

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SAUL AS KING

Introduction:

1. Though Saul had been anointed as King and presented to the people of Israel, the change into a functioning kingdom did not take place immediately.
2. Some had returned with Saul to his home, and they became his inner circle – the first vestiges of a forming government.
3. However, others did not accept Saul readily, nor did they give him immediate support.
 - a. Keep in mind how the tribes of Israel had drifted apart.
 - b. At the end of the book of Judges, they were fighting one another.
4. Chapter 11 records the events that finally united the people in their support of Saul as their King – bringing them one step closer to a united kingdom.

- I. The Threat from the Ammonites (11:1-3)
 - A. The name Nahash means “serpent” or “snake.”
 - B. This man led the Ammonites in a siege against the Israelite town of Jabesh in Gilead.
 1. This threat from the Ammonites had been part of the motivation for Israel’s asking for a king (12:12).
 2. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew (Genesis 19:38).
 3. God had established the borders of Ammon, just as He did for the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 2:17-19).
 4. The Ammonites joined with the Moabites to hire Balaam to curse Israel (Deuteronomy 23:1-4).
 5. They did not learn the lesson of Balaam’s prophecy and, later, attempted to war with Israel (Judges 10 – 11).
 6. At that time, God raised up Jephthah who defeated Ammon.
 7. Now, they are attempting again to take land that belongs to Israel.
 8. Jabesh-Gilead was located on the eastern side of the Jordan River, on the border between Gad and Manasseh.
 9. There is an interesting writing found in the Samuel scroll of the Dead Sea scrolls: *“Now Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had been oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites, gouging out the right eye of each of them and allowing Israel no deliverer. No men of the Israelites who were across the Jordan remained whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But seven thousand men had escaped from the Ammonites and entered into Jabesh-Gilead.”*
 - C. The men of Jabesh proposed a compromise with the Ammonites – instead of fighting a war, they would become the servants of their enemy.
 1. This illustrates the disunity of the 12 tribes, for they did not even attempt a resistance, expecting no help from their brethren (cf. Judges 21:8-9).
 2. It also illustrates their spiritual apathy and lack of trust in God.
 - D. Nahash agreed to their compromise on one condition – he must be allowed to put out the right eye of all the men of Jabesh.
 1. This would make them unfit to rebel or fight against the Ammonites.

1 Samuel 11:1-15

2. But, more than that, Nahash declared that it would be a reproach upon all Israel.
 3. In other words, this was an attack against the nation and – more importantly – against Jehovah (cf. Gen. 12:2-3; 1 Sam. 17:10, 26, 43).
 - E. Upon hearing the demand of Nahash, they asked for a week to send out word and see if anyone would come and help them.
- II. The Action of Saul (11:4-11)
- A. The messengers from Jabesh came to Gibeah and reported their news.
 - B. As the people wept, Saul enquired and was told of the threat of the Ammonites.
 1. Notice that Saul was with the herd in the field.
 2. He was continuing to work as a farmer even though he had been anointed King.
 - C. Saul was angered over this news and sent a message throughout Israel to unite for battle against Ammon.
 1. The phrase, “the Spirit of God came upon Saul,” means the same as when seen during the time of the judges (3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14; cf. 1 Samuel 10:10).
 2. It indicates that Saul’s emotions and actions are in line with God’s will.
 3. In fact, in verse 7 he orders the people to come forth “after Saul and Samuel,” indicating his willingness to follow the lead of the prophet.
 4. His dividing the oxen and sending the pieces throughout the land hearkens back to the actions of the Levite in Judges 19:29.
 5. It is important to notice that the fear of Jehovah motivated the people to follow Saul and go into battle.
 - D. When they assembled for battle, 330,000 men were present.
 1. Bezek was about 15 miles west of Jabesh, located in a hidden valley surrounded by hills.
 2. Notice a significant detail in this verse – there is already a recognized difference between Israel and Judah (cf. 15:4; 17:52).
 - E. The messengers returned to Jabesh and told them of Israel’s help.
 - F. The men of Jabesh reported to the Ammonites that they would come out to them on the next day.
 - G. Clearly, the people of Ammon thought the Israelites would surrender.
 - H. Thus, as the sun was rising, Saul’s army began a slaughter of the Ammonites that would last until noon.
 - I. So, God granted a great victory to Israel and established Saul as the leader of His people.
- III. The Unity of Israel (11:12-15)
- A. The people of Israel have a new attitude toward Saul.
 - B. They demanded that those who refused to follow Saul as king be put to death.
 - C. Saul displayed great humility and leadership when he declared that no one would be killed.
 - D. He also gave God the glory for the victory over Ammon.
 - E. Samuel used this as an opportunity to gather the nation at Gilgal in order to “renew the kingdom” – to unite them under the rule of King Saul.
 1. Gilgal was a significant place in the history of Israel.

1 Samuel 11:1-15

2. It was the site of their first encampment after crossing the Jordan River into the land of Canaan (Joshua 4:19).
 3. It was where they had set up a pillar of 12 stones as a memorial of God's blessings upon them as they came into the land (Joshua 4:1-11, 20).
 4. It was the first place in the land of Canaan that the Passover was kept (Joshua 5:10).
 5. Thus, by returning to Gilgal, Samuel was reminding the people of God's reign over them and the goodness of His blessings toward them.
- F. Thus, the chapter ends with the coronation of Saul as King of Israel, as the people offered sacrifices to the Lord.