

STUDY 3

1 Samuel 7.15 - 10.27

The People's Choice

A hereditary problem

In the last study we saw how God took vengeance on the Philistines and returned to his people Israel. Now under the leadership of Samuel, God's purposes for a repentant Israel could continue.

Samuel, though, had a daunting task ahead of him: Israel was still not in full possession of the land, they were surrounded by their enemies, and Samuel (their only remaining leader) was not getting any younger. Furthermore, Israel was haunted by the problems of hereditary rule. Judges could not pass their rule onto the sons, because Judges were appointed directly by God. The last time a Judge's son had tried to rule, there had been a civil war (see Judges 9). And while priests could pass their office onto their sons, Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas proved how this often bred corruption; there was no guarantee of competence or moral integrity in leadership. So what was ahead for Israel?

Just for starters

What qualities do judges normally look for in contestants at a beauty pageant?
What would you look for?

Israel's demand

Read 1 Samuel 7.15 - 8.22

Investigate

1. How does Samuel try to secure Israel's future leadership? How successful is he? (7.15 - 8.3)
2. How do Israel's elders try to secure the nation's future leadership? What motivates them to pursue this course of action? (8.4-5)

Think it through

3. How would you evaluate the motivations of Israel's elders? (1 Samuel 8.7, 19-20; see also Joshua 23.4-8)

The request of Israel's elders does not take God by surprise. In fact God had promised Abram that kings would come from his family line (see Genesis 17.4-6). He had also made provision for a king in the Law of Moses.

Investigate

4. What kind of king does God approve of? (See Deut 17.14-20)

5. What kind of king does Samuel tell Israel to expect? Why? (8.10-18)

Enter Saul

Read 1 Samuel 9.1 - 10.16

Town of Renown

While we may have mixed emotions about Israel's request for a king, we are still hopeful for their future. After all, God has consented to give them the king they ask for. But as God rolls out the red carpet for Israel's new king, we discover that, of all places in Israel, he comes from Gibeah of Benjamin. Judges 19 - 21 recounts how the residents of Gibeah had raped a Levite's concubine and left her to die. This appalling crime had led to a civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin was nearly annihilated. We are left wondering whether Israel's king-to-be actually has anything going for him.

Investigate

6. What makes Saul stand out from the rest of the Israelites? (9.2)

7. Who takes initiative during the search for the donkeys? (9.5-10)

Think it through

8. Give Saul a score out of 10 for the following qualities:

- a. Determination
- b. Creative thinking
- c. Speaking ability
- d. Ability to instruct others

9. In light of this how would you rate Saul's competency to rule as king?

10. What role does the Spirit of God play in this episode? (10.6, 10) What does this tell us about effective leadership?

And the winner is...

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27

Mizpah

Mizpah was a town located in the centre of the promised land. It held special significance for the Israelites because it was a place of national assembly (Jdg 20.1; 1 Sam 7.5-6). So when Samuel calls the people together to the LORD at Mizpah we can expect that a momentous event will occur which affects the entire nation of Israel.

Think it through

11. How is God's description of himself relevant to Israel's current leadership crisis? (10.17-19)

12. How does 'the baggage incident' (10.20-24) reflect on Saul's character? (See also 30.24.)

13. Evaluate the responses of the following people to Saul's kingship?

- a. Samuel
- b. the people
- c. the worthless fellows

14. What are some of the qualities we should look for in the leaders of God's people?

15. What enables people to be effective leaders of God's people today? Consider the following verses:

- a. Acts 6.8-10
- b. 2 Timothy 1.5-7
- c. 2 Timothy 2.24-25a
- d. Titus 1.5-9