

PREFERRED MONARCHY TO REPUBLIC

– MARCH 7. – 1 SAMUEL 8-10. –

ISRAEL A THEOCRACY – HUMANLY A REPUBLIC –
A KINGDOM PREFERRED – SAMUEL OFFENDED – THE
REQUEST GRANTED – SAUL, SON OF KISH – HIS
ANOINTING – CHOSEN BY LOT.

"Fear God, honor the king." – 1 Peter 2:17.

ISRAEL'S government was a theocracy; that is to say, God was their King; His Law was their government. The elders of each tribe supervised its affairs. God provided a priestly tribe, which represented the religious interests of the people. Prophets and Judges were sent them from time to time as special messengers of the Lord, but without authority except as the people believed their counsels to be wise. Thus Israel was, so far as its earthly interests were concerned, a republic, in covenant relationship with God.

No one will dispute that a republic is the highest type of government. In a republic each citizen is a sovereign; and these sovereigns, by their votes, appoint some of their number to be their representatives and servants. But this highest type of government can be thoroughly appreciated only by intelligent people, and can work the highest good only in the hands of intelligent and conscientious people, submitted to the Divine regulations.

Had no fall occurred, undoubtedly this highest form of human government would have prevailed. The Scriptures indicate that after Messiah's Kingdom shall have thoroughly subjugated sin, thoroughly uplifted humanity, absolutely destroyed all the wilfully wicked, and shall have completely brought the remainder of the race up to absolute perfection, then, at the close of Messiah's

Reign, the earth to all eternity will be a republic, each member of the race a sovereign.

Our lesson shows us that the Israelites did not appreciate their Divinely arranged republic. They beheld the splendor of the surrounding nations, and thought that because they were different, it was to their disadvantage.

As a result of the noble reform instituted by Samuel and maintained throughout his long judgeship, the people were greatly blessed, and the national spirit was strengthened. [R5637 : page 58] But they perceived that the Prophet was growing old, and they feared that his sons would seek to succeed and continue themselves as judges. The narrative tells that they were unreliable – "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and perverted judgment."

A NATIONAL STEP BACKWARD

The elders of the tribes conferred together and believed that it would be better to choose from amongst themselves a king and thus become more like the nations roundabout. They came to Samuel with the matter, as children to a father, as wise men to a statesman of extraordinary wisdom. They told him their desires. Samuel was disappointed, but gave no answer to them until he had time to confer with the Lord. The Lord bade him not be offended – that it had not been he who was rejected, but that the Lord had been rejected and His government.

But the Lord was willing to let them have their experiences with kings; nevertheless, Samuel was instructed to fully inform them what would be the consequences, what would be the manners of the kings, what would be the difficulties. He explained that their liberties would be fewer – that the kings would exercise a more or less autocratic power and would conscript their sons for servants and for soldiers and for public works, and that thus their

liberties would be greatly abridged, the wealth of the people would more or less flow into the coffers of the king, and the best of their lands and of everything would gradually pass into his control. Instead of being the sovereigns, the people would be the slaves of the sovereign, retaining at best only a portion of their rights, etc.

The people, however, had set their heart on having a king. Already they were imagining how a king would lead them forth and give them dignity, marshal their hosts, and cause fear of them in the hearts of their enemies.

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE ILLUSTRATED

At the appointed time, Samuel, apparently by Divine arrangement, having received instructions from the Lord, came in contact with the one who was to be the future king – Saul, the son of Kish. The story reminds some of witchcraft and other occult doings. A herd of asses strayed from the farm of Kish, and Saul was sent to seek them. After searching in vain, he and his servant called upon the Prophet to ask his wisdom – that the Seer tell them where the asses were. The answer was that the asses were found, but that Saul was to come and dine with the Prophet in an appointed place where guests had already been invited, food already prepared, etc.

The place of honor was given to Saul; and the young man, fresh from the country, was astounded to hear the Prophet speak of him as being the choice of Israel for their leader. He modestly called attention to the fact that he belonged to an inferior tribe – a small one – the tribe of Benjamin; and that his family was not even the greatest in it. But the Prophet persisted, addressing him as the one to have future honors.

The next morning he was called early and directed respecting his journey in such a manner that he would have corroborations of

things that the Prophet intimated in advance. He would meet certain people, and by some he would be invited to partake of food, etc. Moreover, he would meet with certain experiences which would make of him a changed man. Meantime, as the two walked together and Saul's servant went before, the Prophet drew forth a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, anointing him to be the king of Israel by Divine appointment. However, matters were kept secret until such time as would be indicated.

Saul's faith in the Prophet's declaration was strengthened by the fulfilment of the very experiences foretold. Meeting a company of those who were styled a school of prophets, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul and he joined with them in their singing and prophesying. We read, "God gave Saul another heart, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he prophesied." – 1 Sam. 10:9,10.

DIFFERENT OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are to remember that the Spirit of God signifies simply an invisible power from God. Those coming under this power sometimes acted in one way and sometimes in another – sometimes speaking, sometimes writing, as they were moved by the Power of the Holy One, Jehovah. Let us not forget the clean-cut distinction which the Bible makes between the Holy Spirit in its operations upon men before Pentecost and since. Since Pentecost, the impartation of the Holy Spirit generally signifies that begetting influence which the Lord gives to consecrated believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, by which begetting and anointing they are brought into the family of God as sons, and are enabled to have discernment of mind to more and more appreciate the mind of God as expressed in the Bible, by the Prophets of the past.

But previously, the Holy Spirit simply signified a holy energy, and meant no begetting to sonship; for, as the Scriptures

declare, the Holy Spirit (in this sense) was not given until Jesus was glorified. (John 7:39.) Only saintly persons, fully consecrated to God and fully trusting in the merit of Jesus, are spirit-begotten now, but any person might at times be used of the Lord as an amanuensis to write, or as a servant to do or to say, wherever, whenever, whatever, the Lord wished to have said, done or written.

The Spirit which came upon Saul was not the Spirit of sonship; the change of his heart did not signify that he had become a New Creature in Christ; for there could be none such until Christ, the Head of the Church, had come and, as the Forerunner of His members, had opened up "the new and living way." Saul had a new heart in the sense that he no longer had the mind, purpose, "disposition," to be a farmer, but a Divine "disposition," will, ambition, judgment and wisdom granted him, especially qualifying him to the office to which God had chosen him; namely, to be a statesman.

In other words, God's Holy Spirit, qualifying Saul for his position as a king, was a mechanical one, much after the same manner that we read that God qualified certain workmen in preparing the Tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, Choose any workmen for this particular work, and I will put My Spirit upon them, and thus qualify them for the work to be done. We may be sure that if God calls any man for any particular work, He is quite able to qualify him for its performance, whether it be a religious work, as is sometimes given to His consecrated people, or whether it be for some work of public benefit, as for instance, in modern inventions, which belong in this dawning time of the New Dispensation.

EVIL OCCULT POWERS IN OPERATION

The difference between Samuel and his occult powers, and the occult powers of others today is this: Samuel's were

manifested under Divine direction at a time when God was pleased to use such powers amongst His people Israel – powers which doubtless will be in exercise also to some extent during the Millennial Age for the world's guidance. But the Scriptures recognize evil occult influences; and the Israelites were warned against necromancers, those who claimed to have communion with the dead, and those that peeped and muttered and had mediumship, etc. **[R5637 : page 59]**

The Bible explains that the fallen angels personate the dead. The Bible tells that the dead are really dead, that the dead know nothing whatever until the resurrection. The Lord warned Israel that these evil spirits would seek to personate the dead, and thus to indoctrinate them in error and lead them away from God. Similarly, throughout this Gospel Age, the same evil spirits, the same fallen angels, have used, and do still use more or less of occult power – psychic powers, mediumistic powers, mesmeric powers, hypnotic powers – to mislead, to attract away from the Truth, to make error appear to be Truth – especially to make people believe their dead friends are not dead, but more alive than before they died.

During this Gospel Age, we believe that God does not use such hypnotic powers, but as St. Paul declares, He has "spoken to us through His Son," and has given us His Scriptures, "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work" – not needing any occult powers. Hence we know of no good occult powers, but are to rate them all as deceptions of the Adversary, against which God's people are fighting.

ISRAEL'S FIRST KING CHOSEN

In due time, in harmony with the will of the Judges of Israel and with the Divine consent, the people came together to Samuel to have the matter of a king amongst them decided – to have the will of the Lord expressed in the matter. Again Samuel

expostulated with them, and told them the dangers of leaving the simplicity of God's arrangement and taking up with the monarchical arrangement. But seeing that they still desired a king, he acted for them and drew lots as respected the different tribes, and then the different families in the chosen tribe, and then the different members of the family indicated. The lot fell on Saul as Samuel knew it would do and as Saul also knew; for they believed the Lord's hand was in the matter.

The fact that they used this method of casting lots should not be considered as an endorsement of such a method today; for we are living under different institutions; and neither the Natural nor the Spiritual Israelites are in that relationship with God in which He proposes to guide their affairs by the casting of lots.

When the lot fell upon Saul, the elders of the various tribes began to look for him. Where is he? Finally they found him bashfully sitting amongst the stuff – the luggage that belonged to the parties that had come to the gathering. As he was brought forth, the young man in the prime of life – probably seven feet tall, of athletic build – he exactly filled the ideal of the people. They were pleased with God's choice, and God had already qualified Saul that he might be a successful king if he would prove loyal, faithful and obedient to Him.

