

1st Samuel Chapters 8-9 – John Karmelich

1. There is a famous Chinese curse that goes something like, “May you get what you wish for”.
 - a) The idea behind that curse is that what we think we want may be the worse thing for us.
 - b) I open with that curse because that is what we see in this lesson. It is God saying, “Is that what you people want? OK, but don’t say I didn’t warn you!”
 - c) The specific wish in 1st Samuel is Israelites wanted a king. The problem isn’t that they wanted a king, but the reason they wanted a king. They wanted a “hands off” relationship with God and delegate leadership to others so not to worry about it.
 - d) We’ll get more into the specifics in this lesson. What I want you to comprehend is that God can answer our prayers in a negative way in order to teach us a lesson.
 - i) This does not mean that God doesn’t want the best for us. It is about teaching us lessons about doing God’s will versus our will.
 - ii) Let me give you an extreme example: “Lord, I always wanted a fast sports car. Oh Lord, please make it so. This is the 435th time I’ve asked you. Can I please have this car?” Finally God makes it happen. You then proceed to get into an accident after driving recklessly. My point here is that sometimes God allows you to “have your way” just to teach you His way is what we should ask for.
 - a) James said, “Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”” (James 4:15 NIV). His point and my point is prayer is about seeking God’s will and not will for our life. It is ok to bring our petitions and requests to God. What is equally as important is to accept God’s answers. God always answers prayer. Sometimes His answer is no.
2. The specific “be careful what you wish for in Chapters 8 and 9 are about the anointing of a man named Saul as the first King of Israel.
 - a) It is about the end of the era of the Judges and the beginning of the era of the Kings.
 - b) Saul, as Israel’s first king, in summary, was an embarrassment. ☹ You don’t see a lot of positive things written about Saul in the bible or historically.
 - c) Saul is a fulfillment of the Chinese curse of “giving somebody what they want”.
 - i) Saul was picked because he was tall and good-looking. If Hollywood were to typecast a king for Israel, Saul would be the guy. ☺
 - ii) Here is a key verse coming up in a few chapters: “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him (Saul). The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1st Samuel 16:7 NIV).
 - iii) In a sense, that last sentence in 1st Samuel 16:7 is a summary of what is going to happen in this lesson and the next few chapters.
 - iv) The Israelites wanted a king. They liked Saul because of his outward appearance. Saul may have been the right guy on the outside but was the wrong guy on the inside. We’ll discover Saul is the kind of king who “lived by his wits” instead of trusting God. Much of 1st Samuel is about Saul’s rise and fall.
 - d) The modern application and lesson of all of this is about understanding what is God’s will for our lives. God is not a genie-in-a-box for us to give commands to. We serve God and not the other way around. Sometimes God does give us what we want as that is the only way for us to learn to serve Him and not the other way around.
 - e) OK, it’s time to start reading this tragedy. ☹

3. Chapter 8, Verse 1: When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. ⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."
- a) Let's recap a little from the last lesson and summarize what is happening here:
- i) Chapter 7 had a "happily ever after" type of ending. The Israelites just won a big battle with the Philistines. The key is they sought God first as their support and God lead them to victory. Samuel prayed to God to intercede for the Israelites and that was the key to the victory. The last few verses of Chapter 7 tells how Samuel went on a regular 3-city circuit making "judge-decisions" over the people.
 - ii) Chapter 8 describes how Samuel is now old and he puts his two sons in charge.
 - iii) The two sons have "good Jewish names", but the only fact stated about their lives is that are more interested in money than in justice.
 - iv) The elders of Israel knew Samuel's sons were corrupt and ask Samuel to appoint them a king just like the other nations around them have.
 - v) OK, so far, not so good. ☺
- b) Chapter 8 opens with the fact that Samuel's kids were corrupt. The first question to ponder is, "Why did Samuel's kids go bad?"
- i) There is a lot of commentary speculation on this one, but it is just that.
 - ii) Remember Samuel grew up with Eli the High Priest. While Eli was loyal to God, his sons were corrupt. Some speculate that Samuel learned "bad parenting skills" from Eli. The point is Eli ignored his sons for the sake of his job. Some speculate that Samuel also ignored his sons for the sake of his job and thus they rebelled.
 - iii) With all of that said, I personally disagree with that theory. I believe the text is drawing a parallel between Samuel's sons rejecting God and the people of Israel rejecting God. Let me explain further.
 - iv) First, we have to accept the hard-fact of free will. We can send our children off to Christian schools all of their life, be great examples, live the perfect Christian life and once in awhile, you still get "bad egg's". In no way am I knocking Christian education, leading by example, etc. The vast majority of times, spending prayer, time and money on your children to raise them with God pays off and pays off well. My point is just to remember that free will exists, and sometimes people simply choose to turn away from God. This maybe the case here.
 - v) My personal view (take it as that) is that God "used" the fact that Samuel's sons rebelled to prepare Samuel for the fact that Israel is about to reject God.
 - a) As we'll read later in the text, Israel is rebelling against God by wanting a king. In a matter of verses, God does not want Israel to have a king "just like everyone else around them". Thus it is about rejection.
 - b) Samuel has to deal with the rejection of his sons. God had do deal with the rejection of "his children (Israel)" at the same time. It is almost as if God allowed Samuel's sons to reject God in order for Samuel to comprehend what God had to deal with. It probably made Samuel a better leader.
 - (1) Does that excuse what Samuel's sons did? No, his two sons are still accountable to God. My point is God "allowed" the circumstance in order to make Samuel a better leader.

- c) As most pastors and bible teachers will tell you, “If you are going to teach on suffering, God makes you understand what suffering is like first”. Personally, I am amazed how my own life often parallels what I teach. It’s not so much I have to go to war like the Israelites, but I have found when it comes to teaching about pain, suffering, rejection, etc. God puts me through situations like that in order to communicate His Word better.
 - d) What Christians learn is that God often allows us to go through suffering in order for us to comfort others going through the same situation.
 - vi) Which gets back to the opening phrase of “When Samuel grew old”.
 - a) Here was Samuel “making his rounds”, appointing his two sons and possibly thinking, “Well, its time for me to kick back and retire now and let my sons take over”.
 - b) Now that Samuel is old, God still used him to anoint Saul and later to anoint King David. Until the day we die we never stop being of service to God. We never know what plans God has for us at any given age.
 - c) Before we move on, I want to give a quick lesson about these two sons.
 - i) Their crime was “accepting bribes and perverting justice” as stated in Verse 3.
 - ii) Notice the leaders of Israel rejected Samuel’s sons for leadership.
 - iii) My point is as a leader, if you are not willing to “do what’s right” for the sake of money, you will lose every time. Never compromise your integrity for anything or anyone.” Once you have a reputation that “you can be bought”, no one takes you seriously and you lose credibility. That is the case of Samuel’s two sons.
 - iv) One of God’s requirements of us is to “act justly”. If you’re not sure what that means, think about Samuel’s two sons and do the opposite. ☺
 - a) “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8 NIV)
 - b) This is about “doing the right thing” even if there is financial incentive to do otherwise. To fear God is far more important than financial gain. Remember that God knows your needs and provides.
4. Verse 6: But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD.
- a) The Nation of Israel collectively told Samuel to “give us a king”. I’m speculating that Samuel met with a large representative of leaders from all 12 tribes. Remember that Samuel was their leader at this time. This “displeased” Samuel as he took it as rejection.
 - b) There is a little application here that we all (myself included) should remember:
 - i) At times of anger, turn to God first.
 - ii) It sounds so logical, but think how often we shout out in anger or get into an argument. If we can just pray first, our perspective on things often changes.
 - c) In Verse 7, God answers this prayer.
 - i) Samuel was the spiritual leader of Israel. He understood that turning to God first in a bad situation can be the only hope.
 - ii) You may say, “Well that’s fine for Samuel. I’m not a pastor or a “spiritual leader”.
 - a) First of all, we are all spiritual “leaders”. If you are single, you are the spiritual leader of a household of one. If you are a parent, you are a spiritual leader over your children. There is also the call for all of us to pray for our church or any other Christian group God calls us to support.

- b) You may not be president of that organization, but I'll argue that being the prayer-leader (secretly make yourself one!) of any organization is far more important than the leader itself.
 - c) When you see a problem arise in any "group" you are called to pray for, do that first. That is the great lesson of Samuel here.
- 5. Verse 7: And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.
 - a) Here comes the key point of the chapter (that means pay attention! ☺). God is saying "they're not rejecting you, they are rejecting me".
 - i) Samuel thought that demand for a king was a rejection of him as a leader. Samuel thought, "I'm not doing that good of a job if these people want a king." God is telling Samuel, "Son, it's not about you. It's about me. Don't take it personally".
 - ii) The first lesson to learn here is that "the world does not revolve around us". Life is a lot less painful when we realize that sometimes, "it has nothing to do with us".
 - b) Now comes the big theological question: Did God want Israel to have a king?
 - i) If you just read these verses, you would think not. It reads like God just wanted himself to be their king and not want a king like the surrounding nations.
 - ii) Yet, way back in Genesis, God promised Abraham that there would be kings among his descendants (Genesis 17:16).
 - iii) Look what else Moses said hundreds of years earlier, "When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite." Deuteronomy 17:14-15 NIV).
 - c) Getting back to 1st Samuel, the issue is not that the Israelites wanted a king, but the fact that they are rejecting God from ruling over their lives.
 - i) Let me try to paraphrase: "Hey God, we just want to go back to making a living. We don't want to have to depend upon you all the time for our survival. We just want a government like everyone else around us. We'll just pay some taxes and let them deal with military. This way, we can go back to our lives."
 - ii) The rejection is not about having a government leader (i.e., a king), but not wanting to collectively seek God as a nation. The point is God specifically choose the Nation of Israel as His witness to the surrounding world. In exchange, they would not act like the surrounding nations. Their primary focus would be on God and God would turn around and protect them.
 - iii) Which of course leads to us. If we as Christians act "just like everyone else", what kind of witness is that for God? Jesus said people will know we are his disciples if we love one another. (John 13:34). If people can't see a difference in our lives, then we are failing to be His witness.
 - iv) Further, God is trying to teach that following Him can be difficult. Whatever we give up in this life cannot be compared to the eternal rewards of living for God.
 - a) "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Heb. 11:24-26 NIV).

6. Verse 9: Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."
- a) God is about to give Saul a warning about what this king-they-want will demand.
 - b) God wants the Israelites to make an informed decision about choosing a king. The point is when this king demands this-and-that, the Israelites cannot use ignorance as an excuse.
7. Verse 10: Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king.¹¹ He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots.¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants.¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants.¹⁶ Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use.¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves.¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."
- a) Let me paraphrase: "OK, folks, you want a king? This guy will demand taxes. He'll draft your children into service and take the best of what you've got. Further, after you start complaining that this king does all of this, I'm not going to help you as I warned you he'll do all of this (notice Verse 18)."
 - b) The sad truth is God does the same with us in His word:
 - i) The "problem" of knowing your bible is that we are now accountable. The bible teaches the consequences of sin, so we shouldn't be surprised when we suffer.
 - ii) God does not bluntly tell us today, "Now if you go out today and do this and that, here is what will happen to you." What God does say is, "Look folks, I gave you a bible to study and I gave you good teachers to show you how to apply this (e.g., from church pastors, good bible radio, etc.). Therefore, you as believers have no excuse when you fail to do what I ask you to do.
8. Verse 19: But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us.²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."
- a) Verses 19-20 are among the saddest in the bible. Let me paraphrase, "Look God, we still agree to come to synagogue. We'll go through the rituals and eat kosher." We just don't want to have to think about you on a regular basis. We just need a king to protect us from invaders. We want to be like everyone else. It's nothing personal, Lord." ☺
 - b) This is not about God not wanting the Israelites to have a king. That was clear back to the days of Moses. This is about their motivation for wanting a king. They were looking for a king for guidance and protection as opposed to God himself for guidance and protection.
 - c) Before we "tisk-tisk" the Israelites, ☺ it's time to personalize these verses.
 - i) Think about prayers we have asked for that backfired when they were answered.
 - ii) We all need to ask ourselves every now and then if there is any aspect of our lives were we want to rule ourselves (we are that king) as opposed to God being in charge. I find God answers the same way he answers to the Israelites. God says to us, "OK, you want to be in charge of some aspect of your life? Be my guest!" ☺ After we have messed up for awhile and turn back to God is when he takes over.

9. Verse 21: When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. ²² The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."
- a) I give Samuel some credit here. He understood how the people rejected God.
 - b) Samuel didn't stand up and say, "OK, but don't say I didn't warn you! Boy are you guys going to get it!" ☺
 - i) The first thing Samuel did after listening to the rejection was to turn back to God in prayer. That needs to be our first reaction as well when we recognize sin.
 - ii) After the collective rejection, Samuel turns to God for further instruction.
 - iii) I also see some patience in Samuel. We don't read of Samuel asking God to name the king today. Samuel tells the people to go back home. Samuel understood the consequences of what was happening and is now waiting on God's timing.
 - c) And now, we come to Chapter 9, which is our introduction to King Saul.
10. Chapter 9, Verse 1: There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. ² He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites--a head taller than any of the others.
- a) Chapter 9 gives us the background for King Saul. This chapter is the circumstances leading up to the point where Samuel anoints him as the king.
 - b) In that culture, stating one's genealogy is similar to us stating our full name. People of that time era didn't have last names as much as they were son of... and grandson of...
 - c) Verse 1 says that Saul's father Kish was a "man of standing". Other translations say he was rich (NKJV) or a man of valor (NABS). The idea is that Saul's father was prominent.
 - d) We are going to see a "picture" painted in this chapter that Saul is everything the world would want in a leader.
 - i) Saul comes from a prominent family background.
 - ii) Saul is good looking and taller than any one else.
 - iii) It is almost as if he is groomed for the part.
 - iv) If you read chapter 9 as a whole what you notice is a lack of any interest in the things of God. I'm sure Saul had a basic Jewish education and attended all the feast days, but you get the impression by reading this chapter that God is a "non-issue" to Saul. He's more interested in the family business.
11. Verse 3: Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys." ⁴ So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them. ⁵ When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, "Come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us."
- a) Saul's father owned a lot of donkeys. Donkeys were a valuable commodity as they could carry large loads. It was the ancient equivalent of the pick-up truck. ☺
 - b) To summarize this paragraph, some of the family donkeys were lost. Saul's father told Saul to go find them and take along a family servant. Saul went from one location to another trying to find the donkeys. After a few days Saul started thinking, "You know, I've been gone so long now my father is going to stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about where I'm going."

- c) This whole escapade of the lost donkeys is going to lead Saul to Samuel.
 - i) A point to consider is one never knows why God has you going through some situation. You may be complaining about having to do some menial chore like finding dads' donkeys. ☺ God may be using that event for some other plan.
12. Verse 6: But the servant replied, "Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let's go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take."
- a) The servant suggests to Saul that there is a man of God in this town and maybe he can tell where the donkeys went.
 - b) This little verse "speaks volumes" about where Saul's heart was toward God.
 - i) Saul did not say, "Hey, there is a man of God in this town? Great, maybe we can talk with him for a little while and learn more about God!"
 - ii) Samuel was prominently known in all of Israel among those who were interested in things of God. If you or your family visited the main temple, you would know who Samuel is. The war with the Philistines just happened in recent times and Samuel was the one who interceded to God and help the Israelites defeat the Philistines. That was from the last chapter.
 - iii) My point here is Saul is essentially unaware of who Samuel is. That fact alone speaks loudly of Saul's relationship with God.
 - iv) Saul's servant wasn't much better. ☺ It wasn't like the servant said, "Hey Samuel lives here. You know, the guy who is judging Israel. Let's talk to him." The servant describes Samuel as if he is some fortune-teller that can be bought.
13. Verse 7: Saul said to his servant, "If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?"⁸ The servant answered him again. "Look," he said, "I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take."
- a) This is another verse that speaks volumes about where Saul's heart is toward God.
 - b) In this verse Saul is wondering what gift can he give to the man of God in order to get the information he needs.
 - i) Saul comes from a wealthy family. Saul is saying in a sense, "Hey, I know how the world works. You have to spend money to make money. Everybody has a price. We have to give this guy a few bucks in order to get the information we need." ☺
 - c) Getting back to the big-picture, what we are seeing is that God is picking, as the first King of Israel a man with no significant interest toward God. God is giving the Israelites "what they want". The Israelites wanted a king like all the other nations. They are rejecting God with this request. God is giving the people what they want, which is a leader that reflects their ambiguity toward God. Saul is a reflection of what the Israelites wanted.
14. Verse 9: (Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)
- a) This verse is a notation to the reader of that day as the terms "seer" and "prophet" were confusing as the meaning has changed.
 - b) There, don't you feel better now that you've read this verse? ☺
 - c) A "seer" literally means one who sees things. It is the idea of one who has a special vision to see the future. The word "prophet" and "prophecy" have the idea of "to make shine forth". For example, if one has the ability to take God's word and explain it well and give good illustrations, that counts as a prophet. Prophecy includes future predictions but it also includes anyone who can make the God's word "shine".
 - d) The point of this verse is the terms were used interchangeably at that time, even though the technical meanings are different.
 - e) Meanwhile, back to Saul and Samuel. ☺

15. Verse 10: "Good," Saul said to his servant. "Come, let's go." So they set out for the town where the man of God was.
- a) The word "good" refers to the fact Saul's servant had a little bit of money on him so that they could pay the seer to state where the donkeys were. They went off to town.
16. Verse 11: As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and they asked them, "Is the seer here?" ¹² "He is," they answered. "He's ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. ¹³ As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time."
- a) This paragraph is showing how special Samuel was to those who sought God.
 - b) To summarize the paragraph, when Saul and his servants got to town, the first people they saw were some women drawing water at the well. The women said in effect, "Yes, the man of God is here. We're having a big feast to honor God while's he here. Nobody eats until he (Samuel) blesses the meal."
 - c) What is missing is any comment by Saul saying, "Oh that's nice. Can we join the meal?" Saul doesn't say, "Wow, this man must be pretty special. I wonder if he'll see us."
 - d) The big picture of this section is about Samuel's lack of any interest in the things of God in compared to his business at hand.
 - e) If you want to see if someone has a heart for God, you don't necessarily have to ask them any formal questions about theology. Sometimes you can just watch their actions and tell whether or not they are seeking God in their lives. This is what we are seeing with Saul. He is a "businessman" and is just interested in solving his missing donkey problem.
17. Verse 14: They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place. ¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ¹⁶ "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me." ¹⁷ When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people."
- a) This next section now gives the story from Samuel's perspective.
 - b) God told Samuel a day earlier that Saul was the guy who would be the king. A bit of trivia is God refers to Saul as the "leader" over his people as opposed to the king. It is a subtle put down.
 - c) It was in the last chapter that Samuel made the big speech to the leaders of Israel that God will give them a king who they want. We don't know the time lapse between Chapters 8 and 9. In the end of Chapter 8 was Samuel giving a big warning to the people what this king will be like. Samuel then went about his business waiting on God's timing for this king to be revealed.
 - i) There is an important little lesson here about waiting on God's timing. God told Samuel that He would pick a king. We don't read Samuel in the last chapter saying, "Who is he God? Where do I find this guy?" Instead, Samuel appears to go about his normal routine. He patiently waits for God to work on His timing.
 - d) Before we move on, notice God says "my people" in Verse 16. God says it twice.
 - i) Despite the fact that the nation of Israel wanted a king to rule over them instead of God himself, God still calls them "my people".

- ii) There is an important lesson there in that the Israelites have been, are and will always be God's "chosen people". Despite their sins, faults and rejection of God, God still calls them "my people". This is why Christians today still honor Jewish people as God's "chosen people". They are wrong for rejecting Jesus, but they can't "undo" the unconditional promises made to them by God.
 - iii) The same principal applies to Christians. As believers we are "adopted" into God's family (see Ephesians 1:5). Once we are part of God's chosen people, and continue to trust in Jesus for payment of our sins, we can't "undo our son-ship" by sinning too much. It would be a like a parent seeing their child going astray. The parent may be angry, the parent may punish the child, but that child will always be their child no matter what. You can't "undo" that.
 - a) That does not give Christian a license to go live however they want. That is abusing the grace that God gave us. God calls us into a life of obedience out of gratitude for what Jesus did for us.
 - iv) My point here is to comprehend how much God loves us even when we mess up.
 - e) Going back to the verses, I wonder what Samuel was thinking staring as Saul.
 - i) Samuel understood God's predictions that Saul would be a disaster as a king.
 - ii) Samuel was told in the last chapter how Saul would drain Israel of taxes and resources in order to set up his government. I have to wonder what Samuel was thinking staring at Saul since Samuel was given a little advanced warning as to what Saul would be like.
 - iii) I'm guessing that Samuel looked at Saul's good looks, he looked at Saul's heights and thought, "Yup, unfortunately, this is just what the people want."
18. Verse 18: Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, "Would you please tell me where the seer's house is?" ¹⁹ "I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart." ²⁰ As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and all your father's family?"
- a) Let me summarize: Saul and his servant walked up to Samuel, not knowing who he was. Samuel in term, even before Saul spoke said in effect, "I know about your donkey problem. Don't worry, they are home. Come with me, as you and I are having dinner with me. Oh and by the way, remember the word going around Israel some time back that the people are asking God for a king? Well, you happen to be the guy that God picked." (That is the idea behind the last sentence of Verse 20).
 - b) Saul had to be impressed. First of all, Samuel answered his donkey question even before Saul explained to him about the missing donkeys. That fact alone validated Samuel as a prophet to Saul.
 - i) I'm guessing here, but Saul was probably struck by the fact that Samuel didn't even ask for any money or a gift before explaining the donkeys were found.
 - c) The last sentence is Samuel telling Saul that he will be the king.
 - i) The key phrase is the "desire of Israel". Let's fact it, I'm sure word got all around Israel that they wanted a king. I'm sure Saul and his family heard this news. We have no record of Saul having any interest in this job.
19. Verse 21: Saul answered, "But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?"
- a) Saul understood that Samuel was predicting he would be the king. The first thing to come out of Saul's mouth is "Why me?" I'm not a politician or a leader.

- b) Of the 12 tribes of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin was the smallest in number. In the Book of Judges, the tribe of Benjamin went to war against the other tribes and lost. That tribe dwindled to be the smallest in number. (Judges 20-21).
20. Verse 22: Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited--about thirty in number. ²³ Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside." ²⁴ So the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion, from the time I said, 'I have invited guests.'" And Saul dined with Samuel that day.
- a) So here is the town-banquet with about 30 people at the table. Samuel had Saul seated at the place of honor and a special cut of meat was set before him.
- b) Samuel was publicly making the point that Saul was to be honored.
- c) I'm guessing Saul was sitting there in shock trying to take all of this in. An hour ago, all Saul cared about was finding his lost donkeys. The next think you know a "religious guy who predicts the future" is telling him he's going to be king of Israel.
21. Verse 25: After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. ²⁶ They rose about daybreak and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get ready, and I will send you on your way." When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. ²⁷ As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us"--and the servant did so--"but you stay here awhile, so that I may give you a message from God."
- a) In the next verse, which is Verse 1 of Chapter 10 (don't worry, I won't. ☺) is the actual point where Samuel anoints Saul as the king. This is not the official point where Saul becomes the king. Later in Chapter 10 is more of a formal ceremony.
- b) These last verses of Chapter 9 take place after the meal as described in the previous set of verses. In essence, Samuel tells Saul, "Look, tell your servant to go on ahead of you. I want you to stay with me for a little while we have a little talk."
- c) I'm guessing what is not said in the text is Samuel giving advice to Saul on what it takes to be a godly leader for Israel. The text says they have a talk, and the next verse (Chapter 10) is Saul anointing Samuel as the leader of Israel.
22. It's time to step back and take this all in.
- a) We had a whole chapter long dialogue explaining how Saul met Samuel and how God told Samuel that Saul would be the first king.
- b) A question to wonder is, "Why are all the details of this chapter included?" Let's face it, the text could have just said, "God picked this guy Saul to be the first king of Israel, and Samuel anointed him in order to make it official". Instead, we have this detailed story about lost donkeys, a servant, God revealing to Samuel 24-hours prior to the event about Saul coming to him. The question is, why all of these details and what does any of this have to do with my life? (I love that question! ☺)
- i) First, let's discuss the "why": Much of 1st Samuel is to show the contrast between King David, the 2nd King of Israel versus King Saul, the first King of Israel.
- ii) Look at what 1st Samuel says about King Saul and King David in Chapter 13:
- a) "But now your (Saul's) kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him (David) leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD'S command. (1st Samuel 13:14 NIV).
- b) God wanted a king to rule over Israel, but the king God had in mind was David. In order to show the Israelites what they do need as a king, first God needed to show the Israelites what they don't need as a king. Thus God picked Saul to be the king.

- c) What Chapter 9 does is give us some idea of Saul's background prior to his reign. All of these details show Saul's lack of any interest in the things of God. Saul was picked not because he was a godly man, but because he fit what the people wanted at that time.
- c) OK, on to the more important question: What does any of this have to do with my life? Why should I care about all of these details of Saul's early life?
 - i) There are all sorts of applications. Let me pick a few:
 - a) Let's start with picking leaders for our local church. Some say the ideal elder is one who is upstanding in the community, a good business leader and is well respected. OK, so the guy doesn't read his bible every day, at least he's respected around here for his financial success. Besides you should see how bad our church budget is. Congratulations, you just picked a "Saul" to run your church. ☺ What we are supposed to do is look at a man's heart and see how it is toward God. That is how we raise up Godly leaders.
 - b) I should append this thought by saying we need to pick people with a heart for God to be our church leaders. This does not necessarily apply to other aspects. For example, if I am going to have surgery, I personally don't care if the guy is a Christian or not. I want to have the best-qualified doctor operate on me, regardless of his or her personal life.
 - ii) The other example, which I'll be discussing throughout 1st Samuel has to do with our desires versus God's desires.
 - a) One of the big picture ideas to see about Saul and David is Saul is a guy who wants to do things "his way" as opposed to David who seeks God's will in all that he does. I'm not saying David is perfect, just a man who seeks to please God in all of his life.
 - b) Saul is the kind of guy who seeks to do what is best for him. We all have part of that nature inside of us. Chapter 9 gives Saul's background. What is missing is any sort of interest in God in his life.
 - c) There is a model throughout the scripture of "the flesh comes first then the spirit". It is the idea that our human (sinful) nature was born first, and when we become born-again is when we seek after the things of God. In that picture, Saul has to come first prior to David. It fits that model that runs throughout the bible.
 - iii) Saul asks the question at the end of this chapter, "Why me? Why did God pick me? The answer unfortunately, is that it is what the people wanted.
 - a) This gets back to my opening question of, "Be careful what you wish for". The people of Israel wanted to be dependant upon a king and wanted a king that reflected that wish. God gave them what they wanted in order to teach them what is best for their life.
 - b) That lesson unfortunately applies to us as well. God sometimes gives us we ask for as opposed to what is best for us. Such "gifts" are designed to draw us closer to God and teach us to ask for God's will instead of our will.
 - c) These chapters should teach us to be careful what we pray for. Our prayers need to be focused on God's will for our life. Again, it is ok to ask God for things that are on our heart. The issue is when we pray, are we asking for things that God doesn't want for our life? Are we asking for things that the bible teaches us not to ask for? That is what the Israelites did and that is what the Israelites God.

d) The tragedy continues in the next lesson. ☺

23. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, Our greatest purpose in life is to do your will. The greatest joy we can experience is to be used by You and to live to glorify You. Forgive us for asking for things that glorify ourselves. We ask for blessings for our life, and we know that you will provide those blessings out of Your love for us, and not our goodness. Helps us to seek you, first and foremost in our lives. Help us so that the lessons of Saul not be wasted on our own lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.