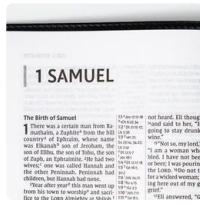


# OpenTheo

## 1 Samuel 10:9 - 12:25



### 1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg discusses the biblical text of 1 Samuel 10:9 through 12:25. Saul is chosen by God to be the first king of Israel, and despite his initial humility, becomes a multifaceted individual who attempts to kill Samuel for a reason unknown. The Israelites face external threats from the Nahash Ammonite, causing them to understand the importance of fearing God and standing united. Throughout the text, the importance of conducting clean government and repenting from evil motives is emphasized, with the recognition that God will not forsake his people.

### Transcript

Last time, we unfortunately had to break off in the middle of a chapter. I don't prefer to do that, but we did come to at least a paragraph break. And we're looking now at 1 Samuel chapter 10.

In chapter 9 and chapter 10, we have Saul's first encounter with Samuel, at which time Samuel tells him, of course, that he's to be the king of Israel. And actually, in chapter 10, verse 1, anointed him as king, poured oil over his head, which was the way that, prior to this time, priests had been inaugurated into their office by the pouring of oil over the head. There had never been a king in Israel previously to do that, too, but this now became something that was symbolic also of being brought into office as king, so that kings and priests then were both anointed ones.

You know that the Messiah, the word Messiah means anointed one. And the term was adopted by the rabbis and by, actually, even the prophets mentioned the Messiah, not very often by that name, but the Messiah is to be the king and the priest of Israel, and so he is the one who's anointed ultimately by God to be the leader, but every priest and every king who served as a foreshadow of Christ was installed by this means. And when Saul departed from Samuel, it was with these predictions in place to confirm to him that Samuel was not just delusional about him being king.

He said there would be three signs given to you. The first is that you'll come near the tomb of Rachel, and some men will tell you that the donkeys you were looking for have

been found and your father's now worried about you. And the second is you'll come to Terabith 3 of Tabor, and you'll find three men going up to offer sacrifices at Bethel, and they'll give you a couple of loaves of bread.

And then the third sign was that when he would come to the mountain of God, where the Philistine garrison is, the hill of God, that there a group of prophets would meet him with musical instruments and singing, and the Spirit of God would come upon him, and he would prophesy, and he'd become another man. After that, Samuel said, now, once the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then just do as the situation calls for. In other words, I give you detailed instructions until the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then, of course, for the most part, you're going to do what the Holy Spirit leads you to do as it occurs to you in the situation.

However, not entirely. Following the Holy Spirit also requires following the instructions of his prophets. And there is one caveat given there in verse 8. The time will come when you'll come to Gilgal, and you'll have to wait for me for seven days there.

At that time, I'll show you what you should do. So, between the time that the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, which was later this day, and the time that he would meet Samuel at Gilgal for this particular offering, between those two times, the Holy Spirit would be allowing Saul to do whatever the situation seemed to demand. But when it came to this Gilgal meeting, it would be Samuel who would tell him what to do.

Now, this is not that Samuel is replacing the Holy Spirit. Samuel is the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. He's the prophet.

And when the Bible says that we don't need any man to teach us, because the Holy Spirit will teach us all things, this doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit doesn't teach us through people who have gifts of the Holy Spirit. Prophets, there's the gift of teaching, the gift of exhortation, the gift of leading, and so forth. If these are true spiritual gifts that some people possess, then what we receive from them is what the Holy Spirit is providing for us in terms of guidance.

So, to say that we don't need a man to teach us because the Holy Spirit teaches us doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit will always teach us simply by direct revelation in our own hearts. The Holy Spirit can teach by many means, through reading the Scripture, through speaking through somebody who's got a gift of the Holy Spirit, and so forth. What he's saying is, the time has come that you and I will meet at Gilgal.

You'll wait three, seven days, and then I'll tell you what to do. Between now and then, you just do whatever seems appropriate. But when that time comes, you have to do what I tell you to do.

That's what he's saying. Now, that day of their meeting at Gilgal did not occur until

chapter 13. And there was a lot of events that transpired in between that time, during which time Saul was simply to be led as the Spirit would lead him.

Verse 9, And so it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel's, that God gave him another heart, and all those signs came to pass that day. When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him. Then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, What is this that has come upon the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? Then a man from there answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? Now, this little exchange, it's a little hard to know exactly what was going on in this conversation with the townspeople. First they said, Is Saul also among the prophets? Apparently this was spoken in credulity. Like, now is Saul one of the sons of the prophets? I mean, we've known these sons of the prophets wandering.

They're kind of strange characters, but they seem to be in touch with God. They have this kind of separated life where they walk around worshipping and singing and prophesying. But Saul, he's just a worker on his dad's farm.

He's not a prophet, is he? Is he now one of the prophets? And apparently for a man to be a prophet was quite a change in vocation. And possibly even Saul's character was such that people would think him particularly unfit to be counted among the prophets. It's hard to say.

Their statement seems to be expressing astonishment that he, particularly, would also be among the prophets. They weren't astonished that there are prophets. They knew that.

But that he would be among them is very surprising. In fact, surprising enough that it became a saying, among them. Is Saul also among the prophets? But then there was another man from that area who said, Yet who's their father? And the meaning of that is not at all clear.

Some suggest that what it means is that this man was a man of greater spiritual perception than the others. And they were saying, Well, how could he be a son of the prophets? He's the son of Kish. But the other man is saying, Well, who really is the father of the prophets? They don't all have one father.

It's not a matter of genealogy. It's not a matter of what family they're in. Who is the father of the prophets? There isn't one man who's a father of all the prophets.

So why couldn't Saul be a prophet like the others? I mean, it's not a matter of who your father is. Who's their father anyway? And so some have suggested that's the meaning of

the who is their father. But it also might be a form of somebody mocking.

But not entirely clear what form that mockery is. The whole conversation sounds like sort of people mocking the fact that he's prophesying. And it seems out of character for him.

But who is their father is not really. It meant something at the time to them. But its exact meaning is elusive to us.

And when they had finished prophesying, he went to the high place. Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, Where did you go? And he said to look for the donkeys. When we saw that they were nowhere to be found, we went to Samuel.

And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you. So Saul said to his uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found. But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said.

There's an example of telling the truth, but concealing the most important part of it. Yes, Samuel had told him the donkeys had been found. But Saul was not at this point willing to mention that he had been anointed king by Samuel.

Maybe because he didn't think his family would accept it. Maybe they'd feel he was getting too uppity and trying to make something of himself. And he wanted to wait and see in what way God would vindicate it.

After all, the anointing was a private one. Maybe he knew that it wasn't the time yet for all of Israel to know about it. And so he wasn't even going to tell his family.

In any case, he has had a rather stirring experience being filled with the spirit, prophesying, becoming another man, being told he's to be king of Israel. And all he tells his uncle is, well, he assured us the donkeys had been found. Then Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah.

Now this is Samuel calling the people to proclaim Saul as the king publicly. And he said to the children of Israel, Thus says Yahweh, God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you. But you have today rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations.

And you have said to him, No, but set a king over us. Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.

Now, obviously, Samuel knew already who was going to be the guy. They're going through this the same way that Achan was discovered. You know, when they knew somebody had trespassed against the devoted things, and that's why the children of

Israel were defeated at Ai.

And they went through this process of God selecting which tribe and which clan and which family and which man, no doubt using the Urim and the Thummim. Now, what's interesting about this is they went through that process, apparently, to demonstrate to Israel who the right guy was. This process would make it clear that God was making the choice, but Samuel already knew who it was because God had revealed it to him.

If Samuel had just gotten up and said, God has shown me that Saul is to be the guy, people might wonder, you know, well, Samuel, do you have a particular axe to grind? Are you showing favoritism to this man for some reason or whatever? Whereas going through the procedure where God makes the selection, it's a public matter of making it clear to everybody who the guy is that God has chosen. Just because it turns out to be no surprise to Samuel, we might say, well, if God was going to do it this way, why did he separately speak to Samuel about it? Well, probably to prepare Saul for the surprise. I mean, if Saul was just in the crowd in this process, picked him out, and said, who, me? You know, I mean, in a public spectacle, it might have been just considered better from God's point of view to let the man have some advance notice that he was going to be the man selected.

But they went through the procedure anyway. And the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, verse 21, then when he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen, and Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought for him, he could not be found.

Therefore they inquired of the Lord further and said, has the man come here yet? And the Lord answered, here he is hidden among the equipment. Saul was a little shy about this and possibly felt like he would not be well received. And he was right, many of the people didn't receive him well on this occasion.

They later did, but on this occasion, some said they were not going to follow him. He might have anticipated opposition, it would just as soon not be put in the position of that. So he decided to hide and avoid the ceremony altogether.

God had to tell them where he was hiding. You can't hide from God. So they ran and brought him from there.

And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. And Samuel said to all the people, do you see him whom Yahweh has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people? So all the people shouted and said, long live the king. Well, not all of them, it says all the people because it was in general, the crowd hailed him as the king.

He was a good looking, he looked big, he looked like the type of man that would be a

good national symbol. Just like when we choose presidents, we're often very much influenced by their looks. Before television, a man's looks didn't really have a lot to do with whether he's chosen to be president.

But since television, people are pretty much chosen by their looks to some extent. Not that every president has been good looking, but often that is the tipping point for voters between a man and his rival. That's just human nature.

If we're going to put a man out as our leader, we want him to be someone we can be proud of when people look at him. So everyone said, yeah, he's the guy, long live the king. Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty and wrote it in a book and laid it up before Yahweh.

And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched. So apparently the beginning of his, perhaps his bodyguard, they were valiant men, and God put it on their heart to just go with him.

They recognized his anointing. They wanted to be involved with what God was doing. And so they volunteered to work with him.

That's how God does things. That's how he did it in this case with Saul. Once the people knew Saul was somebody that God had chosen for this, certain men knew he's going to need help.

He's going to need a bodyguard, going to need leaders to work with him. And so God had touched their hearts and they went with him. But some rebels said, how can this man save us? So they despised him and brought him no presents, but he held his peace.

That is, he didn't defend himself. Saul began as a relatively humble man. In fact, Samuel points that out at a later date when Saul was no longer a humble man.

Power went to his head and caused him to become disobedient to God and caused God to have to reject him eventually. However, when that happened, Samuel said to him in 1 Samuel 15 and verse 17, When you were little in your own eyes, were you not the head of the tribes of Israel, and did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? And then he goes on and says, then you've become a rebel against God and rebellion, he says, is the sin of witchcraft in verse 23. But he says that when Saul started out, he was little in his own eyes and that was a good thing.

To be little in your own eyes is a good thing. No one can see why it would be good if they're just coming from a secular point of view. And that's why sometimes having a high self-image is something that people advocate.

But God always favored the person who was little in their own eyes. And when someone

was proud, God would knock them down. And in this case, we can see Saul was actually admirably and attractively a humble man.

He's reticent to even accept the post. He's hiding among the equipment at his own coronation. This isn't really his coronation, though, because he's really coronated a little later, officially.

At this point, it is announced and shown to the people that this is the man who's to be your king. But he actually doesn't become engaged in any kingly activity at this point. He goes back to plowing at his father's farm.

There's really not that much that he sees himself assigned to do at this point. Now, the time would come when he was inaugurated and crowned formally and then he would become the leader of the armies against the Philistines' primary order of business for any king of Israel at that time, because the Philistines were there as a problem and had been a long-term enemy. But at this point, he really is just, he goes home.

Some people go with him because they figure this is the man that God's going to be using. But he hasn't really taken a throne, or he hasn't had a crown upon him yet. He hasn't really taken leadership of the nation yet.

It's just sort of like Samuel's giving them a foreglimpse of who's going to be the guy that will rule them. But they don't officially coronate him until after he does something very heroic, which even convinces the people who rejected him initially that he is the man that they should follow. But initially we see the people in general shouting, Long live the king.

There are some people saying, we're not seeing it, you know. I'm not feeling it. I don't think this guy's going to be the guy who can save us.

And so that's how chapter 10 ends. And in chapter 11, then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead. Now this is not the same Nahash the Ammonite who came up in the days of Jephthah.

This would probably be some generations later. It's possible that it was a family name of the royal family of the Ammonites. He came against Jabesh Gilead, no doubt trying to reclaim the territory that his ancestor had lost in the days of Jephthah.

And all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, Make a covenant with us and we'll serve you. So they wimped out right away and said, Listen, we're not going to fight you. We'll become your slaves.

Why not? Israel was already being slaves of the Philistines on the west side of the Jordan. Why not here on the east side of the Jordan? We can be slaves of the Ammonites. We're not a free people after all.

It's possible they had not yet heard about Saul's being chosen to be their king. But they may have. But they didn't really put any confidence in him at this point to save them.

So they just kind of laid down like a dog bearing its neck, you know. Okay, don't kill me. I'm submissive.

Make a covenant. We'll serve you. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition I will make a covenant with you, that I may put out all your right eyes and bring reproach on all Israel.

And the elders of Jabesh said, Well, let's reconsider what we were saying there. We said we'd make a covenant and serve you, but we didn't know you were going to put out our eyes. Now why the right eye? Because that's the eye you would use to aim with if you shoot a bow and arrow, if you're right-handed.

And almost everyone was. The right eye would be used for aiming arrows in war, if you're right-handed. And so, in other words, I'm going to make sure you could never rebel.

You could never fight. You have to be permanently disarmed and disabled. Then I'll let you live.

And they said, Well, hold off for seven days that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then if there's no one to save us, we will come out to you. Now, it's kind of strange to lay their cards on the table that way.

You know, we'd like to see if we can get some help here first. Hold off, would you? If no one comes to our rescue, then we'll come out and let you put out our eyes. Nahash, of course, was in the position that he didn't have to agree to this at all.

The reason they were surrendering to him is because he was overpowering them. He could have just waged war and overcome them. However, he may have been confident enough that Israel was so disorganized, they were already under the heel of the Philistines.

He may not have heard about Saul, and Saul hadn't done much of anything yet anyway. He might have just thought, Well, these other tribes, they're so disorganized, so disunified, so rival of each other. There's no danger here.

We'll give you seven days. Rather than expend all our forces trying to break down your walls and so forth, we'll just wait, and you can surrender to us in seven days. We can wait it out.

He was apparently confident that nothing would happen, and so he actually agreed to it. So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the



people. Now, we don't know if the messengers went directly to Gibeah.

They said they were going to send out messengers to all the territory of Israel. They might have sent lots of messengers out different directions, and all the messengers except these ones really came up empty-handed. But the ones that arrived in Gibeah, of course, that's where Saul was.

And the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. Now there was Saul coming behind the herd from the field, apparently just tending cattle. And Saul said, What troubles the people that they weep? And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh.

Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused. So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so shall it be done to his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

Now Saul really didn't have a standing army. He was supposedly a king, but he hadn't really officially been installed. It may be like after our elections, we know who the president is going to be, but it still isn't until January 1st that he really is inaugurated.

Saul didn't have a government yet, didn't have an administration, didn't have an army, and so he was still farming. But he took these oxen, cut them in pieces, and it reminds us very much of that Levite and his concubine, when he took her body and cut it into pieces and sent out the pieces to all the parts of Israel. Same thing, same message here.

And it's explained here, where it's not explained there in Judges. The idea is, this piece of meat that comes to you, this is what's going to happen to all of your livestock if you don't come. This is a summons.

This bit of meat, this cow that's sent to you, is basically a summons to war. This is a draft notice. You come and work, and this is the penalty you'll suffer if you don't.

And that is, your cows will be cut up like this. That would suggest, since it communicated that on this occasion, that there was a cultural understanding of this kind of a gesture. So that when the Levite had cut his concubine's body up and sent out, it would be coming to the people as a summons also.

And they did come. They came and they mobilized against the men of Gibeon on that occasion. But sending out the concubine's body, I don't know if the implicit message was, this is what will be done to your concubines or to your wives, or maybe to you, if you don't come.

The point is, it's a strange gesture, but obviously it meant something in that culture. And

it put the fear of God in people, that there'd be obviously some penalty upon them, an economic one in this case, if they didn't come. So they came.

And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah, 30,000. Now this is the first time that we really see this kind of distinction made between the southern and the northern parts of the country. It wasn't until three generations later that Judah became a separate kingdom from the northern tribes.

But already Judah is beginning to be discussed as a separate unit. Why? I'm not sure at this point, because actually the king was not of the tribe of Judah, not yet. David would be, and that would make Judah a special royal tribe, but this king was of the tribe of Benjamin.

So I'm not sure why Judah was now being mentioned separately, except Judah had always been the leading tribe, even in the days of Moses. They were the tribe that led the procession behind the priests and the ark and so forth when they traveled in the wilderness. And also, when Joshua inquired of the Lord which tribe should begin the assault on the Canaanites, the Lord said the tribe of Judah should.

So already God had made it clear that Judah had some kind of a priority in the country, but it wasn't the same priority that later came to have when David, their favorite son, became the king. And then later Judah became a kingdom by itself. But for some reason, at this early stage, we read of a difference here.

30,000 from Judah, 300,000 from the other 11 tribes. So it was a big army. And they said to the messengers who came, Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have help.

Then the messengers came and reported to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. Therefore the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you. They're putting them off, and they have to wait for reinforcements to come.

They're suggesting, we've decided to let you put our right eyes out and we'll just serve you. But that's not really, of course, what's happening. They're just making sure that Nahash doesn't strike prior to the others coming.

So it was on the next day that Saul put the people in three companies. He actually followed the same strategy that Gideon followed when he went against the Midianites. Traveled at night and so forth, and struck while it was still dark.

He put the people in three companies, and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch. The morning watch is from like three to six in the morning, just before day. And killed Ammonites until the heat of the day.

And it happened that those who survived were scattered so that no two of them were left together. They ran off in so many different directions that they were so smashed as a military unit that there weren't even two people still near each other. Then the people said to Samuel, Who is he who said, Shall Saul reign over us? So those rebels who had spoken against Saul at the end of the last chapter are now out of favor, in a big way, out of favor with the public sentiment because, of course, Saul is now the hero.

Bring the men out here that we may put them to death. And in a sense, that would be the right thing to do. I mean, traitors have always been put to death, even in modern times.

If someone is seen to be a traitor against the government, it's a death sentence. And these men who God had shown that Saul was to be the king, and these men said, Ah, we don't accept him. They were traitors.

But no one was really of a mind to put them to death about it before everyone got excited about Saul. And they got excited about him on this occasion when he delivered Jabesh. But Saul said, Not a man should be put to death this day, for today the Lord has accomplished salvation in Israel.

Then Samuel said to the people, Come, let us go to Gilgal to renew the kingdom there. So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all his men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

This, of course, was the event that made it the proper time to really crown him. The announcement that he was chosen by God gave people time to get used to the idea. But this event made people enthusiastic about the idea.

And so Samuel exploits the situation and says, Okay, now is the time that we're going to coronate him. And so Samuel gives a speech in chapter 12 at the coronation of Saul. And, of course, it's a speech in which Samuel is retiring from his position as the national leader.

He'll always be around to do some judging and counseling and things like that, but he was the man that God had raised up to be the leader of the country until now. There's now another man. We're used to seeing administrations change like this peaceably in our country.

The leadership of the country can pass from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party peaceably through an election and so forth, or the other way. That always happens here. But it doesn't happen everywhere.

It's more common in history when one family or one group gained power in the nation, they'd exterminate the others. And there was rivalry and jealousy of the previous

administration to the point where they often would conduct a purge. Still happens in modern times in many places.

We often rejoice to hear in some rather more primitive societies today, maybe even in the Middle East sometimes, when we hear of an actual election that takes place and there's a transfer of power from one party to another, like in Iraq, and the new party doesn't just exterminate all their enemies. That's kind of unusual. And here Samuel was definitely the man who was the undisputed leader of the country for 40 years.

And he's just handing it off to another guy who's going to do something totally different, and Samuel graciously says, well, this is God's doing. He recognizes God in it, so he's going to peaceably step down and let somebody else take over the country. Chapter 12.

Now Samuel said to all Israel, Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me and have made a king over you. And now here is the king walking before you, and I am old and gray-headed. And look, my sons are with you.

I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Now, by the way, this statement, my sons are with you, it's hard to know what that means. He certainly can't be saying, don't worry, when I'm gone, my sons will still be around, because it was his son's corruption that made the people reject the present order and choose a king.

So he can't be saying, my sons will take over when I'm gone. The opposite is true. His sons are being removed from office, as he is, by the coronation of a new king.

But when he says, my sons are with you, it's immediately followed by his own statement, I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. I think what he's saying is, judge me by the way I've walked, and my sons will have to bear their own responsibility for how you judge them. I'm not going to stand up for them, whatever crimes they've done, whatever you think of them, that's between you and them.

My sons are with you, and you can assess them however you feel appropriate. But as far as I am concerned personally, I have never wronged you. And no one would say so.

You've watched me since I was a child, and I have lived a clean and honest life, and conducted a clean government, insofar as I've governed. Here I am, witness 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 received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you.

And so publicly he says, I'm leaving office, I don't want to hear any rumors about my administration coming down the line later on. If anyone thinks I did anything dishonest, say so right now, and we'll just make it right, and we'll get that on the table here. And they said, you have not defrauded us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand.

Then he said to them, the Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, meaning Saul, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, he is witness. Now it may be that Samuel went through this in order to make sure that Saul, at some later time, jealous over Samuel's popularity as a previous administration, wouldn't trump up some false charges against him, and find an excuse to get rid of him.

I mean, who knows what Saul would do? We see what he did to David. I mean, Saul became a nut. And since it is and was common for kings to just kind of get rid of their predecessors as much as they could, so there would be no rival loyalties of the people, it was not unheard of, if a king wanted to get rid of someone, to just trump up false charges and have them publicly executed on false charges.

Ahab wanted the vineyard of his neighbor, and the neighbor wouldn't sell it, and so Jezebel had false charges brought against the man, had him stoned to death. That's how tyrants reign. I've been reading, again, Richard Wurmbrandt's *In God's Underground*, the story of his imprisonment in communist Romania, as himself a pastor, persecuted for being a Christian.

He was in there for 14 years, and in the course of being in prison, political prisoners came and went through the system that he would meet, he'd be in prison with them, and a lot of times the people who put him in prison were the next people to be imprisoned by someone who trumped up charges against them, and then the people who put them in prison end up in prison later by the next people who come up. In the communist world, it's a dog-eat-dog world, you know, you may be friends with people who are above you until you rise above them, then you find charges and put them in prison and so forth. This is how corrupt governments operate.

You have no security in a country that is not a government of laws. If it's a government of men, instead of of laws, then men can, anytime they feel jealous of or insecure because someone else might be more popular than them, or feel that the man who had the loyalty of the country before might have a chance to command it again, they just find ways to find fault with them and get rid of them. And it's possible that Samuel is cutting that off at the root, saying, OK, before I turn it over to Saul here, anyone ever known me doing anything criminal? Anyone ever going to raise a complaint against me? Have I ever wronged you? Have I ever taken a bribe? Have I ever perverted justice? And they say, nope.

And he says, well, God's witness to that, write that down here. We're going to have that recorded. Because I don't want someone coming along a few years from now and saying, on behalf of Saul, bringing false charges against me, that it's on record, I've done nothing wrong.

So I am immune from any prosecution of the future. And verse six, and Samuel said to the people, it is Yahweh who raised up Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers

up from the land of Egypt. Now, therefore, stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers.

And when Jacob had gone into Egypt and your fathers cried out to Yahweh, then Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the Lord, their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them.

Then they cried out to the Lord and said, we have sinned because we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hand of our enemies and we will serve you. And Yahweh sent Jerubael, which is, of course, you remember Gideon's other name, Bedan, who is usually thought to be a textual corruption of Barak.

There's no judge in the book of Judges named Bedan. And most scholars agree that this is probably a reference to Barak. In fact, in the Septuagint and the Syriac versions, it actually does say Barak here, which suggests that the Hebrew text must have been perhaps corrupted there.

Somebody copied it wrong and then it kept being copied wrong in the later copies. Jephthah and Samuel, he mentions himself unless he's referring here to Samson. Some people think that even the reference to Samuel here is not a reference to himself, but it's a textual corruption that originally said Samson.

It doesn't really matter, but it's a little strange for him to call himself Samuel rather than saying me. You know, the Lord raised up Gideon and Barak and Jephthah and me. It would be a more natural way to say it.

And he delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwell in safety. And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us. When Yahweh your God was your king.

Now, therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, Yahweh has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.

However, if you do 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 as it was against your fathers. Now notice he's kind of disparaging the monarch. He's saying God was your king and you insist on a king.

Now he's saying that in the presence of the king who's being coronated. You know, this

guy is here because of your rebellion against God. It's not exactly Samuel saying, Long live the king.

We are not worthy. He's basically saying God's our ruler and this man is who you wanted. And so I gave him to you.

Obviously, that kind of talk could make a man, let's say a man less humble than Saul, really despise Samuel. Saul never did seem to despise Samuel. Saul always seemed to look up to Samuel.

I think Saul was a pious man who went wrong. And even when he went wrong, he still had a sufficient fear of God to respect Samuel. Because Samuel, from this point on, most of his confrontations with Saul were times where Samuel rebuked him.

Once in chapter 13, once in chapter 15, once after Samuel was dead and came back from the dead to rebuke him. It's like Samuel is almost in an adversarial position against Saul after this time. And he's not really speaking extremely highly of him here, not real supportive.

He is basically saying you serve the Lord and if your king serves the Lord, then you'll do okay. If you don't, then you're not going to do okay. But Saul never really, even though Samuel was clearly in an adversarial position with him, Saul still recognized Samuel as the mouthpiece of God.

Unlike what he saw in David. And David, he saw David as an adversary to him when David wasn't. David never did resist Saul, ever.

But he mistook David for an adversary and he tried to kill him. But he never tried to kill Samuel for some reason. And I think it's just because he couldn't help but respect Samuel and the supernatural things that he'd seen Samuel do, including on this very occasion.

Because it says in verse 16, Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is today not the wheat harvest? That'd be like May or June in the year. I will call to the Lord and he will send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking a king for yourselves.

So Samuel called to the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. So here he's saying, we're going to coronate your king, but it's a great wickedness that you did in asking for this king.

He's definitely registering his disapproval. And he says, just so you don't think it's just me got something in my crop. Just so you don't think that I'm offended because I'm not the leader anymore.

And now someone else has replaced me. You know, it's not like my ego is hurt and I'm just upset and I can't accept the change. I just want you to know that what I'm saying to you is not coming from my own sense of envy, disappointment or pride.

It's coming from God. I'm going to have God give you a sign. Here it is, June.

It doesn't rain or thunder in Israel in June, but God will make it thunder. And that'll be a sign to you that God is speaking by me. And so you'll know that God agrees with me that it was a very wicked thing for you to ask for a king.

And so it happened. The Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people, of course, then feared Yahweh and Samuel.

Samuel still commanded a great deal of respect because it was clear that God always stood by Samuel. Even from the time he was young, God never let any of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel knew that he was established as a prophet of the Lord.

And then there was a time when he delivered them from the Philistines, when he called them in chapter 7 and they rededicated their life to God. And God sent thunder and stuff and sent off the Philistines and defeated them. And now there's this thunder.

It's obvious that Samuel and God are partners. And so people who fear God had to fear Samuel, too. 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 the evil of asking a king for ourselves. Then Samuel said to the people, Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness.

Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside. For then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver for they are nothing.

For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great namesake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. But I will teach you the good and the right way.

Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart, and consider what great things he has done for you. But if you do still wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king. So he doesn't say our king, he says your king.

And what's interesting is the people seeing the thundering and so forth, finally repented of asking for a king. And you might think that Samuel would say, Okay, good. You know, you realize it was wrong to ask for a king.

You agree with me about that. You agree with the Lord. Saul, you can go home.



We don't need a king anymore. Instead, he let them keep the king. They even admitted that it was wicked that they had asked for a king, but apparently God could use a situation with the king.

But they had to realize that their motives had been evil. They had to repent of that. And eventually, of course, God would bring up David as the king, and that would be sort of an ideal situation, as much as it could be in a monarchy, and a type of Christ as well.

So even though they repented of asking for a king, and presumably would have agreed to have the whole plan dropped at this point, Samuel said, No, you can keep your king. Just make sure you don't stop following the Lord. I'll be around.

I'll teach you the right way to go. You obey what I say. You obey what God says.

And you and your king will prosper and be fine. But if you do wickedly, your king and you will be going out together. And so that's how Samuel relinquished his role of national leadership to the king.

This was essentially the coronation. Now, we don't read of an actual crown being put on Saul's head or a throne. In fact, in all likelihood, when we think of Saul's kingdom, it probably doesn't have an awful lot of the regal trappings that we think of in perhaps of European kings and so forth.

In the Middle East, these people who are called kings are sometimes little more than chieftains living in tents, sheiks with their traveling entourage. Saul was a settled monarch, and he did live in Gibeah, and that's where he ruled, apparently. But probably his courtiers were minimal.

He didn't always have a standing army, it seems like. His table where he ate with his courtiers was probably not a huge thing like it would be in some European monarch. A lot of people around him, he probably was more or less unimpressive in his bearing, but he was in authority.

We don't know that he even had a crown at this point, or a throne. Probably he did, but those things are not even mentioned. What he had was, of course, recognition by people that God had picked him as king, and therefore that was all that it really took for him to have the popular support at this point, as long as Samuel was around.

And once Samuel died, the people still followed him because he had become more established in power, and of course people like David, who were seen as threats to him, were hunted down because Saul became very much attached to his idea of being in charge. He was slow in accepting it, and uncomfortable with it, but once he settled in, he liked it, and he didn't want that to be challenged. So we see the man changing considerably over a period of chapters here.

Saul is a really interesting psychological study, because he's a multifaceted individual. He's got piety all the way down to the end, even just before he dies. Though he goes to a witch, he wants to talk to the prophet of God.

He uses the witch to get in touch with the prophet of God. He doesn't ask the witch to give him some kind of a witchy prophecy. He wants to talk to Samuel.

He's an interesting guy, and he becomes murderous and crazy and demon-possessed, and all kinds of things. But he starts out reasonably well. You can't help but be sympathetic toward the guy a little bit.

He didn't ask for the position. He was not aspiring to be king. He got thrust in that position, but along with that position came responsibility.

We don't always choose the station in life that we're in. In many cases, we're born to it. For example, just being born in America, we have more responsibility than others, because we have more freedom than others, more stuff than others.

We didn't ask to be born in America, but that's where God had us born, and we have responsibilities that other people don't have, who don't have so much freedom and don't have so much stuff. We can't complain that I didn't apply for this position, therefore God can't hold me responsible. God put us in the positions we're in, and there's responsibilities that go with it.

Saul didn't apply for the position as king, but God put him there, and along with it came responsibilities. So he had to man up and take responsibility, which he did not do well. He didn't obey God, unfortunately, and that's how his story ends up tragic.