

# Saul made King before all the people

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 March 2024

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us sing to God's praise from Psalm 125. We'll sing the whole psalm.

Psalm 125. They in the Lord that firmly trust shall be like Zion Hill, which at no time can be removed, but standeth ever still.

As round about Jerusalem the mountains stand all day, the Lord has folk doth camp as so from henceforth and foray. For ill men's rod upon the lot of just men shall not lie, lest righteous men stretch forth their hands unto iniquity.

Do thou to all those that be good thy goodness, Lord, impart, and do thou good to those that are upright within their heart. But as for such as turn aside after their crooked way, God shall lead forth with wicked men.

On Israel peace shall stay. Psalm 125. The whole psalm. They in the Lord that firmly trust shall be like Zion Hill.

[ 1 : 13 ] The king of the Lord that firmly trust shall be like Zion Hill, which at no time can be removed, but standeth ever still.

But standeth ever still. A strong God of Jerusalem, the mountain shall be like Zion Hill, the mountain shall be like Zion Hill, and of the main and with mercy.

For in men's rug upon the Lord, all just men shall not die.

Bless righteous men, stretch your clear hands, and do relate with Him.

To thou, to all, O Sajjad, be good, thy goodness, Lord, impart.

[ 3 : 15 ] And do the good to those that God, a bride within them are.

But just for such a star-nosed sight, I've never lived to be blamed.

O Sajjad, be poor with wicked men, on Israel's peace shall stay.

I'd like us to turn to 1 Samuel chapter 11. We're going just to look at the whole chapter and take a few thoughts from the world that we find here.

We've been looking at the life of Samuel. What we're finding now is that the life of the servant of God is intertwined with the life of Saul, the newly anointed king of Israel.

[ 5 : 00 ] And they're bound together and will remain bound until death will intervene. Last Thursday we saw that Saul was presented to Israel as their king.

And while he was acclaimed, it is not with universal acceptance. Probably the majority do receive him and accept him as king, but there are some who do not.

You would have expected a time of celebration to mark out his being presented to Israel, the nation.

But it's a very muted response. They receive him as their king, and yet the final thing we read is they are commanded to return to their own homes.

Not just the people, but also Saul. And then we find at the beginning of this chapter how Saul seems to have just gone back to where he was before.

[ 6 : 21 ] There's no indication given to us of the newfound elevation that marked him out.

He's returned to his home. He's returned to his family. He's returned to his labor. And that seems to us quite strange.

I suppose in one respect that he has nothing to go by. There never has been a king in Israel before now.

Whether they were so aware of the way kings in other nations behaved, probably they would have some awareness.

But Saul returns to life as it was, or so it appears. Some suggest that it is a sign of his humility that he took this position, that he willingly and willfully continued as he once was, because he would wait until the people would honor him by putting him in a place that should have been his, as God's anointed.

[ 7 : 54 ] Well, that again involves us in speculation. But the next portion of the account that we've given to us is the appearance on the scene of Nehas the Ammonite, who encamped against Jabesh Gilead.

And the appearance of this person, without forewarning, probably describes to us the unexpected in the providence of God.

While we can appreciate that there are things that we know that will emerge or that we will encounter as things that are inevitable.

But this isn't one of them. Although, historically speaking, we're told that the Ammonites were a war-fearing people and they they wandered the borders of Israel and the bordering countries and they this is how they made their living, as it were, by pillaging and looting and behaving outrageously.

And some of the historians mark out that kind of living. Israel were aware of them. Jabesh Gilead was aware of them because they were a border people.

[ 9 : 37 ] But the barbarous nature of their encounter with these people is probably stomach-churning in one respect because we don't we think that this is entirely outlandish.

That there is an attempt made by the people of Jabesh Gilead to appease them and say we'll serve you but their king Nahash says yes but this is how you're going to serve me.

It's as if he's putting them between a rock and a hard place you're going to serve me but you're only going to be spared to serve me if I pluck out your right eye.

Seems a random statement but most of the commentators say that in the first place such a threat would terrorise the people.

Secondly it was a humiliation and thirdly it was something that they would be deprived of their ability to engage in any form of warfare and the reason given is that if you think about it those who would go to war would be on the battlefield with the sword in their right hand and the shield in their left hand and they would cover their head with the shield in their left hand and the shield held up against their face but if the right eye was plucked out they were more or less blinded because they depended on the vision of the right eye to engage in battle so it more or less was saying to them this is what I'm going to do to you

[ 11 : 50 ] I'm going to deprive you of all the ability that you have to take your barons against me it seems a strange thing to do and most people today would say the bloody behaviour of the Old Testament is something that we shouldn't read and we shouldn't give any time to as if our modern sensibilities rebel against it that's a lot of nonsense because to this day the same barbarous behaviour is witnessed throughout the world even in modern western society you see people going out armed to the teeth for what reason not because they're going to battle but they claim that they possess knives or they possess guns because they are defending themselves and when they use them they use them every bit as aggressively as was done in the

Old Testament days most of you will have seen this week in the newspaper or on new televisions the account that was given to us of of men who who in Moscow I think in Russia anyway they attacked a theatre and they took countless lives and that was a barbarous thing to do that was a brutal thing to do but these men when they were captured were told that they were tortured by their captors the police and one one of the police cut the ear off one of them and made him eat it that's in 2024 and that's modern society for you as if we're in some way advanced in the kind of behaviour we have far from it or worse still you find her own modern

Scotland advocating that people are plunged headlong into eternity in order to have a peaceful death what about a peaceful eternity what about a peaceful end that ensures that they go into the peace that never ends complete denial of God's word and the truth that the scripture sets before us nobody considers that who are in power but that's the society that we live in so don't be taken in when people object to reading the Old Testament the grounds that the stories that we find there and the scenes that are portrayed there are too blood thirsty for words people read worshiping the newspapers every day but this is what these people wanted to do to the people of Jabesh

Gilead and they told their story and they spread it amongst all Israel and they told Israel about their fate and there's an interesting background to what happens here if you go back to Judges on the end of the book of Judges there's an account there that seems to echo what we have brought to our attention here in some stretch way I suggest you read it for yourselves the last three or four chapters of the book of Judges and it describes an awful situation that eventually involved the hacking to pieces the body of a woman who was guilty of adultery if nothing else but the body was sent throughout

Israel and the children of Benjamin are mentioned and also the people of Jabesh and Israel are all called to to enlist in supporting the Benjamites but they refuse they don't support them so in that sense there is a background to the story here where the people of Jabesh Gilead send word throughout the land for help for the help of Israel and it would almost be inevitable that those that they're seeking help from would turn them down given their history and given their own behaviour in the past but word comes to

[ 17 : 28 ] Saul and Saul response and the response of Saul we are told is because of the spirit coming down upon Saul and he came the spirit of God came upon him when he heard those tidings and his anger was kindled greatly and again we're coming face to face with this truth about Saul that he was given this role as king over Israel he was endowed with God's spirit as a spirit that came upon him and when that happened he responded in a very positive way and it's because of the spirit's presence and the spirit's guidance that he was able to do what he did and that's what we found we see how

Saul responds he took a yoke of oxen he hewed them in pieces and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers saying whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel so shall it be done unto his oxen and the fear of the Lord fell on the people and they came out with one consent it's a question for you is this statement about Saul a sign of his total humility at this time in the sense that the message is sent as king to all the people seeking a response but he is not speaking as somebody who is alone Samuel is mentioned and Samuel is spoken of as someone that the people will know and that the people will respect and in that respect it seems obvious that he is giving place to God in what he is doing because he is paying homage to God's servant in naming him along with himself as the one that they have to respond to otherwise

God will judge them so shall it be done unto his oxen and the fear of the Lord fell on the people and they came out with one consent would it not have been better for him to have mentioned Samuel first and himself second maybe that's a trivial question but there's always the fact that at this point in his new role as king over Israel he's still very vulnerable he is still lacking in confidence and self assurance and he is depending upon Samuel as he will do all the days of his ministry even of his reign even though he will not always listen to Samuel but at this point this is the declaration that is made the fear of the

Lord fell on the people and they came out with one consent that had the desired effect the people came and we told that 30 330 soldiers which was quite an army gathered from the 12 tribes and he took leadership of them and he used his skills as a general probably under the direction of the spirit that has to be said but he secured the victory where he died and it was very effective what he did he divided them into three companies and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch and slew the

Ammonites until the heat of the day and it came to pass that day which remained were scattered and two of them were not left together and the victory was very clear and the strategy was very well worked out and what we need to see there is that whether it is entirely that Saul was somebody who was born to the task or was it something that needed to be wholly acknowledged as God is doing clearly without the Lord and this is what we need to remember and what he reminds us of it is a simple truth but it is a truth that is overlooked or forgotten or put to one side very easily that the victory was secured because of the help of God salvation came not because Israel had a king but because the king had the spirit of the Lord that's good as I can put it the Lord himself says to his people without me you can't do nothing and it is not just in the great things or in the tasks that are beyond us that we can say that if we begin with the small things or the things that we think we can handle ourselves and put the Lord into the equation at the heart of our thinking and at the heart of our direction then we can't fail but our problem is that when we strategize it's only when we begin to find it too much for us that we begin to introduce the

[ 24 : 38 ] Lord and it's the way we get this from that's so much in evidence in our own private lives in our corporate lives as churches throughout the world we may pay lip service to God but we are not willing to listen out for his word what does he have to say what does the Lord have to say to us we're very impatient when we want to do the Lord's work and that's a good thing that we want to do the Lord's work but if we want to do the Lord's work whatever it is that we're doing it is more than prudent to do it with him telling us how to do it when to do it where to do it and in what way the psalm we're going to finish off with except the Lord who built the house the builders lose their pain except the

Lord city keep the watchman watched in vain and find that throughout scripture reminding you of that need now Saul at this point with the spirit in his possession the spirit upon him he knew the Lord was in what he was doing and we see how how in the midst of of recognizing that a victory had been achieved what prevails in the hearts of those who are part of that victory well we read that the people said unto Samuel who is he that said Saul shall reign over us bring the men that we may put them to death now you would think that at the moment of victory they would at least have acknowledged well yes

Saul is our king but God is our God Jehovah is our Lord and Saul is his his servant and the victory is his because of the Lord but that's not what they want is for the for the spirit of vengeance that fills their heart instantly for them to deal with those who weren't with Saul when he was appointed as king the children of Baaliel said how shall this man save us and they despised him and brought him no presents and that didn't happen without people being aware of it and these are the very people their own people but they were sons of Baaliel and they wanted them dealt with instantly but Saul is still under the influence of the spirit of God and he says very wisely there shall not a man be put to death this day for today the

Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel he said that fully persuaded of the truth of what he said the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel and the glory that he gives to God there is in keeping with being in possession of the spirit and I suppose without wanting to labour this and spiritualise this we know that we are in the right place if we acknowledge our God in all the victories that we have in this world all the things that we achieve all the blessings that we secure all the privileges that we enjoy that very often we think well this happened because of something that

I thought or that I felt or that I did in the strength of it as it said in the garlic and now you mean he is never far away and we elevate ourselves and we give ourselves the glory even in the smallest things and it makes us feel good but in the smallest things if God is not in them then they're not really victories they're not really things that are worth rejoicing but here in this case today the Lord hath brought salvation to Israel or in Israel and then we've already noticed that God's time was always the right time and it was a bit perplexing coming to the end of chapter 10 and finding

[ 30 : 17 ] Samuel dismissing the people including the king and sending them back into their mediocre lives without celebration without rejoicing without doing what you would expect them to do after all this was really something that they wanted they wanted a king God had given them a king the people acknowledged him as king but they were sent away without without much of an ado ■■■■ them it authorlegen that find a place that they rightly and righteously rejoice if you're interested in reading about the sacrifices and all the types of the

Old Testament we've often referred to steward of cromity and one of the sacrifices he talks about all of the sacrifices he talks about the meaning and the way that we are meant to understand them and when he talks about the peace offering he says the best explanation of the peace offering is spoken of by John in the first epistle general that which you have seen and heard declared we unto you that you may also have fellowship with us and truly fellowship us with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ and he maintains that the peace offering this is a fellowship offering that is entirely glorifying to God on the basis of of what he has wrought for them and that's where you find the true meaning of it while Saul is in a good place

Israel are in a good place Samuel is no doubt delighted by what he sees the people united in the praise and the thanksgiving of God and there are times like that there are occasions like that and at the very moment at which these times are experienced we think that's the way it is that's the way it's meant to be that's the way it's always going to be but unfortunately not unfortunately that's not the way it remains but praise God that there are times of thanksgiving and celebration acknowledging his hand let us pray oh Lord oh God we give thanks for your for your own involvement in the life of your people when they most need you they are able to call upon you and you hear and you answer and you provide even more than they asked for and we bless you and thank you that in times past that we find men and women raised up who would serve you and who would supply the needs of those occasions where they were lifted up by your own hand how much we need that today that you would raise up those who would serve you and do so fearing God and not man and that we would know that you are using them for your glory watch over us each one cleansing from sin in Jesus name

Amen I'm going to sing two verses in Gaelic from Psalm 126 the first two verses Psalm 126 through a in the that did suit upon Him■ ...

Pure and share. Pure and share.

[ 38 : 49 ] Pure and share.

Pure and share.

Pure and share.

Pure and share.

Pure and share. Pure and share.

[ 41 : 07 ] members of the deacon's court, remain behind for five minutes, please. May we praise, mercy, and peace from God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with you, all never and always. Amen.