

# Will the king please step forward?

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[0:00] And as we come to this passage, Israel must be bubbling away with excitement, I think.

! They're going to have a king, they'd ask for a king, back in chapter 8, even though they were warned! that as they asked for a king, you're rejecting God. And it may not be all you want it to be. But nevertheless, they still wanted a king. Finally, they're having their way. They're going to have this king. The excitement is bubbling up and today is the day they're going to hear who this king is. It's an exciting, exciting day. And we see, first of all, in this passage that the people assemble, the people assemble together, are called together by Samuel. So verse 17, Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah. They're gathering, gathering for the moment when the results will be in. Who is this first king of Israel? I wonder if they feel the excitement that I feel when, as like a general election, I don't know if anybody else shares this excitement.

I love staying up through the night. Who's it going to be as the results come in? Is there going to be a surprise? I even enjoyed the three by-elections this week. Loved it. I'm weird, maybe. But I do. It's exciting.

And this morning, as we come to this passage, this is exciting for the people of Israel. They're gathering together. They're going to find out the results. Who's the king? Who's going to lead them?

[2:02] They've been longing for this moment. But as Samuel gathers the people, he starts off by really bursting their excitement. Because the people assemble. But Samuel's showing them, what are they like? You know, at times of kind of elections in nations, we might review how we're doing as a nation. Where do we want to go? What problems do we want sorted out this time?

Pin all our hopes in the government to sort out all our issues. We review the state of the nation, don't we? And as Samuel gathers the people together, as they're about to find out who is king, Samuel wants to show them what they're like. And it's not happy.

It's really going to burst their bubble of excitement. So have a look down in verse 18. Samuel said to them, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says.

I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you. They're reminded again, as they were in chapter 8 when they made that request for a king, they're reminded what God has done for them in history.

How they were slaves in Egypt and God has rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh. The people there in Egypt, they raised up cries to the Lord for help.

[3:48] And God raised up Moses, didn't he? We know the story well. And Samuel says that he's continued to deliver them from all the kingdoms that oppressed you.

And now they want to be a kingdom. They want to be a nation ruled by a king. They want to be like those kingdoms who've oppressed them.

Do they really want to be like a kingdom? With a king oppressing other nations? Is that what they want? And they've done perfectly well.

God's on their side. God's been delivering them. God's been rescuing them. But they're not wanting any of that. Verse 19, But you have now rejected your God, who saved you out of all your disasters and calamities.

This exciting day for Israel. They're going to get a king. And Samuel stands up and says, But now you have rejected your God.

[5:03] Your God who's delivered you, who's still delivering you out of all your calamities. And disasters. And disasters. You're rejecting him. It's a bit of a downer on the excitement they must have been feeling. The people are assembled. But what are they like? Well, they're rejecters of God. That's what they're like. They're rejecters of God. Tomorrow, we're looking forward to a happy occasion. A wedding. Oh. Did you know? Imagine, though, on what is a wonderful, happy occasion, what should be a wedding, imagine the service begins where the vicar standing up and saying, We've gathered here today as a bunch of sinners who reject God. Imagine that's how the wedding service starts. A bit of a downer on the day, wouldn't it? There is truth in that. And we hope that that truth with the gospel will be expressed.

[6:19] But that's not how to start a happy occasion. And Samuel here, surely he's just being a bit of a killjoy. Saying, On this exciting day, Coronation day, really, you're rejecting God.

That's what Samuel's saying here. Hadn't they all heard this before? They heard this in chapter 8. They're just going through the same thing.

But Samuel's reminding them of the seriousness of this. You're rejecting God. That's why we're here today. Maybe you're sitting here thinking similar.

Why have we already gone on to mention that sin word? Why are we already talking about rejecting God? It's only been five or so minutes into the sermon, Daniel. It's summer.

The weather's bad enough. Don't talk to me about that. And yet that's the human condition, isn't it? We are sinful. And in our sin, we do what the Israelites are doing here.

[7:29] Stubbornly rejecting God. Continuing on in rejecting God. When we choose to follow our own sinful desires, rather than God's pure and perfect ways, we are stubbornly rejecting God as king.

When we choose to say a lie, rather than choose to be truthful, we are stubbornly rejecting God as king. When we choose to be greedy, rather than choose to be content, we're stubbornly rejecting God as king.

When we choose to pursue a lustful thought, rather than pursue purity, we are stubbornly rejecting God as king. It is less than ideal that we human beings should choose sin over God.

And it's less than ideal that God's people here, Israel, are choosing to reject God as their king. They are his people. But God, here in these verses, still shows his grace to his people.

Even in these few verses that we've read, Samuel, for example, is still there. Samuel, God's prophet, God's spokesperson, God's word is still going out to his people through Samuel.

[9:00] That's a sign of God's grace, isn't it? And God is going to be involved in this selection of the king, even though it's a sign of their rejection of him.

Have a look in verse 19. Halfway through verse 19, and you have said, no, appoint a king over us. So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and your clans.

Israel, you're rejecting God, but still you can present yourselves before him, and he's still going to be involved in this appointment of the king.

There's still going to be a king that God chooses for you. Even though Israel here, they're being a bit like a stubborn toddler, throwing a tantrum, refusing to listen to mom and dad, wanting their own way, determined to go their own way, rather than listen to God and his words.

Rather than listening to him, they're rejecting God. Turn back to him. Don't choose to go this way. But God's still involved.

[10:19] God is still reigning supreme over what's going on here. And maybe we too, we hear God's words time and time again.

Maybe we're Christians. We've been following the Lord for a long time, but we refuse to listen and obey to God on one particular thing. For years, for me, it was kind of with my money and giving to church.

Until last year, hearing one of the most brilliant sermons on giving I've ever heard from the Bible and just feeling really convicted that I should actually listen to God's word on this.

I should actually take this seriously. Where are we refusing to listen to God's voice? And maybe for you this morning, you haven't yet turned to God and found him as your king.

And maybe you've heard the gospel time and time again. You've heard that Jesus loves you. You've heard that you can confess your sin to him and he'll forgive you.

[11:28] And you're still refusing to listen to God's voice. Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. Well, the people are called, they're assembled together, but what are they like?

They are rejecters of God, rejecting him as king. Secondly, we see that the king is called. The king is called. There's no big turnaround. There's no realising, yes, we're rejecting God. We'll turn back to him, confess our sins. There's none of that here. And so the time has come where they're going to get what they wanted. And I guess we know kind of what that's like. Maybe refusing, we've refused in the past to listen to our teacher as they warn us of what the consequences are of turning up late to school or not handing in our homework.

[12:33] And we refuse to listen. Yet say, oh yeah, it's fine. And then we face the consequences. Well, that's what's happening here.

The people have heard time and time again, they've been warned what it might be like if you reject God as king. And they haven't turned. And so now the time is coming.

It's a big moment. It's an historic moment. It's the first king of Israel. It's going to be revealed to the people. Saul has already privately been anointed as king.

We saw that kind of last week as Steve was walking through chapter 9 and the early parts of chapter 10 with this. But nobody really knows other than God, Samuel, and Saul.

Nobody really knows about it. And not even Saul's uncle knows. Verse 14, Now Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, Where have you been? Looking for the donkeys, he said.

[13:39] Because if you weren't here last week, Saul and his family, they lost the donkeys. So Saul went off to find the donkeys. And Saul continues to say, But when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel.

But Saul's uncle said, Tell me what Samuel said to you. And Saul replied, He assured us that the donkeys had been found. But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship. Told them the donkeys had been found. Reassured him on that. But, By the way, I became king. No, he didn't say that. He doesn't know. Not even the uncle knows. So, the big reveal to all of Israel is going to happen in a moment.

As Samuel calls them, verse 20, And Samuel made all Israel come forward tribe by tribe. The tribe of Benjamin was taken by Lot.

So Samuel's calling, calling the tribes of Israel tribe by tribe. And they're using Lot to find out who's going to be king to determine the matters.

[14:51] Maybe that seems a little bit odd to us. An odd way of doing it. But Lot's were used in the Bible to help make decisions or find out things.

So, in the book of Joshua, you've got Achan, who's found as a guilty party by the casting of Lot's. Israel's land was allocated to them through casting lots.

And in the book of Acts, a new apostle was selected in that way. Each time, recognizing the sovereignty of God over what the result would be.

And so, the process begins and very quickly, there in verse 20, we get to the tribe of Benjamin. And as it goes on, they get to the Matri's clan within the tribe of Benjamin and then to Saul, son of Kish. Saul is the one. He's the king. Will the new king please step forward? Will the new king please step forward?

[16:04] I said, will the new king just show yourself? Where are you, Saul? Have a look there in verse 21.

But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. The king is called, but where is he? Where's the king? They looked for him, but he could not be found. This is your king, Israel. Where is he?

And so, well, and it seems like a rather comical moment. Verse 22, they inquired further of the Lord. Has the man come here yet?

The Lord, who they're rejecting as king, well, they can't find the new king, so we'll better turn to the Lord. Lord, Lord, where is he?

[17:06] Maybe you'll know. You seem quite powerful. And so, the Lord replies. Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage.

this is your king, Israel. He's hiding away, hiding away behind the baggage. The only way you could find out is by turning to the Lord.

Can't see him. The Lord knows, though. The Lord sees. And so, they run and find him. Verse 23, they ran and brought him out and as he stood among the people, he was a head taller than any of the others.

It's a rather bizarre game of hide and seek, isn't it? I'm tall. I know I'm no good at hide and seek anymore. It's a shame. I loved playing it when I was a child.

But I can't really play it very well now. I'm far too tall for that. Saul is described as being a head taller than the rest. And he's trying to hide away, thinking he wouldn't be found.

[18:18] If they can't see me, I can't. If I can't see them, they can't see me, he's probably thinking. I wonder why he hid.

Maybe trying to avoid the responsibility. Maybe he felt his own weakness and inadequacy for such a huge role. Saul, however, can't hide from God.

God knew where he was. He can't hide from God. In fact, none of us can hide from God. The next king of Israel, King David, wrote this, where can I go from your spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the door and if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. We can't hide from God. Saul can't. We can't.

[19:33] God's maybe maybe we do try and hide from God. Maybe we think there's that special place, there's that room where nobody sees me, not even God sees me.

I can do whatever I want. We can't hide from God. Another verse in the Bible says, nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

We can't hide from God. Like as we come to God's word this morning, it's like we lie naked and exposed before the Lord who works through his word to convict us, to challenge us, to change us. And he's doing that because we're a people who doesn't want us to hide from him. He wants to change us and to grow us more into the likeness of Christ to help us to live for him, to do the tasks that he has set before us.

And for Saul, he wanted him to be the first king of Israel and Saul tries to hide from that. For others of us, I wonder what those responsibilities we have are.

[20:58] Maybe what God is calling us to do. Maybe we're trying to hide from. Maybe it's to be for husbands to be leading your families well, your wives and your children.

Maybe it's for us in our workplace to make that brave step of making known to others that we're a Christian rather than trying to hide that from people.

What is it? we can't hide from God. Even if we think we're getting away with it, we can't hide from God. He's the king who sits on the throne of heaven, who sees all, who knows all.

He's giving responsibility here to Saul. He's called him as king. Saul tries to hide, but he can't. This is your task, Saul.

this is what God is calling you to do. Thirdly and finally, the king is found.

[22:02] We've seen that already. The king's been found, found behind the baggage. But what is this king like? What is this king that Israel are getting?

Who is he? Who's this new king of Israel? We've seen already that he is a king who hides.

Imagine back in May when we had the coronation day. Imagine all the guests turning up. They had to turn up at 8am some of them, something ridiculously early.

It started at 11. They gather there in Westminster Abbey. The musicians are ready. The royals arrive.

The nation is ready. Watching around the TV screens, excited to see the coronation of our new king. And it gets to 11am.

[23:08] Where is he? Where's the king? Where people mutter among themselves in the church?

People are mother among themselves in the nation? Where's our king? What's he doing? What's he playing at? Turns out he's hiding under the bed at Buckingham Palace. It would be embarrassing, wouldn't it?

Does he want to be king? Can we trust this king? Is this really the king we should have would be going through our minds? That goes through my mind as I read of Saul here, hiding behind the package.

He's a king who hides. Is this really the one that we should have as king? We also see that he's a king who is tall. We've seen that in verse 23.

He's a head taller than the rest. Well, that makes up for it, doesn't it? He looks the part. He is tall.

[24:11] He's a commanding presence. Israel, they want a king who's going to go and fight their battles. Of course, of course, he's got to be tall. Commanding, strong presence.

Of course, this is the right king. I wonder whether what Samuel says in verse 24 is a bit sarcastic after it says that the king was a head taller than the others.

Samuel said to all the people, do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people. He's tall, there's no one like him. Usually, in the Bible, it's no one like him. It's talking about God. It's all certainly not God. But the people hear that and they see that he's tall and they're like, wow, long live the king.

Hooray! But just because Saul is tall doesn't mean he is necessarily going to be a good king. The next king who's anointed as king by Samuel isn't the tallest and strongest looking.

[25:25] He goes to Jesse and his sons and goes to the first one and God says no and next one and no, next one no. That boy in the field looking after the sheep, the shepherds, the youngest of all the sons, that's who God wants as his king.

God looks at the human heart first, not so interested in the outward appearances. Saul is tall, but he hides.

But we do see that he is equipped with God's word. He's equipped with God's word. Verse 25, Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of the kingship.

He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the Lord. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes. Samuel was going, was writing down for Saul the rights and duties of the king.

He explained it to the people. That's why we read Deuteronomy 17, because I guess this is what Samuel was talking about for the people.

[26:46] In Deuteronomy 17, that we read earlier, we saw that a king of Israel has got to be a king who God chooses. He's got to be an Israelite.

not to acquire great numbers of horses or turn back to Egypt. Not to take too many wives who may lead him and not to write a copy of the law for himself.

Sorry, he is to write a copy of the law for himself so that he knows the ways of God and can follow him well.

This is the way the king is to be, to live. And Samuel is writing this all down for Saul. Saul is being equipped with God's word.

He's hearing it, he's having it written down for him. We don't know if he writes a copy of the law for himself as well, but he certainly has access to it. This is what God wants his king to be like.

[27:56] So God is equipping him with his word and finally he's a king who's given the spirit of God. Verse 10, we saw this last week.

When he and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him, the spirit of God came powerfully upon him and joined in their prophesying. So even if Saul might be a king who hides away, not sure he wants to take on this responsibility, he's still being equipped by God to do this.

He's given the spirit, he's given God's words, he's being equipped. Given all he needs by God and he looks the part, he's tall.

Given all he needs and he looks the part. He divides opinion a bit. Verse 26, Saul also went to his home in Gibeah accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched.

God was giving him people, people to go and accompany him and say, yes, we want this king. [29:22] Verse 27, but some scoundrels said, how can this fellow save us? They despised him and brought him no gifts, but Saul kept silent. some really love him, some really don't.

And we're kind of left to wonder at the end of this passage, what's he going to be like? Is he going to be okay? He's given everything he needs and he looks the part.

But surely, surely, we'd love a better king than this. One who we can trust whole heartedly, who we're not going to be afraid, is going to wander off and hide away from his responsibility.

Surely, we want better. Surely, we could have better. Surely, we don't want a king who will be questioning whether he's going to appear at the right times or not.

Well, the Bible, as we know full well by now in this series in 1 Samuel, the Bible does show us a much better king, doesn't it? He may not have been a head taller than the rest.

[30:40] We're told in the Bible, actually, he didn't have any particular beauty that we should be attracted to him. But we are told of him that he doesn't hide from responsibility.

Rather, he is a king who, being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man.

He humbled himself to death, even death, on a cross. He doesn't hide away in the baggage.

He could hide away in the heights of heaven and just leave us to it, but he doesn't. He comes down.

He comes down, the king comes down to be with us.

[31:44] He leaves the joys and the wonders of his throne in heaven to come and lay down his life for people who reject God. for people who sin, for people who stubbornly reject God as their king.

But he gives us life for us, so that we can have hope, certain hope of life again with God. People who rejected God become friends with God.

That's the king that we need. that's the king that many of us have and know, and what a wonder, what a joy.

May we be filled with praise. That passage quoted from Philippians continues, therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And we're going to exalt him together now as king as we sing of God. desde desde