

3. Saul tries to kill David though the youth has only tried to help him (1 Sam 18).
4. Saul's own son and heir recognizes that David will be the next king (1 Sam 20).
5. Saul slaughters God's priests, while the surviving priest brings David the means to communicate directly with God through the Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 21-22).
6. David delivers an Israelite city from the Philistines, a task that belonged to the king but which was not fulfilled by Saul because he was pursuing David (1 Sam 23).
7. David's heart is tender and he refuses to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed, trusting God to give him the throne. Saul explicitly declares that David is a better man and will be the next king (1 Sam 24, 26).
8. David has a secure alibi when Saul is killed in battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 28-31).

That God chose David to be the king (and not Saul or Jonathan), and that God established him on the throne (and not David by his own hand) is critical because of the eternal covenant that God will make with David in 2 Samuel. In other words, 1 Samuel is necessary background for the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

### GOING FURTHER

Why is Saul a bad king? How does his rule prepare Israel for a better king?

What indications does 1 Samuel give that David will be a good king?

### PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read 2 Samuel. Consider why the author describes so carefully how the nation (slowly) unites around David. Pay careful attention to chapter 7. How do David's later sins (and consequences) affect (or not affect) God's promise to David?

## THE SELECTION OF A KING (1 SAMUEL)

### PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read 1 Samuel. Think about how it relates to the book of Judges and the promises God has made in Genesis-Ruth. What is God doing? Why does he raise up Samuel? Why does he raise up Saul? What is so special about David? God could have cut all of the "intermediate" action out and just crowned David from the start. According to hints in the book, why did he do it this way?

### INTRODUCTION

The book of 1 Samuel transitions the nation from the time of the judges to the time of kings. Expressed most simply, the book is a defense for the kingship of David. Samuel's story is told because he anoints King David. David's legitimacy hangs on the legitimacy of Samuel's role as prophet. As a prophet, Samuel spoke for God, and thus his selection of David signified God's selection of David. Saul's story is told so it would be clear that God had rejected his kingship and dynasty. While moral lessons can certainly be learned along the way, the main point must be kept in mind in reading through the book: God is choosing a king to lead the nation in fulfillment of his good promises.

### PREPARATION FOR KINGSHIP BEFORE SAMUEL

At first glance, one might think that God was opposed to kingship in Israel. When the elders of Israel approached Samuel for a king, God responded that the nation had rejected him as king (1 Sam 8). While that is true, it does not mean that God had not been planning for a human mediator to rule as king on earth. The problem was not the nature of the request for a king, but the motivation behind it: Israel was unhappy with their relationship with God and they wanted to be like the other nations. God's design for a king was previously revealed beginning in Genesis:

1. God created man to rule over his creation. Designed in/as the image of God, man was to be king over creation, serving as God's agent on earth (Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8).
2. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of kings (Gen 17:6).
3. Jacob gave Judah the blessing of the firstborn, promising that the scepter would not depart from the house of Judah until it came to the one to whom it belonged (Gen 49:8-12).
4. Under inspiration of God, the foreign prophet Balaam predicted that Israel's king "will be greater than Agag," and that "a scepter will rise out of Israel" that would crush the nations (Num 24).
5. God gave laws for kings in the nation of Israel (Deut 17:14-20). Though there was no king in the time of Moses and Joshua, the Lord anticipated the day when there would be a king.
6. Though living in the difficult days of the judges, Hannah expected that God would fulfill his promises and provide a king to rule over his people (1 Sam 2:10).

### **SAMUEL THE PROPHET**

All of the stories about Samuel are intended to establish one thing: Samuel was a true prophet of the Lord and thus could anoint a king on God's behalf. First, we learn that Samuel's birth was the work of the Lord when he opened the womb of the godly Hannah (1 Sam 1). Second, we see how God spoke directly to Samuel, a relationship which was acknowledged by others (1 Sam 3). Third, we watch Samuel serve as an effective leader, speaking the words of God, leading the nation in repentance, and defeating the enemies (1 Sam 7). When Samuel chooses first Saul and then David, it should be recognized by all that he is doing God's will. Samuel also warns the people of the perils of an unrighteous king (1 Sam 8), a critical lesson that should point the nation away from Saul and to David.

### **SAUL'S FAILED KINGSHIP**

After his anointing and initial victory (1 Sam 10-11), Saul's kingship was an unmitigated failure. His refusal to submit to God was manifest in his illicit sacrifice (1 Sam 13), his jealous effort to murder his faithful and victorious son (1 Sam 14), and his violation of the ban imposed on the Amalekites (the same sin that Achan committed!; 1 Sam 15).

Why did God choose someone who would be such a disaster? My conclusion is that when the nation of Israel was impatient to have a new king because of Samuel's old age, God provided them with a king who was "ideal" given the desires of their hearts. Thus, they were given a king who was tall, of a distinguished family, and ready to lead the nation in battle. If they had waited on God's timing (Samuel, after all, lived for many more years, only dying in 1 Sam 25:1), David would have been the first anointed king. In choosing Saul, the people received a king after their own heart, and the result was failure. God rescued his people from this failed leader by anointing a man after his own heart.

### **THE APOLOGY FOR DAVID'S RULE**

From the anointing of David at the midpoint of the book (1 Sam 16), the book becomes exclusively an apology for David's kingship. That such an apology is important is clear from the length given to it by the author who repeats story after story and testimony after testimony that David is the rightful king of Israel, in contrast to Saul. That this repetition was necessary becomes clear when one sees how slow the nation was to accept David as their king. (In 2 Samuel 5 we see that it was a full seven years after Saul's death before all twelve tribes recognized David as their king.) David is shown as a superior king to Saul in many ways. Here are a few:

1. The Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul and comes upon David (1 Sam 16).
2. David defeats the giant Goliath while Saul, the physical giant of Israel, cowers in his tent (1 Sam 17).