Ostensibly, he's going to be able to lead the people, he's going to be transformed, he's going to be enabled by the Spirit of God to do the job. This is very consistent with what the Spirit of God does in the period of the book of Judges, which is the period right before Samuel was born. Samuel was the last judge. (Actually, his sons are but they're corrupt; he's the last good one.)

So things are sort of happening according to the pattern in the book of Judges. When the Spirit of God shows up in the book of Judges, the Spirit of God comes upon people. It's not a permanent indwelling like it is in the New Testament. It's a temporary enablement to do a specific task or job. And that's what happens to Saul here. The Spirit of God comes upon him when he meets these prophets. He prophesies, and that's going to be proof that the Spirit of God is now upon him. And he should be ready for the job, ready for the task. He has divine enablement. But what happens? He disobeys! It's a lot like Samson, if we want to continue with the illustration about Samson being parallel to Saul. Samson had the Spirit of God come upon him, too. Was Samson always obedient to the Lord? Hardly ever! Samson is out there pursuing women, doing what's best in his own eyes, but he is empowered as long as he doesn't cut his hair, so on and so forth. We know all of the story. The Spirit of God is going to enable him to be a judge and to deliver the people from the Philistines. This is his job; it's his only task—deliver Israel from the Philistines. He's going to be able to do that once empowered by God to do so. Ostensibly, so is Saul. But Saul disobeys. He does not go down to Gilgal.

On Gilgal... There are three Gilgals. Let me read a little bit to you here from Harper's Bible Dictionary.

1 Gilgal between Jericho and the Jordan, the Israelites' first encampment after crossing the Jordan (Josh. 3–4), which became Joshua's base of operations.

So this is the main Gilgal of the several that are going to be mentioned in scripture. This is the one between Jericho and Jordan, where the Israelites encamped before going in for the Conquest.

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This Gilgal is probably modern Khirbet el-Mafjir, about one and a quarter miles from ancient Jericho, or possibly Khirbet en-Nitleh about two miles southeast of Jericho. In the tribal period and the early monarchy (thirteenth-eleventh centuries B.C.) it became an important political, religious, and military center, especially for the tribe of Benjamin [MH: Saul's home turf]. It was one of the places visited by Samuel on his yearly circuit (1 Sam. 7:16). A number of the early traditions about Saul are set here. It was a rallying point in Saul's campaigns against the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:4–7). It is here that he was affirmed by the people as king (1 Sam. 11:14–15) and it was here also that the kingship was taken from him (1 Sam. 13:8–15) for presuming on Samuel's priestly prerogatives. This Gilgal is denounced by the eighth-century prophets as the site of a national sanctuary under royal patronage with a corrupt sacrificial cult (Hos. 4:15; 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5; Mic. 6:5).

It's going to turn into a corrupt cult center. And this is the Gilgal that we're dealing with here in Samuel's day and Saul's day. It's an important place of political significance. Specifically, scholars believe that since this was the place where Joshua launched his campaign and conquest years and years earlier, that this is why Samuel wants Saul to go there. Once he's met by the prophets, once he's empowered by the Spirit of the Lord, he's supposed to go to Gilgal to be the next Joshua—to do like Moses and Joshua did, to obey the Lord and get his fighting instructions there (his next set of instructions) from the Lord at Gilgal. This is what Joshua did to empower the Conquest. He followed what the Lord wanted him to do.

This is not what Saul does. It's not what Samuel sees happen. In fact, this is going to be his downfall because he takes it upon himself to act as Samuel instead of waiting for him at Gilgal. So this is where things are going to start to go wrong for Saul; almost right after he's made king, he loses the kingship. I mean, it doesn't take much time.

Commentators are also at odds to explain the disobedience. It seems clear enough why he should have gone there (again, to follow in the footsteps of Joshua). But why doesn't he do it? Is Saul lacking confidence? Is he just spiritually dull? Does he want to worship Yahweh his own way at Gibeah, bypassing Samuel's directive about meeting him at Gilgal? Why does he do what he does? It's kind of a mystery. Whatever the precise reasoning, his failure here begins a pattern of self-demise. It may be that he's just lacking confidence. It may just be that he's inept. Whatever it is, he lacks internally what is needed to be the real leader, and especially to be the spiritual leader. He lacks the character to do

so. We get some idea why Samuel wanted him to go to Gilgal from 1 Samuel 11:14.

14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom."

So this is quite in line with the idea that we're going to go back to the place where Joshua launched the Conquest. Essentially, this is where the kingdom of Israel gets launched against the opposing peoples of Canaan. And so Samuel says, "We're going to go back there and we're going to re-launch the Conquest." Because in the book of Judges, the Conquest is lost. They don't fulfill it. They don't complete it. So in Samuel's mind, "We're going to go back to Gilgal." This sort of means something to everybody. "We're going back to Gilgal where the Conquest was launched and start over again, and the Lord is going to be with us."

And this is the way it looked. The Lord had empowered Saul. The Lord had come upon Saul just like he had come upon all the other judges. He should be ready for the task, but what does he do? He blows it from the very beginning. He doesn't go to Gilgal. Again, the reason may be as simple as his own ineptitude or his own uncertainty. Maybe he just thought this was the better way to do things. Either way, he's not taking spiritual leadership. He's not listening to the prophet! This is what he's supposed to do. Joshua listened to Moses. Moses listened to God. Okay? Saul is supposed to listen to Samuel because Samuel is the mouthpiece for God here. But this is not what Saul does. Saul does his own thing and, again, it leads to his demise.

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The fact that later when he gets to Mizpah, when Saul finally gets everybody to Mizpah... The public acknowledgement of his selection to be king happens there, and thus his status. But when he's at Mizpah, what does Saul do? He hides! It shows he's not the kind of king Israel needs and Yahweh wants. When Saul's status as the new king is finally revealed publicly, he behaves cowardly. He hides himself.

His refusal to share what had happened to him at his anointing with his uncle is also suspect. He had not been charged with keeping it secret. Why doesn't he want his uncle to know of his anointing? Is Saul embarrassed by it? It's obvious he has no confidence in fulfilling it. Maybe he thinks he's going to hear, "Oh, that's impossible because you're Saul! You can't be king. Look at you! Look at

what kind of man you are, as opposed to how you look!" Maybe that's in the back of Saul's mind. I mean, who knows? But he doesn't go and he acts like a coward when it's publicly revealed that he's going to be the first king. What's going on here? Again, he has specific problems that are going to inhibit his kingship.

What about the prophesying, lastly, in 1 Samuel 10:10-11? What does it mean that Saul received a new heart? My judgment on this is that it means just what it meant in the period of the book of Judges. It means that whatever happens here when the Spirit of God comes upon Saul, it enables him for the task. It's what he needs to do the task—to be the ruler of God's people. But still, he blows it. He doesn't go to Gilgal as instructed. Had he gone to Gilgal, he would have gotten Samuel's blessing, so on and so forth. But he doesn't. He disobeys what the prophet says and, of course, the prophet is going to notice this.

So whatever the prophesying involved, it didn't transform Saul into being the kind of king... In other words, it didn't transform him into being the spiritual leader that God wanted for a king. While it is clear that the Spirit empowered Saul for specific acts of service (this is how the Spirit of God worked in the book of Judges—you were empowered to do a specific task)... It just so happens that Saul's task is to be this ruler over the people now. But again, he blows it because he doesn't obey. So whatever prophesying involved, it doesn't transform Saul into a new kind of person with different character. It would have transformed him into being a military leader because that's what his job was—to go in and out before the people, just like they asked for earlier in 1 Samuel 7 and 8. God would have done that for Saul. He would have empowered him. And Saul had the proof! He had these three things that happened to him in succession as proof that God would be with him. But he doesn't go to Gilgal. It's like he doesn't accept the call, and that is just going to spell doom to him. He's going to lose the calling pretty rapidly.

Again, the parallel to Samson is pretty clear. Samson is enabled by the Spirit of God to do what he does and he uses that power on a number of occasions. But spiritually speaking, he is just inept. He is not a spiritual leader. He's not the kind of person that ought to be king. What God wants as a king is a spiritual leader, and this is not what Saul is and it's not what Samson was. And Saul is going to fail.

To wrap all this up, it seems that Saul had one set of ideas in his head about serving Yahweh as king when Samuel had another. Samuel was God's prophet. He was the Moses of a new team. Saul was supposed to be the military

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deliverer. That's what the people asked for. God is going to give them a military deliverer, but this guy has to obey the prophet to be blessed and he just doesn't do it. Again, the people asked for somebody to lead them in battle. That's what they get! God would have empowered him to do so. We know this because the Spirit of God had come upon him. But the prerequisite is obedience. It's doing what you're supposed to be doing. And Saul just doesn't do it. The teamship breaks down early with Saul's disobedience to Samuel. Saul doesn't seem to know his place in the spiritual pecking order. And though perhaps well-intentioned, he was out of line with what God wanted. He may have been well-intentioned in the beginning, thinking, "Well, this is what kings do so this is how I'm going to act," rather than obeying Samuel, the prophet. He just falls out of favor with God.

So next time we're going to look and see what Saul actually does. He doesn't go to Gilgal; he does something else. He goes and subdues the Ammonites. And this is going to be part of showing his downfall. We're going to talk about Saul versus the Ammonites next time, and also an odd theme. This is going to sound very odd but we're going to go through it: the serpent in Samuel. Believe it or not (I'll just telegraph it this way), there is vocabulary from Genesis 3 about the *nachash* (the serpent) that gets reused in 1 Samuel 11 and several places in 1 Samuel to describe an adversarial relationship with God. So some of that language is going to come up here and we'll jump into it for the first time in 1 Samuel 11.

TS: All right, Mike. Looking forward to that. Don't spoil it for us! I want to know how it ends next time, so don't give away the ending.

MH: No, we won't. It's kind of odd, but there it is.

TS: Good to know. Looking forward to it! All right. Again, we want to give a shout-out and a special thank-you to Logos for supporting our podcast. So visit logos.com/nakedbible. We'd appreciate it. And with that, Mike, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.