

Week 35: *The Four Offices: King*



Hook

Main Point: Jesus is the King of kings, yet humble, gentle and caring like a shepherd.

Every year, many different sports teams reevaluate their franchises, asking the hard questions about why they likely weren't as successful. Only one team can truly win the championship, after all. Most years, the head coach is the selected scapegoat for this lack of success, as he exists as the "king" of on-field operations and team culture. Every year in the NFL, teams hire new coaches, expecting them to be saviors of sorts as they count on these coaches to establish a new standard for success. Teams will trip over themselves attempting to offer the next savior of their franchise guaranteed money over a lengthy contract that could end in utter failure. The most baffling statistic about the NFL coaching carousel is that **NFL franchises spent \$800 million dollars** over the last five years on ***fired*** head coaches according to an article from ESPN¹. These are strictly NFL coaches who are no longer working under that contract. They were collectively paid \$800 million to sit on their couches at home. This is proof that trusting in a human savior doesn't always have the desired result when it isn't the right guy and can be incredibly costly.

Q: Have you ever seen somebody put their trust in an incapable leader? What was the fallout?

Q: How do we break free from trusting in these types of leaders?

RECAP: In the last three lessons, we have looked at three of the four offices of leadership in ancient Israel – judge, prophet and priest – and how they each pointed us ahead to Jesus as the perfect fulfillment of all those roles. This week, we will end our study of David by looking at the role of king in Israel and how the failure of Israel’s human kings points us ahead to Jesus as the only perfect King.

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Book

Main Point: Jesus is the King of kings, yet humble, gentle and caring like a shepherd.

1 Samuel 8:4–22 and Deuteronomy 17:14–20 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Kings of Israel are representatives of God, ruling in His stead.

Q: Why did the people ask for a king? What was their hope?

Q: How was Israel's king supposed to be different from kings of the world?

Because this period marks the transition from theocracy to monarchy in Israel, the books of Samuel and Kings explore what happened when God's people asked for a human king to rule over them instead of living with God as their king. We saw in a previous lesson that during the time of Moses, the leadership structure was Moses as prophet (and judge), Aaron as priest, and God as king. Then, during the time of the judges, there were various judges (only two of whom were also prophets), various priests, and God as king, though they didn't really follow Him as king most of the time; everyone did "what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Israel's last judge, Samuel, was also both a prophet and a priest, fulfilling all three human roles God intended for leadership in His kingdom. Though Samuel wasn't perfect, he was a "second Moses," and along with Deborah, he was one of the only two judges who was also a prophet as Moses had been. It's not surprising that the prophet Jeremiah would lump Moses and Samuel together as godly leaders in Israel's history (Jeremiah 15:1).² While Samuel judged Israel, the people followed God's law. But when he got old, he appointed his sons as judges, who did not walk in God's ways. When the elders complained to Samuel, they didn't ask him to appoint replacement judges; they asked for a king so they could be like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8:4–5).

In most nations in the ancient world, the king was considered a divine being. He ruled with ultimate authority and was above the law.³ But in God's law, the king was merely a representative of the true King, God. He was not allowed to acquire much wealth, many wives, or many horses for himself. He was to keep a copy of the law with him and read it every day, following it completely, "so that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers" (Deuteronomy 17:20). In God's law, the king was human just like everyone else. He had a special role to play, but he was not higher in value or importance. He was to see his role as that of a servant of the people, not as lord over them (Ezekiel 34; Mark 10:42–44).

God told Samuel to tell the people what would happen if they had a human king. A king would take the best of their sons and daughters to serve in his army and his palace and

the best of their flocks and crops as his taxes. Instead of remaining free people, they would become his slaves. But they wanted a king anyway. Why? To “go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:20). They thought a king would make them stronger. Instead of a federation of tribes, they wanted to be a united nation with consolidated leadership. When we look closely at their request, it’s word-for-word what God had promised – to go before them and fight their battles (Deuteronomy 1:30). God had been doing for them exactly what they wanted from a human king. He had done miracle after miracle for them and won battle after battle. From the time of Moses throughout the time of the judges, they won their battles when they trusted in the Lord. When they didn’t, they lost. Yet here they were, asking for a human substitute – as if a human military leader could be stronger than God!

Some of us have the same problem today. We put our hope in a strong leader to fight our battles instead of putting our hope and trust in God. We tend to think of a good leader as charismatic rather than the model in Scripture of a humble servant leader. Whether a business, political, or church leader, we put our hope in people rather than God. But David wrote in Psalms not to trust in chariots or horses (military strength) but to trust in the name of the Lord our God (Psalm 20:7). David wasn’t perfect, but he saw his role as king rightly. He knew he was not the ultimate king but operated merely as a representative of the true King. A godly leader will tell you not to put your hope in him but will point to Jesus.

Q: In what ways have you put your hope in human leadership rather than God?

Q: How do our lives look different when we trust God to fight our battles?

1 Kings 2:1–4; 11:1–6; 2 Kings 22:1–2 and Ezekiel 34:1–16 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly leaders should be shepherds, not typical kings.

Q: How did Solomon break God’s laws for kings from Deuteronomy?

Q: How is a shepherd leader different from a typical king?

In our study, we looked at Saul and David, the first two kings of Israel. Saul was the people’s idea of a good king – strong, tall and handsome – while David was a young shepherd boy who faced a giant with only a slingshot and faith in the Lord. Though he was strong in the people’s eyes, Saul ended up operating out of fear, not faith, and his reign spiraled downward fast. But David’s trust in the Lord meant that even when he sinned, he repented and turned back to God. Though he made mistakes, overall, David’s reign was considered successful by God because of his faith. The rest of Israel’s kings, starting with his own son, Solomon, were judged in Scripture by whether they followed the ways of their father David, who followed the Lord with his whole heart, not dividing loyalties with other gods (1 Kings 11:6; 2 Kings 22:2).

With all his mistakes and missteps, this is what made David a man after God's own heart and the model for all future kings of Israel. Every king throughout the book of Kings was judged this way: Did they follow the Lord with their whole heart as David or did they worship other gods? David's son Solomon started out well, with supernatural godly wisdom beyond anything the world had ever seen. But he did exactly what Deuteronomy told kings not to do. He accumulated much wealth, many horses, and many wives for himself. And those things pulled his heart away from the Lord.

This is the first half of what it means to be a godly king, loving God with your whole heart. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God told us the other half, loving and caring for His people. As Jesus said, these are the two sides of the greatest commandment – love God and love others (Matthew 22:37–40). These two things cannot be separated; if you really love God, you will love others as yourself (1 John 4:16–21). Ezekiel was written during the exile to Babylon, reflecting on what Israel had done to break the covenant and be sent into exile. There were a few good kings in Israel's history, but most were not. They didn't care for the flock but used them for their own gain. So, God said He Himself would be their shepherd again. God had been their king before the monarchy. They had tried to have human kings and it didn't work, just as He said it wouldn't. Now, in the new covenant in Christ, He would return as Israel's king and care for His sheep Himself. The description in Ezekiel is so similar to the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15) because Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10).

Jesus said the same thing about the religious leaders of His day and the way they treated His people (Matthew 9:36; 23:1-15). After He pronounced woe to the religious leaders, He cried over Jerusalem and how He longed to gather them as a mother hen gathers her chicks (like a loving shepherd), but they were not willing (Matthew 23:37). Jesus isn't one of those harsh overlord types. He wants to be our loving Shepherd.

Q: How have you experienced Jesus as the Good Shepherd in your life?

Q: What does using Jesus as a leadership model teach us about how we should care for others in the church, our families and our communities?

2 Samuel 7:8–16; Matthew 21:1–11; and Philippians 2:1–8 [Read]

Talking Point 3: The failure of Israel's kings points us to Christ as our true king.

Q: What did God promise David about His kingly dynasty?

Q: How was Jesus as king different from what people expected?

When David wanted to build a house (temple) for God, God told him He didn't need David to build Him a house; He would build David a "house," a dynasty. A son of David would rule Judah (the Southern Kingdom) continuously through all the monarchy until they were exiled (except for a brief period when Queen Athaliah ruled, which was still part of the "house" of David because her son was a son of David [2 Kings 11:1–3]). In the

immediate future, God's promise was about David's son Solomon, who would build the temple for the Lord. But in the long-term future, it was the promise of Jesus, who would establish a new kingdom that would last forever (2 Samuel 7:13–16).

Because of this promise, the people of Jesus' day expected a Messiah from the Davidic dynasty who would rule as king over the physical nation of Israel. But at this point in Israel's history, they were not an independent nation, and they hadn't been for hundreds of years. When they returned from exile and rebuilt Jerusalem, they had local leaders, but they were still ruled by Cyrus, king of Persia. Then the Greeks took over, then the Romans.⁴ In Jesus' day, the Maccabean Revolt was about 150 years in the past, and the people were hoping for a Messiah who would overthrow the Romans and rule as king of an independent kingdom of Israel again. Even after Jesus' death and Resurrection, the disciples still expected this (Acts 1:6).

But Jesus never even tried to overthrow Rome or sit on a physical throne in Jerusalem, because His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Yet He did unequivocally tell His people that He is King. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He was making an intentional statement that He was the Son-of-David king they had been waiting for – but not the kind of king they were expecting. Scholars call this the “triumphal entry” of Jesus as compared to the Roman “triumph” in which kings or military leaders paraded through the city in a chariot after a victory surrounded by their officers and the spoils of battle. In some ways, what Jesus did looked very similar to a triumph. People shouted “Hosanna” (“Save us now!”) and called Him the Son of David (meaning “king”). But He rode on a donkey, not a war horse or a chariot. And the crowds who followed Him were commoners, not the powerful elite of Jerusalem. Jesus' “triumph” showed that He wasn't like the Roman emperors. He was victorious, yet humble (Zechariah 9:9).⁵

Jesus is our victorious king, but on Palm Sunday, He wasn't coming home from a battle celebrating His victory. He was on His way to the battle at the Cross. His battle wasn't with Rome; it was with sin and death. And His victory wasn't obtained by chariots and war horses but through sacrifice. As Paul wrote in Philippians, Jesus left all the glory of His throne in heaven to come to earth as a humble servant and even die on a cross. But one day, every knee will bow before Him because He is the King. He is the Good Shepherd King who rules over His people with loving care. But His humility, compassion and love do not lessen His power or authority. He sits on the throne with ultimate authority over all the universe (Ephesians 1:20–23; Revelation 5).

Jesus as King means He has ultimate authority over our lives. When we choose to follow Christ, we don't just accept Him as our Savior but also as our Lord. That doesn't mean just bowing before Him in worship on Sundays, only giving Him lip service. It means bowing our hearts, minds and lives before Him in submission to His will every day, in everything we do. It means taking ourselves off the throne of our lives. We don't just say, “Christ is Lord”; we live as if Christ is Lord of our lives every day. As Samuel told Saul, obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). God doesn't want lip service. He wants living sacrifices (Romans 12:1–2).

Q: How does someone who lives with Christ on the throne of his or her life look different from someone who lives with himself or herself on that throne?

Q: In what areas of your life are you still holding back from submitting to the lordship of Christ? How can you lay those things at His feet?

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Took

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Jesus taught us how to pray in Matthew 6:

⁹ Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Jesus invites you to pray for the expansion of God’s kingdom on earth – this means that more and more would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. God reigns as king in the hearts of His people; we are also to pray that God’s people would submit to God’s will (as revealed in the Scriptures). You have the opportunity to reflect Jesus more and more in your words, thoughts and actions and thus see God’s will executed more perfectly in your life.⁶

Q: What does it mean for God to be King of your life?

Q: In what ways will Jesus rule in the future? What benefits do you reap if Jesus rules in your life today?

CHALLENGES

THINK: Why is it difficult to truly give authority over all our life to Jesus? Why do we still want to hold control in some areas? In what specific areas do you struggle to submit to the lordship of Christ? How is God leading you to make changes and submit those things to Him? What difference might it make in your life if you did?

PRAY a prayer of submission before the Lord. First, honor and glorify and praise Him as King. Then bow your heart before Him, giving up all authority and control to Him. Ask Him to guide your steps and help you honor Him as King and live as a sacrifice to Him.

ACT: Tell one person what you learned about God, faith or yourself through this study of David's life. Think back through all the lessons we have learned; look at your notes, your prayer journal, or the chapters of Scripture to refresh your memory on what God has taught you. Then share it with at least one other person.

¹ https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/35271981/sources-nfl-teams-spent-800m-fired-coaches-execs-last-5-years

² Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed. *Lutheran Bible Companion, Volume 1: Introduction and Old Testament* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2014).

³ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1962).

⁴ Shaye Cohen, *Ancient Israel: from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999).

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009).

⁶ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1831–1832.