

1 SAMUEL 9-15 THE RISE AND FALL OF SAUL

Israel has asked for a king like all the nations and God has promised to give them one. The question is: Who will it be? And how will he go? We know that God has always intended to rule Israel through a human king, but we also know that human kings—particularly kings “like all the nations”—can tend towards vice and corruption. Israel already has a king: God. How will they fare now they have a human king, too?

1. Read these verses, make a note of what they say about Saul, and classify them as either ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ Saul:

- 1 Samuel 9:1-2
- 1 Samuel 10:1
- 1 Samuel 10:6-7
- 1 Samuel 10:21-22
- 1 Samuel 10:23-24

2. Read these verses, make a note of what they say about kingship, and classify them as either ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ kingship:

- 1 Samuel 9:15-16
- 1 Samuel 10:17-19

3. How would you summarize your impression of Saul thus far?

4. Read these verses, make a note of what they say about Saul, and classify them as either ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ Saul:

- 1 Samuel 11:6-8
- 1 Samuel 11:12-15

5. Read these verses, make a note of what they say about kingship, and classify them as either ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ kingship:

- 1 Samuel 12:12-15
- 1 Samuel 12:19
- 1 Samuel 12:20

Read 1 Samuel 13:2-14.

6. What does Saul do? (See also 1 Samuel 10:8.)

7. How does Saul respond when he is confronted (vv. 11-12)?

8. What does Samuel say God will do in response to Saul’s actions?

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-3, 7-29.

9. What does God order Saul to do to the Amalekites?

10. How does Saul obey this order? How does he fail to obey it?

11. Why do you think Saul’s failure is such a big problem? What are the consequences of Saul’s failure?

God had always intended to rule Israel through a human king, but Saul was not that king. Saul ignored the facts that God is

Israel's ultimate king, and that any human king has to rule *under* his authority, not *instead of* it. Saul disobeyed God. But given the realities of sin, how can Israel *ever* have both a human king and a divine one and not have them clash? It is not until a thousand years later that Israel gets its answer.

Read Romans 1:1-4.

12. How is Jesus a human king?

13. How is Jesus a divine king?

Implications

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- God's plans for Israel were not undone by its sinful motivations in asking for a king. How is this an encouragement to us when we sin? Conversely, how is God's reaction to Saul's disobedience a warning for us when we sin?
- Saul's response to Samuel accusing him of disobedience in 1 Samuel 15 is a classic case study in the psychology of sin: he denies it (vv. 13-14) and then justifies it (vv. 15, 21). How can we sometimes fall victim to the same psychology? (What examples can you think of?)

- God being King in your life is a big theme that comes up again and again in 1 Samuel - Are you living with God as king in every area of life? What changes do you need to make so Jesus can truly be king in every area of your heart?

- What confidence do you get from knowing that our ultimate king, Jesus, is both human and divine?

Give thanks and pray

- Ask for forgiveness when you have knowingly disobeyed God and tried to justify it afterwards.
- Thank God for giving us a leader in Jesus who knows what it is like to be human, but who also rules with the very authority of God.