

The Wrong Kind of King

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[0 : 0 0] page 277 of the Pew Bibles and it's 1st Samuel chapter 8. When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders.

The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, you are old and your sons do not follow your ways. Now appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have.

But when they said, give us a king to lead us, this displeased Samuel. So he prayed to the Lord and the Lord told him, listen to all that the people are saying to you.

It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

[1 : 2 5] Now listen to them, but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights. Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king.

He said, this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights. He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses and they will run in front of his chariots.

Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants.

He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use.

[2 : 3 5] He will take a tenth of your flocks and you yourself will become his slaves. When that day comes you will cry out for relief from the king that you have chosen but the Lord will not answer you in that day.

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. No, they said, we want a king over us. Then we shall be like all the other nations with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.

When Samuel heard all that the people said he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, listen to them and give them a king. Then Samuel said to the Israelites, everyone go back to your own town.

Thanks a lot Derek for reading that and if you could have your Bibles open at 1 Samuel chapter 8 that would be a great help as we look at God's word together.

It's page 277 in the church Bibles. If that's fallen close you could open that. As Darren mentioned I hope that you can join us after the service even if you've just been coming along a little while or you're just visiting as we head into the park for a picnic and if you didn't bring food I was struck yesterday I bought a tabloid newspaper because it had a Euros wall chart for me to fill out and the headline on the front page was stake it off.

[4 : 06] Taylor Swift buys Greg's for her entire crew. So there you are. Greg's is always open if you haven't brought your own lunch and it's good enough for Taylor Swift's roadies so it's good enough for us in the park.

Now let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. I'll pray I'll lead us in a prayer. Let's pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight oh Lord our rock and our redeemer.

Amen. Now one of the things we get very concerned about is security. We're seeing that in the general election campaigns that are underway at the moment. People are concerned about defence security.

They're concerned about financial security. And we ourselves personally can find that security is something we long for and whether it's just personal security in our homes or when we think about putting aside money for a rainy day there's lots of ways in life that we are looking to feel secure.

And as a church it's easy to feel insecure. To think there's people coming now but we're only one generation away from extinction. Maybe we're one really bad decision from oblivion.

[5 : 22] How do we future proof how do we future proof our community our church family and get the security we need. So for each of us and for our church where will we go to feel secure?

Well we're back this morning with Israel in the time of Samuel in our sermon series. So we're after Moses and we're after Joshua and God's people were living in the promised land that he'd given them under a series of leaders called judges and Samuel is the latest judge.

God had promised them that if they trust him and they're faithful to him he will give them the security that they need. But when they have leaders who fail to lead them in trusting God and they're unfaithful enemies around them rise up and invade the land and we've seen that under the leadership of Eli earlier in 1 Samuel who was a lousy judge.

The people became faithless and the Philistines a neighboring marauding army of people started invading. But last week there was this great turning point as Samuel brought the people together in one place and he brought them to turn their hearts back to the Lord in repentance trusting him afresh and we heard that God thundered from heaven and scattered the Philistines and there was this miraculous deliverance and chapter 7 ended with this summary of Samuel's lifetime that throughout Samuel's life and his ministry among the people leading them spiritually the land enjoyed rest and peace because the people were right with God.

But then Samuel grew old and the seminal moment that we're thinking about this morning comes in verse 5 just at the very bottom of the page there. Then the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel and they said to him verse 5 you are old and your sons do not follow your ways now appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have.

[7 : 24] That's the request and the question we need to start with as we look at that is what on earth is wrong with that? what is wrong with Israel asking for a king?

And we could understand them asking for a king for a couple of reasons one is the situation they're in we just heard them say that Samuel is old and earlier in the chapter we read this that he has appointed his sons to replace him verse 1 Samuel grew old he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders and that's never going to go well that's a lesson we learn in Samuel we learnt it with Eli he appointed his sons to rule after him and they were a disaster they were corrupt and now Samuel makes the same mistake and there's a good life lesson there because just because you think that someone is a good bloke tells you nothing really about whether their sons are good leaders for the people and Israel sees that again in verse 3 his sons Samuel's sons did not follow his ways they turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice so Israel asks for a king because they know they've got a problem here with leadership they know they need change and we can understand that and the second reason we might think it was reasonable for Israel to ask for a king is

God has promised them a king when God made his great promises the seedbed of the whole bible to their first father in faith Abraham in Genesis 17 he said kings will come from you through Abraham's offspring God's blessing is going to come to the whole earth and it's clearly going to come through a king in Abraham's line in Numbers chapter 23 God promised through the prophet Balaam that Israel would become a kingdom with a great king Balaam prophesied a star will come from Jacob a scepter will rise from Israel they're waiting for this king and then in 1 Samuel chapter 2 we met Hannah Samuel's mother a woman of faith and she prophesied this great song that like a prophecy like a key unlocks the whole book of 1 Samuel and she said at the climax of her song chapter 2 verse 10 she said

God will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed his anointed is his messiah his anointed king so the key idea of the whole book we're in 1 and 2 Samuel is God is going to teach his people the kind of king to look for the kind of king they need and here Israel asks for a king so that's good isn't it no it's not good and we're going to look at why all is not as it seems sometimes we find out in life don't we that all is not as it seems I don't know if you saw last week the news from China about this waterfall it's China's highest natural waterfall people go from all over the world to see it as tourists it's magnificent but a hiker last week went up following the waterfall looking for its source assuming he'd find a spring and he found this which he shared on social media it's a pipe pumping water down the waterfall it looks like a waterfall it's actually a water fountain all is not as it seems in China and what what's going on here in 1 Samuel 8 is that what could have looked like a very devout prayer from the people of God

God please send us the messianic king you've promised that we know we need so that you would fulfill your gracious promises to us is anything but that and as we do a closer examination of Israel's request it shines this uncomfortable light on their hearts and also on our human hearts so the first point this morning the people asked for the wrong kind of king and the first thing it reveals to us these are on our sheets inside the service sheets is our passion for substitutes our passion for substitutes we see that in how God responds to their request if we pick things up in verse 7 the Lord told Samuel listen to all that the people are saying to you it is not you they have rejected but they have rejected me as their king so they've rejected God and they're putting something else in their place he says as they have done from the day I brought them up out of

[12 : 05] Egypt until this day forsaking me and serving other gods so they are doing to you instead of putting their hope in the God of heaven whom they can't see it's more attractive to Israel to put their confidence in a human king who they can see a king who looks impressive who can lead your army out in battle that's what the other nations have to keep them secure and that's what Israel wants too and Israel has completely missed the real problem here if we just turn over the page to verse 20 there's tragedy and irony in verse 20 they say they want a king they say then we shall be like all the other nations with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles well we just saw in chapter 7 that if you're right with God he will fight your battles you don't need a human king if you've got the Lord Almighty on your side he is all the security you could ever need being a God follower is not easy but it is not complicated you humbly entrust yourself to God alone what the people need is a leader whether he's a king or not who will lead them in staying right with God and the king they really need would do that so in Deuteronomy chapter 17

God anticipated this request in his law that he gave to Moses for Israel and he said when the people ask for a king he mustn't be a king like the other nations he has to be a king who reads God's word every day and leads the people in obedience of God's word and for us it's good to reflect on the times that we want a substitute for the living God that will make us feel secure who would fight our battles for us it's something we can do as individuals and notice that Israel here goes to God and asks God to give them the very thing they want to replace God with it would be like us praying and praying for something pleading with God for it because in reality the thing we most want from God we actually want to worship instead of God that's really what we're trusting and so we're very clear on exactly how God has to answer our prayer what the solution is to our problems what is it that we already have that we most fear losing because really we get our security from it or what is it that we most long for because we think if I got that

I would feel secure that's the first issue that Israel's request shines a light on our passion for substitutes secondly it shines a light on our aversion to holiness at the start and end of the chapter you get these bookends like these brackets about the king that they want at the end of verse five they say this appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have and then over the page at verse 19 if you have a look we want a king over us verse 20 then we shall be like all the other nations so here's the problem Israel has spent too much time looking over their shoulders at what the nations around them have that makes them secure their request reflects a passion to be like everyone else to have what they've got and this cuts to the heart of what it means to be the people of God in Deuteronomy chapter 4 as God reminded the people that he had rescued them he said this has never happened to any other nation that they were rescued like God in the way

I rescued you and then he sets out for them his commands that they would be holy because God is holy and holiness is about being set apart we could over translate it that God says to them be different because the Lord your God is different as Israel sees that they can find their security in the God of all this who has rescued them they can live differently reflecting God's holiness in their moral living as they keep God's commands and God's plan for his people his purpose is that as they stand out from the nations around them and the way they live they are magnetic and they draw people from other nations around them to join them in worshipping the Lord of the Bible what does that require the courage to be distinctive to see what makes the other nations feel secure and think that's really interesting we don't need that because we have the living God on our side but Israel looks around at what the other nations get their security from and they they get it from things they can see and they think we need that we need a strong man king the Philistines even had five kings in five cities five big men with big crowns on big thrones that's what we need thinks Israel well fast forward to today and this aversion to holiness is painfully familiar for us what is

Jesus evangelistic strategy to save people from every nation today before Jesus returns that we his people would be the salt of the earth distinctively tasty in how we live differently that we would be the light of the world distinctively shiny in how we live differently for him Jesus sets out his commands for his people in Matthew five to seven and he says let your light shine that men might see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven we are to live differently for him so that we attract people to him well of course we shine most brightly for him when the values we live by the people around us simply don't live by them in that sense being a Christian today choosing to live for Jesus and trust him is radically subversive in Scotland today it's adventurous because it's subversive to be willing to be courageously different willing to look weird in the eyes of the people around us because we found our security and our joy in Jesus and we can look at what other people are striving for and think oh that's really interesting it's just that I don't need that and we're glad to live lives that reflect

[19 : 01] Jesus goodness because we trust him and that he'll give us what we need what stops us from doing that well isn't it often that we feel insecure we feel a sense of fear thinking goodness if they really think they need that stuff to feel secure maybe we need it as well and we're afraid we won't manage without it thirdly in Israel's request for a king they show us our immunity to wisdom Samuel reports their request to God and instead of refusing it and saying well they can't have that kind of king God says to Samuel warn them what the king will be like what does a strong man king actually look like so Samuel passes on the warning and we can pick things up in verse 11 and see if you can spot the key word as we read through from verse 11 again this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights he will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses and they will run in front of his chariots then he says what he'll do with their sons they'll be called to fight in war they'll be called to plow his ground to reap his harvest to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots verse 13 he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers he will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants he will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants your male and female servants and the best of your cattle monkeys he will take for his own use he will take a tenth of your flocks and you yourselves will become his slaves in other words if you insist on putting your trust in a man and giving him the authority that will make him a substitute for God in your life you will lose out and what

Samuel's describing here isn't especially mean of a king king this is just normal human king behavior you choose a leader for their strength because you think that will make me feel safe against my enemies and what you'll find is it's going to cost you so the people go away and they reflect on what they'd asked for and what Samuel has said and they come back and they say we were thinking maybe let's not have that kind of king after all no that's not what they say in verse 19 if you have a look but the people refused to listen to Samuel no they said we want a king over us this is what the human heart is like the Lord so often warns us in his word about the mess we'll make of our lives if we make certain choices but we are unmoved our problem is rarely a lack of information in our lives it's that we are immune to wisdom and let's think about this particular warning here in this chapter that things we put our trust in can take from us

Jesus said something similar he said anyone who sins is a slave to sin he warns us that it might look like freedom freedom to reject the commands of God and think I want the right to choose what I'll live for but we'll always choose something else instead of God to love and serve because we think it will make us secure and whatever you want to live for you'll find that it will take and take from you you see that if you choose to get your security from your career I used to find this in the law firm I worked for the problem around me was not the job I see no problem in insecure overachievers who thought if they gave themselves and gave themselves to their bosses and their workplace they would find security and identity and it left them enslaved and even exploited by the very things they chosen to trust no doubt they would have looked at

Christians in the workplace saying sorry I can't be around tonight for that meeting because I've got my my growth group and I'm committed to that group of people but I'll work late I'll come back afterwards or I'll work late at home I will get it done and they might have thought these guys are enslaved to what they believe but really by not knowing the security they could have in Jesus they were enslaved to what they put in his place you can do that with any good thing a relationship family a sporting achievement when we take all our hopes for security and love and identity then we find we've enslaved ourselves to it and we also see churches making this mistake we see in 1 Samuel chapter 8 in what we look for from our leaders in evangelical movements and churches we often appoint leaders who are strong men visibly impressive dynamic full of charisma because we think that's what's going to grow our church that will make us feel safe as a church they'll bring people in they'll give us clear direction and that's what we need and then so often when churches do that we start to hear allegations of overbearing leadership heavy shepherding scandals of spiritual abuse you look for a leader who makes you feel secure instead of a leader who leads you to find your security in

Christ and you get a leader who takes and takes and takes that's what we learn from Israel's requests for the wrong kind of king the people asked for the wrong kind of king but secondly this morning and more briefly let's see that the Lord gives the people what they asked for let's pick things up in verse 21 verse 21 then Samuel heard all that the people said he repeated it before the Lord the Lord answered listen to them and give them a king then Samuel said everyone go back to your own town and it's left hanging it's a cliffhanger for next week what kind of king will they get you can read on if you want but come back next week what kind of king are they going to get we see in this an alarming warning don't we sometimes we can be asking for the wrong thing from God sinfully and

[26 : 00] God's solution is to give us what we asked for to teach us but as we zoom further out in the whole Bible story from this moment we see that God uses this deeply flawed request from Israel to set things in motion to provide them ultimately with a different kind of king and when you look at 1 Samuel 8 like that this is one of the most significant moments in human history that we're looking at today it triggers the chain of events that leads to God sending to Israel the king that he really did promise through Hannah and promised through Balaam and promised to Abraham the one through whom God will bring his blessing to people from every nation and put this world right we get to John chapter 18 and Jesus is brought before Pilate and Pilate says to Jesus are you the king of the Jews and Jesus says my kingdom is not of this world if it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest but now my kingdom is from another place

Jesus is saying at that moment I am a king but I'm not a king like the other nations have this king God sends he humbly trust God's word so that when he explains to his followers who are perplexed that he has to he says everything that is written about me in the law of Moses must be fulfilled he will be a king who unlike Samuel will never need to pass on his rule to dubious sons because he'll reign forever because he lives forever and the people put him to death because he wasn't the king they wanted he's not the strong man king the substitute king the king you can trust instead of trusting God but wonderfully he is the king we really need not one who takes and takes and takes from us but one who came to give everything he was and everything he has to save us who said to his followers even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many it was the

D-Day commemorations this week I'm sure you saw that 80 years since the allied forces walked onto the beaches of Normandy and faced waves of machine gun fire to liberate Europe knowing many of them would never see that free he's in that picture there he's now 100 years old and he gave a speech and he spoke of the day he came off the people carrier onto the beach and he got shot by a sniper on the beach and he was saved by his friend Gummison Gummy he called him who went back for him and strapped him up and got him to a field hospital but Gummy never made it well for every Christian we have a story like that to tell but it's about our king 1

Samuel 8 says a human king will take and take from you to give you the security you think you want in Jesus we find a king who gave and gave and gave everything so that he could give us the security that we really need the security of redemption forgiveness right standing with God and when you grasp what a good king he is it hews our hearts of all that we've seen Israel get wrong in this chapter we stop running after substitutes we trust him we're even willing to pursue holiness for this king we have the courage to be distinctive in our lives today because we don't need to look over our shoulders and think I need what the people around me have got for now we know that we are known and loved and given a security by our king that not even death could take away let's let's let's pray together

Lord Jesus we praise you that you the king of kings and lord of lords are the king we really need that you whose kingdom will stretch from shore to shore and go on forever would come into our world to serve us and save us and face death on the cross that we might live thank you for the security and joy that you bring to us as your people may your spirit so work in us that our sense of that security in you will abound that we would be willing not to run after the idols of our age but instead to be holy and as we live differently for you would you draw others to know you we ask for your namesake amen song yeah hello