

Royal Kingdom

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 1: Who's on the Throne?

1 Samuel 8:1-22, 12:22

Kevin Maurice --- May 24, 2020

Video Link for The Bible Project's Introduction to 1 Samuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJOju5Dw0V0>

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel are two separate books in our modern Bibles, but that division is due simply to scroll length. It was originally written as one coherent story. We're just going to cover the Book of 1 Samuel in this video.

So, after Israel was rescued from slavery in Egypt, they made a covenant with God at Mount Sinai and eventually came into the Promised Land. And there Israel was supposed to be faithful to God and obey the covenant commands. Before the Book of Samuel, Judges showed how Israel failed at that task big time. It was a period of moral chaos, and it showed Israel's need for wise, faithful leaders. The Book of Samuel provides an answer to that need.

The Book of Samuel's story focuses on three main characters: the prophet Samuel (where the book gets its name), and then King Saul, and after that, King David. And all three of them transition Israel from a group of tribes ruled by judges into a unified kingdom ruled by King David in Jerusalem.

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Good morning, Church. I'm excited for our teaching time today as we're going to study a major turning point in Israel's story as we enter the United or the Unified Kingdom period of God's people. And all of the Old Testament has been building toward this pivot, this hinge in history, where God takes a group of people, the Israelites, and He transforms them into a kingdom. And it's a kingdom that stretches forth into the New Testament and actually, into eternity. The kingdom that God inaugurates in the book of 1 Samuel is the foundation for the

eternal kingdom of God, that ultimately culminates in the life, death, resurrection and reign of Jesus the Christ.

And that is where this whole story is going --- the kingdom of God, Christ on the throne. Today we're going to study the events in the Book of 1 Samuel that set this kingdom into motion. And in this book and in the history of God's people, we get to see God's sovereignty on display, and we're reminded of the rebelliousness, the sinfulness, of humankind; and yet we get to witness God's love for His people and His plan for redemption. And the question we're going to ask today, over and over, is – **Who is on the throne? In this kingdom, who's on the throne?**

Events Leading Up to 1 Samuel

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 8 as we seek an answer to that question. Now, for context and a bit of review for how we've gotten here: God had brought His people out of slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. Now it took a lot of time, there were some detours, and an entire generation disobeyed God and died off. But eventually, led by a general named Joshua, the people step into the place they were promised. But when Joshua and his generation pass away the people turn from God and turn directly toward evil.

And for years, Israel's life, their story, is this wretched cycle – of sin; and then oppression by their enemies; then they repent and cry out for deliverance from God; and God sends a rescuer. He rescues them with these various judges. Then some time goes by and they fall back into their old patterns, their old ways, and they sin again, and the cycle starts over. And in one of the most succinct and appropriate summarizing verses in the entire Bible, the final sentence in the book of Judges tells us – **In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.** That's how the Book of Judges ends. Yikes. But there's this incredible foreshadowing in that verse – **In those days, there was no king in Israel.** We're moving toward something.

In the early chapters of this book, we're introduced to Samuel. He's born to a woman who longed for and desired a child but she didn't think she could have one. But God had other plans. He's born and his mother dedicates him to the Lord and so, he lives and serves with the priests of God. He hears from God and as he grows up he matures in wisdom and in his pursuit

of God and in his leadership. Samuel steps into the story as someone who points God's people back to Him. And he becomes the final judge in that stage of Israel's history. He's arguably the greatest judge, the greatest prophet of that time.

Samuel serves God and the people faithfully. Years go by and he gets older, and then we arrive at 1 Samuel chapter 8. And in chapter 8, the people gather together, they march up to Samuel and they demand a king....

Now, as we explore this chapter we're going to study what is wrong with this ultimatum – the sin of their demand. Then, we'll uncover the consequence of this choice – the people want a king, what happens when they get one? And then, finally we'll see the true king on the throne and look at what that means for our lives. That's our outline for this morning – [the Sin, the Consequence and the Throne.](#)

The Sin of the People's Demand

Let's read the text together now starting in verse 1. We're told that, **When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel...Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest gain. They took bribes and they perverted justice.** Samuel is this legendary prophet, judge, leader. But he's nearing retirement so he appoints his sons to lead and shepherd God's people. But the sons aren't anything like their dad. The apples fell far from the tree.

And the people take notice. And this opens the door for them to demand something that they've been wanting for quite some time. And here's how we know this. We know that they've been wanting this because it's the **elders of Israel who gather together and come to Samuel...and say to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the other nations have." But this thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.**

Do you see [The Sin of the Demand](#)? The sin, the root issue behind their desire for a king – the people are rejecting God. Who’s on the throne? God is supposed to be their real king. They’re meant to depend on Him for everything. He’s proven consistently that He is steadfast and good. But they don’t trust Him to be king. And God tells Samuel – “They’re not rejecting you – they’re rejecting me.” And it’s been like that since day one.

Even when they were slaves in Egypt and He demonstrates His power by sending plagues; even after He parts the Red Sea and they walk through, despite His daily provision of food and security, God was still not enough for the people. They demanded a golden idol, they put their faith in bigger, stronger armies and water sources and food sources and safe conditions. They’re trusting all of these other things, just not God.

And they keep doing this, even in the Promised Land. Just a few chapters earlier, in 1 Samuel 4, the Israelites are at war with the Philistines and they lose a battle. They come home and they’re trying to regroup from this defeat and figure out what went wrong. But rather than praying to God and asking Him to go before them and fight for them, as He has already done and has promised to do – instead of doing that they say, “Here’s an idea! We’ve got that Ark of the Covenant thing, let’s just take that into battle and then we’ll win.” They come up with this scheme and they treat God’s holy ark as a tool or a trinket; they trust it, not Him. They go into battle and they’re defeated again, and they actually lose the Ark of the Covenant for some time.

So, their history and now this demand for a king demonstrate their rejection of God. They just don’t trust Him. Now, don’t get me wrong, they like God or at least they like the idea of God, and they certainly enjoy the things that He provides, as long as He provides it on their terms. *We don’t trust that God’s going to fight for us in this battle so we’ll carry the Ark into the fray instead. We’re tired of living under the banner of God’s rule and provision; we want a human king.*

Who’s on the throne? Who do you trust to be? Isn’t it easier to trust God to rule and to reign when everything that you feel like you need or you want for a good and happy life is already in your possession or it’s just there right ahead of you? Your job is secure; your marriage is fulfilling; the kids are mostly well-behaved, everyone is healthy. Yeah, God’s on the throne – that’s great. But when something is missing, or there’s an unfulfilled desire in your heart, is there this creeping feeling of insecurity or uncertainty?

Consider, for a moment, is there something in your life that you require or even demand from God in addition to His presence and His salvation before you feel like you can really trust Him? Is there something that consumes your thoughts or your worries? What do you cling to in times of difficulty? How you answer those questions may reveal who or what you trust most. And it might reveal who is on the throne in your life.

Because Israel doesn't trust God; they want a human king. There's this blatant sin in their demand. They want a mascot, a champion, a hero because a) they've rejected God and b) because they want to be like everybody else! *Everyone else has a king. Why can't we?* When I was in high school, whenever I wanted to do something or I needed money for something that was out of the ordinary, my dad would ask me to write a proposal and then present it to him. And he had this stack of yellow legal pads in our kitchen and I would take one of those and carefully craft and articulate my argument. Then, we'd sit down at the dinner table or go grab a burger and I'd state my case. I remember having to do this when I turned sixteen and got my driver's license and I wanted a car. That was the deepest desire of my heart at that point in my life. And so, I had to present my need, my argument. I had to give my pitch to my dad.

Do you want to know one of the things that I wrote on that yellow legal pad? *Everyone else has one.* That must not have been too persuasive because I drove a 1992 Dodge Caravan minivan throughout high school. That's what I got. And my naive teenage demand for a car is the same argument that the people of Israel use! *Everybody else has one!* They're looking to their left and to their right and they're looking to their neighbors and they say, "All of these other nations have kings. Why can't we? Give us what they have."

And the people are so busy comparing themselves and looking around that they miss the point entirely. God did not want His people to be like everybody else. They were chosen, specifically, to be set apart. Not to be the same, but to be different. And what was meant to distinguish them from everyone else was their faith in an invisible God. Instead, they want a king that they can see and touch and really, control, because they've rejected God as their king.

So, what does God do? You almost expect fire to come down from heaven on this group of people, but that's not what happens. God sends judgment in a different way. God tells Samuel, "Obey their voice... give them their King." This is a sinful request – so why does God give it to them? Because He is on the throne. And He is not threatened by cheap imitations or impostors that they or we think should be there instead. And because He's on the throne, because He's

sovereign – God will sometimes give people the things we so badly desire in order to teach us the consequences of serving other kings.

The Consequence of the Choice

That's what we're about to see – [The Consequence of the Choice](#) to enthrone anyone or anything else over God. Returning to the passage, God commands Samuel to give the people a king and to tell them what that king will be like. And I want you to notice how many times God warns the people exactly what they're going to get: **“Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.” So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king. He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen... He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.”**

The dominant word in this description is the word TAKE. It's used six times to define the future king. He's going to take their sons and daughters; their crops and their lands and the best years of their lives. He will exploit them for his own gain. The irony here is tremendous isn't it? It's like that episode of *The Twilight Zone* where every wish comes true, but it's tinged with these terrible strings attached to it. Israel's demand for a king is their monkey paw wish!

You've coveted a king to be like everyone else. OK, you'll get a king, like everyone else. You will get a king that could not care less about you. The thing you wanted so badly, this king whom you have chosen for yourselves, he will enslave you.

That's the consequence of choosing another king. It's true for Israel and it's true for us. When you have any other king on the throne of your life, of your heart – any other king besides

God, that king will tyrannize you. And because it's your king, you're a slave to that king, you'll allow it to. You'll allow it to take and take. Just think through some examples of what this is like...

Some people work so hard to get the job, the promotion, the raise, the letters after their name. They put it on the throne of their life. And then towards the end of their life they look back and they realize it was a curse. If you've enthroned career or success as the king over your life you will become a slave to it. You'll overwork, you'll envy others who are more successful than you or who progressed more quickly than you. You'll resent missed opportunities and you'll resent the people who you believe made you miss them.

And you might be so driven that you drive yourself and your marriage and your relationships off of a cliff -- all in service to a king that has no right to sit on the throne. There are people who have their dream job, the job they always wanted, but they're miserable because they're a slave to it. They have more money or achievement than they've ever dreamed they would, but no time to spend it, no one to celebrate with because that's what the success or career king took from them.

Or consider this – if you have to be in a relationship to be happy, you will become a slave of the relationship king. You'll very likely make terrible dating decisions and choices and end up conceding very important things. And you'll allow this ruler to take and take because you're scared of losing what you've enthroned.

Or if marriage is on the throne of your life, you'll constantly feel like your spouse either lets you down or you're letting them down because they're the king, they're the queen! You'll resent them for not ruling well, which, by the way, is not something they were meant to do. Or you'll bow down and worship them, something that you're not meant to do. And you'll either enable an unhealthy relationship or you'll turn to the side and you'll be tempted to leave your marriage in search of fulfillment in another, a better marital kingdom. You'll seek another ruler.

The same can be said for placing family on the throne. You so deeply desired this Norman Rockwell picturesque family. Maybe you even prayed for it or demanded it from God. And in your quest to achieve it or hold it together, you will do everything in service to that picture in your head. You'll allow destructive behavior and you'll bend over backwards, because family reigns over your life. And you'll spend year after year dreading Thanksgiving and sighing

over Christmas because it's what you have to do to serve this tyrant that you've put on the throne.

Parents, this is so tempting to do with our kids. We love our children. But that little girl or that little boy is not meant to rule. It is one of the most damaging things we can do to a child – to place them on the throne and place a crown on their heads and then bow down and worship. If your child is king, you will give too much to them, you will shield them from everything, you'll fight their battles for them. But as much as they hold a place in your heart, they cannot – and I mean that – they cannot, emotionally or spiritually, withstand the pressure or the weight of being the king of your heart. The consequences of enthroning a child or children are ghastly.

We all have a throne in our lives. Bob Dylan said it best – “You’ve gotta serve somebody.” We’re all serving a king. But this is what it looks like, the consequence of choosing any king other than God. If your king is not the Lord, you will become a slave to someone or something that will take and take and take.

Galatians 4 puts it this way – **When you did not know God, you were enslaved to those things that by nature are not gods.** You gotta serve somebody. So, who's on the throne? Who do you want to be on the throne? Even after that dire warning from Samuel, the people don't relent. Finishing up in chapter 8 – **The people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.”**

God says, “Give them what they want.” And over the course of the next few chapters, the people receive exactly what they asked for.

Samuel anoints a man named Saul to be king over Israel. And Saul is everything the people wanted. He's smart, he's good looking, he leads them into battle and they win – they're like everybody else, hey, maybe even better. And Samuel calls the people together for the coronation of King Saul. And in chapter 12 Samuel gives a speech, but it's not what the people expected and it's certainly not what they wanted to hear.

Because as happy they are, with their new king and with themselves, Samuel wants them to know and to feel the magnitude of the evil that they've done in wanting to be like other nations and in rejecting God. Samuel tells them: **“Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon**

the Lord, that He may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.” So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord.

God sends this terrifying thunderstorm and it begins to destroy their harvest, a symbol of their prosperity and their security. And the people are so shaken by this event that they actually repent. **The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.”**

And while the people are in this state of fear, Samuel offers good news. He tells them – **“Do not be afraid, you have done all of this evil; yet do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless.”** They’re nothing.

Don’t turn away from God, he says. Serve Him with all your heart. Even though you’ve sinned terribly, even though you now have this ruler who will take so much from you, and even though there is no undoing that sin or the painful consequences that are yet to come, Samuel says there is still a future hope for God’s people, there is still hope of rescue, there is still a greater kingdom on the horizon.

And then, here comes the gospel. This next scripture tells us so much about who God is and who we are to Him. And it presents us with God’s plan for redemption. 1 Samuel 12:22 – **For the sake of His great name the Lord will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own.**

In spite of their history of rebellion and even after their sin, God says, “Even though you’ve rejected me, but I will not reject you. Even though you are faithless, I will remain faithful.” In this chapter, God renews His covenant with His people. It is a never-ending promise, it is a vow that He will love them and care for them. And it’s a vow of His commitment to them.

King on the Throne

God firmly establishes that no matter what they do – He is the true [King on the Throne](#). With all of our sinful demands, even when He allows us to face the consequences of our choices to follow after these other rulers, He is still the true king. And He loves us for His great name’s

sake, for no other reason than He chooses to and He has claimed us as His own. That is His covenant promise to His people. And God on the throne, He isn't a king who takes. He's a King who gives – He gives everything so that we won't be slaves, we'll be children.

That's exactly what the Book of Galatians tells us— **When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son** – He gives His Son -- **born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters. And because you are sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So, you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if a child, then an heir through God.**

Jesus humbled Himself. He descended from heaven, stepped into human flesh, to inaugurate the kingdom of God and establish His rule and reign -- not to subjugate us as slaves, but to adopt us as children.

So, let me ask you again – Who's on the throne? Christ the King brings life and adoption into the family of God. He's the only true king. So, today, could you stop putting your trust in anything or anyone other than the one true King who loves you enough to rescue you and redeem you, for no other reason than because you are His?

Application

Listen, this is powerful, identity-shaping truth. If you believe this – that Christ is King and that you are His, it will alter and affect every area of your life. So, let's apply this gospel truth to our lives, and let it saturate our souls and sink down into the roots of who we are. And to do that, I want to encourage us as a church to do two things today and then this week.

First, and this is something we can do together, even if we're apart, would you please join me in memorizing 1 Samuel 12:22? Let's memorize this as a church, starting today –

For the sake of His great name the Lord will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own. I'll read it again – **For the sake of His great name the Lord**

will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own. Memorize that. Inscribe it on your heart. You can do this with other people. Ask a friend or a small group to learn it with you, send them a video or a Marco Polo of you saying it. Write it down somewhere in your house where you're going to see it. Say it as a family before you eat dinner this week.

And when you're faced with temptation or loneliness, or self-righteousness, or despair; whatever emotion or whatever desire causes you, drives you, to look to other kings for happiness or satisfaction or security – you go back to God's Word. You lean on this gospel truth. You trust Him. Remember this passage and remind yourself of who is on the throne and what He is like.

The second thing I want to encourage you to do this week, and this is for you, individually. After you've memorized 1 Samuel 12:22, find some time alone in the next few days– driving in your car, in the morning before the kids are awake or at night after they've gone to bed. Go outside on your porch or in your driveway or just go for a walk. And I want you to take this passage and personalize it.

Write it down in a journal or type it on your phone so that you can see it. Read it out loud so that you can hear it. And place yourself into the truth of this scripture. **For the sake of His great name, the Lord will not reject Kevin, because the Lord was pleased to make Kevin His own.**

For the sake of His great name, the Lord will not reject me, because the Lord was pleased to make me His own.

Contemplate that astounding truth this week – that God, in His great power and wisdom has chosen to love you -- not because of who you are or what you've done, good or bad, but because of who He is. He's the King. And He's on the throne.

Tim Keller says this about the good news, the gospel of Jesus, and what He has done for us. He says, **“The gospel is not about choosing to follow good advice, it's about being called to follow a good king. Not just someone with the power and authority to tell you what needs to be done – but someone with the power and authority to do what needs to be done, and then to offer it to you as a gift.”** That's our king.

Israel sinned when they issued an ultimatum and demanded a human king. They rejected God and so they received a king after their own heart.

The next ruler in Israel, who we're going to learn about more in the next few weeks, will be a king after God's heart.

But, remember, our true King, seated on the throne, is God Himself. Enthroned Him in your heart. Trust Him. He's a good, good king.

Would you please pray with me?

Father, we bow down before You, we come before You, and we are humbled by Your great love for us. God, You love us because of who You are. You love us – You've chosen to. And so, God, we repent of any other kings that we've enthroned or have tried to enthrone in our lives and in our hearts above You, over You. God, we repent of that, and we ask You that You would be the King of our hearts and our souls and our lives. God, we pray that we will obey You, we pray that we will turn toward You, God, and we thank You for Your Son, for adopting us as sons and daughters into Your kingdom. We love You, Lord, and we pray these things in Your name. Amen.