

WENT WE WANT A KING

1 Samuel 12:12-25 (p. 435)

November 4, 2018

*But when you saw that Nahash . . .
was moving against you, you said to me,
“No, we want a king to rule over us” – even
though the Lord your God was your king.*

1 Samuel 12:12

Samuel tells the kingship story

Then Samuel said to the people

*“Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with the evidence before the Lord
as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your fathers*

Now then, stand still and see the great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes!”

1 Samuel 12:6-16

Samuel’s main points:

- 1) THE LORD is your KING
- 2) God prepares his people for JESUS’ KINGSHIP (see 1 Samuel 2:10)

What is the problem with a king?

*“Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die,
for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.”*

1 Samuel 2:19 (see also 1 Samuel 8:5-20; Belgic Confession, Article XXXVI, and OWBTG, #52)

Samuel's job description

*"As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.
And I will teach you the way that is good and right."*

1 Samuel 2:22

Holding tightly, holding loosely

"But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away."

1 Samuel 2:24-25

1) TRUST God!

2) God will expose FALSE HOMES

For further study of 1 Samuel 12

David Howard's review article "The Case for Kingship" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 52:1 (Spring 1990) at https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_kingship_howard.html. His section on Samuel is worth looking up.

Spurgeon's commentary of 1 Samuel at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/spe/1-samuel-2.html>

Expositors' Bible Commentary has a very good analysis of this passage.

Spurgeon's sermon "Harvest Time" at <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/2896.htm>. This is not Spurgeon's best exegesis, but the included study notes are good.

P.G. Matthew's sermon "The Effectual Prayer" at <https://gracevalley.org/sermon/the-effectual-prayer-2/>

Liam Goligher's sermon at <https://www.tenth.org/resource-library/sermons/treaty-of-the-great-king>

John Piper's sermons on 1 Samuel 12, especially "The Sinful Origin of the Son of David," at <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/1-samuel/12/messages>

Alexander Maclaren's commentary at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/1-samuel.html>

Our World Belongs to God

52. We obey God first;
we respect the authorities that rule,
for they are established by God:
we pray for our rulers,
and we work to influence governments—
resisting them only when Christ and conscience demand.
We are thankful for the freedoms
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;
we grieve with those who live under oppression,
and we seek for them the liberty to live without fear.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches respect for governing authorities (see also 1 Peter 2:13-17); Revelation 13 illustrates government gone wrong. Colossians 1:16 teaches that authority and power come from Christ; Ephesians 6:12 warns us that authority and power can become infected by evil.

53. We call on all governments to do public justice
and to protect the rights and freedoms
of individuals, groups, and institutions
so that each may do their tasks.
We urge governments and pledge ourselves
to safeguard children and the elderly
from abuse and exploitation,
to bring justice to the poor and oppressed,
and to promote the freedom
to speak, work, worship, and associate.

That governments are called to justice generally and that how a government treats the poor and the weak is a key indicator of a society's commitment to justice is taught in all the prophets and in psalms like Psalm 72.

54. Followers of the Prince of Peace
are called to be peacemakers,
promoting harmony and order
and restoring what is broken.
We call on our governments to work for peace
and to restore just relationships.
We deplore the spread of weapons
in our world and on our streets
with the risks they bring
and the horrors they threaten.
We call on all nations to reduce their arsenals
to what is needed
in the defense of justice and freedom.
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,
confessing that our world belongs to God;
he is our sure defense.

Isaiah 2:1-4 expresses God's will for peace, and Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ." (Matthew 5:9).

David Howard, "The Case for Kingship"

Westminster Theological Journal 52:1 (Spring 1990) at

https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_kingship_howard.html

5. 1 Samuel: The Rise of Kingship

The first reference in Samuel to kingship occurs in the Song of Hannah. Here, in 2:10 - as well as in words of the man of God in 2:35 - YHWH's king and anointed one are referred to. Their occurrence here reinforces the view that kingship is viewed positively in the Deuteronomistic History. They function proleptically, since there was still no king at this juncture in the book, and they serve to signal at the outset the book's interest in the chosen king. The work comes full circle at the end of 2 Samuel, with the reference to David as YHWH's anointed (23:1). As Childs notes, 1 Samuel 2 reveals the book's theocentric perspective: "The focus on God's chosen king, his anointed one, David, appears right at the outset, and reveals the stance from which the whole narrative is being viewed."[\[31\]](#)

[p.112]

Gerbrandt does not consider these early texts, but rather limits his discussion of kingship in 1 Samuel to the critical chapters where the monarchy is established, chaps. 8-15 (pp. 140-158). He concedes - as standard critical scholarship has long noted - that an antikingship sentiment undoubtedly is present in individual verses or fragments in 1 Samuel 8-12. However, he argues (again) that in the unified section the true problem is in the *request* for the king, and specifically in the *reason* for the request. To wit (p. 145):

In 1 Samuel 8-12 there is no larger unit which implies that kingship is totally wrong, or needs to be eliminated. Rather, within 1 Samuel 8-12 it is not the institution of kingship which is evil, but Israel's request for the institution. In their request Israel had demonstrated a total lack of faith in Yahweh's ability to successfully lead them in battle. In this way they had rejected Yahweh's kingship over them in the crucial area of defence.[\[32\]](#)

The request was not only for a king to govern "like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:5). Israel wanted a king "so that we indeed [*gam*] might be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us *and fight our battles*" (8:20; my translation). YHWH would be "deposed" as king because his role as military protector was to be transferred to Israel's human king.[\[33\]](#)

Gerbrandt notes that 1 Samuel 8-12 performs two functions in the larger corpus. First, it clearly warns of the dangers of kingship, the most obvious being that it could easily become oppressive. Another danger was that it could undermine Israel's understanding of YHWH as Israel's protector. The temptation would be to see the human king as the guarantor of Israel's national security, rather than YHWH. This is why Israel's request constituted a rejection of YHWH's kingship (1 Sam 8:7).[\[34\]](#)

The second function that 1 Samuel 8-12 performs is to integrate the idea of kingship into the rest of Israelite theology. While chap. 8 raises the problem of kingship, chaps. 9-12 serve to resolve it, while still reminding us of the problem. By the end of chap. 12, the theoretical problem of kingship has been resolved, and the duties of king and people are clear: to keep covenant. In this way, we can see how kingship theology/ideology is to be reconciled with that other great theological motif - the Mosaic covenant.

1 Samuel 13-15 perform a twofold function. First is the simple narrative function, describing how and why Saul's house was rejected, paving the way for David's rise. Second, here we can see in example some of the dangers of kingship that we have seen in speech in chaps. 8-12. The disqualification of Saul as king shows that even Israel's king was not exempt from keeping covenant. Again, the problem was with the type of king, and not the institution. As Gerbrandt says: "After all, the rejection of Saul does not lead to an Israel without a king but to an Israel with a king who fulfills his proper function" (p. 158).