

THE CHOICE OF A KING

- 1 SAM. 10:1-27. - JULY 12. -

Golden Text: – "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." – 2 Sam. 23:3.

SAMUEL informed Israel that God acceded to their request for a change in the form of their government; that they might have a king like the nations round about them. This lesson details the process by which God's choosing of a king was indicated. Viewed from the standpoint of faith it contains lessons for us daily, indicating how divine supervision takes cognizance of human reason and operates in harmony therewith.

A well-to-do farmer named Kish, residing not far from the present site of Jerusalem, had a son named Saul; tall, manly, well-balanced mentally, but not specially religious. This son was God's choice for Israel's king. In the carrying out of the divine programme, a herd of asses, under Saul's care, was lost, and, after vainly searching for them, he finally bethought him to consult God's prophet, Samuel, who lived not a great distance away. We can see how this lesson itself would be helpful to the young man – drawing out his thought to the fact that all things are known to God, and that the prophet was God's special representative. Samuel's ability to locate the asses gave Saul an increased faith in him as a man of God, and in the message which he gave him, when later the prophet told Saul that he was God's choice for king over Israel, and poured upon him the oil anointing him to that office. It was, doubtless, in harmony with the prophet's advice, that Saul kept the matter of his anointing secret, and went about his business until such time as the Lord's providence should make him known to Israel as the divinely chosen king.

Saul was well suited to the office in various respects. First, he belonged to the small tribe of Benjamin, whose territory lay between that of the two principal tribes, Judah and Ephraim; he would, consequently, be more likely to have the sympathy and cooperation of the people of the most influential tribes, who would have been more likely to have feelings of opposition and jealousy toward any man from an important tribe. We read that he stood head and shoulders above his fellows, and the intimation is that he was quite muscular. In olden times, when physical force had so much to do with military fighting, we can readily see that such a type of man appealed strongly to the sentiments of the people.

Various Scripture lessons convey to us the thought that God's foreknowledge has much to do with many things that to men may appear accidental. Thus, for instance, with Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul. The Scriptures inform us that he was chosen of God to be a special vessel, or servant, from his mother's womb, implying a divine supervision of the prenatal conditions, which affected the general caliber and balance both of his mind and of his body. We think it not unreasonable to assume similarly in respect to King Saul; that his noble stature and physique may have been the result of divine foreordination. However, this divine foreordination and interposition did not affect the free agency of either of these men, of the same name and the same tribe and born more than a thousand years apart. With the conditions favorable in both cases, the free will, free agency **[R4197 : page 198]** was untrammelled; as, for instance, King Saul, later in life, chose an evil way and was not hindered by the Lord from taking it; while Saul of Tarsus, when shown the right way, manifested his loyalty of heart most remarkably. The latter states, however, that notwithstanding the blessing conferred upon him from his mother's womb and the honor that later came to him as an Apostle, he might still, by rejecting the Lord, become a castaway as respects a share in the coming Kingdom.

Another suggestion that may appeal to all the Lord's people is that, while known unto the Lord are all his works from the foundation of the world, these are not known to us, and hence all of us should reverence the Lord and recognize his supervision in the affairs of his consecrated people; specially should they be on the lookout for divine providences and be prompt to follow them. A constant temptation is to view matters from the worldly standpoint and to conclude that our destiny is entirely in our own hands and to forget divine providence in our affairs. Every day this lesson should become more deeply impressed upon us. With each year of Christian experience we should learn to look into the facts and circumstances of life from the standpoint of faith, seeking to note the will of the Lord concerning us in things small as well as great. True, the Lord is not now selecting from amongst his saints a king for Israel, but he is making selections for the Body of the Great King, the Messiah, whose Head is the Lord Jesus Christ and whose members are the "more than conquerors" of this Gospel Age.

"LITTLE IN THINE OWN EYES"

Although Saul was tall and athletic, a wonderful man in his way, he was humble withal, as the Lord testified: "Thou wast little in thine own sight." (1 Sam. 15:17.) This is another characteristic which belongs to those whom the Lord is now choosing to be kings and priests unto God under their Lord in the Millennium. They must really be taller than their fellows in respect to character as New Creatures, even if not according to the flesh; but they must be humble, "little in their own sight." They must realize that they are not worthy of such honor, that it is only of God's grace, and that the honor thus conferred upon them is not merely for themselves, but that they may be used of the Lord in connection with the blessing which he intends to confer upon humanity in and through the Kingdom of his dear Son.

Respecting Saul's homeward journey we read: "And it was so that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him." (1 Sam. 10:9,10.) Verse 6 declares that he "was turned into another man." Forthwith he joined himself to one of the schools of the prophets, which Samuel had established, through which the better education of Israel might be accomplished, especially with respect to religious truths and influences. We may be in doubt as to just what is meant by this statement of Saul's change, but we can have no doubt that it would not signify that God's holy Spirit came upon him as it came upon the Church at Pentecost and as it is with all of the consecrated from that time to the present; because this Pentecostal blessing is a seal of sonship and grants an enlightenment of the mind respecting the deep things of God's Word and plan, such as was not granted to any previous to our Lord's anointing with the Spirit. Respecting this Pentecostal sealing we are informed that the holy Spirit was not yet given, even to the disciples, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Not until Jesus' glorification was the holy Spirit sent forth, because the penalty for sin being upon the race none could be fully accepted of God to the begetting of the holy Spirit to the heavenly nature until after the ransom price for sinners had been paid by our Lord's sacrifice.

The Spirit of God upon Saul was more physical in its manifestation, controlling his words and actions rather than enlightening his mind in respect to the deep things of God. This was true of all the prophets who spake and wrote as they were moved by the holy Spirit, but who did not understand in full degree the things which they uttered. – 1 Pet. 1:10; 2 Pet. 1:21.

Saul's experience gave him practical demonstration of a divine power outside of himself, and thus tended to fix his mind upon the more sober things of life and God's relationship to these. The result was that, returning to his duties as a farmer, he was

thereafter a changed man, or had a new heart, a new purpose. The experiences through which he had passed led his mind out into new channels, new ambitions. The sports of life in which he had previously spent considerable time were unworthy of his attention now, because he had been lifted to a higher plane and had his mind full of conjectures and resolutions respecting the Kingdom; wondering, perhaps, how the Lord would bring it to pass that one so obscure as himself should come to a place of such political prominence in the nation.

Similarly we may suggest that those who believe God's message and accept the anointing of the holy Spirit, typified by the oil poured upon Saul, also find new aims, new impulses, new hopes, new desires, and are also disposed to join themselves to a school of the prophets, to associate with those who are studying the divine Word and will. And similarly these in all of life's affairs are changed men. Yet not similarly either, because the change to these is much greater and of a different kind, as we have already suggested. The Scriptures explain to us that the Lord's people, now being selected for joint-heirship in his Millennial Kingdom, are changed in a most remarkable manner. All things become new to them, and things which they once loved now they hate, and things which once they hated now they love. The ambitions of these are too high to permit of waste of time and energy in the follies of life, which engage the attention of the worldly. The thoughts of the Kingdom fill their hearts and they study to make their calling and their election sure, requiring their time and attention to such a degree that previous pleasures are dead and unsatisfactory in comparison. **[R4198 : page 198]**

GOD'S CHOICE OF SAUL INDICATED

When we read that Samuel called all the people together at Mizpeh, we should understand that it signifies that according to their national organization all the people were represented, not

only as twelve tribes, but by persons representing the different tribes proportionate to the number of persons in the tribe. The proper persons to represent the tribes, we are informed, were chosen by lot; but no matter how, all the tribes were represented, and not all the people were expected to go to Mizpeh.

At the proper time the prophet Samuel stood forth and explained to the people afresh, that they had not done wisely in appealing for a king instead of continuing the Lord's arrangement, but that the Lord was willing to give them an experience along the line which they had preferred, and that they were now come together to ascertain from the Lord who of the hosts of Israel should occupy the important position of king. Accordingly they first inquired of the Lord respecting the tribe in which was the person of his choice. The testing of the twelve rods, representing the twelve tribes, gave the answer that the expected one should be from the tribe of **[R4198 : page 199]** Benjamin. Next the testing as to the different families of the chosen tribe, and next as to which member of the chosen family, the choice falling upon Saul, the son of Kish, as Samuel already knew it would, and as Saul also knew because of Samuel's words and the anointing oil. Thus the Lord dealt with the minds of the people to show them his choice and to teach them to look for divine direction in their various interests.

There is a lesson here for the Lord's people in respect to the choosing of elders and deacons in the various ecclesias. Each of the consecrated should recognize that in doing his part in the election he should merely act as the Lord's agent and that the Lord's will should be done fully, completely. Personal preference should be ignored, wire-pulling and attempting to influence the minds of those who would vote should be merely along Scriptural lines in respect to character, and nothing should be done for strife or vain-glory, but all to the glory of God. Earthly relationships should have no influence in this question, as his people should

speak as the oracles of God, recognizing that the matter is in their hands to be decided according to the directions of the holy Word and Spirit.

The record shows that when the announcement was made that Saul, the son of Kish, was to be the king, there was a general search and none knew his whereabouts. Inquiry of the Lord revealed the fact that he was hidden amongst the stuff, the baggage of these tribes. The modesty of Saul is commendable. He knew that he would be the choice on this occasion, for the Lord had indicated this by his anointing, but he modestly withdrew. As much modesty of heart, even though differently expressed, should be found amongst all the Lord's dear people, specially amongst those who are chosen to serve the Lord's flock in any capacity. The man should be hiding himself rather than aspiring to the position of service, however much he may appreciate the honor of being a servant of the Lord and of his flock.

Saul's modesty is further evidenced by the fact that after being chosen he did not assume a dictatorial spirit and authority, but reasonably, properly went to his own farm to attend to its interest until such time as the Lord would indicate some forward movement on his part – until the Lord would bless him with the kingdom. And it is so with us; we are to do as the Apostle tells us: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," not necessarily forever, but until such time as the Lord's providence should open the door and call him forth to service for the Lord and his people. If the matter is of the Lord at all, he will give the opportunity and the wisdom to use it properly. If it is not of the Lord, the service would better never be entered upon in any degree.

"WHOSE HEARTS GOD HAD TOUCHED"

Verse 26 tells us that a band of men accompanied Saul to his home – men whose hearts God had touched. And on the other hand the following verse tells us that there were other "sons of Belial," who despised him, brought him no present, but said: "How shall this man save us?" Apparently the latter class were more numerous than the band who accompanied Saul. The whole account reminds us of our Lord after his anointing, when a band of the people were drawn to him, "Those whose hearts God had touched." These became his disciples and followers, and the Apostle tells us that the number of them was about five hundred. There were certain sons of Belial who withstood Jesus, of whom the prophet tells us saying, "We hid, as it were, our faces from him; there was no beauty that we should desire him." They said in effect, "How can this man save us?" There was nothing desirable in him in their estimation.

The same thing is true of the Lord's people and cause ever since, and particularly true of those who occupy any place of prominence in his service. Some approve God's dealings, recognizing his providences, and act in harmony with their faith. These are the ones whose hearts God has touched. God's directings and touchings in the present time are mainly through the truth, "Thy Word is truth;" "Sanctify them through thy truth." The sanctified are looking for the Lord's leadings, and they are assisted in discerning them. On the other hand, as there were in Saul's day and in our Lord's time, so there have been since, sons of Belial, contentious, unwilling to be guided by the Lord's providences and the words of his prophet. These sons of strife are not always dissolute either; as, for instance, in our Lord's time they included scribes, Pharisees and doctors of the Law, who were moved, we are told, with envy and jealousy; those Satanic qualities which trouble the entire human family so much. The lesson to us is that we should never forget the Lord in our

personal affairs, and specially in the affairs of his Kingdom. And the recognition of this should make us very careful respecting every step we take "Lest haply we be found even to fight against God." – Acts 5:39.

PROMPT TO USE OPPORTUNITIES

In the Lord's providence an opportunity came to Saul, and his promptness in seizing it endeared him to the hearts of the majority of the people. An enemy, the Moabites, made an attack upon the city of Jabesh, overpowering it. They then sent a message to the people offering to spare their lives, but on condition that their eyes should be put out. Saul promptly sent a message to all of the tribes to come to the help of their brethren, and with the recruits thus gathered drove off the enemy and delivered the people. May we not draw an illustration from this also as respects those whom the Lord anointed with the holy Spirit, with a view to their becoming ultimately joint-heirs with Jesus in the Kingdom. After being anointed of the Spirit we should expect some opportunity for divine service, and should be on the lookout for the same, even while, as the Apostle urges, we abide in the same calling wherein we were called. We also know of an enemy who has blinded some of the Lord's people and who is threatening others with blindness. The circumstance should become to us a call, and we should go forth in the name and the strength of the Lord, and with all the assistance we can command in harmony with his arrangement for the delivering of our brethren from the power of the blinding forces. Whoever sees such an opportunity and fails to avail himself of it, gives evidence that he is not in a proper condition of heart for one of the royal priesthood; he needs more love for God and for his people.

APPLYING OUR GOLDEN TEXT

After Saul had been indicated as the king the prophet "Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it

in a book, and laid it up before the Lord" – probably in the ark. The book probably set forth the rights and prerogatives of the king and the rights and duties of the people with a view to having each recognize the responsibility. Nevertheless, this was merely a statement of how matters should be; and, as a matter of fact, we find that neither Saul's kingdom nor any other kingdom was free from imperfection. God, however, in his book, the Bible, has set before us the laws of his kingdom, the laws which will be in force when the Millennial Kingdom shall be established and **[R4198 : page 200]** which, when rightly enforced, will bless all the families of the earth, instructing and uplifting them.

Our Golden Text is in harmony with this thought, declaring that "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." This is the meaning of the Lord's careful selection and instruction, and disciplining and judging and proving his people whom he is now calling to a position in the Millennial Kingdom. They must judge justly and they must rule in the fear of the Lord, and none will be selected or elected who are of a different disposition. The Lord makes this clear when he tells us through the Apostle that all of these who will have a share in the Kingdom must be copies of God's dear Son. – Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:13.

However, while justice will be the rule of the Kingdom it is not the rule of those who are under instruction and preparation for the Kingdom. Justice is not the Lord's rule for his people in the present time when they themselves are weak and imperfect and when their judgment of others would necessarily be imperfect also. He therefore tells us to "Judge no man before the time." The time will come when we shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2), but by that time we shall be qualified by our glorious First Resurrection change, which will make us like our dear Redeemer and Lord. On **[R4199 : page 200]** the other hand, we must remember that the force of this Scripture is that we must do no judging in the present time; instead of seeking to execute

judgment upon others we may strive to exercise it upon ourselves; but toward others we must exercise love, sympathy, compassion. This is one of the great lessons to be learned and whoever fails to learn it will fail to get into the Kingdom. Whoever does learn this lesson may understand that in proportion as he himself is forgiving in that measure shall he be forgiven, for, "If ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses," "Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." As we prove every matter of doctrine by the touchstone of the ransom, so let us learn to prove every word and act and thought by the touchstone of love. Whatsoever is not of love is sin; will prove injurious to ourselves and possibly to others.

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