

## Introduction

- A new (to you) car!
  - no scratches or scuffs or greasy spots on the seats...
  - ... or the smell of new paint, clean walls and a new carpet after decorating a room
  - perhaps that's how it seemed to Israel - a new beginning!
  - there was an **air of hope for the future**; a new kingdom, with a new king - a new king to bring deliverance and salvation
  - chapter 10 ended with the question: "Who is this Saul? How can he help us?"
  - he **can, by the power of God's Spirit**, chapter 11 answers

## Let's see what Saul is made of...

- Trouble is brewing on Israel's eastern border:
  - Nahash the Ammorite besieged the city of Jabesh-gilead - twenty miles south of the Sea of Galilee and just east of the Jordan
  - it seems Nahash had been on a terrorising rampage against Israel, gouging out the right eye of all he captured
  - he seemed unstoppable
  - Jabesh-gilead managed to negotiate a bit of time before their right eyes would be gouged out, making them militarily impotent because the left eye was normally covered by their shields in battle
  - Nahash's motive, though, was to totally humiliate Israel
  - it was fun to him to see his kin Israel squirm
  - he was so sure no one could stop him pursuing his sport...
- There are still those who want to maim, destroy and strangle God's people
  - church baiting is more than a past-time to some
  - they are arrogantly against Christians
  - but the Lord Jesus Christ warned us that if the world hated him it would also hate us
  - so, as long as we have the friendship of Christ, there will be those in the world who are arrogantly against us
- Saul came in from the fields to find the men of Jabesh at home with a problem
  - when he heard their plight "**the Spirit of God rushed upon him**"
  - Saul summons his militia and stormed into Nahash's camp in the early hours of the morning and totally routed the Ammorites
  - the Bible text emphasises that what made all the difference was the **Holy Spirit**
  - **he** equipped Saul to lead the army to victory
  - Saul is portrayed as a second **Samson-like** figure - a "**super-judge**"
  - the same word is used of the Spirit 'rushing' on Samson as on Saul
  - none of the other judges are described in this way
- And there is more....
- Saul divides his troops into three - just as **Gideon** had done
  - hacking an ox in pieces and posting the pieces around is reminiscent of the last chapters of Judges (**Judges 19-29**)
  - (it was intended to unite Israel against a foreign foe)
  - Saul is described as a saviour as were the judges **Othniel** and **Ehud** (**Judges 3:9 & 15**)
  - the shy, hesitating farmer is transformed by the Spirit, making him like a number of judges rolled into one
- What a contrast there is here to the Gibeah at the end of Judges
  - there they were sexual perverts who gang-raped a woman until she was dead
  - the whole tribe of Benjamin prevented Gibeah receiving justice and a civil war broke out
  - now Benjamin was a source of salvation and deliverance
- **It is the Holy Spirit who makes the difference**

- Salvation came to Israel **not because they had a king, but because the king had the Spirit of the Lord**
  - the monarchy is not the power, God is
  - Jesus says a similar thing to the church **"Without me you can do nothing."** (John...)

## Farewell Samuel?

- At Gilgal Samuel reaffirmed God's covenant with Israel as his final address to them
  - (though he's still got some action to go - anointing David in chapter 16, advising David after Saul tries to kill him in 19, not sying till chapter 25!!)
- Why at Gilgal?
  - it may have been the people of Gilgal who had murmured against Saul
  - anyway, Gilgal was where God's power had worked for Israel against hopeless odds in Joshua's day (Joshua 34)
  - Samuel calls for a renewing of the kingdom - see 12:14,15
- And the nature of the call makes clear that it is **God's kingdom, not Saul's!**
  - it is a call to **align with God, together, under Saul**
  - it is amplified in the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ: **"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"**
- Scholars think the word for 'covenant' in Hebrew comes from an Akkadian word meaning 'fetter' or 'bind'
  - that's what is being called for here
  - bind yourself to the Lord, who on his part will bind himself to us
  - already Israel had 'slipped the knot' in their passion for a king and rejecting their true (and only) king
  - now that new king and the nation must renew their binding to the Lord God
- Jesus Christ is our Lord and that means we are his vassals - his slaves
  - are we ready to re-affirm our "binding" ourselves to him today?
- Samuel's speech breaks into three parts, but we don't have time to deal with them now:
  - 1. Samuel vindicates his standing
  - 2. he accuses Israel of their guilt
  - 3. and finally he shows them God's alternatives
- Overall we see God's goodness and mercy to his people
  - 'Don't be afraid, you have done evil, but ...'
  - here is hope for the future!
  - don't go back and wallow in your guilt - fear God and serve him with all your heart

## Conclusion

- So what do we make of all this?
  - **Holy Spirit is the one who brings success - make space for him in our lives!**
  - one of the key ways God describes his relating with us is **"in covenant"** - are we ready to **re-affirm our "binding" ourselves to him today?**