

Did God Micromanage Saul?

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Bible students like to discuss God's involvement in the selection and behavior of civil leaders. In three separate articles (this one and in the next two), we will discuss three Old Testament leaders who were chosen by God.

The three examples demonstrate that, even when God does choose a person to lead nations, He generally does not micromanage the actions of that leader.

Israel demanded a king

Many years ago, the elders of Israel wanted Samuel to help them to have a king (1 Samuel 8:5). The request of the people displeased Samuel, and he prayed to God (verse 6).

God instructed Samuel to warn the people about their request (verses 7-18). The people heard the warning, but still wanted a king (verses 19-22).

So God picked their king.

God chose Saul

There was a man in the land named Saul, who had noticeable physical qualities for leadership (1 Samuel 9:1-2).

God informed Samuel of the selection of Saul (1 Samuel 9:15-16).

Samuel poured oil on Saul's head (1 Samuel 10:1).

Did not force obedience

When Bible students look at the behavior of Saul, they can recognize that God did not micromanage Saul's behavior to be obedient.

The biblical record shows some examples of God being displeased with some of Saul's choices.

Unlawful sacrifice

Notice Saul's decision to make a sacrifice.

1 Samuel 13:8-10—"Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, 'Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to

me.' And he offered the burnt offering. Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him."

1 Samuel 13:11-12—"And Samuel said, 'What have you done?' And Saul said, 'When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, "The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD." Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.' "

1 Samuel 13:13-14—"And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.' "

Not following instructions

Notice this example of Saul not following instructions.

1 Samuel 15:10-11—"Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, 'I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.' And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night."

1 Samuel 15:13—"Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, 'Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD.' "

1 Samuel 15:14—"But Samuel said, 'What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?' "

1 Samuel 15:15—"And Saul said, 'They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.' "

1 Samuel 15:16-17—"Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night.' And he said to him, 'Speak on.' So Samuel said, 'When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?' "

1 Samuel 15:18-19—Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, "Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed." Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?' "