

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-14 Saul Becomes King

Sometimes we want something because other people have it. This breaks the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” (Ex. 20:17). We covet against God when we are not satisfied with what he gives us. The tribes of Israel had become tired of the chaos and the leadership of the judges. They wished to be like other nations. Other nations had kings, and Israel wanted a king too.

Samuel was disappointed in their demand for a king. He knew their demand was not respectful to him. Their demand was also disrespectful to God, their rightful King. Throughout the following centuries, Israel experienced the very dangers Samuel warned them against in this lesson.

When the elders came to Samuel, they said, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have” (1 Sam 8:5).

Samuel prayed about their demand, and the Lord spoke to him. “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. Listen to their demand, but warn them. Tell them what having a king will mean for them.”

Samuel told them that a king would claim his rights. He will take their sons and daughters to serve in his court and his army. He will take the best of their farmlands and also tax their crops and their flocks for his own use. The people refused to listen to Samuel’s warning. “No!” they said, “We want a king over us.”

Samuel prayed to the Lord again about their demand. Yahweh replied, “Listen to them and give them a king.”

Sometime later, a farmer in the tribal land of Benjamin lost his donkeys. He sent his son Saul and a servant to look for them and bring them back. They searched for several days but did not find them. Instead of giving up the search, the servant suggested that they should ask Samuel. They found themselves near a town where he was visiting.

The day before, Yahweh had told Samuel that he would soon meet a Benjamite. He told Samuel to anoint this man as Israel’s first king. The next day, when Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, “This is the man who will govern my people.” We see that both God and his prophet Samuel were willing to accept the people’s demand for a king.

Now Saul was a tall and handsome young man. Samuel said to him, “Do you know that all Israel wants you and your famous family?”

Saul said, “Why do you say such a thing to me? I am a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe, and my family is the smallest in our smallest tribe.”

They feasted and later talked into the night. The next morning, Samuel asked Saul to send his servant ahead so they could speak privately. He had a message for Saul from God. Then Samuel anointed Saul’s head with olive oil, and kissed him, and said, “Has not Yahweh anointed you ruler over his inheritance?” Samuel then predicted four signs that Saul would experience, as he went on his way. As Saul walked away from Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all four signs happened to him that day.

When Saul returned home, he talked about finding the donkeys, but said nothing about being anointed as king. He kept quiet. Later, Samuel summoned representatives from all the tribes of Israel to Mizpah, a town in Benjaminite territory. He reminded them that they had asked for a king. Then the tribes appeared before Samuel as he cast lots. They came tribe by tribe, then family by family. The tribe of Benjamin was chosen, the clan of Saul was chosen, and finally Saul himself was chosen. But Saul was not present. They found him hiding among the supplies. He didn't want to push himself forward. He didn't feel worthy to be Israel's king.

Samuel spoke before all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Saul was designated as ruler in two ways: Samuel anointed him privately, and he was chosen by lot publicly. He became king effectively, however, when he led Israelite fighters in battle. He had established his capitol in Gibeah, his hometown. When the Ammonites besieged Jabesh, an Israelite city east of the Jordan, Saul sent out a call for soldiers to all the tribes. They responded, and he rescued the city. This was his first great military victory.

In some ways, the rescue of Jabesh was the high point of Saul's reign. He fought several other campaigns, including several against the Philistines. But he soon lost his modesty and began to act willfully in disregard of God's commands.

This story is **important** because it shows us that God was willing for Israel to have a king. Samuel warned the people, but was obedient to God in anointing Saul. Saul was the first king, and he ruled over all Israel.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Saul was chosen by God through Samuel. Saul had no authority to rule without God's blessing and spiritual power.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Why did the Israelite tribes demand a king? [Pause]
A. If you said, "they were not happy with the chaos of the preceding period of the judges," you are correct.
2. Why was Samuel reluctant to give Israel a king? [Pause]
A. If you said, "Samuel thought the people were rejecting his leadership and God's kingship," you are right.
3. What were some of the bad effects of kingship, that Samuel warned about? [Pause]
A. If you said, "kings would take their sons and daughters, would take their best land, and would tax their crops and their flocks," you are correct.
4. What were some of Saul's kingly qualities? [Pause]
A. If you said, "He was tall and handsome, modest and brave," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you listen each time, try to remember the lessons about the period of the judges and Samuel. Then tell someone else the story of Saul's becoming king. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story of Samuel

and Saul. Ask your friend the same review questions you answered when you first heard this summary.

Saul did not feel qualified to fill the job God was asking him to do. Has this happened to you? Ask some of your fellow believers this same question: Do they feel qualified to do what God is asking? Share your stories. Then pray together, asking God for faith to trust him to help you do whatever he asks you to do.