

# Acts 13:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

## Analysis

**And afterward they desired a king** (αἰτέω, aiteo)—Israel's demand for a king (1 Samuel 8:5) was rooted in covenant unfaithfulness, rejecting the LORD as their King (1 Samuel 8:7). Paul emphasizes this as **they desired**, highlighting human initiative rather than divine design.

**God gave unto them Saul** (Σαούλ, from Hebrew שָׁאָל, sha'ul meaning "asked for")—The irony is profound: God gave them exactly what they asked for. Saul embodied Israel's self-will—tall, impressive outwardly (1 Samuel 9:2), but ultimately a tragic failure. **A man of the tribe of Benjamin**, the smallest tribe (1 Samuel 9:21), yet Saul's reign foreshadowed the greater Saul of Tarsus (also Benjamite, Philippians 3:5) who would be transformed to serve God's true King. **Forty years** marks a complete generation of testing, paralleling Israel's wilderness wandering—both periods of divine patience with rebellion.

## Historical Context

Paul preached this sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (c. AD 47-48) during his first missionary journey. He recounted Israel's history to demonstrate God's faithfulness leading to the Messiah. Saul reigned approximately 1050-1010 BC; Josephus and Jewish tradition assigned him a 40-year reign, though 1 Samuel gives incomplete chronology.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How do you see the pattern of "asking" for what seems good externally but proves spiritually disastrous in your own life or culture?
2. What does God giving Israel exactly what they desired teach about the danger of demanding our own way rather than trusting His timing and plan?

## Interlinear Text

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κάκεῖθεν ἡτήσαντο βασιλέα καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ  
And afterward they desired a king and gave unto them G3588  
G2547 G154 G935 G2532 G1325 G846

θεὸς τὸν Σαοὺλ υἱὸν Κίς ἄνδρα ἐκ φυλῆς Βενιαμίν  
God G3588 Saul the son of Cis a man of the tribe of Benjamin  
G2316 G4549 G5207 G2797 G435 G1537 G5443 G958

ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα  
years by the space of forty  
G2094 G5062

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Samuel 10:1** (Parallel theme): 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 Samuel 15:1** (Kingdom): Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

**1 Samuel 11:15** (Kingdom): And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

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