

“LONG LIVE THE KING!”

I. Introduction

- A. “How can this man save us?”
1. It is a question that arises in a variety of contexts.
 2. When a football team loses its star quarterback to injury, fans wonder if the backup will be able to lead the team to victory.
 3. In a presidential campaign season, candidates try to persuade voters that they will be able to fix what is wrong with our nation.
 4. When your car is making some strange noise, you take it to the mechanic in hopes that he will be able to figure out what is wrong with it.
- B. In the passage we have just read, the question “How can this man save us?” is asked by men who looked upon Saul with derision and scorn.
1. The fact that the text refers to these men as “worthless fellows” makes it clear that they were wrong to take this view of Saul.
 2. This is a little surprising given what we know about Saul’s tenure as Israel’s king.
 3. The same Spirit who rushed upon him and empowered him to bring about the great deliverance described in these verses was eventually taken away from him.
 4. Saul’s reign ended in disgrace.
 5. Nevertheless, it began on a very promising note.
 6. We hear echoes of the great deliverances recorded in the book of Judges in this passage.

7. In spite of Saul's eventual failure, this text gave Israel hope that God would raise up a man who would be able to save them from all that oppresses them.

II. Confirmation (10:17-27)

- A. When Samuel called the people together at Mizpah, it was a momentous occasion.
 1. Israel's first king was about to be publicly selected.
 2. Yet Samuel opened the assembly by repeating God's rebuke of Israel for rejecting him as their king and insisting on having a king like the nations.
 3. Why would Samuel do this?
 4. Why get things kicked off on such a sour note?
 5. Why be so negative?
 6. Because it was the truth.
 7. God was not going to let his people forget what they had done.
 8. God keeps confronting us with the truth of his Word until we repent.
- B. The reason why Samuel called this assembly was because Saul's private anointing had to be publicly confirmed.
 1. This was done through the casting of lots, probably using the priestly Urim and Thummim.
 2. During the Old Testament era, and even in one instance in the New Testament, God used this as a method of revealing his will.

3. It was important for Saul's anointing to be publicly confirmed in this manner.
4. It would not have been enough to have Samuel simply declare that God had revealed to him that Saul was going to be Israel's king.
5. If there were worthless men who protested God's choice of Saul even when it was revealed publicly through the casting of lots, it stands to reason that others would have protested if God's choice had simply been declared to them by Samuel.
6. As Matthew Henry explains, Samuel knew "the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them who would not acquiesce in the choice if it depended upon his single testimony; and therefore, that every tribe and every family of the chosen tribe might please themselves with having a chance for it, he calls them to the lot... By this method it would appear to all the people... that Saul was appointed of God to be king."

C. When the lot fell to Saul, Saul could not be found.

1. We don't know why, but for some reason Saul had hidden himself among the baggage, a term that probably refers to military equipment.
2. This may seem like a minor detail, but there is good reason to think that it is included here because it has some significance.
3. It brings to mind the donkeys that Saul was unable to find without God's revelation.
4. In fact, the Hebrew verb "found" was used twelve times in 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16.
5. God is telling Israel that they will not be able to find a king for themselves without his word.
6. Just as Saul never found his donkeys until God told him where they were, Israel cannot find their king until God tells them where to

look.

- D. After Saul was set forth as the one whom the Lord had chosen, Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship and recorded them in a book that was placed before the Lord as a testimony.
1. Both Saul and the people needed to know how this office was to function in Israel.
 2. In spite of the people's demand for a king like the nations, their king would not rule like the kings of the nations.
 3. Israel's king was subject to God and to God's law.
- E. Another thing that took place after the public confirmation of God's choice of Saul was that different people responded to their new king in different ways.
1. Many of the people shouted out, "Long live the king!"
 2. Others referred to as "men of valor," men whose hearts were stirred by God, committed themselves to Saul's service.
 3. And then there were the worthless fellows, men who were resentful of Saul's authority and unimpressed by his noble stature, men who said, "How can this man save us?"
 4. Those words bring to mind what some of the people said about Jesus in John 6: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" (John 6:42)
 5. The differing responses to King Saul remind us of the differing responses that people have to Jesus.

III. Empowerment (11:1-11)

- A. As we come to chapter 11, we learn about the first crisis that Saul had to deal with as Israel's king.
1. Nahash the Ammonite had laid siege to the city of Jabesh-gilead.
 2. The Ammonites were descended from Lot's son Ben-Ammi, and they lived on eastern side of the Jordan River, not far from Jabesh-gilead.
 3. The men of Jabesh-gilead responded to this siege by asking Nahash for a treaty.
 4. They were willing to concede defeat and serve as Nahash's vassals.
 5. Nahash's response reveals what kind of man he was.
 6. He was willing to grant Jabesh-gilead a treaty, but the terms would be unbearably severe.
 7. He would only give them a treaty if all of the men agreed to let him gouge out their right eyes.
- B. In addition to the sheer cruelty of such a measure, it would have served a practical purpose for Nahash.
1. Men with gouged out right eyes were unfit for military service because the left eye was typically hidden behind a shield.
 2. Men without right eyes would not be able to see in battle.
 3. If all the men of the city were blinded in their right eye it would have rendered these people permanent slaves.
 4. It would have thoroughly humiliated and discouraged them.
 5. They would be left utterly unable to protect themselves and their families.

- C. Nahash's tactics were nothing short of demonic.
 - 1. He was doing the same thing that Satan tries to do to us in our warfare with him.
 - 2. He exploits our failures and weaknesses in order to humiliate and demoralize us.
 - 3. He tries to bring us to the point of sheer despair.

- D. When Saul heard about the plight of Jabesh-gilead, he quickly summoned all Israel to himself and prepared to deliver the besieged city.
 - 1. More importantly, the text tells us that "the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled."
 - 2. This brings to mind how the Spirit had equipped Samson to bring deliverance to Israel in the book of Judges.
 - 3. And there are other similarities between Saul's actions in this text and the actions of some of Israel's other judges.
 - 4. The idea conveyed by this is that the Lord was raising up Saul as a sort of super-judge.
 - 5. After mustering the people and dividing them into three companies, Saul made a surprise attack on the Ammonites in the early morning and completely routed them.

IV. Renewal (11:12-15)

- A. After seeing Saul bring about such a great victory, the people remembered the words of the worthless men and urged that they be put to death.
 - 1. But Saul responds with a dignity that will be sorely lacking later on in his life.

2. He says, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel."
 3. This was not a day for vengeance but for worship.
 4. And notice that Saul does not take the credit for this deliverance.
 5. He says that it was the Lord who worked salvation for Israel.
 6. He understood that it is not the king in his own strength who will bring deliverance, but the king empowered by God's Spirit.
 7. As the Lord says in Zechariah 4:6, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."
- B. Saul had already been privately anointed and publicly selected as Israel's king.
1. In the closing verses of chapter 11, he is officially installed as king.
 2. This takes place after Samuel's summons to go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom.
 3. Gilgal was the place where Joshua had set up twelve stones as a memorial of how the Lord had brought Israel into the Promised Land.
 4. On that historic occasion, Joshua told the people, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." (Joshua 4:21-24)
 5. When Samuel spoke of renewing the kingdom he was calling the people to renew their allegiance to the Lord and to renew their trust

in his power to save them.

6. The renewal of the kingdom was a renewal of the covenant.
 7. Covenant renewal is a regular part of our lives as God's people today.
 8. Every time we gather for public worship, and especially when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are renewing our trust in Christ and our allegiance to him.
- C. One other thing to note about this passage is how it shows us something of the depths of God's patience and kindness toward his wayward people.
1. In demanding a king like the nations, Israel was rejecting the Lord as their king.
 2. Even though the Lord gave them the king they wanted, he still used that king, flawed as he was, to restrain them from their sin and to renew his rule over them as their true King.

V. Conclusion

- A. When the people cried out, "Long live the king!", they were expressing their hope that Saul's reign would be a source of enduring blessing for them.
- B. Sadly, that was not to be.
- C. In spite of the promising beginning to Saul's reign, things went downhill pretty fast.
- D. This reminds us that Jesus Christ is the only King who satisfies our longing for lasting deliverance, unshakeable security, and unending blessings.