

## Chapter Seventeen – Saul, the First King

After the death of Eli, Samuel was appointed leader. He ruled the nation well and justly, and everybody respected him. When he grew old, he appointed his sons to help him. Unfortunately, they did not follow in his footsteps. They took bribes and did not judge fairly. They imposed such heavy taxes that the people became angry and disappointed.

“You have grown old,” the elders said to Samuel, “and your sons do not follow your good example. We want a king as other nations have, to rule over us, to lead us to battle and to judge us fairly.”

Samuel was not pleased with these words. “God is your king,” he answered, “what more do you want?” But they still demanded a king, so Samuel went to consult God in prayer. Then God said to him, “Give them what they ask for. They have always turned away from me since the day I brought them out of Egypt. Give them what they want but warn them how badly a king will treat them.” So Samuel told them, “When you have a king to reign over you, he will have the rights of a king. He will make your sons soldiers. He will take your daughters to cook for him. All the best parts of your lands, vineyards and olive-yards he will take for himself. He will tax your crops. He will take away your servants. All the donkeys that now work for you will work for him instead. You will be his slaves; and when you cry out for help against him, the Lord will not listen to you, because you yourselves have asked for a king.” But the people would not change their minds. They were desperate for a king to lead them into battle and fight their wars.

There was a man from the tribe of Benjamin named Saul. He was a fine big man. God told Samuel to look for him and anoint him as king saying that he would be the one who would deliver the Israelites from the power of the Philistines.

Through God’s almighty power, Saul and his son Jonathan freed the Israelites from the oppression of other tribes. The people accepted Saul as their king. Now that God had given them what they had wanted, Samuel asked them not to turn away from God again, even though they had sinned and had done evil deeds. God would not forget and abandon them as long as they remembered and turned their hearts to him.

Unfortunately Saul turned out to be a disobedient king and did not obey God’s orders given to him through Samuel. God told Samuel to pass him the message that he had to destroy the wicked Amalekites and nothing should be kept alive. He was to take nothing from them. However, Saul captured their king and kept him as prisoner and allowed his men to keep the best of the flocks and herds. God was very sorry that he had made Saul the king as he was dishonest and disobedient. He was so proud that he built a monument to himself and took all the credit for the victories without thanking God.

Then the Lord came to Samuel and said, "Saul is no longer fit to be the king as he does not possess the qualities of a good king. I have rejected him and will choose another to replace him."



*King Saul in battle*

Questions:

1. Suggest TWO reasons why the Israelites wanted a king?
2. What warnings did Samuel give the people about having a king?
3. Why was Saul considered to be a bad king?
4. What do you think are the THREE most important duties of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong? Explain your answer.
5. God loves obedience. How can we obey God in our daily lives?