

The Request for a King

1. Intro & Context

- Last week I was woken by Liana saying she thought there was someone in the house
 - She said she had heard footsteps downstairs so went to investigate – impressive!
 - Normally she’s whacking me and shaking me and whispering “DID YOU HEAR THAT?”
 - This time SHE gets up goes and looks around the house!
 - In the end she didn’t find anyone and there was nothing suspicious > thinks she was dreaming

- Well there is a story a couple in Oak Hill, America who came home from shopping one day when they thought they heard someone in the house
 - You know how they worked out whether there was someone there or not?
 - The man told a joke and they heard a laugh upstairs

- Now I tell that stories, because today we are talking about security and how we try and get security in this life
 - It maybe you have a great sense of humour and you can ensure your security with your side splitting jokes
- But what about the rest of you?
- What do you look for to give you security in life?
 - Money
 - Job
 - Relationship
 - Government
 - Health
 - Suburb you live in
- Israel was looking for security ... but they were looking in the wrong place
- And as we look at 1 Samuel 8 & 10 together this morning, we’re going to see
 - the problem of seeking security in wrong places ...
 - and where we can find true and lasting security

2. The request for a king like the other nations (8:1-8)

- In 8:1-3 we see the narrative moved on several decades from earlier chapters

- Samuel is growing old > lots of grey hairs and his best days are behind him
- In the intervening time, he has appointed sons as judges in Beersheeba (in south > Samuel at Ramah)
- But his sons are corrupt > ICAC is onto them
 - Accepted bribes and perverted justice
- Kind of reminds us of Eli and his sons
 - Eli's sons 'took' meat from the people
 - Samuel's sons 'took' bribes from the people
- Both sets of sons were putting themselves before those they were meant to serve

- At this point you might think we've just gone full circle, back to where we were at the beginning
 - It's clear that Israel's well-being can't be guaranteed by the sons of its leaders
 - Because even the best of leaders like Samuel, can have the worst of sons

- And so, Israel is once again in crisis
 - The peace and security of the years under Samuel were in jeopardy if his sons were going to play any part in Israel's future
 - Clearly the system of delegating to sons was not delivering the leadership Israel needed

- In v4-5 ... a proposal emerges for establishing Israel's security that would change the nation forever
- The elders approach Samuel with their dilemma
- And what's their proposal?
 - "We need a new leader you are old and your sons are corrupt"
 - "The last time we had a leader with corrupt sons in leadership, we were in chaos"
 - Israel's elders didn't want to see it happen all over again

- Up until that point we're thinking "Okay, the elders have a point"
 - Who wants a pair of dropkicks being leaders of their nation?

- But then they drop the clanger ... and they say to Samuel in v5
 - "Now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have"

- Not only is their request sinful (which we'll get to in a minute), but it also dumb!
- Because the reason the elders come to Samuel and make this demand is because the sons of their leader are dropkicks
 - But **their** proposal is to institute a monarchy ... which is based on the hereditary principle of a father being succeeded by a son!
 - They're demanding the very thing they are seeking to overcome!!
- However, it gets worse
- Because the Israelite elders don't just want a change in leaders ... they want a completely new political system
- In v6 we're told Samuel is displeased by their request
 - Possibly because Israel have rejected his decades of godly leadership and prophecy?
- But as we read on we find out
- Because when he prays to the Lord, the Lord answers –
 - v7 - *it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.*

The rejection of God

- Here's the real issue
- The people want a leader who will be their king
- They want someone who will provide leadership and protection and security from the nations around them
- And so in demanding a king ... what they're doing is
 - rejecting God's appointed ruler – Samuel; AND
 - rejecting God who is their king
- This really is stupid
- Because time again in the OT, God had told them that he himself will protect them and fight for them¹
- And on many occasions throughout their history, Israel had 'cried out' to the LORD for help when faced with adversity and God had graciously delivered them as he promised
- But not this time
- Here is Samuel's accusation from 1 Sam 12:12

¹ Exodus 14:14 - The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." and Deuteronomy 20:4 - For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

- *"But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites 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.*
- Facing the military threat of the Ammonites they didn't 'cry out' to God
 - Rather they demanded a king of their own ... when really 'the LORD their God was their king.'
- This was Israel rejecting God by failing to trust Him to give them the security they desired ... and which he had always provided²
- But in their foolishness, they decided their security was no longer to be found in the Lord ... but in a king
- **Application - Seeking security in things other than the Lord**
- Like Israel, most human beings have an inbuilt desire for security in life
 - And as a result we spend a great deal of time and energy trying to find, win or build security for ourselves and those we love
- And so we make sure
 - we have enough locks and alarms on our homes
 - we live in a suburb that is safe
 - we have health insurance that has all the cover we want
 - we exercise to stave off a heart attack
 - we have accumulated sufficient super
 - we have a job that pays a good salary
 - we elect governments who promise national security
- Because deep down we want to feel secure
- Of course, its futile to seek security in any of those things ... because it's just a mirage
 - They promise so much, but they fail to deliver
 - Companies sack their workers
 - Investments fail
 - Relationships end or breakdown
 - Our health is tenuous and sickness strikes
 - There's only so much the government can do to protect us from terrorism

² Refer Deuteronomy 20.4; Judges 4.14; 1 Samuel 7.10, 14; 12:11

- Even still ... the temptation to forget that God is king and he can be trusted in whatever journey lies ahead of me is very real
- And so we look to
 - Our marks > our job > our marriage > our location > our super > our looks > our relationship > our success > or our politicians to give us security
- You know what we're doing when we do that?
 - We're turning that thing we are seeking security in ... into an idol
- You know what an idol is?
 - An idol is something you trust in more than God
 - It's something your heart desires more than God
 - And like Israel, we will often abandon God to get that thing our heart desires ... in this case, the desire for security
- Your idol of security, will cause you, like the Israelites ... to sacrifice your God given priorities to have your idol
- And so you will prioritise
 - Work over growth group
 - Savings over giving
 - Family over church
 - Facebook over prayer
 - Moving house over gospel need

The rejection of distinctive living

- But wasn't just a rejection of God as their king
- It was a rejection of living God's way to be like the other nations
- They no longer want to be the unique people of God ... they want to be like everyone else
- While it's a little ambiguous in v5 ... Israel's intention is made much clearer in v19-20 when the elders repeat their desires to Samuel
 - *"We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations,*
- Their request to be like all the other nations was a direct rejection of their calling as the people of God to be
 - The Lord's treasured possession among the nations (Ex 19:5)
 - A kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6)
 - To be holy, set apart from the nations (Lev 20:26)

- A great nation in praise, fame and honour high above the nations (Deut 4.6; 26.19)
- Other nations were meant to look at Israel and see they were different from them and therefore see they belong to the Lord
 - They were meant to be a light to the nations, rather than being a mirror of the nations
 - They were supposed to be different
- And so, Israel's request is not just to have a king like the other nations ... but **to be like** the other nations around them
- **Application - *Living like other nations***
- Israel's sin to be like the world around them is the same for Christians today
- There is always this pull ... this temptation ... this ease of existence that is to
 - just blend in with the culture
 - to be the same
 - to do what everyone else is doing ... because it seems so normal
- Michael Hart wrote a book called 'The 100 Most Influential Persons in History'
- He ranked
 - #1 – Muhammad
 - #2 – Isaac Newtown
 - #3 – Jesus Christ
- You want to know why?
- He said
 - If Christians actually lived out what Jesus actually taught them to do ... he said "*I would have had no hesitation in placing Jesus first in this book.*"
- To be a Christian means you cannot love the world AND love the Father
 - You will either love one and hate the other > you cannot love both
- God's people are to have this DNA that makes them counter-cultural
- Unless you're living a life that is radically different from your non-Christian friends, neighbours and colleagues ... then rather than becoming relevant as you might think ... you actually become irrelevant
 - Because you're no different
 - You offer nothing different to what they already have or know

- If you're going to offer something relevant ... and not just relevant ... but transforming and life changing ... then you need to
 - be different
 - swim against tide
 - be counter-cultural and not merely walk in step with the culture and be like the nations around you
- That's why the followers of Jesus says "No!" to the fleeting pleasures of sin
- You can't sit on fence if you're fair-dinkum about following Jesus
 - Either you're going one way ... or you're going the other
- When Christians are living lives that are indistinguishable from the world around them ... they're holding hands with Israel and saying ... we want to be like the other nations
- And that friends is a terrible rejection of Jesus Christ ... who is the King of kings and Lord of lords

3. The regulations for a king unlike the other nations (8:9-17; 10:17-26)

- Despite their sinful demand for such a king ... God relents
- And he tells Samuel to listen to them and let them to have the king they wanted
 - He also tells Samuel to warn them what 'a king like the other nations' will do
- In v10-18 he says
 - "You want a king like the other nations ... well let me tell you what you are getting yourself into ..."
 - "He will **take** everything from you!"
- Just as Eli's sons would 'take' meat and Samuel's sons would 'take' bribes ... this king will also '**take**'
 - "He will
 - **take** your sons to serve in his armies
 - **take** your daughters to run his kitchens
 - And don't think your property is secure ... because he'll also
 - **take** your fields, olive groves and vineyards and give them to **his** people to manage
 - And did you ever hear of taxes? Because all those armies and servants need feeding you know ... so he'll also
 - **take** a tenth of your grain and wine and sheep to feed them all
 - And on top of that he will
 - **take** your servants and livestock for himself

- AND he will
 - **take YOU** to be his slaves”
- “This is what kings of other nations are like” – take, take, take

- Samuel is saying ...
 - “You want a king like the other nations ... it will be just like going back to being slaves Egypt”
 - “You’ll be no better off”
 - “Only in those days you cried out to the Lord and he heard your cries and sent Moses to rescue you ... ”
 - “This time when you cry out there will be no rescue”
- And **despite** the warning ... the people said
 - *“No! ... We want a king over us*

- Immediately after this in Ch 9 we’re introduced to Saul
- And in 9:2 Saul is described as
 - *an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites-- a head taller than any of the others.*

- And in Ch 9 Saul goes on a crazy donkey chase across the countryside trying to find his father’s donkey’s which were lost
 - Prior to this God had told Samuel that he would send a man to Samuel who he was to anoint as the king of Israel
 - Saul has no luck finding the donkeys ... but he does find Samuel
- Saul left home looking for donkeys ... comes home as the anointed king of Israel

- In 10:17 Samuel calls all Israel together for the big announcement and to make Saul’s appointment official
 - What the Lord had disclosed privately to Samuel and Saul ... he would now declare publicly to the people
- And despite all that God had done for them
- And despite their rejection of him as their one true king ... God gives them the king they desire
- And with the whole of Israel assembled, lots are cast
 - And Saul is called out as the one chosen to be king ... so Israel can be like the other nations

- But when they go looking for Saul ... he’s nowhere to be found!
 - This man who is meant to be

- *an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites-- a head taller than any of the others*
 - He is hiding amongst the baggage!
- Can you believe it!
 - This king they're about to put your faith in
 - This man they think will be your saviour
 - Where is he?
 - Cowering amongst the bags
 - Hiding from the people who want him to be their king
 - This doesn't bode well for the future!
- Despite ALL this ... they find Saul ... and Samuel presents him to the people ... and the people shout - "Long live the king!"
- In v25 we get a glimmer of hope that may redeem the situation
- Because God tells Samuel to "*explain the regulations of the kingship*"
- Most probably this is what is written in Deut 17
 - Deuteronomy records the speeches of Moses to the people just before they are about to enter the Promised Land
 - It's a reminder to the new generation who hadn't been at Mt Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments and the Law about how they were to live as God's people in the Promised Land
- And in Deut 17 God foresees the time when Israel would have a king over them
 - However, listen to the regulations God stipulates his king should be like ... and how different it is to the warning Samuel gave the people about what a king like the other nations would be like
- *Deuteronomy 17:14-20*
 - ¹⁴ *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,"* ¹⁵ *be sure to appoint over you the king the **LORD your God chooses**. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite.* ¹⁶ *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."* ¹⁷ *He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.* ¹⁸ *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 priests, who are Levites.* ¹⁹ ***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 decrees²⁰ and not consider himself better than his brothers 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.

- God's king was
 - to be a king the LORD your God chooses
 - to be a king who served his brothers ... not take, take, take
 - to be a king who submitted to God and his Law
- Israel wanted a king like the other nations who would rule ***instead of*** God
- But the regulations set out that the king was to rule ***under*** God

- Throughout 1 Samuel there's been this tension between the installation of king being seen as both a negative and positive
- On the one hand, Israel's request 'for a king like the other nations' is condemned by Samuel because it's a rejection of the Lord
- But on the other hand, the book of Judges ended with the comment
 - *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*
 - The implication being that Israel needed a king to get itself out of the crisis it was in
 - And God ends up giving them a king as they demanded

- It's here that the tension is resolved
- Because it's in the giving of these regulations that it becomes clear how a human king can co-exist with God as king
 - God is the real king
 - While the human king acts as God's representative
 - Therefore, Israel's kings were to rule as 'vice-regents'
 - on behalf of God
 - under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - with Samuel and the other prophets standing alongside the king, bringing the word of God to the them

- You see having a king to rule over them was not a bad thing
 - God is not opposed to Israel having a king
 - What mattered is whether the king would be a king after Gods own heart ... who would be willing to submit to the Lord

- **Application**

- Israel's quest for a king who would lead them and give them the security they craved ... was actually part of God's salvation plan
 - Because it would be under Israel's next king, King David that God would give them that security as David conquered the Philistines and other Canaanite tribes
- However, the tension between God being the king and Israel having a king would only ever be full resolved in the coming of the Lord Jesus from the line of David
- Because in Christ we have **God the son** coming to be king
- And in Jesus Christ we see a king just as the regulations for the kingship specified
 - He's a king of God's choosing
 - When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan river, God said "*this is my son of whom I am well pleased*"
 - He is a king who served his brothers ... not take, take, take
 - Mark 10:45 – Jesus said "*I have not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many*"
 - He is a king who submitted to God's will
 - In the garden before he was about to be arrested and crucified he prayed "*Father take this cup away from me, yet not what I will, but what you will*"
- On the cross, Jesus Christ showed us he's the righteous leader we need
 - For he doesn't **take** everything **you have** from you
 - He **gives** everything **he has** to save you
 - And in doing so he secures your eternal future
- And when you know his love and commitment to serve you in this way ... this means you have absolute security in this life too
- Because you know
 - That no matter how sick you get
 - How lonely you are
 - How uncertain life is
 - How scared you are
- You know ... there's one who has laid down his life to give you the greatest security you can ever have ... life without fear or crying or death or pain ... for eternity

- And friends
 - when you know that ...
 - when you follow this righteous king who was willing to give up everything for you ...
 - then that frees you to give up everything for him
- Which means ...
 - You're free you to swim against the tide of the culture around you
 - It will enable you to be light to the nations ... rather than living like the nations
 - While at the same time finding rest, and peace and security in the truly righteous king who gave it all for you

PRAY