

Saul Will be the First King of Israel

1 Samuel 9

1 Samuel 9 - *"There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. ² And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. ³ 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." ⁴ So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. ⁵ When they had come to the land of Zuph, 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." ⁶ And he 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." 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 is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?" ⁸ 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." ⁹ (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.) ¹⁰ Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was. ¹¹ As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?" ¹² 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. ¹³ 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 will find him." ¹⁴ So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. ¹⁵ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, ¹⁶ "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." ¹⁷ So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people." ¹⁸ Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where is the seer's house?" ¹⁹ 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 will tell you all that is in your heart. ²⁰ 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*

on all your father's house?" ²¹ 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 tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"

²² Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there were about thirty persons. ²³ And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Set it apart.'" ²⁴ So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, "Here it is, what was kept back. It was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

²⁵ When they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house. ²⁶ 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." And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel. ²⁷ 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 awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God."

Background Notes

The people of Israel wanted to be like the other nations and have a king. Unfortunately, this request was not in line with God's perfect will at this time. The Lord wanted Israel to be a theocracy, with **God** as King. A theocracy is a nation and government that is directly ruled by God. Even after Samuel's counsel to the people concerning all the problems they would face if they had a king, the people still demanded a king. So, God allowed the people to have their choice -- this was an instance of God's permissive will.

In 1 Samuel 9, in His permissive will, God gave Israel the king that they were looking for. Saul was an impressive looking man. From his shoulders up, he was taller than anyone else -- that's pretty tall! The NBA would probably have drafted Saul if he were living today -- at least they would if he could play basketball! Not only was Saul tall, but he was handsome as well, and he was descended from a military hero in Israel. So Saul came with some pretty impressive credentials. God gave the people what they wanted -- a king who was quite impressive, humanly speaking. But Saul was not a man after God's own heart. That would be said only of King David, the man who would replace Saul as king. So Saul was a man after the people's heart, but David was a man after God's own heart.

Doctrinal Points

1. God is sovereign over the details of His will that He chooses to use in His plan.

God knew that the people of Israel wanted an impressive man for their king, and so in His permissive will, he gave them Saul. But how could Saul be anointed as king when he and Samuel didn't even know each other? Answer: Detailed circumstances. These were all part of God's plan. God is sovereign -- that is, He is in complete control over all details. They are all part of His sovereign will to carry out His plan. Some of Saul's family donkeys just happen to wander away

and get lost. Donkeys, by the way, were the “pickup trucks” of the day, so this was a significant loss. Young Saul and a servant were sent to find the donkeys, and “just happened” to pass by Ramah where Samuel lived. Samuel “just happened” to return to Ramah that day, and was going to present a sacrifice to the Lord from the high place of the city that very day. So, Saul and his servant came in contact with the prophet Samuel to ask about the lost donkeys.

Little did Saul realize God was working behind the scenes in all of these details that seemed to “just happen” for God to bring about the plan of His will. God is sovereign over the details that He chooses to use in His plans. This is true in bringing Saul and Samuel together, and it is true in our lives as well. God works through detail events and circumstances, big and small, to accomplish His will and plan for our lives. Even mundane things, like lost donkeys or lost pets, or lost car keys, or lost papers -- God can use every detail in His plan for our lives.

Here’s an illustration from my life. Little did I realize that when I just happened to take a certain part-time job years ago, that my boss would just happen to suggest I go to seminary, and that he would just happen to be willing to provide the financial means for the schooling! God was working behind the scenes through all of these details -- even that particular part-time job that I just happened to take.

Romans 8:28 says that God is working all things (including all the details of all the events and circumstances) together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. So we know that God is at work in our lives, even in the details of events and circumstances. And God is at work in the world as well. Ephesians 1:11 says that God works **all things** after the counsel of His will, and that certainly includes all the details of all events and circumstances. God is sovereign over the details of His will that He chooses to use in His plans.

2. God is sovereign over the details of His will that He chooses to reveal to His people.

In verses 15-27 Samuel and Saul met, and Samuel told Saul that the donkeys had been found. More than that, however, Samuel told Saul that “all the desire of Israel” would be his (v20). That was another way of telling Saul that he was going to be the king of Israel, and Saul’s response to this news was quite humble (v21). Saul was then given a portion of honor at a special dinner that Samuel had arranged. At the beginning of 1 Samuel 10, Samuel anointed Saul privately, and then sent Saul on his way.

What is especially interesting in all of these events is how and where some of the details were revealed. God revealed to Samuel the time that a man from Benjamin would show up, and that this man was to be the king. But notice that the Lord didn’t reveal to Samuel that Saul would be easily recognized because he was very tall, and the Lord didn’t reveal that the man’s name was Saul -- yet it would have been very easy for the Lord to include these details in the revelation to Samuel.

Why didn’t God reveal these obvious details? Answer: because God is sovereign over what details of His will He chooses to reveal. In 1 Samuel 10 God revealed a number of details to Samuel about Saul’s trip home, and Samuel

communicated these details to Saul. Why were all these precise details given to Saul when probably only one or two were necessary (from our point of view)? Answer: God is sovereign over the details of His will that He chooses to reveal.

This is true today. We don't know why God chooses to reveal some of the details of His will for our lives, and chooses not to reveal other details. For example, God can reveal His will and guide us in our decision-making processes in a number of different ways, including detailed circumstances along with His Word -- but He doesn't reveal all of the details! Aren't you glad that God doesn't reveal the details of the time and place of the occasion of your death? God is sovereign over the details of His will that He chooses to reveal to His people.

Practical Application

Praise the Lord! He does not forget about the lost donkeys!

In the midst of the important matter of the choosing the first king of Israel, God didn't forget about the lost donkeys! This is a very encouraging word for us today, isn't it? When God uses detailed circumstances (like lost car keys, or lost pets, or lost papers, or lost jobs) to accomplish His will and plan for our lives, He doesn't forget the lost items. He is concerned about these things as well. Praise the Lord that He doesn't forget about the lost donkeys!