

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 10

Saul Anointed King

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, “Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. 2 When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, ‘The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, “What shall I do about my son?”’ 3 Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. 4 And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand. 5 After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. 6 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. 7 Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. 8 Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.” 9 When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. 10 When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11 And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” 12 And a man of the place answered, “And who is their father?” Therefore it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” 13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place. 14 Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, “Where did you go?” And he said, “To seek the donkeys. And when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel.” 15 And Saul's uncle said, “Please tell me what Samuel said to you.” 16 And Saul said to his uncle, “He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.” But about the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

10:1 *oil*. Perhaps spiced olive oil (see Ex 30:22–33). (CSB)

Used in biblical times for food preparation, as fuel for lamps, for medicinal purposes, and as a cleansing agent, particularly associated with the tabernacle and priesthood (Ex 30:22–33). (TLSB)

poured it on his head. Anointing with oil was also used to identify prophets (1Ki 19:16), priests (Ex 29:7; 40:12–15; Lv 4:3; 8:12), and esp kings (12:3; 16:1, 13; 24:6; 26:9, 16; 2Sm 1:14, 16; 19:21; 22:51; 23:1; 1Ki 19:16; Ps 2:2, 6) as divinely equipped for their particular task. (TLSB)

Has not the LORD anointed you . . . ? In this case, the chosen leader of God's people. In some theological traditions today, people seek out leaders who have “the anointing,” i.e., special charisma provided by God. By contrast, in Scripture, the Anointed One is Christ, as head of the Church, who appoints faithful servants for His people. Beware of leaders who claim a special “anointing.” Saul likely knelt so that Samuel could reach his head for anointing. (TLSB)

his heritage. “My people Israel” (9:16). The Lord’s inheritance includes both the people (see Ex 34:9) and the land (see Ex 15:17). After departing from Samuel, Saul is to receive three signs (see vv. 2–7) to authenticate Samuel’s words and to assure him that the Lord has indeed chosen him to be king. (CSB)

10:2 *Rachel’s tomb.* Medieval tradition locates Rachel’s tomb just outside of Bethlehem, near the border of Ephraim and Benjamin. However, most scholars locate it farther north, near Ramah, just south of Bethel (Jer 31:15). (TLSB)

10:3 *oak of Tabor.* A terebinth grew on the way to Bethel and must have been a well-known landmark. (TLSB)

Bethel. Lit, “house of God.” Place where Jacob had seen a stairway to heaven (Gn 28:10–19) became a significant worship site for many generations. (TLSB)

carrying. Apparently bringing sacrificial offerings to Bethel. (TLSB)

10:4 *two loaves of bread.* Significant because it indicates Saul’s vicarious participation in the wave offering of bread that they will make (Nu 18:11). Saul was clearly being “set aside” for holy things. (TLSB)

10:5 *Gibeah of God.* Gibeah was Saul’s hometown (see v. 26; 11:4), located in the tribal area of Benjamin (Jos 18:28; Jdg 19:12–14). It was usually called “Gibeah” or “Gibeah of Benjamin” (as in 13:2, 15), but twice “Gibeah of Saul” (15:34; 2Sa 21:6). The present designation (used only here) may have been Samuel’s way of reminding Saul that the land of Canaan belonged to God and not to the Philistines (see Dt 32:43; Isa 14:2; Hos 9:3). (CSB)

Lit, “the hill of God,” probably Gibeah, Saul’s hometown (v 26; 11:4). Located in area assigned to Benjamin (Jsh 18:28; Jgs 19:12–14). Name affirms that this is God’s land, not that of the Philistines (Dt 32:43; Is 14:2; Hos 9:3). That a Philistine garrison was located there along with an Israelite high place shows that the Philistine occupation was not oppressive or even that significant. (TLSB)

prophets. The bands of prophets with which Samuel was associated (as also the “sons of the prophets” with whom Elijah and Elisha were associated; appear to have been small communities of men who banded together in spiritually decadent times for mutual cultivation of their religious zeal. (CSB)

prophesying. Here (and in vv. 6, 10–11, 13) appears to designate an enthusiastic praising of God inspired by the Holy Spirit (see Nu 11:24–30 for similar use of the term). (CSB)

Musicians singing God’s Word were regarded as prophets (see notes, 1Ch 25:1, 2). (TLSB)

harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre. Phoenician and Canaanite clay figurines of bands using these instruments have been discovered. These instruments must have formed a typical musical ensemble. Both male and female figures are depicted playing such instruments. (TLSB)

10:6 *Spirit of the LORD.* The Spirit would occasionally come upon leaders of Israel for special purposes. Saul, by joining this troop of prophets, identifies himself with their prophetic roles. (TLSB)

rush. Hbr term typically describes prosperity or strength. Author uses verb esp to describe changing of a person by a spirit (18:10). Cf 2Sm 19:18, where the verb describes crossing the Jordan River. (TLSB)

turned into another man. Besides the physical anointing, the Lord's Spirit comes upon Saul and transforms him (lit, "overturned"). Mention of the Spirit (cf Ex 31:3; Dt 34:9; Jgs 6:34; 11:29) is significant. God assures His people that Saul's election is proper and blessed. Saul joins the prophetic celebration, and his very person seems to change. Descriptions of Saul's activities as "ecstatic" are based on comparisons with pagan prophetic behavior (see notes, 1Ki 18:28, 29) rather than the Lord's prophets. Saul did not become an ecstatic, but he probably changed from a quiet, shy young man to a bold and confident leader (cf 11:6). (TLSB)

10:7 Samuel's instruction is for Saul to surrender himself to the Lord's leading. Within a week (13:8–14), Saul will misuse the privileges given him and bring judgment upon himself and God's people. (TLSB)

do what your hand finds to do. Saul is to take whatever action is appropriate when the situation presents itself to manifest publicly his royal leadership (see 11:4–11). (CSB)

Saul has privileges for manifesting his kingly role. (TLSB)

10:8 *Go down before me to Gilgal.* At some unspecified future time, perhaps previously discussed (see 9:25), Saul is to go to Gilgal and wait seven days for Samuel's arrival (see 13:7–14). (CSB)

10:9 *another heart.* Not only his outward behavior but also Saul's very attitude changed as a result of the Spirit of God coming upon him. (TLSB)

10:10–11 At home again, Saul's acquaintances acknowledge him as being very different from the man who had left a few weeks earlier. With uncharacteristic freedom, he joined the prophets. (TLSB)

10:11–12 Curiously, the proverbs are stated as questions, indicating something suspicious about his prophetic activities. Saul was apparently not a very spiritual person prior to his anointing. But now he assumes spiritual leadership, like the prophets before him. (TLSB)

who is their father? Prophets may have been addressed as "father" (2Ki 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), so the question could concern Samuel's leadership. (TLSB)

10:11 *Is Saul also among the prophets?* An expression of surprise at Saul's behavior by those who had known him previously—another subtle indication of his character. (CSB)

10:12 *who is their father?* Some understand the question as an expression of contempt for prophets generally, others as implying the recognition that prophetic inspiration comes from God and therefore could be imparted to whomever God chose. However, since leading prophets were sometimes called "father" (2Ki 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), the speaker may have intended a disdainful reference to Samuel or an ironical gibe at Saul. (CSB)

10:14 *Saul's uncle.* Ner approaches him (1Ch 9:35–36) rather than his father. Ner's son, Saul's cousin Abner, would later become the great commander of Saul's army. "Ner" was also the name of Saul's grandfather (1Ch 8:29–33; 9:39). (TLSB)

10:16 Saul, again behaving shyly, avoids telling the most important detail of all that had transpired. (TLSB)

10:1–16 Although Samuel anoints Saul as the king-designate and the Holy Spirit changes Saul, people remain uncertain about his leadership. At times, others, or even you, may question the direction life is taking. Call on the Lord, who always leads in the right way, even when it seems otherwise. The ultimate

sign of this is the death and resurrection of Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. • Thank You, heavenly Father, for providing Jesus as the ultimate sign of Your gracious guidance. By the power of Your Spirit, increase my faith in You and my confidence in living for Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)

Saul Proclaimed King

17 Now Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah. **18** And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ **19** But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us.’ Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands.” **20** Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. **21** He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot; and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. **22** So they inquired again of the LORD, “Is there a man still to come?” and the LORD said, “Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.” **23** Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. **24** And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!” **25** Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. **26** Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. **27** But some worthless fellows said, “How can this man save us?” And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

10:17 *Samuel called the people.* After the private designation and anointing of Saul to be king (9:1–10:16), an assembly is called by Samuel to make the Lord’s choice known to the people (v. 21) and to define the king’s task (v. 25). (CSB)

Lit, “watchtower.” Used for several locations throughout Israel. Mizpah in Benjamin is the site where the Lord helped His people defeat the Philistines (7:10–13) and where Samuel had been acclaimed judge. The irony of Saul’s kingship should not be missed; God had led the people to victory at Mizpah as their King, but now they cried out for another king. (TLSB)

10:18–19 Official decree from Samuel, reaffirming the Lord’s divine care and covenant with His people and echoing the Ten Commandments (cf Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6). Yet the Israelites had broken that covenant relationship by having false gods (cf Ex 20:3). Despite their sin (reminiscent of the words in 8:7), the Lord makes good come out of it. (TLSB)

delivered. The Lord delivered them from Egyptian slavery into the Promised Land (Jsh 24) and used the judges, as His instruments, to save them from their enemies (Jgs 3:9, 15, 31; 6:14; 10:1; 13:5). (TLSB)

thousands. Equivalent to “clans” in v 21; Hbr term at this time is less precise as a numerical unit. (TLSB)

10:18 *I delivered you.* Speaking through Samuel, the Lord emphasizes to the people that he has been their deliverer throughout their history. He brought them out of Egypt and delivered them from all their enemies during the time of the judges. Although the judges themselves are sometimes referred to as Israel’s deliverers (see Jdg 3:9, 15, 31; 6:14; 10:1; 13:5), this was true only in a secondary sense, for they

were instruments of the Lord's deliverance (see Jdg 2:18). It was the Lord who sent them (see 12:11; Jdg 6:14). (CSB)

10:20 *tribe of Benjamin*. Probably by casting lots (see 14:41–42; Jos 7:15–18). The Urim and Thummim were used for this purpose. (CSB)

10:21 Saul's modesty and shyness (see note, 9:21) apparently returned, and he cannot be found until the Lord reveals his hiding place. Reluctantly, he assumed the kingly responsibilities, to the acclamation of the people. (TLSB)

10:25 *rights and duties of the kingship*. Samuel here takes the first step toward resolving the tension that existed between Israel's misdirected desire for a king (and their misconceived notion of what the king's role and function should be) and the Lord's intent to give them one (see Introduction: Contents and Theme). This description of the duties and prerogatives of the Israelite king was given for the benefit of both the people and the king-designate. It was intended to clearly distinguish Israelite kingship from that of the surrounding nations and to ensure that the king's role in Israel was compatible with the continued rule of the Lord over Israel as her Great King (see Dt 17:14–20). (CSB)

Samuel prescribes both for the king and for the people the duties and prerogatives (Hbr *mishpat* has both connotations) of the new monarchy, assuring that God's presence and purpose would be fulfilled. (TLSB)

book. Samuel records the Lord's message and places it before the Lord—perhaps in the ark, which held the two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Ex 25:16), the pot of manna (Ex 16:33), and Aaron's staff (Nu 17:10); cf Dt 31:26. Such a document could have contributed to the writing of 1 and 2Sm and demonstrates the literacy of servants trained at the tabernacle. (TLSB)

10:26 *Gibeah*. Saul's capital-stronghold, perhaps located on a bluff north of Jerusalem, which overlooked a main road. Archaeologists have discovered a corner of a fortress on this site, which included a rectangular tower. (TLSB)

men of valor. Perhaps the beginning of Israel's official army. God moved them to support Saul militarily. (TLSB)

10:27 *How can this man save us?* Reflects the people's continued apostate idea that national security was to be sought in the person of the human king (see note on v. 18; cf. 8:20). (CSB)

Division of opinion on Saul's suitability. Saul shows himself to be the proper public figure who remains quiet in the face of inappropriate opposition. (TLSB)

10:17–27 The secret selection and anointing of Saul is made public in a national assembly, though Saul is still hesitant about taking on the role. When we hesitate to turn away from certain behaviors or to take on godly responsibilities, God's Spirit brings change through repentance and faith. As we die to sin and live in Christ (Rm 6:1–4), He gives our lives deeper meaning. • "Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee; Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine; Take my heart, it is Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne." Amen. (LSB 783/784:1, 5) (TLSB)