

The Kingship of God: How Every Government Works For Our Good

Lessons From A King Before A National Election

1 Samuel 27–30

November 6, 2016

Sunday Evening Bible Study

1 Samuel 1–8: In the period of the Judges, when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25), Israel is fraught with internal corruption and threatened by external enemies. “Perhaps,” they reasoned, “we need a political solution. A new government and its political leader will save us.” And so they asked the prophet Samuel for a king “like all the nations.” Their sin is not *that* they asked for a king, for that was allowed in the law God had given Moses (Gen. 17:6; Dt. 17:14–17). Rather, their sin is in *why* they asked for a king. They sought to put their trust in this political solution rather than God. For that reason, God tells Samuel “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me” (8:7). In making an idol of government, they have become like the idolatrous nations around them. They want a king like all the nations so they can live like all the nations. They wanted the benefits of God, but they did not want God.

1 Samuel 9–16: God gives them what they ask for along with a warning about monarchies (8:10–18). Because of our fallen natures, no one can be trusted with much power. Everyone is prone to abuse power and use it for personal gain. It is not wrong to seek or hold power in order to serve others (see Jesus!), but to use a position of authority to serve self is the constant temptation of every leader. The more power a leader has, the more ability he has to exploit people and make them his “slaves” (8:17). In fulfillment of that warning, Israel’s first king, Saul, views himself as above the law and uses his power to promote himself (13:3,4), his glory (15:12), and his wealth (15:19). In doing so, he rejects the authority of the Word of God. Because he rejected God’s Word, God rejects him as king (15:23). In his place, he directs Samuel to anoint David. David now becomes the “anointed one,” the “messiah,” the “Christ.” The longing of the human heart is for a king who will “go out before us and fight our battles” (8:20). Will David be this king?

1 Samuel 17–18: David, the messiah, is chosen by God to be the “champion” (Heb., “man between two”) for Israel and fight a battle for them that they could not win by themselves. He stands in their place and conquers their greatest enemy. The messiah is born in Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah. He is a good shepherd and obedient son, but his brothers initially reject him as their king. Unintimidated by the enemies of God, he is the least likely candidate to be the savior of his people, appearing to be weak and ill-equipped. But he operates in the strength of the Lord, achieves victory in a most unexpected way, and empowers his followers to fight the good fight. In David’s life, we see the foreshadowing of his greater descendant, Jesus the Christ (Luke 24:27).

1 Samuel 19–26: David, the guiltless Messiah (20:8), is the target of assassination plots hatched by his jealous rivals (19:11). But if God wants you alive, no one can make you dead! This messiah loves his covenant friends, and his followers place their loyalty to him even above their own families (20:30). In breaking with a legalistic interpretation of the ceremonial law, the king illustrates that people were not made for the law, but the law for people (21:6). In recruiting and organizing an army of outcasts and misfits (22:2), he demonstrates how God uses the weak and foolish to shame the strong and wise of the earth. Even though he could have killed those who resisted him on several occasions, the Messiah chooses to withdraw and wait, trusting in the Lord and his timing (24:10).

1. The King Carries Out The Lord’s Command (27).

1.1 The king seeks safety with his misfit men among the Gentiles (1–7).

1.2 The king “raids” from his base of operations to establish his kingdom (8–12; cf. Mt. 4:12–16).

1.3 Q1: Is David’s deception the morally right decision?

A1a: Yes, for two reasons:

1. While the ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness, Biblical ethicists have posited that lying and deception might be acceptable in circumstances where everyone understands the whole truth is not expected. But these circumstances are specifically permitted or advocated by Scripture alone. We are not left to decide other circumstances for ourselves (i.e., this is not situational ethics). See R. McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*.
 - a. In opposition to criminal activity. If lying and deception can save an innocent human life, lying may be acceptable. Examples: leaving a light on, sting operations, misdirection (Ex. 1:15–21).

- b. In times of war, if lying and deception can further a just cause and limit casualties, lying may be acceptable. Examples: cardboard tanks, disinformation, interrogation of prisoners, etc. (Josh. 8:2; Heb. 11:31).
 - c. In “inconsequential social arrangements” where everyone understands the truth is not expected: For example, jokes, greetings (How are you doing?), sports (fake punts); makeup and hair dyeing? (Lk. 24:28f; Mt. 6:17,18).
2. There is no mention of God in chapter 27, therefore, God does not condemn the deception. Therefore, “b” applies.

A1b: No, for two reasons:

- 1. David breaks the ninth commandment because of his failure to trust in God. He already knows the Lord has anointed him to be king, so there is no way he cannot be king. He knows that Saul’s doom is imminent. God has repeatedly assured David of protection but still David “said in his heart, I shall perish...” His problem is that he talked to his heart instead of to God.
- 2. There is no mention of God in chapter 27, therefore, God does not commend the deception.

1.4 Q2: Is David’s destruction of Amalekites, et.al, the morally right decision?

A2a: Yes, because this is a sanctioned, holy, and just war.

- 1. God commanded destruction of these people (1 Sam. 15:3; 28:18; Dt. 7:1–5; 20:16-18).
- 2. God, the Creator, has absolute rights over all people, places, and things.
- 3. God is perfectly just and righteous in all that he does.
- 4. All of us deserve God’s justice and none of us deserve his mercy.
- 5. The Canaanites, Amalekites, etc. were enemies of God who deserved to be punished.
- 6. God’s actions are not examples of ethnic cleansing. Judgment is based on their profound depravity and moral rebellion, not their ethnicity (Ro. 1:18–32).
- 7. Their removal from the promised land was necessary for Israel’s theocracy.
- 8. No mention of God in chapter 27, therefore God does not condemn this slaughter.

A2b: No, because David’s actions are not consistent with the above criteria:

- 1. David made an exception for the Philistines.
- 2. David’s motive for killing was not justice or obedience to God but self-preservation.
- 3. David did not destroy the property of the people but used it as a mercenary bribe.
- 4. No mention of God in chapter 27, therefore God does not commend this slaughter.

2. The King’s Enemy Is Warned of Impending Doom (28).

2.1 The king’s enemy resorts to desperate measures (1–7; Jn. 18:28f.)

2.2 The king’s enemy receives an ominous revelation (8–25; Mt. 27:19)

2.3 Q1: Is it morally right to seek answers and guidance through a witch or medium?

A1: No. Scripture is clear on this (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Dt. 18:9f). But God can use any means he chooses to accomplish his purposes (Nu. 22:28).

3. The King Is Delivered From Jewish and Gentile Enemies (29; Acts 4:24–28).

4. The King’ Receives the Spoils of War (30; Luke 11:17–27).