

Making Promises

Part 6: The Kingdom

Review

- God gave Israel exactly what they asked for. Outside of a few exceptions, Israel's kings were wicked and oppressive. Even the ideal king, David, had his moral failings. In many ways, the monarchy was a judgment upon Israel.
- Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, he was from the town of Gibeah, where the tragedy at the end of the book of Judges.
- Samuel gathered Israel together at Mizpah for the public ceremony of coronation and investiture of Saul as king over all of Israel.
- When the lot was cast on Saul, the people searched for him but they could not find him. Turning to the Lord yet again, Yahweh told them he could be found hiding amongst the baggage.

First Challenge

- For too long the confederation of hebrew tribes had been splintering between east and west and between north and south, thereby leaving it open to **external aggression** as well as **internal disintegration**.
 - ▶ In addition to having had no early **political ambition** himself, Saul was king over a people whose most urgent need was not the splendor of an elegant and impressive imperialism but a tangible expression of solidarity and common national purpose.
 - ▶ When the first national crisis arose and appeal was made to Saul for help, the supplicants found him, the king, plowing in the field with **his oxen (1 Sam. 11:5)**.
- Since the crushing defeat of **Ammon by Jephthah** more than fifty years earlier, the Ammonites had been waiting for an opportunity for revenge (**Judg. 11:32**). The drastic shift to monarchy in Israel, particularly in light of its unpromising first example, must have provided what seemed to be an opportune time to make the move.
 - ▶ The selection of **Jabesh-Gilead** also was carefully thought out. Besides being somewhat remote from Gibeah and thus providing a stiff challenge to Israel's logistical capability, Jabesh-Gilead most probably was the home of Saul's non-Benjamite ancestors.
 - ◆ In the story of the **Levite and his concubine (Judg. 19-21)**, all the

cities of Israel were called to fight against the Benjamites, but the people of Jabesh-gilead refused to join the mustering of the tribes at Mizpah (**Judg. 21:8–12**).

- ◆ As a result, Israel carried out the ban against Jabesh-gilead after they had defeated Benjamin. Only **four hundred virgins** from Jabesh-gilead were spared, and these were given to the remnant of Benjamin as wives. Jabesh-gilead was thus full of Benjamites, and Saul had a family connection with them.
- Nahash, the Ammonite king, has besieged Jabesh-gilead. There is historical reason to believe that Nahash may have been on a **binge of terror** among all Israel east of the Jordan (**1 Sam. 11:1-4**).
 - ▶ The **Spirit of God** now came upon Saul, and he took a yoke of oxen, slaughtered them, and dispatched their remains throughout the nation. This was to alert the nation to the gravity of the situation and persuade it to come as one united body to the city's defense (**1 Sam. 11:6-7; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6**).
 - ▶ Saul gathered men together at **Bezek**, 300,000 men from Israel and 30,000 men from Judah, and they prepared to fight the Ammonites (**1 Sam. 11:8-9**).
 - ▶ Confident of victory, the Jabeshites—tongue in cheek—promised the Ammonites that they would **surrender** to them the following day and that the Ammonites would then be free to do “whatever seems good to you.” Saul, however, led the fighting men of Israel and Judah against Nahash and defeated the Ammonites in Jabesh-gilead.
 - ▶ The theological weight of Saul's test becomes clearer when we note that “Nahash,” the name of the Ammonite king, means “**serpent**.” Saul had been raised to kingship as a **new Adam**. His first test was to be confronted by a **serpent**.
- Though the people wanted to give **Saul** the credit for the victory, Saul gave **Yahweh** credit, presenting it as another Ebenezer in which “Yahweh has accomplished salvation in Israel” (**1 Sam. 11:12-13**).
 - ▶ After Saul's great victory, Samuel gathered the people to Gilgal to “**renew the kingdom**” (**1 Sam. 11:14**). There, he addressed Israel for the last time, turned over the kingdom officially to Saul, and formally marked the end of the period of the judges.
- In light of this incontrovertible evidence that Saul had been anointed by Yahweh, Samuel again summoned the people together, this time at Gilgal, in order that the nation, now united in its support of Saul, might enter into covenant with both **Yahweh** and **the king** (**1 Sam. 11:15**).

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<p>1 Samuel 11:5</p>	<p>Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh.</p>
<p>Judges 11:32</p>	<p>So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and the Lord gave them into his hand.</p>
<p>Judges 21:8–12</p>	<p>8 And they said, "What one is there of the tribes of Israel that did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah?" And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead, to the assembly. 9 For when the people were mustered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there. 10 So the congregation sent 12,000 of their bravest men there and commanded them, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword; also the women and the little ones. 11 This is what you shall do: every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall devote to destruction." 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 11:1–4</p>	<p>1 Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." 2 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." 3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." 4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 11:6–7</p>	<p>6 And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.</p>

Judges 3:10	The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.
Judges 6:34	But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.
Judges 11:29	Then the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.
Judges 13:25	And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.
Judges 14:6	Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.
1 Samuel 11:8-9	8 When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9 And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation.'" When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad.
1 Samuel 11:12-13	12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." 13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has worked salvation in Israel."
1 Samuel 11:14	Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom."
1 Samuel 11:15	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.