

CHOOSING A KING.

– 1 SAM. 10:17-27. – JULY 12. –

Golden Text: – "The Lord is our king; he will save us." – Isa. 33:22.

ALTHOUGH the people of Israel were self-willed in the matter of desiring a king like the nations about them, it is to their credit that they desired the Lord, through his prophet Samuel, to make the selection of the one who should fill the office. Undoubtedly, however, men of the various tribes were ambitious for the office. To suppose otherwise would be to disregard our knowledge of and experience with human nature. If the petty offices of ward and town politics are eagerly sought and almost fought for at the primaries and polls today, what wire pulling might we not expect if it were determined that a king should be chosen? We fear that a contrast between the people of Christendom and the Israelites on this subject would result unfavorably to the former. In all the countries constituting "Christendom" how few there are who, when choosing their officers, give any consideration whatever to the Lord's choice for the position! Even when we think of the choice of ministers in the denominations of the Church nominal, we find the contrast rather unfavorable; for the choice of a bishop or minister is indeed, apparently, very rarely referred to the Lord exclusively, with the desire to have his will and his choice, and none other, selected.

Guided by the Lord, Saul, a young man from an influential family, of the tribe of Benjamin, was anointed to be king. He was brought to the prophet for the anointing by a peculiar train of circumstances. His father owned a valuable herd of asses which strayed away, and Saul, after seeking them in vain, appealed to the prophet for assistance in locating them, and thus he showed his confidence in God, and in Samuel as his prophet. Nothing is recorded respecting the young man's interest in religious matters up to this time; but he is mentioned favorably as a "goodly" young man. After his anointing he kept the

matter secret with becoming modesty, waiting for the Lord's plan to develop more fully and to bring him ultimately into prominence before the nation. It is quite probable that this secretiveness was at the instigation of Samuel.

In due time Samuel sent word to the Elders of Israel to meet him at Mizpeh (watch-tower), and upon their arrival the matters of this lesson followed. Samuel rehearsed to them the Lord's favor as it had been [R3218 : page 205] with them during the previous centuries, beginning with their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. He impressed upon them the fact that all of the Lord's care over them had been for their good; that no king could have done them better service than their great King; and that no government could have been more to their happiness than that they had enjoyed and which they were now rejecting in their request for a king, which petition the Lord had determined to grant. In harmony with this they had assembled – not all the people, but representatives from all the tribes and from the various families of each tribe. Ignoring the anointing of Saul already accomplished, Samuel proceeded to cast lots, that the people might thus know that the choice to be made was the Lord's choice and not Samuel's. It was the custom at that time to have the High Priest's ephod in use on such occasions, and a pocket in the ephod was made the receptacle for slips of paper, or sometimes for the precious stones representing the different tribes and families. First, a choice was made amongst the tribes to determine in which one would be found the man whom the Lord had chosen to become their king. Doubtless the princes of the tribe of Ephraim remembered the good promises prophetically given by Jacob respecting them, and probably thought that the Lord's choice would fall upon their tribe. The princes of Manasseh may also have remembered the good promises respecting their tribe, and may not have been without hope respecting the lot. The men of Judah, unquestionably, would call to mind the promise that a lawgiver should come from Judah, and would have strong hopes respecting the result of the lot. But when the lot was cast, when the hand pulled forth from the ephod pocket the stone representing the tribe of Benjamin, the matter

was decided, and in general the people bowed to the Lord's decision. Next, the leading families, or clans, of the tribe of Benjamin were representatively placed in the ephod, and the hand drew forth as the Lord's choice the name representing the family of Matri; and again, the various members of the family of Matri were representatively placed in the ephod bag, and the hand drew forth the name of Saul, the son of Kish. Thus was publicly demonstrated the Lord's choice, which the prophet and Saul himself already knew. We can imagine the stir and commotion to find the man thus chosen to be the king, respecting whom but few of the people seemed to have the slightest knowledge. They sought him everywhere, but could not find him, and again the inspired oracle was sought to indicate whether he would be found, and where. The Lord's answer was that he had hidden himself amongst the stuff – the baggage which, as was the custom, was probably piled up, surrounding the camp as a barricade. Saul evidently had full confidence in the Lord's foreknowledge and that the lots drawn would confirm the prophet's declaration to him and his anointing. The modesty which led him to hide and, to some extent, to shrink from the honor to be conferred, is very gratifying to all right-minded people. Would that we could see more of this modesty amongst the chief ones of this world and also amongst the chief ones of nominal spiritual Israel! We should each mark the beauty of such humble-mindedness, and seek to cultivate the same quality in our own hearts and lives – however different this may make us from the majority of the world.

When Saul stood amongst the people he was head and shoulders above them, probably seven feet tall. His natural qualities would thus appeal strongly to the people of his time, who even in picturing their rulers represented them as many times larger than the average man. Then Samuel introduced him, saying, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" and the responsive shout of the people was, "God save the king!" or literally, Lord, let the king live – the usual greeting to their kings.

We are reminded of the fact that God is now about to establish a Kingdom in the world and is choosing a King. The Millennial kingdom might not be necessary in the form in which it will be introduced, were the people in the right attitude of heart to desire and to obey the divine will; but they prefer to have the laws of righteousness *enforced* rather than voluntarily to submit themselves to the Lord. In due time they shall have a king, Immanuel – like Saul in some respects, but very unlike him in others. The Lord is now selecting this King Immanuel. He is passing by the great tribes, the prominent people, and choosing the little and the humble – not many great, not many wise, not many learned has God chosen, but the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom. (1 Cor. 1:26-28.) The selection is going on in the sight of all the people. They will be witnesses, when all the steps of the election of God have been taken, that the choice is the Lord's without peradventure; and yet the Lord foreknew his choice in advance of this public selection. He foreknew Jesus as the Head of the Church, the Head of the great King; he anointed him in advance "with the oil of gladness above his fellows," to be King; yet, so far as the people in general are concerned, they know not the Lord's anointed – the matter is kept secret for a time. The members of the body of Christ must all be like the Head. As the Apostle declares, God has predestinated that every one who shall become a member of that body shall be "conformed to the image of his Son." (Rom. 8:29.) By and by, when the outward election is complete, when **[R3218 : page 206]** the world shall come properly to feel its need for a great King, search will be made to find the Lord's Anointed, and he will be found at his second advent. "The desire of all nations shall come"; the Christ of God will be the desired one of all nations. (The name Saul, singularly enough, signifies Desired.) As the men of Israel gave a shout when they recognized Saul's stateliness, so the world of mankind will shout for joy when they shall realize the presence of the Christ of God, the great King, their deliverer from Satan, from misrule, from every enemy – the Lord who "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet – the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Not only shall it be true that the Lord's Anointed One shall be head and shoulders above all

others, "the chiefest amongst ten thousand, the one altogether lovely," but it should also be true to a considerable extent that all those who are intimately associated with the members of the body of Christ in the present life – before he is proclaimed King of the whole world – should be able to recognize the largeness and grandeur of character in those whom the Lord is choosing for this place of honor in the affairs of men. They should be able to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, should see their largeness of heart, their moral heights – should discern in them the spirit of a sound mind.

The record is that a band of Israelites, a bodyguard, at once attached themselves to Saul – men "whose hearts God had touched." They were touched with the realization that the Lord had made this choice, and with the desire to be in accord with the Lord and to support the divine will as it concerned the chosen one, and to cooperate therewith. This is a proper lesson to all of the Lord's people now. It is because we see Jesus to be the Father's choice that we unite ourselves to him; because we see the Father's character manifested in him that we leave all to follow him. Similarly, if we lend our aid, our support to any human being in connection with the divine plan and service, it should be simply upon **[R3219 : page 206]** this ground – not merely a personal magnetism or favoritism, but because our hearts are touched by the Lord with a realization of the leader being of his appointment. Thus our loyalty will always be to God and not to men. Nevertheless, we shall find ourselves co-laboring in a manner most useful and most helpful in the Lord's service; coworkers with God and coworkers with all who are his servants under his appointments. So, doubtless, it will be in the future when the great King complete has taken the reins of government; the best of mankind will flock to him, anxious to know and to do his will and to be in full accord with him as the representative of the heavenly Father and his Kingdom.

The expression "Sons of Belial" signifies children of the Devil, or wicked persons – persons out of harmony with God and not submissive to his arrangements and selections. There are also such in the present

time, who are speaking evil directly or indirectly of such members of the body of Christ as they have contact with; being out of sympathy with the Lord they are out of sympathy with all of his arrangements. Their influence either in the nominal church or out of it is, therefore, against the true interests of the Lord's cause. There will be such in the Millennial age when the Kingdom shall have been established, and of these the Lord speaks in the parable, "Those who would not have me to reign over them." Again they are mentioned by the Apostle (Acts 3:23) saying, "It shall come to pass that the soul who will not obey that prophet shall be cut off from amongst the people." However, we may be sure that they will not be cut off until they have had a full exhibition of the divine power and mercy; – only such as resist after all these opportunities and privileges will be counted worthy of the Second Death.

Very shortly after Saul's appointment to the kingdom he had opportunity to show his ability in delivering the people, for a neighboring king advanced upon Israel with a considerable army. Saul gathered his troops from the various tribes, to the number of 330,000 men, and totally routed Nahash and his army of the Ammonites. This victory cemented the hearts of the people of Israel to their king, and they in their loyalty demanded the execution of the sons of Belial who had spoken against him; but the nobility of King Saul is shown in his refusal to accede to this suggestion, and his saying, "There shall not a man be put to death today." So when the power of the glorious King of the Millennial age shall be manifested in the routing of the enemies of righteousness, the general sentiment of the world toward him will be loyalty, and then he will have an opportunity of showing his mercy and forbearance toward those who during the darkness of the present time have spoken evil of him and sought to oppose his Kingdom. The declaration shall then go forth that none shall die the Second Death on account of Adamic weaknesses, blindness and insubordination; – that none shall die the Second Death except as the result of personal and wilful sin after having been brought to a knowledge of the truth.

Our Golden Text is one the sentiments of which should be deeply impressed upon the hearts of all the Lord's people. The world may cry out, saying, "We have no king but Caesar," but the Lord's people, the Israelites indeed, will feel the reverse of this, – that "the Lord is our king." In harmony with his command, we will honor earthly kings and obey earthly [R3219 : page 207] laws in every particular in which they do not conflict with the divine law; but, nevertheless, above earthly kings, our esteem, homage and obedience must be to him whom the Lord hath appointed, King Immanuel. If he be enthroned in our hearts it will be comparatively easy for us to be loyal to him in our conduct and in our words, wherever we may be. If we deny him, he will also deny us; but if we confess him he will also confess us before the Father and the holy angels – he will save *us* and ultimately through *us* as his Church, his body, he will, according to the original promise, bless all the families of the earth which we, with him, will then inherit. – Gal. 3:29.

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