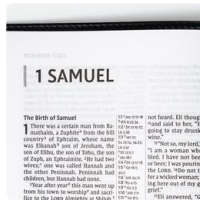


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1 Samuel 9:1 - 10:8



1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this passage from the biblical book of 1 Samuel, Steve Gregg discusses the transition from judges to kings in Israel and the appointment of Saul as the first king. Gregg delves into the role of charismatic leaders, or judges, in biblical history and how their leadership style reflects God's intended way for the church to be run. He also discusses the distinctions between the Old and New Testament in terms of the Holy Spirit's influence, noting that in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit comes upon prophets and individuals, while in the New Testament, believers become the house of God. Overall, Gregg frames Saul's appointment as a turning point in Israel's history, setting the stage for the monarchy that would follow.

Transcript

All right, let's turn to 1 Samuel 9. The eighth chapter is a very important turning point, not simply in the book of 1 Samuel, but in all of the biblical history that we've covered so far. Because when God brought Israel out of Egypt, they were led by a prophet named Moses, who also provided civil leadership for them, as well as, of course, spiritual leadership. When Moses died, they were led by primarily a military leader, Joshua.

But he also was a prophet, because he did prophesy. As you find in the last chapters, he actually utters prophecies in the name of the Lord to Israel. And he was obviously the leader of choice that God publicly chose and authorized through the laying on of hands of Moses.

So that Moses, whose leadership was indisputable, then passed along his leadership to Joshua, making Joshua's leadership indisputable. But when Joshua died, there was nobody whose leadership was naturally indisputable. There was a vacuum that was deliberately left, and the people of Israel were left to be governed by God himself.

How? Well, they had his law. It seems that many times people think that a life of obedience to God is one of getting guidance in every detail of life, where in fact it would appear that the way God had set things up is the basic laws are live this way, bring your sacrifices to me at the regular times, worship me, honor me, don't honor any other gods,

be faithful to me, don't murder, commit adultery, steal, and so forth. Live a righteous life according to my laws, make sure you're honoring me as your God and not some other.

And that's all that was required. What about every day? Well, they planted seeds, they cultivated them, they plowed ground, they harvested crops, they raised children, they conducted themselves in certain ways toward their neighbors, and so forth, according to God's law. At least that was the plan.

God was not seeking to micromanage their lives. He gave them general principles of righteousness to live by and basically said, here's your property, have fun, enjoy, stay true to me. And so that was how God intended it to be.

They didn't need leaders because they had God. He had given them the law and they were left to manage their own lives according to his governance, through his law. Now, from time to time, of course, they didn't obey.

In fact, very frequently they did not obey and they served other gods and had to be punished because God was their king and father. He took in hand the responsibility of disciplining them when they disobeyed. They didn't need a king to do that, they had God to do that.

He'd bring in the Moabites or the Ammonites or the Philistines or somebody and they'd afflict the people until the people were ready to reform and turn back to God. And when they did, God would raise up what's usually referred to as a charismatic leader. That's what the scholars refer to the judges as, as charismatic leaders.

And, of course, this has nothing to do with the term charismatic in the sense of a branch of evangelicalism, but charismatic means someone who's gifted by God. Charisma means a gift of grace. And so God would gift somebody, an Ehad or an Othniel or a Deborah or a Samson or a Gideon or a Jephthah, and these people would just pop up suddenly at the time of need and God would give them His Spirit.

His Spirit would come upon them. And they would then rally Israel together, lead them to victory, drive out the enemies and end the oppression. And then these leaders would continue to provide moral leadership and apparently civic leadership for the rest of their lives.

And then they'd die and there'd be an emptiness again. And God never considered that He needed to have a hereditary rulership that always needed to be replaced. And, by the way, in going through judges, I pointed out that I think that this, in some ways, reflects the way that God intended the church to run, ideally.

In the days of Jesus, Jesus was here founding the church like Moses founded Israel. The apostles were appointed by Jesus to establish the work after Jesus was gone, as Joshua did. And when the apostles died, they left no successors, just like Joshua left no

successor.

Well, how was the church supposed to be run? It was supposed to be run by the Holy Spirit. It was supposed to be people led by the Spirit. As many as are led by the Spirit, they're the children of God, Paul said.

But what about leadership? Didn't they need human leadership? If they did, God would raise it up, charismatic leadership. God would put His Spirit on certain people. This is apparently how God intended for things to go.

Ideally, the church did not need some hereditary institutionalized leadership any more than Israel did. If God is the king of the kingdom, then the people of the kingdom obey the king. And they don't need someone else to tell them to do so.

However, people do become disobedient and come under discipline from God. And sometimes there are revivals that have occurred throughout church history where God has raised up people like Finney or Moody or Wesley, any number of men who had the Spirit of God upon them and called the people of God back to an obedience and so forth. I mean, it's very much like the period of judges.

This is how the church has been at its best. But at its worst, it was like Israel when they asked for a king. Because they said, listen, we really can't just answer to God directly.

This is unacceptable. We want to be like the other nations. We want to have an institutional leadership.

We want to have a king who leaves the throne to his son and to his grandson and so forth, so that there's always some man in charge. Even though that's not how God set things up, and how when Israel asked for that in chapter 8 of 1 Samuel, God said to Samuel, they've rejected me. They're not happy to have me rule over them.

So they've rejected me and they want a king. But give them what they asked for. And he gave them the request, but with warnings that this would not be good for them.

That is how the church eventually ordered its affairs after the apostles were gone. They set up a succession of leaders. Leaders that would succeed one another so there would always be some human leaders in place.

Even though the apostles, to my knowledge, did not leave any successors to themselves. This is the view the Roman Catholic Church believes in apostolic succession. They believe that the apostles did leave successors to themselves.

And those successors left successors and so forth. So there was like a hereditary, it's not really hereditary, but an institutionalized situation where one leader is gone, there's another one to step in. And so you have constant human leadership.

And the problem with hereditary leadership or institutionalized leadership where there's institutionalized forms of succession of leaders is that the leaders then are rising up not because they're gifted of God, but because they happen to be born to the right father. David's son Solomon became a leader. Well, the Spirit of God came on Solomon, so that was okay, but Solomon's son Rehoboam didn't have any such spirituality.

And many of the kings afterward did not. But they were kings anyway because they were hereditary kings. It didn't matter if they were spiritual, they were in positions.

They were placed in them by the institutional system. And that's how it became in the church in much of history. The early leaders of the church were spiritual men.

Paul in 1 Timothy 3 describes the qualifications for someone who would be a leader in the church. Certainly the elders that he appointed to lead local congregations, he wasn't replacing apostleship. He was just recognizing local leaders for local congregations.

They had to be spiritual men. When they died, we don't know what Paul intended to happen. Were they supposed to appoint successors or just wait until more were needed? Let another need arise and then God can bring up some more spiritual men to lead.

But what God set up was a succession of leaders that was institutionalized so that the bishops would appoint successors and they would appoint successors. And then you have this succession. So the assumption is that the Roman Catholic Church has bishops that are in the direct succession, unbroken succession from the apostolic times.

We have no biblical support for that happening. We have no reference to any of the apostles appointing successors to themselves to be apostles. So it's not a biblical doctrine, but it's the doctrine of the institutional churches.

When the Protestant Reformation occurred, many of the Catholic doctrines were challenged, but not the Catholic institutionalism. The Protestant churches were set up with an institutional leadership too. Not just the same, but still institutional.

So that there's human leaders who hold office because there's an office there to be held. Whereas in the book of Judges, there wasn't an office to be held. There were leaders who rose up and the office came into existence because the leader was there in that position.

When he died, the office disappeared too. The office existed because of the man. But in institutional situations, the man's authority exists because of the office.

And so the shift from the period of the judges to the period of the monarchy was that kind of a shift. There was not some office of judge during the period of judges so that when a man who had been judged died, then they had to find someone else to fill the vacancy. There was no vacancy.

There was no office there. But once the monarchy was started, the death of a king created a vacancy. But not for long because his son would be the next king.

Unless it was in the Northern Kingdom where the general might become the next king. The one who staged a coup and killed the heir or whatever became the next king. But the point is there was an office to be taken.

An office to be seized by somebody. And that is, I believe, what led to even greater problems in Israel than they had during the period of the judges. And I believe the church has had greater problems of corruption because of this very system too.

Because if a group of Christians are gathered together spontaneously and they don't have institutional leadership or anything like that, but they're just recognizing this man has a spiritual gift, this woman has a spiritual gift, we receive the gifts that God gives to each one and the body edifies itself in love. And we recognize some gifts are leadership gifts. Some people are gifted to provide some kind of guidance.

Others are gifted to provide exhortation or teaching or something else. But the gifts are the charisma. The gift of God is what the church is guided by.

It's God, His Spirit, through gifted individuals leading His people. The king governing his kingdom. But when it's decided we need to appoint some men to hold an office here, we need to set up a corporation that has three positions or five or seven positions of eldership and then we'll find men to put in those positions.

And when they die we'll have to find another man to elect someone else to fill that position. Eventually the office itself has a life of its own that's independent from qualified people. And eventually it's often the case there aren't spiritual people to put in those offices, but there's still a vacancy so they put someone in there.

And so a group that met together as a fellowship might have had five people who were truly gifted in leadership that everyone else just recognized. Well, God speaks through these people. We feel like it's healthy and wise to listen to what God is saying through these people.

But that doesn't mean that the next generation of that same group are going to have five leaders. Maybe they'll have three, maybe two, maybe ten. But instead they institutionalize it.

Okay, we're going to have five elders here, and so we're going to find five men to replace these men when they die. Well, what if there aren't five anointed men? Well, just put in whatever you got. Whoever runs the best campaign and gets voted in.

Well, what if the men we get voted in aren't really spiritual? Well, then it's going to have an impact negatively on the group. And to tell you the truth, as long as there's an office

to be filled, that gives the wrong kind of person something to aspire for, who wants to control for bad purposes. See, when a group doesn't have any offices to fill and they just follow the people who are God's leaders, then a bad guy who comes into the group doesn't have any particular power to corrupt, except maybe to undermine and, in private conversation, try to corrupt individuals.

But a bad person can't take control, because there is no control. There's no position of control. The people who are spiritual are listening to the Spirit of God, speaking through whoever speaks by the Spirit of God, not to the bad guys.

When you've got offices, then the bad guy can work his way up into the office. And then he's officially a leader. And that's what happened in the Roman Catholic Church, I believe, in the Middle Ages.

I believe there were offices to be held, bad people wanted power, and they moved, they positioned themselves, so they went up through the ranks into the position of bishop and pope, and eventually we had the most corrupt institution history has ever seen, operating in the name of a church. And so Israel also had the same problem. When there were judges, the bad guys really couldn't make it.

Abimelech, Gideon's son, tried to put himself in position of power over at least some part of Israel. He didn't last long. He was not a legitimate successor.

He killed off his brothers and got some brigands to back him up and force himself into power. But once he died, that was over. He didn't leave a successor.

Because there wasn't, in Israel, an institution of successive leaders. God was the one who was the leader, and he'd raise up gifted people as he saw the need. Likewise, it's possible for a group of Christians to meet without any official leadership.

If God is leading them, whoever is led by the Spirit of God will be led very similarly. I get off on these tangents, of course, but that's why I teach, so I can do these tangents. But they are connected.

They're connected to what we're studying here. A Roman Catholic friend of mine and I always have this discussion. He says, well, look, as soon as people broke away from the central authority of the pope, look at how divided the church has become.

Look how many denominations there are. It's like, clearly, it's not been a good thing. It's good to have a central authority because then people are united.

But I say, no, I read church history a little differently. The Roman Catholic Church is not united in a spiritual sense. It's united like an organization.

So is Ford Motor Company, and so is Microsoft. They have a CEO. They have supervisors.

There are officers, and people do what they say. If they don't, they're fired. Same thing with the Catholic Church.

You obey the authorities that are institutional, or you get kicked out. You know, the Jehovah's Witnesses say that they are obviously the true church because they say, Jesus prayed that his people would be one. And look at us, the Jehovah's Witnesses.

They say, we're all one. We all agree on every point of doctrine. And I say, yeah, that's not surprising because anyone who disagrees with you gets kicked out.

Of course you all agree. By the process of elimination, the only people who remain in the organization are the ones who agree. That's an artificial kind of agreement.

The Roman Catholic Church has that too. A Martin Luther comes up to help bring some correction. He gets kicked out or killed.

He didn't get killed, but many like him, Hus and others got killed. This kind of unity that the Roman Catholic Church maintained is the unity of a tyrant unifying his realm by force. The Holy Spirit unifies us in love.

And it is true that when the Reformation took place, it freed people up from the tyranny of one central authority. And unfortunately, it led to many other institutional denominations that operate in many respects the same way the Roman Catholic Church does. That's not an improvement.

But what it did do is that it made it possible for all people who are true Christians to be led by the Spirit and not have to be under one central authority. Or any central authority. They don't have to be under the Baptist denomination or the Assemblies of God denomination or the Methodists.

They can just meet with other Christians who love Jesus. And what I was telling my friend is, you know, it looks to you as a Roman Catholic that the Protestant world is really divided. But I have found, meeting people all over the world when I travel, the people who've broken free from the institutional thing, whether it's Catholic or Protestant institutionalism, when they break free and they just read the Scripture and just follow God, they don't tend to be disunified.

Because when I meet them, they're so much on the same page. Spiritually. Maybe not doctrinally, but that's not the issue.

And so it is possible for God to rule his people. And there's nothing wrong with there being human leaders as long as that human leadership doesn't become like a political leader. And that is, of course, the thing that has driven many people from churches who've been in them before, church politics, and church leaders trying to control people, and not necessarily being spiritual men at that.

So this is the very same thing that happened in Israel. And it began here, when the people said, we're tired of having God be our king, and him just raising up judges whenever he wants to. We want to have something predictable.

We want to have something institutionalized. We want to be like the other nations around us. We want to have a king, a man that we can be proud of, a man that we can point to, and all the kingdoms around us will say, wow, you've got a great king, he wears a beautiful crown, and has a lovely palace, and we can be proud of our king too, like other nations are.

That's what we want. And so God told Samuel. Samuel was displeased by the thing, and he prayed about it.

Samuel's a real man of prayer. Because if I were Samuel, I would have just said to him, no, that's bad. That's not what God wants.

But instead of answering back, although Samuel was displeased, he went and talked to God about it. And he got a surprising answer. God says, go ahead.

I mean, Samuel knew that God didn't want them to have a king, but he didn't know that God would say, go ahead, give them a king this time. Give it to them, but warn them what it's going to be like, and then they'll take their fate on their heads. And so he did.

And he came back to the people and said, okay, this is what it's going to be like if you have a king. You still want that? And they said, yes, we do. And so he sent them back to their tribes and their tents, and he took responsibility under God for finding a king for Israel.

There was no time set upon it. He didn't say, okay, by this time next year, I'll have a candidate for you, or something like that. But he just said, okay, God has authorized your request.

He'll give you a king. Go home, and I'll let you know when we've got somebody that God has in mind for you. And so this is how things were left at the end of chapter 8. And so in chapter 9 and following, we find how Samuel came to find a king for Israel.

Chapter 9, there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekoroth, the son of Athia, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. A mighty man of power probably means of societal or cultural power in his community. He might have been a warrior because there had been, of course, wars fought in that generation against the Philistines and so forth, and he might be a man who had had some military prowess also.

We don't know exactly how his mighty man of power status came to be acquired, but it's possible that in his younger years that he had been quite a warrior. In any case, he was a

man of influence in his community, and he was a Benjamite. Now remember, there weren't very many Benjamites at this time.

At the end of the book of Judges, we read, although we're reading about something that happened early in the period of Judges, that the Benjamites were reduced to 600 men and even had a hard time finding wives for them. And the tribe of Benjamin was very small, as will be mentioned in this chapter. Saul himself mentions he's from the smallest tribe.

But that a man from Benjamin would be chosen to be the king is rather interesting because during the period of the Judges and even up to this time, there were tremendous tribal jealousies. You'll remember how the tribe of Ephraim threatened war once because Gideon didn't call them early enough for their liking to come to the battle. And they wanted to have a piece of that action, a piece of that glory, and they'd missed out on it.

And they almost were going to fight a war against him, but he placated them. Later on, they had the same complaint against Jephthah. They were going to burn his house down because he didn't call them.

The tribes were often very much rivals of each other. When that town of Gibeon had that incident where the concubine was abused to death, and the rest of the tribes gathered up to ask the tribe of Benjamin to surrender the culprits, the tribe of Benjamin was so tribal that they stood by their criminals and said, we'll fight the rest of you 12 tribes off ourselves. Israel was not very united.

They should have been, but they weren't. They had their tribal territories, and it's just like nations today. They get nationalistic.

The tribes got tribalistic. And for God to pick a king from the smallest tribe in a setting with such tribal jealousies going on and rivalries was a risky thing because, first of all, other tribes would say, why wasn't our tribe the one? And why should little Benjamin be the one who provides leadership for the rest of us? And there would be always the possibility that other tribes would simply by force resist. They were big enough, big enough to reject anyone from Benjamin they wanted to because it was such a small tribe.

When Saul was first introduced to the tribes as the one that God chose, there were certain men from other tribes who says, what, we're not going to serve him. However, that changed when the Spirit of God came on Saul, and he became, as it were, a charismatic leader himself like the judges before him, and he went out and he delivered Jabesh from the Ammonite threat, which we'll see later on. But the point I make here is simply that God chose a man from the smallest tribe, and God sometimes does that.

Gideon said something like that. He was of the tribe of Manasseh, as I recall. And he, at that time, I guess that was the smallest tribe, or at least a very small tribe.

And when Gideon was called to deliver the people, he said, I'm from the smallest tribe and the most insignificant family in the tribe, and I'm the least man in my family. In other words, no matter what group you associate with, it's always the smallest and least significant. And God often does that.

He chooses the small things, the weak things, to confound the strong and the wise and so forth. And that seems to be a pattern of God picking someone from the small tribe. And it says, this man Kish, verse 2, had a son whose name was Saul.

Now Saul means asked for. And we have to assume his parents named him that, probably because they had prayed for a son. And when he was born, they commemorated that by naming him the one asked for.

But in this case, his name becomes even more significant because he becomes the king that Israel asked for. And not a good one at that. Often what people ask for is not the best thing.

And God will give them sometimes what they ask for. As it says in the Psalms, He gave them their request, and with it leanness of soul. Not talking about this story, but another.

But the point is that what people ask for, God will sometimes give them. Therefore, obviously we need to be careful what we ask for, and not be too rash. But this man was probably one who his parents had asked God for, and when he was born, they named him a term that meant that.

Of course, we know that one of the most famous men in the New Testament was named Saul, also of the tribe of Benjamin, and became the apostle Paul. No doubt he was named that more to be named after the ancestor of his people, rather than because of some specific case of his parents asking for him from God. Maybe.

But that our apostle Paul would have been named by his parents Saul, and was of the same tribe as this Saul. It's probably more of just naming your child after someone famous in your national history. So here's Saul, a choice and handsome young man.

There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel, and he was really tall. From his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people. Now, if you want someone who has regal bearing, somebody that you can be proud of amid the nations, a king, you get the man who's the tallest man around.

Of course, the Philistines had a taller one, but Saul was the tallest one in Israel, from his shoulders on up, head and shoulders above everybody else. Now, the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, please take one of the servants

with you and arise, go and look for the donkeys. Now, here's a man who's going to be king, and he's the kind of person you send on an errand to look for lost livestock.

He's not a man of, you know, a lot of privilege or influence or apparently larger responsibilities either. Since the household had servants, one would think you could just send the servants after the donkeys. But Saul apparently wasn't that much above the servants in terms of his responsibilities and could be sent out with a servant to find them.

So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, and they did not find the donkeys. Then they passed through the land of Sheolim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them.

Now, we never do figure out where the donkeys went. The story takes another turn. And the donkeys are eventually found, but not in the story.

We just hear that they made their way home. So if you're worried about the donkeys, it all turns out okay for them. But they sure were hard to find.

I mean, Saul and his servant go through several different regions, and they're not there. But they end up in the land of the Benjamites. And when they had come to the land of Zuth, Saul said to his servant who was with him, Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us.

Now, there's a man who knew his father very well, because later on we learn that a messenger says, Kish has stopped worrying about the donkeys and is worried about you now. So Saul knew how his father was disposed that the time would come where he wouldn't care anymore about the livestock. He'd be worried about his son.

And Saul thought, well, it's getting to the point where he's probably starting to feel that way about us, so we better head on home. And the servant said to him, Look, now there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man. All that he says surely comes to pass, so let us go there.

Perhaps he can show us the way that we should go. Now, of course, he's talking about Samuel. They must be at Ramah, which is Samuel's home.

But notice how they speak of him. They say, oh, we're in Samuel's town. Let's go talk to Samuel, like he was well known to them.

It's like, oh, there's a man of God lives here. He's got a good reputation for speaking for God. It's almost like Samuel had become rather obscure at this time, although he was still technically judging Israel.

But this is at a stage very late in Samuel's life, and like so many of the heroes of the Bible, there are decades passed over without comment of things. He was mentioned in connection with the covenant that was made when the people came back, when the ark was brought back. This was very early in Samuel's life.

The ark was brought back, and Samuel led the people to Mizpah, and there they made a covenant with the Lord, and Samuel kind of led the nation. And then the Philistines came out against them, and under Samuel's leadership, the Philistines were routed largely through God, sending thunder upon them, and so forth. But the point is, Samuel was prominent at this earlier stage.

But then when we come to chapter 8, the distance between chapter 7 and chapter 8 must be decades, because in chapter 8, Samuel's an old man. And what he's been doing since then? Well, he's moving on a circuit between about four or five towns, and judging in those towns, but he's not really that prominent. So much not so, that it would appear that this servant didn't, and Saul may not have even known Samuel by name.

They knew there was a man of God, but if they both knew Samuel as well as we think they should, he would have said, this is where Samuel lives. But instead he's talking about a man of God, more generic. You know, what he says comes to pass.

Like there's some knowledge of him, but he's not a household word, apparently. So let us go there. Perhaps he can show us the way that we should go.

Verse 7. Then Saul said to his servant, But look, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there's no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have? And the servant answered Saul again and said, Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God to tell us our way.

Now, formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus, Come, let us go to the seer. For he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer. Now, if this book was written partially by Samuel himself, then the term prophet must have replaced seer in a rather short space of time.

Because at the time that this story took place, while Samuel was an old man, prophets were still called seers. But the writers, talking from a later perspective, they used to call prophets seers. Apparently the common usage had changed by the time that this was written, and now they spoke of them as prophets instead of seers.

But, of course, we have reason to believe that Samuel was written not simply by the man Samuel, but by Gad and Nathan as well, or even by some later editor using the works of these three men. Because we know that Samuel, Gad, and Nathan all wrote books, there's a reference to that in 1 Chronicles 29.29, that there are the records written by

Samuel and by Nathan and Gad. However, the book that we're reading right now may well have been put together by some editor who's bringing together the records of these men, and at a later date it's possible that by the time that Samuel had died and there were other prophets, that the term prophet had become a common term for people who held sort of a prophetic office.

Before that, they were just referred to as men who see things that others don't see. They see visions or something, they're individuals. Then Saul said to his servant, Well said, come let us go.

So they went to the city where the man of God was. As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young men going out to draw water and said to them, Is the seer here? And they answered them and said, Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now, for today he came to this city because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place.

As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes because he must bless the sacrifice. Afterward, those who are invited will eat.

Now therefore go up, for about this time you'll find him. This was at a high place that they were having this sacrifice. Now at later times in the kings, it was considered to be a bad thing to offer sacrifices in the high places because the high places have been traditional sites of Canaanite worship.

And at a later time, after Solomon's time, when the temple was built, it was not necessary to offer anywhere except at the temple. In fact, it was not even advisable to do so. It might even be said to be not allowed.

But Israel during the time of Solomon and following still offered at the high places in addition to the temple. But when they did, they were offending God because the places they were offering in the high places, they were apparently compromising somewhat on the purity of their worship. They might have even been worshipping the Canaanite deities there because they did have a tendency to do that from time to time.

The reforms of people like Hezekiah and other kings who tried to do right often were marred by the fact that although they did destroy a lot of idols, they didn't tear down the high places. I think Josiah did destroy the high places and I think he's an exception to that. But the high places were not places where Israel was supposed to offer sacrifices at a later time than this.

However, since Shiloh had apparently been destroyed and the Ark was in a private home and the priesthood was apparently doing nothing. In fact, there might not have even been much of a priesthood because Eli and his two sons, the priests, had died on the

same day leaving we don't know how many offspring but we don't read of any of them being significant. Apparently God was being a little looser about where people could offer sacrifices.

There was no central shrine, no central tabernacle at this time. So a high place was I guess as good as any to worship the true God and so Samuel was conducting a sacrifice there and he needed to be there to bless the sacrifice. That is probably because it would have been considered to be not allowed to offer a sacrifice in a high place unless the prophet was there to oversee it and put his blessing on it for fear that an unsupervised sacrifice at a high place might be offered to a wrong deity.

So the presence of the man of God was required to bless it. So there was a sacrifice that day and Samuel was apparently on his way up to it and a sacrifice, you have to remember, is not just a religious service, it's a feast. A lot of bulls and sheep were sacrificed.

Only parts of their bodies were usually burned and the rest of the meat was eaten by the participants. And so it was like a public feast and sacrifice combined. It says in verse 14, So they went up to the city, and as they were coming into the city there was Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

Now Yahweh had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over my people Israel, that he may save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked upon my people because their cry has come to me. And when Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you.

This one shall reign over my people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Please tell me, where is the seer's house? And Samuel answered Saul and said, I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today.

And tomorrow I will let you go and tell you all that is in your heart. But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and all your father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am I not a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribes of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me? And this was the end of the conversation.

The question apparently was unanswered. So Samuel said, Okay, I'm the prophet, and I've got something I want to talk to you about with you tomorrow. And I will address all of your concerns.

I will tell you all that's in your heart. So you can ask me any question about what God's

up to, and I'll let you know. But that's going to be tomorrow.

Don't be in too much of a hurry to go home. The donkeys have been found, all is well. You don't have to worry about that.

But he says, On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and all your father's house? Now Saul no doubt was aware that Israel had at some point previous to this, we don't know how much time it had elapsed, but in chapter 8 they had asked for a king. That would be the most natural way to understand the desire of all of Israel is to have a king. And so he says, Well, who do you think is the man that they desire? It's you.

And your father's house. Now his father's house would be his extended family. And apparently when Saul became king, some of the members of his family also came into positions in the royal family too.

For example, his uncle Abner became the general over the armies. It's like when David became king. Joab was his cousin, became the general.

And usually the rising tide raises all the boats in the family. If the man in the family becomes king, there was always a lot of nepotism. Hey, brother, cousin, you're a king now.

You got a position in the government for me. And so this was not something that was only going to affect possibly Saul's person, but also his whole family. They would become the royal family.

And Saul answered and said, Am I not a Benjamite? In other words, how could this be that Israel's desire is for a man like myself? And are they really going to be happy with a man who is from the smallest tribe? Aren't they going to be concerned that they could easily overpower my people in replacement of someone from their own tribe if they wish? How could I be a good choice for this? I'm not even from a significant family in my own tribe. But Samuel didn't answer him on that. Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and had them sit in the place of honor where among those who were invited there were about 30 persons, none of whom knew Saul or knew why he was there.

It must have been surprising to have this stranger brought in by the prophet and put in the position of honor. And Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you of which I said set it apart. And the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul.

Apparently Samuel, knowing from the day before, the day before God had spoken to Samuel and said, You're going to meet tomorrow, the man. Samuel, in anticipation of what he had told the cook, set aside the choice portion for somebody. I'll tell you tomorrow who to give it to.

So it was already prepared for Saul. And Samuel said, Here it is, what was kept back. It is set apart for you.

Eat, for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people. Apparently what that means is since I sent out the invitation to these 30 people, at that same time I made arrangements with the cook to set this portion aside for you. So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

When they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house, which is the normal place to, in the evening, have a comfortable conversation. I mean, it was in the open air, in the cool of the evening, in a hot climate. The rooftop was sort of an extension of the house itself, sort of like the patio, only it was up on a flat roof.

And it says, They arose early, and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, Get up, that I may send you on your way. So they talked into the night on the roof of the house. Apparently Saul slept on the roof of the house.

Samuel went down and slept in the house. And arising early, Samuel called up to him and said, Get up, time to go. And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel.

Now as they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Tell the servant to go on ahead of us. And he went on. But you stand here a while, that I may announce to you the word of God.

Now it would appear that Saul would have some inkling that this was about him being king, based on what Samuel had said when they first met. You know, the desire of all of Israel was on you. And then the favor he was shown at the feast.

And then the conversation on the rooftop, we have no information about the subject matter that that conversation went to. But it's possible that it avoided the subject, and that Saul didn't get much detail about what God had in mind, so Samuel wanted to speak privately without the servant present about that. Because he was going to anoint him privately.

Just like David at a later time was anointed privately, and only later was recognized publicly as the king. So Saul was first anointed privately, and his kingship was made public later on. So, Samuel took a flask of oil, chapter 10, and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, Is it not because Yahweh has anointed you the commander over his inheritance? When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah.

And they will say to you, The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And

now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worried about you, saying, What shall I do about my son? And so he says, You're going to have several signs given to you. This is the first one.

You're going to meet some men who will tell you your dad's been worried about you. Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine.

They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall receive from their hands. Now these young men that are mentioned here probably were of the sons of the prophets, as they were called. Otherwise, it's hard to know why these young men would know to do this.

I mean, if you just run into strangers, they're not likely to give you part of the sacrifice they're taking up to the house of God, unless they're in on it. I mean, these men could not have been informed about this beforehand by Samuel, because Samuel didn't know until the day before who the man was. He couldn't have said, oh, he looks like this, and here's the man you're going to meet, and give him a couple loaves of bread, and so forth.

Samuel must here have been, depending on the Holy Spirit, to inspire these men to know what to do. That the same Spirit that was inspiring Samuel to predict it would also inspire these men to carry out the actions he predicted. And therefore, I suppose they must have been among the prophets.

They'd be the men you'd expect to be hearing from God about such things. And it says, after that, you should come to the hill of God, where the Philistine garrison is. And it will happen when you've come there, to the city, that you'll meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them.

And they will be prophesying. Now, this is a fairly common scene in the books of Samuel and Kings, that the prophets often were moving about in companies, often with musical instruments, and prophesying. Now, what prophesying looked like in these circumstances, we can't really say.

I mean, we have samples of prophetic oracles and of prophetic writings in certain places in the Bible, but we don't have any of the samples, necessarily, of what these men were prophesying. And it's not likely they were just going around predicting the future or something into the open air. It's possible that this was more like a spiritual fellowship of men in a more or less unspiritual society.

Men who had the Spirit of God, and who spoke to one another as from God, things that

were mutually encouraging things. Maybe what we might call personal prophecies. The prophets in Israel often were speaking to the whole nation.

Their books were written down for Israelites and Christians to benefit from later on. Other times they just spoke a personal word to an individual. Maybe these companies of prophets were just there like the church.

They're, you know, each one gifted to whatever he contributes to the body, builds up the body. Maybe these men were the few in any given town who were spiritual, had the Spirit, and they fellowshiped together to mutually encourage through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, whatever had to be said. I don't know.

It's rather mysterious, because we read on several occasions of these companies of prophets. Often they're singing with musical instruments, and they're prophesying, presumably to each other, although maybe not. Maybe they're standing on the public square prophesying to other people.

It's not designated. So there's a mysterious element to these prophets that we keep running into. But he says you're going to run into a group of these prophets when you get to the place where the garrison of the Philistines is.

So the Philistines were encamped in various places within Israel. Yet, back in chapter 7, when the Philistines were driven out, we're told they came no more into the land of Israel. But obviously they had come back.

When it says they came no more, it just means for the time being, they gave up their aspirations of conquering or controlling Israel. They had been coming regularly, and they didn't do that anymore. But that doesn't mean ever again, because it's clear that in the years that had transpired, apparently between chapter 7 and chapter 8, that apparently was decades long, the Philistines had reasserted their claims, and at least had a few garrisons encamped within Israel.

One of them is at this place that he calls the Mountain of God. We don't know what that is. In the Pentateuch, the Mountain of God is Mount Sinai, but that was nowhere near the land of Israel.

So there were other mountains that had been probably designated in various places that were probably high places where God was worshipped. This may have been in Gilgal, apparently, or near Gilgal, this particular mountain, and there was a garrison of the Philistines there. And there he would meet this group of prophets.

Apparently the presence of the Philistines didn't inhibit daily life of the Israelites very much. The prophets could still walk around and prophesy, probably the Israelites could still farm their lands and do their daily business with the Philistine presence nearby, maybe a little bit like the Jews were with the Romans occupying their land. The

Philistines just there to keep reminding Israel that they belonged under their control.

Probably they were exacting tribute from the Israelites. I don't know that we read of this being the case, but that would be probably what was going on. And also we do know from a later statement that the Philistines were preventing the Israelites from having blacksmiths among them.

Because although the Israelites were allowed to use metal tools in their farming, they were concerned that they might beat them into swords and become armed against the Philistines. So the Philistines were keeping Israel disarmed. And it even says in a later passage we'll come to that if the Israelites needed to sharpen their plows and their farming instruments, their metal farming instruments, they had to go to a Philistine blacksmith who charged them exorbitant prices for it.

So the Philistines were a little bit oppressive, but apparently not marching through the streets in hobnail boots. The Israelites could still function for the most part, but they were not free. And the Philistines were controlling them in some measure and had a garrison there at Gilgal.

And he says that when you run into these prophets, verse 6, then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now this statement that the Spirit will come upon him and he'll be turned into another man, it's very tempting to see this in terms of New Testament experience. When people are born again, they become a new creation in Christ when they receive the Holy Spirit.

And yet, it does not seem that this is the experience that is being described here. To say he became another man is different than being born again in this case. I mean, it's a figure of speech.

He was still Saul, son of Kish. He was not really, literally another man, but he was a changed man. He was a more God-conscious man than before.

We don't read that he was necessarily a very spiritual man before this, but once the Spirit came upon him, he was much more aware of God and would be, after he prophesied, viewed by others as a man of God. He had a new identity in the community and probably a new awareness in himself. Lots of people would say, I'm a new man now, and they're not talking about the Christian experience of rebirth.

You know, I used to be a down-and-out derelict, but now I'm a new man because I've changed my ways, or whatever. To say you're turned into another man does not need to be pressed into a New Testament kind of a mold. The Spirit coming upon him, obviously, is an expression we find in the New Testament too, but as we've seen, when the Spirit came upon a man in the Old Testament, it empowered him to do something, but it didn't necessarily sanctify him.

And the New Testament work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify the believer and empower the believer. But that phenomenon of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer permanently, that was not something that existed in the Old Testament. And we're even told that in the Gospel of John, in chapter 7, which says, in verse 39, after Jesus spoke about living water, John says, "...but this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive." And notice, "...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The Holy Spirit was not yet given in the sense that he was after.

The Holy Spirit was given in some senses because there were prophets who had the Spirit come upon them. But the Holy Spirit was not given in the New Testament sense until Jesus died and rose again. It was glorified.

And what sense was that different? What was different in the sense that the believers then became the house of God. Instead of there being a tabernacle made by men, they became the temple of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit dwelt permanently in the believers. That was not true in the Old Testament.

Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room, in John 14 and verse 16, He says, "...I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." This is different than in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit didn't abide with people forever. He came, empowered them, and then apparently went.

He just came for the occasion. And yet Jesus says, I'm going to send the Spirit who's going to come and live with you forever. And later on, He says, it's good for you that I go away, because if I don't go away, the Holy Spirit will not come in this sense.

Jesus had to go to heaven to pour out the Holy Spirit, and since He had not done so yet in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was not poured out on the people of God in the same sense. But He did come upon individuals, as we saw in the book of Judges, and He comes upon prophets, and He came upon Saul. And Saul was changed.

He was a changed man, at least changed in the eyes of the community, changed in probably his whole perception of the reality of God. Before the Spirit came upon him, he was no doubt, like most Jews, a believer in Yahweh, but probably a believer in Yahweh in the same sense that most Christians are believers in God. They believe the doctrines about Him.

But did he have any experience with God? Did he have a personal relationship with God? Apparently not before this time. Most people didn't. But when a man had the Holy Spirit come upon him, that was God coming upon him, and he would be now a man who knew God other than by hearsay.

He'd be a man who knew God by personal encounter. That'd make him a different man,

but not a man who was entirely spiritual, because a man can have an encounter with God and not be a spiritual man. Think of Balaam.

Balaam had God by His Spirit revealing things to him, but he was not a good man or a spiritual man. Think of Caiaphas, a high priest who had Jesus crucified. He prophesied on one occasion.

We don't read that the Holy Spirit came upon him, but we have to assume that the Holy Spirit spoke through him, but he was not a good man. So having an encounter with God like this changes a man in some ways, but in the Old Testament it didn't change him in the ways that the Holy Spirit does with us now, because the Holy Spirit goes to work in us now. Since He comes to dwell in us, He begins to take root and produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and change the kind of people we are.

It's a different functioning, a different outworking of the phenomenon of an encounter with God. But Saul would then be among the few people in Israel who had had the experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon him. And the presence of the Holy Spirit upon him would be manifest by him prophesying, as was almost always the case in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, we read of a number of times when the Holy Spirit came upon people, they spoke in tongues. And sometimes it says they spoke in tongues and prophesied. In the Old Testament, we don't read of anyone speaking in tongues, but we read of the Holy Spirit coming upon them and they prophesied.

So that when the Holy Spirit came upon the 70 elders that Moses had gathered at the tabernacle door, they prophesied briefly. And that was a sign that this had happened. This would happen to Saul too.

He says, The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. And let it be when these things come to you, that you do as the occasion demands, for God is with you. So he's not micromanaging you.

Once you have the Holy Spirit, do what seems right to do in the occasion. Again, being led by the Holy Spirit doesn't require that someone give you detailed instructions. The Holy Spirit is to lead you.

And you can do what the occasion demands, for God is with you. You shall go down before me to Gilgal, and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait till I come to you and show you what you should do.

Now this prediction was not to be immediately fulfilled. This was something that would be further off. Saul was not going to go directly to Gilgal and offer a sacrifice there after seven days waiting for Samuel.

That did happen later on in chapter 13. There were other important things that were going to happen in between including possibly the passage of a year or two. I'm thinking that because of chapter 13 verse 1 says Saul reigned one year and when he reigned two years over Israel etc.

etc. It sounds like Saul reigned for a while before the occasion came for him to go to Gilgal. Remember Samuel said you do what the occasion demands.

Well there was no demand to go to Gilgal until chapter 13. The occasion demanded it then and he was supposed to wait for Samuel for seven days. That's what it was about.

Although it sounds like these are instructions to be carried out immediately, this was actually instruction that belonged to a later time and it would be pertaining to God using Saul to deliver Israel from the Philistines. But there would be other things that were orders of business first including his inauguration and even his saving of Jabesh from the Ammonites which would be later on. It's a shame not to break in the middle of a chapter but there's just no way we can take an additional 21 verses when we're already running over time.