

Who is This King?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 September 2018

Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[0 : 00] Thanks, Jamie. Good evening, everyone. My name is Alistair. I have the privilege of being on staff here at Brunsfield. And I thought it would be good because, again, we have such a long passage this evening to give you a little bit of an introduction into what we'll be thinking about and a little bit of heads up as Graham and Sabina come and read two chapters for us to keep us alert as God's word is being read to us.

I thought I'd give you a few hints on what to look out for. So in chapter eight last week, Pete took us through how Israel have rejected Samuel as their ruler.

They've rejected God as their king, and they're demanding a human king so that they can be like all the other nations around them. And Samuel said that this king will take, take and take from you.

He will not necessarily be the best thing that you're asking for. And so as these chapters are read to us, I'd like you to look out for some encouragements of who this king is.

And if you want, you can take little notes next to the verse. You can put a plus sign in your Bible or on another piece of paper if you don't want to write in your Bible. And then also think of or look for some of the warning signs as to is this really the king that the people of Israel want?

[1 : 15] So there are some really big encouragements, but there are also some really big warning signs. So keep your eyes out for those as we go through. And I'll hand over to Graham, who's just about to come and read 1 Samuel chapter nine to us.

Let's pray together before we turn to God's word. Heavenly Father, we come before you and confess that you are all we've ever needed.

And yet so often we look in other places. But Father, I pray that this evening as we look at your word, as we see your goodness, as we see your compassion, as we see your care for your people, that we would be able to say that you are all that we want.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. I wonder how many of us actually know the person who is ruling over us.

How many of you really know the queen? So I wonder out of the 28 monarchs that are currently in our world, how many people in their countries really know them as individuals?

[2 : 27] Does our queen, for example, like toast or cereal for breakfast? Does she watch Netflix or does she watch Amazon Prime?

Does she like short crust or puff pastry? These are all important things to know. But the thing is that we don't really know much about our queen at all.

And what we do know is given to us by the media or directly from the palace itself. But tonight we're going to be looking at a very different king. And there's something special about this king because he was appointed by God to rule over God's chosen people.

And the question that I want us to think about this evening as we go through this sermon is, who is this king? God gave instructions of how the king of Israel should act and live in Deuteronomy chapter 17.

And just before we dive into 1 Samuel 9 and 10, I want to read Deuteronomy 17 verses 15 to 20. You don't have to turn there if you don't want to.

[3 : 34] Just to give us an insight into what God says a king should be like. So Deuteronomy 17 verse 15 to 20 say this. Be sure to appoint over you a king that the Lord your God chooses.

He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite. The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them.

For the Lord has told you, you are not to go back that way again. He must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

And when he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law taken from that of the Levitical priests.

It is to be with him. And he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God. And follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.

[4 : 42] And not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites. And turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

So as we look at 1 Samuel chapter 9 and 10 this evening, keep those instructions in the back of your mind. And ask yourself the question, who is this king? Does Saul fit these criteria?

So the first thing that we see in our passage is the beginning of a king. 1 Samuel chapter 9, the beginning of a king. As I said at the start, at the beginning, at the end of chapter 8, sorry, we see the leaders of Israel asking for a king despite Samuel literally just telling them that this king was going to take.

He was going to take and he was going to take. And so I'm left thinking, well, what is this king going to be like? Who is this king? And in chapter 9, we're introduced to a man called Saul.

But he isn't really what you'd expect, is he? In verses 1 and 2, we're introduced to a nice, young, obedient man. Doesn't sound like he's a taker.

[5 : 58] Saul comes from a wealthy family. He's described as a handsome man and he is tall. And the word for handsome could also be translated as good.

So not only is Saul put forward as this good looking, young, tall, obedient man. But verse 2 says that he is the best in the whole of Israel.

This young man is the top of the pile. He is the creme de la creme in the eyes of the world. But then in verse 3, we get this strange little story about some missing donkeys.

And how Saul and a servant are sent by his dad, Kish, to go and find them. And what do we see in verse 4? Saul obeys. Now this is a very different story from all of the other sons that we've seen in the book so far, isn't it?

Because none of them have been obedient, but they've lived for their own gain. Something is different about this man. Something is different about Saul. This is the beginning of something new in Israel.

[7 : 01] And this is the first sign of encouragement for Saul. At the end of chapter 8, we leave Israel and Samuel at the brink of a political revolution.

People are demanding a king. Samuel's been rejected. Israel have rejected God. They want their human king. And you can imagine the scene where Samuel's standing in the middle of the courtyard.

And people are rallied around him and they're chanting. What do we want? We want a king. When do we want him? Now. Now. And amidst all this tension.

Amidst this political unrest. The writer of 1 Samuel introduces us to a young man and tells us the story of some missing donkeys. Why?

All of this seems so ordinary compared to the great things that are happening in the cities. And yet we're taken to a countryside story of some donkeys. I think there are two reasons why.

[7 : 59] Firstly, the writer introduces us to Saul now to show us his pedigree. He is exactly the kind of king that Israel wants. He's tall.

He's handsome. He's a good lad. And he's obedient to his dad. There is no one better than him in the whole of Israel. This is the king that you want on the throne. But notice how in all of these introductory comments about Saul, not one thing is mentioned about his heart.

Not one thing is mentioned about his desire to serve God or his devotion to God. These two chapters are bookended by Saul's physical attributes.

And so I find myself thinking. Well, it's nice that he looks nice in the eyes of the world. But how does God view him? How does he stand before the ultimate king? Who is this king?

In the eyes of the world, he's perfect. He's the perfect king. But God looks beyond what we can see. He looks into the very inner parts of a person's soul.

[9 : 08] God is providing Israel with what they want. He's giving them a king. But he's going to make sure that everybody knows that God is still the one in control.

God has the ultimate authority. And the second reason I think this little account of ordinary events is given is to show that God's plan is worked out through the ordinary.

God makes thousands of ordinary events happen on a daily basis, all to accomplish his extraordinary will. That person who just happened to be there on that day where you needed prayer and they prayed with you.

That person who gave you a hug on a Sunday morning and went around to Costa and listened to your pain for hours. That Sunday school teacher who asked you the right question at the right time and pointed you to Jesus.

That stay-at-home mom who has other moms around for coffees and tells them about Jesus. Ordinary events. But God works through the ordinary.

[10:13] And we'll see that as we continue through these chapters. And so Saul and his servant, they go and they look around but no donkeys to be found. And in verse 6, the servant says that there is a man of God nearby who might be able to help them and say where the donkeys are.

It's interesting, isn't it? That it's the servant who suggests to go to hear the voice of God. Not Saul. Surely the future king is the one who should know who Samuel is.

Saul doesn't seem to have a clue. He should be the one jumping at the opportunity to hear from God. And so again, we see little breadcrumbs.

Maybe this won't end so well after all. Even in the beginning of this story, we see that it might not end well. And as they walk to the town, it just so happens that Samuel is coming out at the same time.

Is that a coincidence? Definitely not. Verse 15. God had revealed all of this to Samuel already. God told Samuel that he's sending Saul and that Saul is to be anointed as a ruler over God's people.

[11:28] Why? Verse 16. Because I have, this is what God says, because I have looked on my people and their cry has reached me.

That is astonishing. God is being so kind and loving to a people who have literally just rejected him. They've called for a man to take his place as king.

They've turned their back on God. And yet God still has a heart for his people and he has heard their cry. And instead of God punishing them for their rebellion, he shows compassion.

God is rich in mercy, even though he's been rejected. God is in control. And his good purposes for his people will not be thwarted by his people.

In verse 19, Samuel invites Saul to dinner and tells him that the donkeys were found three days ago. At the end of verse 20, we see Samuel hinting that Saul, hinting at Saul's new beginning as king.

[12:40] He says, To whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line? Saul, you are the one these people are crying out for.

You are the one that God has chosen to be king. And doesn't Saul respond well in verse 21? I can't be king.

I'm a nobody. He's humble. So they go up together and eat and Saul is already treated like the king. He's given a special piece of meat that was set aside for him.

That was the custom of the day. And he is seated at the head of the table, the place of honor and respect. This young lad who was looking for donkeys is now being treated like a king.

And in the morning, Samuel tells Saul to send his servant ahead because in verse 27, he has a message from God for him. Something new is just about to happen.

[13:40] Who is this king? Here we see the beginning of a king and all of the events in this chapter seem so random and so ordinary. But all of these events are pointing to the truth that God is in control.

And that nothing, not even his own people, will ever thwart his plan. God is giving Israel what they want. But he is showing them through these string of events that he is still the one ruling over them. But God doesn't exercise this control like a puppet master in the sky, making everyone dance to his own music. But this is the control of an all-powerful, completely sovereign God who is infinite in wisdom and who is perfect in love.

He is the all-powerful king who can make the best happen. The all-compassionate king who wants the best for his children. And the all-wise king who knows what's best for his people.

This is the king that is control. And this is the king that Israel rejects. And this is the king who is in control today. But how often is he rejected?

[14:57] God gives his people the kind of king that they want. But he makes sure that they know that he is still in control. God calls a man who looks the part. Maybe even sometimes acts the part

and says the right things.

But it's only with God's preparing and anointing that this man becomes a somebody. Without God, he is a nobody. Who is this king? Without God, he's nobody.

But with God and with God's anointing, this is the king who will govern God's people if he listens to God's word. God takes ordinary events and ordinary people and accomplishes his extraordinary will.

Isn't that a privilege for us here this evening? Isn't it such a privilege that God would see fit to use weak and broken people like you and me? But let's not forget that there are also warning signs as well as encouragements as we go through this passage.

Who is this king? The second thing that we see in this passage is the confirming of a king in 1 Samuel chapter 10. The confirming of a king.

[16:10] So right at the end of chapter 9, we see Samuel tell Saul that he wants to give him a message from God. God is revealing his will to Saul. Samuel takes oil and anoints Saul.

Setting him apart for a certain task. And in this case, it's to be a leader over Israel. Now, there are only two cases in the Bible so far that people or things have been anointed.

So it is a pretty special event. And the only two cases are the priests and the tabernacle. Both are people and things that are used in the worship and service of God.

This is an important event. Saul is being set apart. And Samuel kisses Saul, showing respect and affection to God's new servant. And just in case there is any doubt in Saul's mind as to whether any of this is going to happen, in verses 2 to 8, Samuel tells Saul three things that will happen.

And these are to be a confirmation that what Samuel has said is true and that he has been appointed a king according to the will of God. Sign number one, in verse 2, Saul will meet two men who will tell him that the donkeys have been found.

[17:31] This isn't any new information for Saul. But it points to the fact that God is in control. Sign number two, in verses 3 and 4, Saul is going to meet three men who are going to worship God with sacrifices.

And Samuel even knows exactly what they'll be carrying and exactly what they'll say. And then sign number three, in verses 5 to 7, Saul will meet a group of prophets.

And verse 6 says that the spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon him and he will prophesy. God is going to equip Saul for the task that lies before him.

And it will be confirmation that the Lord is with him. God's servant can do absolutely nothing by himself.

According to his own strength or ability. He must solely be reliant on the power and equipping of God Almighty. Three signs all showing that Saul is God's chosen king.

[18:38] And in verse 8, Samuel tells Saul that he must go ahead of him and wait until Samuel comes to tell him what to do. Now surely, as the anointed king of Israel, Saul is the one who has the ultimate authority.

I mean, I wouldn't dare walk up to the queen, knock on the castle door and say hello and tell her how to do her job. Or to presume that I know better than she does how to fulfill her duties as queen. So why does Samuel, why does Samuel think that Saul should wait on his instructions? Well, Saul is to wait because even the king of Israel is subject to the great high king, God himself.

The king is to be marked by obedience to the will and word of God. God's king must wait on God's prophet to be given instruction on how to live according to the will and word of God.

The spirit of God gives power and equips God's servant for the task ahead of him. But Saul must be obedient. And this is something important to keep in the back of our minds because this is exactly the thing that starts Saul's downfall later on in the book.

[20:01] We cannot expect to live in the favor of God if we are not willing to submit to the word of God. As Saul turned to leave, verse 9, it says that God changed Saul's heart.

Now we shouldn't read our New Testament minds into that. This isn't a New Testament equivalent. Saul is not now a saved man. Because that's not what it means.

But it means that now something has changed. Saul's different. He has a different attitude, a different outlook on life. From this point on, this young, obedient farmer will have to act like a leader. Like the king of a nation, a warrior who's going to march before Israel's army. And a man whose responsibility is to listen and obey God's words.

If Saul were to continue as he begins here, he would be a great king. But sadly, this change doesn't last very long. Later on, we see Saul becoming proud.

[21 : 05] Independent. We see him rebelling against God. And because of his disobedience, he loses his kingdom. And he eventually loses his own life. Beginning well is really important.

But the question should also be, how do you end? It's good to start off well. But if that devotion, if that desire to live according to God's word, if that desire to serve him dissipates, we're in a bad place.

Saul starts off well, but he loses the fire of his initial love and devotion for the Lord. And so his throne is stripped from him. And God's favor leaves him.

All of these signs were fulfilled that day. And when people see Saul prophesying in verse 11, they are surprised. Isn't this the Saul that we know?

What's come over him? Only one man seems to get to the heart of the matter in verse 12, where he says, who is their father? The man is saying, go back to the source.

[22 : 14] The prophets were praising God. God is the inspiration of their songs and their words. God is the source. Saul prophesying shouldn't make us wonder at what's happened to him.

But it should make us see that God is with him. This is the king and he is confirmed as king by these signs.

And then Saul goes home and in verse 14, he's asked by his uncle where he was. And he says absolutely nothing about him becoming king. Saul is not proud. He's humble.

Maybe even a bit shy. Who is he to take on the helm of God's chosen people? Who is he to sit in a place of authority over the nation of Israel?

At this point in time, Saul's attitude is 100% correct. He is a nobody. But the God who is with him, the God who equips him and the God who has true authority, he is the marvelous one.

[23 : 16] And it's his works that matter. God can take the smallest and most insignificant person in the eyes of the world and do a mighty work for his purposes.

So Samuel gathers the nation of Israel together. And I think that he gives them one last chance to repent of their rejection of God in verses 17 to 19.

This is an indictment against Israel for their rebellion because they want a physical king to fight their wars for them even though God has saved them from all of their disasters and calamities.

They have rebelled and now their king will be presented to them. But they need to remember just how much God has done. And so they come together and cast lots to see who their king will be.

And as the lot falls on Saul, nowhere to be found. Now do you see the irony here? Israel have rejected God, but they need God's help to find their fearless leader.

[24 : 24] Because in verse 22, God tells them that Saul is hidden in the supplies. You know that feeling when you wake up on a, it's usually a Monday morning, and you know that you've got a really hard day ahead of you.

You don't want to get up and you don't want to have that conversation. You don't want to go to that meeting or that doctor's appointment. You just want to hide from the world. And so you pull the cover over your head and you say, I'm not going anywhere.

That's exactly what Saul is doing. He knows what his job is. It's been confirmed to him beyond any doubt.

And yet as he arrives with the rest of Israel, he dives out of sight. He is afraid. And the problem with this is that he obviously doesn't know who he's been called by.

Who he's been anointed by. Who he's being equipped by. Saul is relying on himself and he is afraid. He is a reluctant leader. But if he knew who God was, if he knew who was ultimately in control, then he would know that he has absolutely nothing to fear.

[25 : 38] But Saul is a fallen human being, a broken vessel that is fragile and unspectacular. And yet the God that he serves is mighty.

And he enables those who obediently serve him. So they find Saul. They bring him out. And Samuel presents him before the people.

But notice that nobody bats an eyelid that he was just hiding. Nobody gives a second thought that this fearless leader is the one they want to stand in front of enemies' armies.

Their desire for an earthly king to be like all the other nations has made them blind to the warning signs that are already showing. And so they shout with one loud voice, verse 25, long live the king.

And Samuel explains the rights and duties of a king. Probably reading out the list that we read at the very start in Deuteronomy. Who is this king?

[26 : 58] Well, he's the king that Israel want. But they're blind to the warning signs and problems that are literally just around the corner. How would you feel if the person you loved most in the world, the person that you'd helped countless times and saved so many times turns around to you and says, I want absolutely nothing to do with you.

I would absolutely destroy you, wouldn't it? That is exactly what Israel have just done to God. And even more than that, they've turned to a man who looks the part on the outside, but is showing all the signs that he is no king after God's own heart.

And do you know what I was thinking about yesterday as I was praying for this evening? This is exactly what we do to God as well, isn't it? How often do we turn our eyes and seek fulfillment and pleasure in the things of the world?

Does it make sense to base our lives on our Lord God who loves us and who saves us? The one who is there for us and who has sacrificed so much for us?

Why look to anything else? 500 years ago was the beginning of the Reformation in Germany. And do you know why the Reformation was needed?

[28 : 23] It was needed because the glory of God was being trampled on. Churches weren't worshipping God as they should. People weren't focusing on Jesus for forgiveness, but instead looking at priests and indulgences.

The main concern of the Reformation was the glory of God. Because the minute we take our eyes off of God, he is replaced by something else and we become idolaters.

Israel wanted to be a king like every other nation. And so their desire for an earthly king made them forget about their true heavenly king.

The only king that matters. God gives them what they want, but he makes sure that they know that he is still in control by showing them their cowering king.

And by working out his will through ordinary events, God works in the ordinary. Nothing of this world will ever nullify his plans.

[29 : 27] And no amount of weakness in a person can or will ever prevent God from using them as an instrument. We get so caught up in the extraordinary.

Thinking that God has a special task, some grand plan for each individual to reach thousands of people with the gospel. And in a sense, he does have a grand plan because we have the privilege of sharing that message.

But do not disparage the ordinary. Do not think little of those who day in and day out are faithfully living out their lives as good Christian people in the home and in the workplace.

God works through the ordinary. Be faithful to God's word and live out an ordinary life to the praise and glory of an extraordinary God.

And know that God equips his saints, his people. So often we pray for people to become Christians. So often I hear Christians pray for revival and a great turning of people back to the Lord.

[30 : 33] And those aren't bad things to pray for. But I think we should pray that God would give us a deeper desire to live according to his word.

Pray that God would give us opportunities to witness of his glory in the mundane, ordinary tasks of life. And pray that God would see fit to use us in certain circumstances to accomplish his will.

We can sit here and discuss whether Saul is a good king or a bad king. Some things in the beginning are good and some are bad. But ultimately, he's going to fail.

And ultimately, it doesn't matter. Because there is only one king who fulfills God's desire for a king. There is only one king who held 100% to God's law.

And there is only one king who is the ultimate authority over his people. And that is our king, Jesus Christ. Who is alive and who is seated at the right hand of our father in heaven.

[31 : 42] Our king did not march before earthly armies. But he has destroyed our worst enemies. Sin and death.

That is the king the only one is coming out for. Nothing can hinder his reign. But Jesus is the king that we should all be looking for. That we should all be wanting to serve and that we should be praising.

Israel rejected God as their king. Our world rejects Jesus as king. How will you respond to him this evening? Will you accept him? Or will you reject him?

Jesus is not an upgrade from Saul. Jesus is the true king that was promised way back in Genesis chapter 3. The first book of the Bible. The one who would come to set God's chosen people free from the chains of sin that bind us.

Jesus is the king who threw his death on the cross bore God's wrath and took the punishment that we deserve. And was raised to life on the third day revealing to us the glory of our God.

[32 : 52] The beginnings of our ultimate king were humble. He was born in an animal feeding trough in a small town. No royal robes in sight.

He died a criminal's death so that we, his subjects, could be reconciled with God. And he rose again confirming his identity as the chosen one of God.

And when he returns everyone will see him. And every knee will bow and worship him as the one true king. Do not wait to that final day to recognize who he is.

Let's pray together. Lord, we come before you this evening as humble, broken people.

And we acknowledge that you are king. We ask forgiveness for the times that we have taken you off the throne of our hearts and put other things in your place.

[34 : 04] Lord, you are all that we want. You are all that we've ever needed. Lord, we pray.