

The Rejected King

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Date: 22 January 2022

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. It's so good to be on Zoom. I know it's not ideal for a lot of people but hey, thank God for Zoom and we're able to still connect with people through this technology.

It's a great morning. It's a little bit of drizzling at night and which is something I just love. So when I woke up, it was a great morning. The Murphys are back in Hong Kong. Welcome back. It's so good to have you guys. And oh, let me introduce myself. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Alan. I oversee the Utes here at Watermark. So before we get into God's Word today, let me just pray for us and then we can begin. Father God, we come before you this beautiful day and Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for your amazing grace and even God, thank you for the songs that we just sang this morning. Father, you are the true King. You are the King who who opens the eyes of the blind, who heals the sick, who has a power, who has put to death our sin and who have overcome death. And Father, as we come to find you in your scripture, we pray that you'd reveal your Word to us, to your people, Lord, and that you would take your glory, edify us, convict us, comfort us, and most of all, God, that you would show yourself, that you would show your gospel, truth, and your beauty to us this morning. So come and be glorified, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. So we've been going through 1 Samuel for a few weeks now. And if you remember, the series, the title of our series is All That Glitters Is Not Gold. It may look all beautiful from the outside, but it could be a whole different story on the inside. Or we could be attracted by the exterior, but it could be all decaying in the interior. So today's scripture is from chapter 8 all the way till 10. Though we do not read everything today, we'll be going, we'll be summarizing here and there.

But I would love to encourage you all, us all, to read the whole passage in these coming days, because such a profound story is unfolding in these few chapters. It's just amazing.

So let me start with this. I'm sure you have heard the phrase, you don't know what you're asking for. And it's usually with kids, right? The kids come up to you and they ask you something ridiculous and thinking that it might be fun or tasty. And then we would go like, kid, you don't know what you're asking for. Seriously. So here's a video that shows exactly that. So enjoy the video.

[2 : 38] This child will not stop insisting on tasting this. I keep telling him it's going to be gross, but he does not want to listen. So I'm going to let him find out for himself.

Go spit it out. Come on, get to the sink.

Great. I hope you enjoyed that. So many times we think that kind of incidents usually happen with kids, but the reality is it happens a lot with adults too. And in fact, today's scripture is all about that. It's all about people asking God for something they don't know what they're asking for.

So let me give a short summary of the whole chapter eight to 10, a very short and brief summary. And then we can begin today's work. So what we find in chapter eight and chapter all the way to 10 is so Samuel is getting old and his two sons are not doing well. So the elders of Israel come together to him and saying, Hey, you're getting old. We need, and you guys are not doing well. So give us a king and Samuel gets upset. God gets upset and feeling like that the people have rejected them as, as leaders, but eventually God gives them a king. But first God warns them, telling them, you don't know what you're really getting at. This king is not going to be as you think it is.

And eventually in chapter nine, we come and we saw, we are introduced to Saul who meets Samuel. And finally Samuel anoints Saul as a king in private. And then in chapter 10, we find, Samuel calling all Israel together in a place called Mizpah. And he warns them again, Hey, this is what you're really doing. It's not great, but people make no comment. So Samuel casts lots, falls on Saul. And finally Saul is hiding when he's being called to be a king, but still Saul is brought out and he's proclaimed king. And that's where the story ends. So it's a fairly simple story, but never judge a book by the cover, right? So there's a lot going on this in the story. So let's start right at the beginning. So let's start from the demand of the king for a king. So let's start from the beginning. So the elders come to Samuel asking for a king. They say, Hey, appoint us a king that will judge us just like all the nations. Now, one of the first questions you want to ask is, why are they asking for a king? Why do they want a king? So let's go to verse five. So verse five, we see all the elders coming together and saying, behold, you are old, which is a great way to start conversations, by the way. I mean, just go up to people and say, Hey, behold, you are old and your two sons are not walking in the right path. So basically what he's saying is, Hey, you're, you are getting old. Your two sons are not doing great. Your sons are accepting bribes. They're perverting justice. And if you stop and think that sounds very familiar to Eli and his sons.

[6 : 12] Now, if you remember a few chapters back, a few weeks back, we were looking at Eli and his two sons. Now, Eli was a priest for the nation of Israel. Basically, he was a leader and he was not a great priest. And he was someone who would choose comfort rather than honoring God, who would choose comfort rather than confronting his two sons who were dishonoring God badly. And his two sons were not great. They were the ones taking sacrifice away. They were the ones sleeping with women that came to serve in the tent. So they did not really have a good leaders. Now, what that led to was that led to a devastating defeat of Israel in the hands of Philistines. And in that battle, what happened?

And if you remember, it was the two sons were in the middle of the whole battle. What happened in the battle is the Philistines come in and attack them. And the two sons thinking, we're going to use God. They bring out the Ark of God and they lose the Ark of God. And if you know, the Ark of God is the most precious thing for the Israelite. It was meant to be the very presence of God in their nation. It was their identity, their most precious, their holiest thing. And in that battle, they lose it.

And that whole event ends with this devastating sentence where it says, the glory has departed from Israel for the Ark of God has been captured. So that whole incident was very devastating. It was a huge loss. They lost God's presence. They lost God's glory.

And it was pretty traumatic. So now the elders in chapter 8, they come and they're seeing a similar pattern unfolding before their eyes. Now they're seeing the same thing. The leader is getting old.

The two sons are not walking the same path. Now they don't want to be defeated in battle like that in the past again. You see, they have seen what happened in the past. They remember what happened in the past. So they're coming to Samuel and saying, no, no, we don't want to go through that.

[8 : 20] Better give us a king. And if you stop here and think, what we actually find here is behind this demand for a king, behind this curtain of demand is a whole lot of insecurity and fears.

What if we go down the same route in the past? What if these other nations around us and come and attack us again? We don't want to lose in a battle. So what they do is they look for a solution.

We don't want to go through the same way. So they look for a solution. They look at all the nations around them and what do they see? They see kings. And they realize that the kind of ruling that they had, the kind of governing they had, the leaders they had, the two sons they had is not going to work. They want a king. They need a king, someone who will lead them, someone who would represent them, someone who's strong and powerful. That's why when you come to verse 20, you see them saying, hey, give us a king who will go out before us and fight our battles. Now they're looking for a king who's going to bring them victory, who's going to lead them, who's going to represent them, who's going to give them security and take away their fears. They're saying, give us that king.

So now they are saying, appoint us a king who will judge us like all the nations. Now, before we quickly judge them for asking for a king when they already had a leader, for asking for a king and trying to be like all the nations, let's look at that demand a little closely. Because what we see here is we see the same sentence repeated way in the past before.

If you go to in the book of Deuteronomy, way back, we actually find God in the past, God through Moses, speaking to his people, giving his people a tons of laws, ways to worship, ways to sacrifice, ways to live their life. And in the book of Deuteronomy, when we come to chapter 17 and verse 14 to 20, what you will find there is you will find laws regarding a king. And interestingly enough, verse 14 goes, when you come to the land that the Lord, your God is giving you and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, I will sit over a king like all the nations that are around that are around me. Now, it's pretty interesting, the very same sentence is being used way in the past. Now, what we're seeing here is God actually knew that his people were going to ask for a king one day. And God had and at that time, God did not tell them, hey, no, you cannot have a king. But what we see here is in Deuteronomy is that God had actually given them guidelines regarding a king. Hey, this is how you're going to have a king. This is the type of king you'd want to have. So now the elders come in chapter 8, Samuel, we come back there and we see that the elders come and say the same sentence to Samuel, asking for a king like all the nation, which is a pretty good thing. So the question arises, so why was God displeased with that demand?

[11 : 35] Why did God say that the people were rejecting him in verse 7? You see, if you think about it, the fact that they were asking for a king was not bad in itself. But what was wrong with the demand for a king? And for that, to answer that question, we need to go back and see the whole story that has been unfolding in 1 Samuel. Here's a little graph to help us see it. So in 1 Samuel, in 1 Samuel chapter 1 and 2, what we see here is we see Hannah, right? Hannah has a problem. The problem is she has no child.

And her solution was that she would run off to God and she would give herself in prayer and surrendering herself to God and God being the center of her solution. But then we come to chapter 4.

Now there's a problem again. And the problem is the battle between Philistines and Israelites. So there's a huge problem. They're being defeated. It's not going great. So there's a problem. And what's their solution? Their solution is not to go to God. But as we're seeing last week, they try to use God. So they bring out the Ark of God as if it's a big secret weapon. And they try to use God. They don't go to God in repentance. They come up with their own solution. And that does not go well.

And again, we come in chapter 7, the chapter previous to this scripture, and we see there's a problem again. The Philistines are attacking them again. But this time, their solution is what?

Their solution is to actually go back to God. So in chapter 7, we see Samuel bringing people back to God. And he's telling, leave all these idols, leave all these things that you're worshipping and come back to God. Seek Him. And then in chapter 7, we see that God delivering them away from Philistines and giving them victory. So now we come to chapter 8, today's scripture, and we are back to square 1. We have a problem here. The problem is that they don't have good future leaders. Their two sons are not doing well. Their leaders are getting old. There's a fear that all this other nation would attack them. They're insecure. They're in fear.

[13 : 53] Now, and their solution for this time is not to go back to God looking for a solution, not to go back to God in prayer and repentance and back to the relationship. But this time, what they do is, just like chapter 4, they come up with their own solution to the problem.

So which they did. So they come up to Samuel and said, hey, this is our solution. Give us a king. Do you see what's happening there? And if you stop and think about it, hey, that solution is not a bad solution, right? The solution is not that bad. I mean, you would want a king so that the other nation would not bully you, right? You don't want other nations to look at you and like, oh, look at this country. They don't even have a king or a governing system.

They're taking progress. You don't want other nations to put you down because that would be reason for attack and conquer. You would want a strong and charismatic leader. You'd want someone who would represent the country, someone who would fight and bring victory to your nation. You'd want a king who would bring justice through the authority that he's given. I mean, think about it. When we all have problems, we want to think about it systematically, right? We want to analyze it, discuss it, and we want to come up with the best solution that we can find. And that's the thing. But one of the things that the elders did, and which we do many times, is that when looking for a solution, we tend to leave God behind it. We tend to forget God and leave and come up with our own solution. Now, how many times have we made decisions based on our own wisdom? How many times have we made plans and then asked God to bless them? You know, decisions regarding investment, school for your children, career, even where to live, are our finances, or how we spend our time? Think about the decisions that you have made.

Because you see, we make decisions every day, every minute. So, now we see that the demand for a king is not just a demand, but it is something that came out of insecurity. It came into a place where they're finding a solution that leaves God behind without God. But you see, let's stop there, because there's still more to this demand. There's still more behind this demand for a king. Because let's look at how God responds to this demand. Let's go to verse 7. And verse 7, Lot tells Samuel, he says, hey, obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, God saying me, from being a king over them. You see, God is saying here, hey, these people have not just rejected me, but they have rejected me from being a king over them. That he's saying that he's the king that is being rejected here.

And what is interesting here is to look at what the king, what the people wanted the king to do. It is interesting to see what the people wanted the king to do. So, there are three things you'll find in these three chapters that the people wanted the king to look like. One is, they wanted the king to judge them. You'll see that right in verse 6 and 13. The second thing you want, the people wanted was the king to go out before them. You'll find that in verse 20. And finally, the people wanted the king to go out and fight their battles. Now, look at these three things. It's very interesting.

[17 : 52] Now, the first one is to judge. Now, to judge does not mean as we think it is, like courtroom and the hair thingy and order, order. It's not that kind of judge. Judge in those times meant someone who would govern. In simple words, it's someone who is the leader of that nation. Someone who would judge.

Someone who would say what is right and wrong and do justice and stuff like that. Someone who is governing them. Now, which is why Samuel was first displeased, right? When they asked for a king to judge them and Samuel was like angry. How could you do that? I'm the judge right now. I'm the leader.

But eventually, God tells Samuel, no, no, no. God, they have not rejected you. They have rejected God. Now, look at these three things. Because what you see here is that these three things where what was, these three things is what God was already doing indirectly or directly.

For number one, God would appoint judges and the judges would listen to God and God would actually govern his people indirectly through the judges. In fact, it was directly in most of the times.

And look at number two, that God would go out before them. If you go throughout the, in the past, in Exodus, the eternal numbers, there are so many promises where God would tell his people, hey, I will go out before you. I'll promise to go out before you. I promise to be with you that you don't have to go alone, that I will go out before you. So there's so many promises where God said that I'm going out before you. And finally, and if you see in Joshua 10 and 2 Chronicles, you'll find it was always being proclaimed that whenever there was victory, it was always said that God is the one who fought the battles. There's a promise in 2 Chronicles where God says, do not worry, do not be afraid, go out into the battle because the battle is not yours, but it God's. And what we see throughout history is that God has always been the one to govern his people and lead his people. God has always been the one who had gone before them. And God has always been the one who had fought their battles. So now, now we see when God said what God meant by, they have rejected me as a king over them. You see, because what they have done is that they have taken all the things that

[20 : 15] God was already doing and decided on their own to give it to someone else, to find someone else to do it. Basically, they were replacing God with another king.

You see, they are in a problem and they are seeking a solution in another place. They are looking for someone to come and save them in their insecurities. They are looking for someone to come and satisfy their insecurities and fears. They are basically looking and trying to look for a king that would give them salvation while they already have a king, which was God. And what we see here is that in this demand for a king, they have actually made God the rejected king. So you see, the demand for a king is not as simple as it sounds.

It came from a place of insecurity and fears and it went towards a place where they made a solution, made a decision on their own, leaving God behind. And at the same time, they rejected God as a king by taking whatever, everything that God was doing for them, saving them, fighting their battles, protecting them, governing them and looking for another king. So it's a demand that is, that has a lot of baggages, a lot of stories, a lot of things behind it. It's not just a demand. But eventually, God does give them a king.

But first, he warns them before giving them a king. He tells them what they're getting into. He basically tells them, hey, you don't know what you're getting into. And eventually, which takes us to our second point, which is, he tells them the cost for a king. He's telling them it's going to be costly to have a king.

When we read from chapter 8, verse 10 to 18, you will see all the warnings that God give the people against kings. And now, we will not go into detail of every line and what are the warnings, but I want you to notice something in this whole paragraph. Because one thing you'll notice is that you will see the phrase, he will take, being repeated a lot. You might not be able to see here, but you'll see it almost six to seven times in this whole paragraph. He will take, he will take this, he will take that, he will take a lot. Now, basically, God is telling them that this is a king that will take a lot away from you. The people were thinking that this king was going to bring them salvation. But verse 17 in this paragraph tells us that, no, no, no, it's not going to bring you salvation or freedom. What is this king is going to bring you? It's slavery. And just like the video we watched in the beginning, the people thought that this king is going to be like chocolate. It's going to be tasty. It's going to be awesome and fun. But it's just going to be nasty. It's something that's going to take away rather than give. It's not going to be what they expected him to be. And that is why even in chapter 10, when we go to chapter 10, verses 18 to 20, you'll see God telling them about their slavery in

[23 : 36] Egypt and about the times they were being oppressed by other nations. You know, right before Saul was going to be proclaimed as a king, God warns them again, reminds them, hey, I have taken you out of Egypt. I have freed you from the oppression and slavery. And it's interesting that God uses these words of slavery to warn his people once more before giving them a king. Because actually their demand for a king is going to be costly. And if we take a step back from this story and look at the whole Bible, biblical story, that is something you'll find throughout the Bible. From the beginning, Adam and Eve, they did not want God to be God. And they wanted themselves to be a God.

So they rejected God, thinking that that's going to give them freedom. That's going to make them more wise. But eventually that led them to suffering and toiling and in another form of slavery.

You come to New Testament and Jesus talks about the prodigal son, the son who wants all the money from his father. And he goes out with his idea of freedom to have party, orgies, and every kind of pleasures, which eventually leads him to not freedom, but slavery, slave to his debt, and just suffering and losing everything in that whole process. And we see that kind of theme throughout the Bible, including this story.

You see, we might think that coming to God is like being enslaved with all the do's and don'ts and the religion. But what God is saying here is that no, it's not about the do's and don'ts, but in him, there's actually life. You see that he is the source of life. And if you think about it, God is not saying that, hey, by asking for a king, this is what's going to, you're going to just get freedom and joy.

No, no, no. He's saying that, hey, by asking for a king, you're running away from the source of life. You're running away from the source of joy and hope and truth because he's saying, I am the source of life. And if you think about David, David is someone who has been so close to God, who has tasted God.

[25 : 53] And when you come to Psalm 63, there's this beautiful Psalm where he says like, even in the dry and harsh land, when there's no water in the desert place, I mean, when we are thirsty, we really want water, right? But what David says in Psalm 63 is that even in the dry and harsh land, God, I long for you.

It's not that he longs for water, like I'm longing for water right now. But David says, I long for you, God. So much so that he goes on to say, God, that your love is better than life itself. Think about it. Because we as humans, life is all that we have. But David proclaims, God, your love is better than life. You see, God is saying here, what God is saying here is that God is saying like, hey, you guys are thinking that another king is going to be able to save you.

But no, no, no. It's me, it's God who's able to save you. It's I who is able to fight your battles. That I'm able to lead you to green pastures where you will be satisfied, where you will find your desires filled. And even when you're most difficult and suffering, that I have promised to go before you and to be with you. And that's the demand for a king is taking away from the people.

But here's the thing. You see, we all have these other kings in our lives. You see, that we would rather lean on than God. And especially the city of Hong Kong, there are so many other kings that we can find. There's so many other kings that are here in Hong Kong. It could be finance, could be status, could be value, it could be career, school for your children, it could be relationships.

And we don't wake up one day suddenly thinking that, hey, today I'm going to reject God and look for another king. No, no, no. This other kings happens in a very subtle way. It happens in ways that we are not really aware of. And the way it usually happens is when we see all the other nations around us and we ask for a king just like all the nations. And that means we look at all the people around us. We look at the culture that is around us. You see, in the passage, today's passage, what we find is that Saul is described as someone who's very tall and very handsome. Someone like Nathaniel.

[28 : 35] And even though in chapter 10, verse 22, you see that Saul is actually hiding away when he's being called to be a king. He was a coward. But people did not really care about that. They just saw a potential king being a coward, but they did not care because what they see is a tall and handsome guy who looks really good, who looks all like he's all that glitter, but not realizing it's not all that gold inside.

Because you see, before this chapter, before this whole story, the other people in other nations and the enemies of Israel used to be described as tall people. These tall people would be a huge threat to Israel. And in a very subtle way, in a very small way, God actually did give them a king that looked like all the nations, someone who was tall and someone who was handsome. You see, basically what happened here is that the people of Israel were swept away by looking at all the nations, by the people and the culture of other nations. So you see, it happens in a very subtle way when we are swept away in the currents of the culture around us in Hong Kong. You know, for parents, it could be that you tell yourself, I'm not going to fall for this pressure of where my child is going to study and all and being compared with the school that they get into.

But then as you meet other parents and you find the pressure and that this COVID is not helping at all, you start to worry over your kids and start looking, start being frantic and anxious. And then, and then that pressure falls on you and suddenly you're looking for other kings in your life. For others, it could be money and work for where you see everyone chasing after everyone working so much, chasing after value and status, working hours and hours. And then you end up spending your whole time and energy in that, in the pursuit of finance and career. And for some, it can be jobs. And for some, it can be relationships and marriages. You see, all of these things are not bad in itself.

You do want to think about your child's education. You do want to be responsible with your finance and career and relationships. But when we are swept away, unconsciously or even knowingly, we come up with our own solution, leaving God behind and rejecting him as a king by looking for other kings or in most of the time by being king ourselves in our lives. You see, as the Israelites were looking for a king, for a king to save them, to turn away from there, to take away their insecurities and fight the battles.

We too look for other kings who will come, who will save our lives, who will bring security in our lives. And in those small moments, we go and look for another king, which most of the time is ourselves.

[31 : 34] So what is that small king in our lives? But church, here's the good news. You don't have to look for these other kings because the true king was sent on this earth.

The promised king that would bring salvation to all people and creation did come. And unlike the king in chapter 8, this king did not come to take away, but he came to give.

This king came to give eternal life. He came to give the living water that would satisfy you. He came to give life, to show the truth, to show the way, because this king was the truth, was the way, and was the life.

And above all, he was the true king that came to pay the price, which takes us to our last point, the price paid by this true king.

You see, because God knew that his people and his creation would reject him generation after generation, and our rejection would mean separation from him.

[32 : 40] It would mean our separation from the source of life. It would mean that it would be our separation from him who made us, who knows us, who knows our inmost being. He knows how we function.

He knows everything about us from the way we think and the way we are made and the way we are brought up. You see, it would mean separation from the truth. But God sent his son, Jesus Christ, the true king, who takes all of our shame, all of our sin, which is the cost, which is the price of our rejection, on the cross and puts it to death so that whoever believes in him does not have to search for other kings anymore.

So that whoever believes in this true king does not have to search and look for other kings to bring salvation and to take away the insecurity and fear.

So you see, for he is the king that will satisfy. He is the one who is able to save us and he is the one who is able to bring life. He is the king that promises to be in your suffering and hardships not because he is just a promise but because he himself has gone through the suffering and he himself has gone through the worst of the worst that we can ever go through.

You see, he comes not to take away but he comes to give. He comes to give you life and he comes to give you all that was promised. But one thing that he does ask is that he calls you to himself.

[34 : 13] You see, he calls you to himself in faith and repentance. Faith and repentance meaning that he wants you to come in total faith, total trusting on him that you would reject these other kings in our lives, that you would put away all these other kings and are seeking for other kings and come to him and in repentance that we would turn away from these other kings and to turn to him who is the true king who is able to provide, who is able to bring salvation and fight our battles.

Because, you see, he is a king that is trustworthy and faithful because he is the true king. Now, if you are new to Christianity today, if this is your first time coming to church, even though it's online on Zoom, hey, I want to invite you to him, Jesus, who loves you and who wants to give you life, that life that you have never dreamt of or imagined because he is the true king in our life who is able to give.

And if you are a follower of Christ this morning, is there a place in our life where we are, where we need to confess and turn back from these other small kings?

You see, it could be even in this time of COVID where things are unpredictable and scary that we don't know what's going to happen that we suddenly panic and we forget that God is still king, that he is still sovereign.

It could be in our workplace and even in the smallest of smallest things like job or relationship, even parenting. Is there a place where we need to confess and come back to him?

[35 : 51] Places where we have made ourselves and other things king because Jesus promises to be that king who is able to take away our insecurities, who is able to go out before us, to govern us, lead us and to fight our battles.

Hey, can I ask us to pray right now? Father God, we come before you and we confess that there are so many times where we seek other kings and Father, as we come this morning, we pray that you would come and that you would be our king.

Father, we ask your Holy Spirit right now to come and just speak in our hearts, reveal our hearts to us, Lord, the places that we have missed, the places that we have seeked other kings.

So Father, come and lead us, we pray.