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### **Part I Anointing of Saul**

*1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. (1 Sam 9:1-2)*

Power can so modify the character and disposition of its owner as to render them unrecognizable from the person that they were before owning it. Such was the case of Saul. Recalling the words of the great English commentator, Lord John Dalberg-Acton: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." But even Lord Acton made exception in the person of General Robert E. Lee. I believe Acton considered Robert E. Lee in an altogether separate category of great men who were also great in magnanimity of character: "I deemed that you were fighting the battles of our liberty, our progress, and our civilization," Lord Acton wrote to Lee on 4 November 1866, "and I mourn for the stake which was lost at Richmond more deeply than I rejoice over that which was saved at Waterloo. Lee was great because he did not view himself as great but, rather as an instrument in the hand of God."

### *Israel's Ungodly Request*

At the time of his blessing and coronation as first King in Israel, (in reality, the Lord was first King in Israel) Saul was a good and humble man; but what tyrant do we see in later years! You will recall that, in the preceding account given in Judges, *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* (Judges 21:25) Even the sons of Samuel had been corrupted by a pretended divine authority to gain lucre from the people. Until the latter period of the Judges, Israel had owned God - the same who brought them with a strong out-stretched arm from Egypt - as their King. But the people, not satisfied to have God as their King, murmured for a king like those of the other nations round about: *4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* (1 Sam 8:4-5) I hope this attitude does not amaze and shock you for the same has happened in our own dear America! It would be well to recall the counsel of another King (David) who said:

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. (Psalms 33:12)*

Of course, God was not well pleased with either the ingratitude or lack of loyalty to One who had been their Salvation and Comfort from olden days. Be careful for those petitions we make in prayer: *7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Sam 8:7)* Human rule is always oppressive and tyrannical. Only a nation whose God is the Lord can enjoy true liberty and freedom.

*God warns Israel*

God warned Israel, through Samuel, of the outcome of their opting for a king instead of the Lord to rule over them: *11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. (even the tenth part is less than the Mammon of our day lays claim to) 16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. 17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. (1 Sam 8:11-18)* A casual perusal of the points of this text will reveal a familiar picture of government gone amiss in the America of our own day.

So, even the goodliest young man of all of Israel, would turn to be precisely what the Lord foretells. The reason is clearly revealed in the quote of Lord Acton above. Unrestrained power always leads to oppression! Of course, there may be exceptional and stellar characters in history such as George Washington who may refuse the scepter of power to the profit of freedom and liberty.

Even when we ask for things unprofitable, if we persist, the Lord may grant our prayers for our learning. This did God with Israel.

*Saul Anointed King:*

Saul is anointed king at the insistence of the people. *1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? (1 Sam 10:1)* It is true the Lord often gives us precisely what we desire. In turning from God, these people did not merit warm care of the Lord in their government. They would learn that misery in life often follows the elation of a moment of seeming victory.

*God's Admonition to Israel:*

*Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. (1 Sam 10:18-19)* In moments of our national solace, God reminds us of His Providence at our ancient founding as a nation. He was with us in many miraculous demonstrations of power, and moved in the hearts of our Founding Fathers to establish a government that appealed to the powers of Heaven for its authority and guidance – “*One Nation, Under God.*” We have allowed venal judges to turn the Constitution of the United States on its

head – deliberately interpreting the Constitution to mean the exact opposite of its clearly stated intentions. We were warned by the ancient philosopher and Roman advocate of a republican form of government in which all laws applied equally to every citizen – even those in public office. *Power and law are not synonymous. In truth, they are frequently in opposition and irreconcilable. There is God's Law from which all Equitable laws of man emerge and by which men must live if they are not to die in oppression, chaos and despair. Divorced from God's eternal and immutable Law, established before the founding of the suns, man's power is evil no matter the noble words with which it is employed or the motives urged when enforcing it. Men of good will, mindful therefore of the Law laid down by God, will oppose governments whose rule is by men, and if they wish to survive as a nation they will destroy the government which attempts to adjudicate by the whim of venal judges.* Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106-43 BC

### *Presumptions of Saul*

He usurped the priestly and prophetic office of Israel by sacrificing at Gilgal. (1 Sam 13:8-10) Presumptions in false worship will not be brooded by the Lord. *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.* (1 Sam 13:13-14)

### *Presumptions Lead to Open Rebellion*

Saul defies the commandment of God in taking spoils which the Lord had forbidden. This is not an isolated case, but a general characteristic of a man who began well and ends in disaster of character and person. *Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.* (1 Sam 15:10-11) There comes a tipping point in our disobedience and defiance of God at which there will be no recourse to judgment. Though the door of repentance is always available, the terms of judgment still looms in our face. God often holds His hand of Judgment until the iniquity of a people is full, and so is that of our own dear land surely approaching the same point.

The moral character of Saul was undermined by his infatuation of power, or perhaps that infatuation simply revealed what dark features had always existed under a handsome and appealing countenance as a young man. We will next explore the depth of despair and ruin to which Saul finally sinks before his horrific demise.