

Saul: Israel's "Highly" Qualified Candidate (1 Samuel 9:1-14)

Israel progressed from requesting a king (8:5) to now demanding one (8:19-20). The LORD had already decreed that there would be a king once the nation enters the Promised Land (Deut. 17:14-15).

The people of Israel demanded a king because:

- Samuel is old; around 60 years of age (8:5)
- Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah are wicked (8:3, 5)
- Military presence and pressure are increasing from the Philistines to the west and the Ammonites to the east
- Worldliness, idolatry, paganism and syncretism are gaining traction in the hearts of the Israelites

Samuel dismisses the elders to their own city (8:22), and we are now waiting for the next scene. Who will be this king? What will he be like? Will he be the people's king, or God's king? How much will the LORD allow them to experience the pain of their request, given their motives?

1. Saul's Lineage (v.1)

- This is the second time in 1 Samuel that a lineage has been given (1:1). Saul's genealogy is focused on a man called Kish, who had no reputation other than being wealthy within his own town in Benjamin (v.3). Beyond this, he has no credentials.
- Saul is from the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was not only the youngest of Jacob's children, but Benjamin, as a tribe, was the smallest. In addition, the men of Benjamin kidnapped the daughters of Shiloh, and forced them to be their wives (Judges 21). Benjamin does not have the best reputation.

2. Saul's Resume (v.2, 5)

Appearance:

- Saul is described as a handsome, young man. Young men in Scripture describes those who are capable of war, marriage, and inheritance.
- He is also "tall." Physical stature is always one of the major external indicators of Israel's enemies (Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10; 9:2; 1 Samuel 17:4). Saul is the only Israelite who is noted for his great height.

Relationship:

- In the father-son relationship, he has a unique one. Eli and Samuel's relationships with their sons were tumultuous ones.
- Saul is doing his father's bidding in seeking after the lost donkeys (v:3) and does not want his father to worry about them after 3 days of searching for the donkeys with no success (v.5).

Incompetence:

- Saul cannot even find donkeys, which he may have lost himself (v.3). Is this indication of what he will be like as a shepherd and king of Israel?

3. Saul's Servant (v.6-10)

- Saul desired to turn back to Ephraim after the failed rescue mission, but his servant recommended visiting this "man of God" in the city who is "held in honor" and in whom "all that he says" comes true. This man is not named. Saul's servant is looking for more than just lost donkeys.
- Saul thinks that he must pay an "interview" fee, which is typical in paganism and false prophets. Saul is not the spiritual leader; his servant is.

4. Saul and the Women at the Well (v.11-14)

- Saul concedes to the servant's proposal and agrees to go to the city (Ramah). On their way, they come across young women coming down from the city (evening).
- They are going to meet these young women as they are about to draw water at a well. Scripture is ripe with stories revolving around wells; Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and Jesus Christ (Gen. 24:10-61; 29:1-20; Ex. 2:15-21; John 4:1-42). This scene indicates that there is going to be a life-changing event.

5. Saul's Name

- The name "Saul" is from a Hebrew verb which means "to ask" or "asked for."
- Samuel's name shares the same Hebrew verb. His name means "God hears" or "God has answered."
- One of the qualifications of a spiritual leader is faithfulness in shepherding (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3). Saul's failure in finding physical lost donkeys will be indicative of his shortcomings to spiritually lead God's people.
- "Asked for" (Saul) is going to come into contact with "God hears" (Samuel).
- Saul is the perfect candidate for Israel. He is tall, handsome, young, and impressive, just like the leaders of the pagan nations.
- His physical height highlights his pride, arrogance, and lofty views. The LORD "brings low" those who are "lifted high" (2:7). His height is an indicator of his heart.