

Making Promises

Part 6: The Kingdom

Review

- 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.
- Nahash, the Ammonite king, has besieged Jabesh-gilead. The Spirit of God now came upon Saul, and he took a yoke of oxen, slaughtered them, and dispatched their remains throughout the nation.
- 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.
- 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.

Samuel's Address

- As covenant mediator, Samuel took the occasion first to verify his own **credibility** among the people (**1 Sam. 12:1-5**) and then to rehearse for them God's mighty acts on their behalf from the time of the **exodus** to the present hour (**1 Sam. 12:6-13**).
 - ▶ They had demanded a king, and Yahweh had graciously given them Saul. If now Saul and Israel would be true to the terms of the covenant all would go well. If not, they could expect the **disfavor of Yahweh (Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 12:14-15)**.
 - ▶ As a token of both his own authority and that of Yahweh, Samuel summoned **thunder** and **rain from heaven**. When it came, the people stood in awe, for it was the wheat harvest, the very midst of the dry season. The God of Israel was sovereign over nature and history. The message was clear: Israel, even as a monarchy, must **submit to God (1 Sam. 12:16-25)**.

The Serpent Within

- Encouraged by his defensive campaign against Ammon and by the spirit of solidarity and covenant favor he had experienced at Gilgal, Saul undertook the

first of his **offensive campaigns**.

- ▶ The Philistines had indeed been removed from Israel by **Samuel** more than thirty years before, but they continued to harass Israel's borders and even on occasion to penetrate deep into the interior. Saul saw the need to put a stop to these activities once and for all. His first assault on the Philistines was at the garrison of **Geba** less than five miles from the capital (**1 Sam. 13:2-4**).
- ▶ Jonathan struck the blow to rid **Geba** of the **Philistines**, but this provoked a strong Philistine response. With a vast host the Philistines arrived at Micmash, forcing the local inhabitants to evacuate, and the Israelite troops fled twelve miles east to Gilgal or even across the Jordan to Gilead (**1 Sam. 13:5-7**).
- While at Gilgal, Saul recalled the words of Samuel two years before that a time would come when the king would have to wait seven days for the prophet to arrive at Gilgal. Fearful of the imminent attack of the Philistines, Saul **offered sacrifice** to Yahweh and thus violated not only Samuel's precise instructions but also the cultic prescriptions concerning proper ritual (**1 Sam. 13:8-10**).
 - ▶ When Samuel did arrive, he had to rebuke the king and inform him that his dynasty, which could in some sense have lasted forever (**1 Sam. 13:13**), would come to an untimely end. Instead God would grant the rule to a man **after his own heart** (**1 Sam. 13:11-14**).
- Saul's motivation to offer the sacrifice, however ill-advised, seems **genuine** and **appropriate**. What he apparently failed to realize, however, is that animal sacrifice is not a prerequisite for **entreating God**.
 - ▶ In the OT there is no clear case of "seeking the favor of the Lord" in a context where sacrifice was a **necessary accompaniment**. The fact is that Saul had not heeded the divine word through the prophet, and **obedience** is always better than **sacrifice** (**1 Sam. 15:22**).
 - ▶ Additionally, it would seem that in ancient Israel rituals associated with holy war were not to be performed by the **king** unless a **prophet** was present. Both in ch. 13 and in ch. 15 Saul acted without the presence of Samuel, and in both cases his transgression was related to holy war ritual (**1 Sam 13:11-12; 15:3, 7-11, 17-19**). For these offenses Saul was rebuked by Samuel and **rejected by God**.
 - ▶ Saul's kingdom will soon be ruled over by a leader appointed by God. The Israelite king was rightly king only as far as he was the representative of **the King**; otherwise the Lord would reject him.

Part 6: The Kingdom

<p>1 Samuel 12:1–5</p>	<p>1 And Samuel said to all Israel, “Behold, I have obeyed your voice in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you. 2 And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day. 3 Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you.” 4 They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.” 5 And he said to them, “The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they said, “He is witness.”</p>
<p>1 Samuel 12:6–13</p>	<p>6 And Samuel said to the people, “The Lord is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. 7 Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous deeds of the Lord that he performed for you and for your fathers. 8 When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them, then your fathers cried out to the Lord and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. 9 But they forgot the Lord their God. And he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. 10 And they cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve you.’ 11 And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. 12 And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ when the Lord your God was your king. 13 And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you.</p>
<p>Deut 17:14–20</p>	<p>14 “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 me, like all the nations that are around me,’ 15 you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ 17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. 18 “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. 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 12:14–15</p>	<p>14 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. 15 But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 12:16–25</p>	<p>16 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the Lord will do before your eyes. 17 Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.” 18 So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. 19 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.” 20 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. 21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. 22 For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. 23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”</p>

<p>1 Samuel 13:2-4</p>	<p>2 Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. 3 Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." 4 And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:5-7</p>	<p>5 And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, 7 and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:8-10</p>	<p>8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. 9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:13</p>	<p>And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:11-14</p>	<p>11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." 13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."</p>
<p>1 Samuel 15:22</p>	<p>And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:11-12</p>	<p>11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering."</p>
<p>1 Samuel 15:3</p>	<p>Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "</p>
<p>1 Samuel 15:7-11</p>	<p>7 And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction. 10 The word of the Lord came to Samuel: 11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 15:17-19</p>	<p>17 And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. 18 And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord?"</p>