

## **“Kings”**

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*Genesis 49:8–10 (ESV)*

<sup>8</sup>     *“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
          your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
          your father’s sons shall bow down before you.*  
<sup>9</sup>     *Judah is a lion’s cub;  
          from the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
          He stooped down; he crouched as a lion  
          and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?*  
<sup>10</sup>    *The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
          nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,  
          until tribute comes to him;  
          and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.<sup>1</sup>*

Unless you’ve been living under a rock, you know that we’re in the midst of a presidential race. It seems like the campaign season never ends, even though Election Day is a little over eleven months away. Stories about the presidential candidates on both sides seem to dominate the headlines.

I think the length of the campaign season and the countless news stories devoted to the candidates indicate the importance of the office of President. Generally, as the President goes, so goes the nation. Leaders are important, and the Commander in Chief, the Leader of the Free World, is a highly influential person. So it matters who is elected to be the next President.

Leaders have always been important. Throughout history, many leaders of nations have been known as kings, emperors, or Caesars. In countries where there is a monarchy—as opposed to democratic republics, like America—these leaders are even more influential. The fate of a nation rises and falls with its kings.

This is certainly true in the Bible. One of the major themes of the Bible relates to kings and kingdoms. That’s what we’ll be looking at today.

It should go without saying that God is the true King. When we looked at the beginning of the Bible, I observed that the creation account in Genesis shows that God made the world to be his temple, and that his rest on the seventh day was a sign that God was seated on his throne,

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

in his temple.<sup>2</sup> In addition to that clue, there are many statements, particularly in the Psalms, that God is the King of the universe. So, for example, Psalm 47:1-2 says,

- <sup>1</sup> Clap your hands, all peoples!  
Shout to God with loud songs of joy!  
<sup>2</sup> For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared,  
a great king over all the earth.<sup>3</sup>

So God is clearly the ruler of everything, simply because he alone is God—eternal, almighty, all-wise—and because he created everything.

But early in the Bible, we also get the idea that God wants to rule the world through humans. Adam and Eve were supposed to “have dominion” over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26, 28). How were they supposed to rule over the world? They were supposed to do so according to God’s word. My favorite definition of the kingdom of God comes from Graeme Goldsworthy. He says that God’s kingdom is: “(a) God’s people (b) in God’s place (c) under God’s rule.”<sup>4</sup> Adam and Eve were God’s people, in the garden of Eden, and they were told to guard and keep the garden, and not to eat one of one tree. But we know the story: they failed to rule God’s world because they failed to keep God’s word.

But the theme of kings doesn’t end there. Even in Genesis, we’re given some hints that God will use kings to rule the world. God told Abraham that “kings shall come from you” (Gen. 17:6; see also v. 16). God repeats that promise to Abraham’s grandson, Jacob (Gen. 35:11). At the end of Genesis, Jacob blesses his twelve sons, and he says the words that were read earlier to Judah. Jacob tells Judah that his hand would “be on the neck of [his] enemies” and that his brothers would “bow down before” him (Gen. 49:8). He also says, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him. and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (v. 10). In other words, Judah will be a king of the whole world. The “obedience of the peoples” means the obedience of all the nations. At the time Jacob said this to his son, it would have seemed preposterous. Judah was a nobody, now living in

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<sup>2</sup> See “A Theater for His Glory” (September 27, 2015), <http://wbcommunity.org/story-of-the-bible>.

<sup>3</sup> See also Pss. 5:2; 10:16; 24:7-10; 29:10; 44:4; 47:7; 48:1-2; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3; 93:1-2; 95:3; 97:1; 98:6; 99:1-5; 145:1; 149:2.

<sup>4</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trio* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 54.

Egypt. How could he become king of the world? Clearly, this didn't happen in Judah's lifetime, but the promise is that someone from the tribe of Judah would someday rule the world.<sup>5</sup>

Israel didn't have a king for hundreds of years. But before they had a king, God gave Israel some laws regarding how a future king should act. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, this is what Moses tells Israel regarding a future king:

<sup>14</sup>“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ <sup>15</sup> you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. <sup>16</sup> Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ <sup>17</sup> And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. <sup>18</sup>“And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, <sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

This passage hints that Israel would later want a king because all the other nations had a king. But Israel already had a king: God. He sat enthroned above the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4), over the ark of the covenant, in the tabernacle. Right away, we see this tension: God is the true King, yet the people want a human king. God's plan was for Israel to have a king, but if there was going to be a king who rules over Israel and the world, he must rule under God's word. That's why there is a command for the king to read the law and do what it says. God rules by means of his word, and the king of Israel had to rule by means of God's word, too. He wasn't supposed to be greedy, or have multiple wives, or return to Egypt. Instead, he was supposed to keep God's word.

When the people enter the Promised Land, they were led by Joshua, the successor of Moses. But after Joshua died, there was no one who followed him (see Judg. 2:6-10). For roughly three hundred years, Israel was led by a series of judges, or rulers. They helped deliver Israel from its enemies. You can read about this in the book of Judges. That book of the Bible

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<sup>5</sup> This same promise is repeated in Num. 24:17, when Balaam, a false prophet, sets out to curse Israel. Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam can only bless the nation, and his final oracle speaks of a distant day when “a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”

show what happens when there is no leader: without a righteous king, the people of Israel tended to worship idols and do wicked things. Nature abhors a vacuum. When there is no righteous leader, people tend to lead themselves or desire a powerful leader. And in the book of Judges, the problem was people led themselves poorly. So we read, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).<sup>6</sup> Without a ruler, there is chaos.

The last of the judges was Samuel, who was also a prophet and priest. And it was under Samuel that the first real king of Israel came to power. When Samuel was old, the leaders of Israel came to him and demanded that they have a king. We see this in 1 Samuel 8:4-9:

<sup>4</sup> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah <sup>5</sup> and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” <sup>6</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. <sup>9</sup> Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

The Israelites wanted a king because all the nations around them had kings. Samuel must have felt rejected, because he was the judge of Israel and they were asking for a king to judge them. But God told Samuel that they weren’t rejecting him. No, they were rejecting God. It wasn’t wrong to want a king,<sup>7</sup> but Israel wanted a king for the wrong reasons. And Israel had a history

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<sup>6</sup> There’s an interesting moment in the book of Judges when the people of Israel approach one of the judges, named Gideon. They say to him, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian” (Judg. 8:22). But Gideon refuses. He says, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you” (v. 23). Gideon knew that God was supposed to be King. Perhaps he knew he wasn’t supposed to be king because he wasn’t from the tribe of Judah. (He was from the tribe of Manasseh [see Judg. 6:11; Josh. 17:2].) Perhaps he also knew he wasn’t fit to rule over Israel. In the next few verses Gideon makes a golden ephod from earrings. An ephod was a garment that the high priest wore, but Gideon wasn’t a priest. And the fact that he made something out of gold earrings reminds us of the golden calf, which was also made out of gold earrings (Exod. 32:2-4). It’s no surprise that the Israelites worshiped this golden ephod that Gideon had made (Judg. 8:27). He was no king. (Strangely, Gideon had named his son Abimelech, which means “my father is king.” Why would Gideon name his son that if he didn’t think he should be king?)

Gideon’s son, Abimelech, tried to make himself king of Israel by murdering all his siblings. But Abimelech’s power grab didn’t last long, and he was killed (see Judges 9). So Israel continued to have a series of judges.

<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of 1 Samuel, Samuel’s mother, Hannah, prays, among other things,

of rebelling against God’s chosen leaders. So God gave Israel a king, but not until after warning them of what that king would be like.

In the next few verses of 1 Samuel 8, Samuel warns the Israelites that the king will take and take and take from them. He will take their sons to serve him in his army. He will take their daughters to work for him. He will take their best fields and vineyard and olive orchards. He will take their grain and their servants and animals. Worst of all, the Israelites would be his slaves (vv. 10-19).

After hearing this, you would think the Israelites would change their mind. But instead, they still demand a king. They said (in vv. 19-20),

“No! But there shall be a king over us,<sup>20</sup> that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

They didn’t realize that God fought their battles for them (Exod. 14:14; Deut. 3:22; Josh. 10:14, 42; 23:3, 10). Later, in chapter 12, their asking for a king is called “evil” (1 Sam. 12:19-20).

So God gave the Israelites a king. The first king was named Saul. But he was not from the tribe of Judah. Instead, he was from the tribe of Benjamin. Perhaps this is the first clue that this king will not be the promised king of Genesis 49. God tells Samuel that Saul will be the “prince” or “leader” of Israel (1 Sam. 9:15-16). What’s interesting is that when God speaks of Saul, he doesn’t mention the word “king.” That seems to be a hint that Saul wasn’t the real king of Israel that God had in mind, even though he was the leader that God was giving the Israelites.<sup>8</sup> God first gave Israel a king that was a negative example.

Yet Saul looked the part of the king. We’re told that Saul was “a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people” (1 Sam. 9:2). When Saul was proclaimed king of Israel, it seems he was afraid to come forward. We’re told he was “hidden . . . among the baggage” (1 Sam. 10:22). The people of Israel had to had to go get him, and when he stood

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The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;  
against them he will thunder in heaven.  
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;  
*he will give strength to his king  
and exalt the horn of his anointed* (v. 10).

<sup>8</sup> “The word ‘king’ is deliberately avoided because Yahweh was Israel’s king.” Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 95–96.

among the people, we're told that "he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward" (v. 23).

I think we're told these details for a reason. Saul looked like a king. He was bigger and better looking than anyone else. But looks can be deceiving. Though Saul started out well, he wasn't obedient. His starting out well included a victory over the Ammonites, enemies of Israel (1 Sam. 11). Saul's son, Jonathan, won a battle over the Philistines, another enemy of Israel (1 Sam. 13:1-4). It looked like things were going well. But then a large number of Philistines gathered to fight against Israel. Israel's soldiers started to hide in caves. They were trembling (1 Sam. 13:5-7). Saul had to make a move. Samuel, the prophet and priest and former judge, had given Saul instructions to wait for seven days in a city called Gilgal, so that Samuel could come and offer up sacrifices to God.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, the sacrifices would help Israel defeat the Philistines. That's what happened earlier, in chapter 7 (vv. 7-11). At that time, Samuel offered sacrifices and God defeated the Philistines. At any rate, Saul didn't wait for Samuel to come. So Saul took matters into his own hands: He offered up the sacrifices himself. That may not seem like a big deal, but it is. The king was not the religious leader. He was not a priest. Only priests were supposed to offer sacrifices. The king was not above God's law. The king was not the absolute ruler. He had to do things God's way.

All of this may seem very distant, but God still wants us to do things his way. That's true of how we do things in church. It's true regarding how we act in our families and how we use our money. God's way is better than ours, and when we do things God's way, we show that we trust in him. When we do things God's way, we show that he is our king.

But Saul was impatient, so he offered the sacrifices himself. He showed he didn't trust God's word. No sooner had he offered up the sacrifices than Samuel came on the scene. And when Samuel saw what Saul had done, he asked him, "What have you done?" (v. 11). That question reminds us of Genesis 3. After Adam and Eve sinned, God asked Adam, "Where are you?" (v. 9). Then he asked Eve, "What is that you have done?" (v. 13). When Cain sinned by killing his brother, God asked him, the same question: "What have you done?" (Gen. 4:10). Saul,

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<sup>9</sup> Samuel gave these instructions to Saul in 1 Sam. 10:8. It's hard to believe that these are the instructions referred to in 1 Sam. 13:8, since it would appear that this even occurred two years later. Perhaps Samuel had given these instructions to Saul again, prior to chapter 13. The timing of the instructions, or whether Samuel gave Saul the same instructions to wait seven days more than once is unclear. What is clear is that Samuel had given Saul these instructions and Saul disobeyed them.

the first king, was a bit like the first man, Adam. But he failed. He didn't obey. And the consequences were serious, as we see in 1 Samuel 13:13-14:

<sup>13</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. <sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Saul's kingdom would come to an end, and a new king would replace him. This is reinforced in chapter 15, when Saul disobeys God again. Saul was supposed to devote the Amalekites to destruction. The Amalekites were enemies of Israel and God had said back in Exodus 17:14, after the Amalekites attacked Israel, that they would be destroyed some day. Now, God was telling Saul, through Samuel, to settle that score. Saul defeated the Amalekites, but he didn't obey completely: He didn't kill the king, Agag, and he kept some of the Amalekites' possessions. Because of this, God says, "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments" (1 Sam. 15:11). And Samuel tells Saul, "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king" (v. 23). Obeying God indicates that we trust him. The king, above all people, should have obeyed the LORD. The fate of the nation depended on his obedience.

In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel goes to find the next king. God tells him to go to Jesse, a man in Bethlehem, from the tribe of Judah. God tells Samuel that one of Jesse's sons will be the next king (1 Sam. 16:1). When Samuel arrived at Jesse's house, he saw the oldest son and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him" (v. 6). He assumed the oldest and presumably the biggest son would be the next king. But God told Samuel: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (v. 7). Then Samuel looked at the next six sons of Jesse, and he could see that God didn't choose any of them to be the next king. So Samuel asked Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" (v. 11). Jesse said that he had one more boy: the youngest one was outside, keeping sheep. Samuel asked Jesse to send for the boy, and when he came, God told Samuel that this boy, David, was going to be the next king (v. 12). David, the youngest, a shepherd boy, would be the next king of Israel. The Spirit of the LORD came upon David, empowering him from that day forward (v. 13).

Before we move on in the story, we should notice the power of appearances. A month or so ago, Kathy and I were watching one of the Republican presidential debates. There were ten candidates on stage, and what I found interesting was how I was evaluating them based on how they looked, how they spoke, and how they gestured. I found myself responding better to people who were more confident, who didn't stumble in their words, who had rhetorical prowess. Those whose speech was halting, or who stumbled, or who looked awkward didn't fare as well in my opinion. I realized that I wasn't paying attention to the substance of what these candidates were saying. And the truth is that most Americans respond to political candidates in very superficial ways. That's why most presidential candidates are on the taller side and have a full head of hair. On Thanksgiving day, I met Michael Dukakis. He's 82, so he's slightly stooped now, but he's apparently 5'8". I towered over him. All I could think of was that infamous picture of him in a tank when he ran for the presidency in 1988. He just didn't look like a president.

Appearances can be deceiving. We need to look at the substance of a person's character. We need to consider what they are saying, not just how they are saying it, or how they look. That's how God looks at us. He's not impressed with appearances. He sees the heart of people, not how much money they have, or where they grew up, or what they look like. And we need to evaluate people the same way. God chose a very unlikely person to defeat Israel's enemies and to be the next king. God has a habit of choosing the weak and the poor and the unlikely. That is still true today.

The next chapter in 1 Samuel, chapter 17, contains the famous story of David and Goliath. The Philistines, those enemies of Israel, gathered in Judah to fight the Israelites. The Philistines were represented by Goliath, a giant who was over nine feet tall. This monster was challenging the Israelites to a fight. He told them that they should choose a man to fight him. Now, the obvious choice to fight Goliath would be Saul. He was taller than any other Israelite. He was a warrior who had a penchant for throwing spears (1 Sam. 18:10-11; 19:9-10). But Saul was afraid of Goliath. He and the Israelites were sitting on the sidelines, quaking in their boots (17:11).

But David wasn't afraid. The shepherd boy came to bring food to his brothers. When David found out what was happening, he wondered who would fight against Goliath. David offered to fight the monster (v. 32). When Saul tried to turn David away, David insisted that his experiences as a shepherd, driving away predators, prepared him for this battle. To underscore

just how unlikely it was for David to fight Goliath, David goes into the battle with no armor. The only thing he brings is a staff, a slingshot, and five smooth stones (v. 40). David told Goliath, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand” (vv. 45-47). Sure enough, David hit Goliath in the head with a stone shot out of his sling, and David fell down dead.

David was the unlikely hero. But that didn’t impress Saul. Saul knew his days as king were numbered, and he was jealous of David. So he tried to kill David. But David managed to escape and hide from Saul. Finally, Saul was injured by the Philistines in battle, and rather than have the Philistines kill him, he killed himself (1 Sam. 30:1-4). But this came after Saul had done more evil things, showing that he was not a righteous king. David, on the other hand, refused to kill Saul, even when he had the opportunity. David knew that it wasn’t his place to kill God’s anointed one, even if the king was evil.<sup>10</sup>

After Saul’s death, David became the king of Israel. He defeated the Jebusites, a group of non-Israelites who lived in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem became the capital city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). God had told the Israelites in Deuteronomy that he wanted a centralized place of worship (Deut. 12), and Jerusalem would be that place. David also defeated the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17-25). He brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-15). And that brings us to a very important moment in the story of the Bible, when God made a covenant with David.

When David conquered Jerusalem, he built a house there. And he had it in mind to build God a house—a temple—because the ark was still in a tent, the tabernacle. We see this in 2 Samuel 7:1-3:

<sup>7</sup> Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup> the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” <sup>3</sup> And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

God had given the Israelites rest—their enemies were defeated. And as I said in the first sermon of this sermon series, temples were built when a nation had rest. So it was natural for David to

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<sup>10</sup> See Saul’s admission to David: “You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil” (1 Sam. 24:17).

think of building a temple. But after Nathan, the prophet, told David that he should build God a house, God spoke to Nathan. God had a message for David: “I don’t need a house. In fact, I’m going to build you a house—a dynasty.”

This is part of the message that God gave to David. Let’s read verses 8-11:

<sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

God planted Israel in the land, like he planted Adam and Eve in the garden. And God told David that he would make his name great, just like he told Abraham back in Genesis 12:2. It looks like God was promising to bless the whole world through one man: King David. God had told Abraham he was going to bless the world through him and his offspring. Then God told Israel they would be a kingdom of priests, mediating God’s blessings to the whole world. Now all the hopes of the world rest again on one man and his house—his dynasty. The king represents the whole nation and he is supposed to represent God to the nation—and to all the nations. God then tells David what will happen with his house once he has died. Let’s read verses 12-16:

<sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

God tells David that his offspring, his child, will build a house for God. More than that, this throne will be established forever. And we see this covenant language: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.” When I talked about the covenant that God made with Abraham, I said that when we see statements like, “I will be your God and you will be my people,” that’s covenant language (see Gen. 17:8; Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12). Now, the covenant is made with the

king. In this passage, we don't find the word "covenant," but other passages in the Bible tell us that here God is making a covenant with David and his offspring (2 Sam. 23:5; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-37).

In this covenant, God promises that he will make David's dynasty last forever. God will make sure that happens. But God also demands obedience. That's why God says, "When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men" (see also Ps. 132:11-12). God expects obedience from his covenant partner. That's why Psalm 132:12 says regarding David,

If your sons keep my covenant  
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,  
their sons also forever  
shall sit on your throne.

We realize that this message doesn't concern just Israel, because David says that "this is instruction for mankind" in verse 19.<sup>11</sup> In other words, this news is news for all of humanity. The little shepherd boy and his offspring have become the most important people in the world, because the God of the universe has made a covenant with him.

I love the way that David responds to this news. First God reveals himself to David, and then David responds with worship. He says things like, "you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (v. 22). And he says,

<sup>28</sup> And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. <sup>29</sup> Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.

After David receives this news, we see that he subdues Israel's enemies. The first verse of chapter 8 says, "After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them." Verse 11 said he "subdued" the surrounding nations. Remember that God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" back in Genesis 1:28. It seems that David was fulfilling this role. And "David administered justice and equity to all his people" (v. 15). He was a righteous king. If Saul was like the first Adam, David was like the second Adam.

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<sup>11</sup> That is Peter Gentry's conclusion. See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 399-401.

But David wasn't perfect. After all of this, David committed a great sin. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, a woman married to one of David's warriors. And when Bathsheba became pregnant, David tried to cover it up. When that didn't work, he had Bathsheba's husband killed in battle (2 Sam. 11). Though David repented when the prophet Nathan confronted him, there were serious consequences in his kingdom. One of his sons, Amnon, raped one of his daughters. Another son, Absalom, killed Amnon, and then rebelled against his father and tried to take the kingdom from him. Things were never the same for David.

But David did have a son, Solomon, who followed him on the throne. And at first, Solomon seemed like he would be the one who would reign forever. He built God a temple. He was wise. During his reign, the surrounding nations were coming to Israel and were being blessed. But Solomon didn't pay attention to God's warnings. He acquired a great deal of wealth for himself (1 Kgs. 10:14-22). He returned to Egypt to get horses (1 Kgs. 10:26; 28-29). He even married an Egyptian (1 Kgs. 3:1)! Worst of all, he acquired many foreign wives, who led him to worship false gods (1 Kgs. 11:1-8). He was not God's forever king.

I'll talk more about this next week, but in 1 and 2 Kings, we see what happens to David's "house." It's a disaster. The kings that follow David worship false gods and do wicked things. Even the best kings, like Josiah, can't restore Israel.

But there is another king that would come. The prophets promised that a king from David's family would reign "with justice and with righteousness" (Isa. 9:7). This king, like David, would be a very unlikely king. Like David, he would have an obscure background. Like David, he wouldn't look like a king. Like David, he would defeat a monster in a very unlikely way, securing a victory for his people. But unlike David and Solomon and all the rest of the kings that followed them, he would never do anything wrong. He never disobeyed God. He never failed to represent him rightly.

Of course, I'm talking about Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, like David. Jesus grew up in an obscure place, Nazareth. Like David, Jesus is a shepherd—the Great Shepherd (John 10). Like David, Jesus "had no form or majesty that we should look at him" (Isa. 53:2). Jesus was truly a man "after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Yet unlike David, he never sinned. Yet Jesus died on the cross, not for his sins, but for ours. God told David that he would discipline his son "with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men" when he sinned.

Jesus didn't need to be disciplined because he did nothing wrong. Yet he was disciplined on the cross for our sin. Isaiah 53:5 says,

But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

With his "stripes" we are healed. We are forgiven. If you have a relationship with Jesus, he is your King. He is your Lord. And he is your Savior. He took the punishment that you deserve because you have been wayward, like Saul and David and Solomon and all other kings who are merely human.

All of us will be ruled by someone, or something. We will come under the authority or power of someone or something. A lot of people act as though they are kings. Some people are ruled by materialism or drugs or people they want to please. Who or what is your king? If your king is someone or something other than Jesus, he, she, or it will let you down. I guarantee that such a person will fail. That king will disappoint you. That king will do wrong. That king may be demanding, but he, she, or it will be unforgiving.

If you have all your hopes set on the next president, I guarantee you this: The next president will fail, perhaps in major ways. He or she is a flawed, sinful person, whose heart and loyalties are divided.

But the real King, the true King, is not like any other. Jesus cannot be compromised. He won't fail like David and Solomon. He won't fail like our presidents. He will never do what is wrong. He is the only one who has ever obeyed God fully. He is the true covenant partner of God. He did what Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David didn't and couldn't do. He does what no other king, president, or prime minister could do. No president or king will be perfect. And no president or king will give his life for you. No president or king can secure eternal life with you. Human rulers can't restore a relationship with God for you. But Jesus can.

David defeated a giant named Goliath. But the true giant isn't a nine-foot monster. The true giant isn't a bad economy. The true giant isn't Hilary Clinton or Donald Trump. The true giant isn't Isis or Boko Haram or Iran. The true giant is our sin, death, and Satan. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave, he defeated our true giant. Like David, he did it in the most unlikely way. No other king can defeat that giant for us. All of us are like the Israelites,

standing on the sidelines, quaking in our boots, unable to enter into battle with the enemy. But Jesus, the Son of David, fights for us. And everyone on his side is victorious.

So don't put your ultimate hopes and trust in the next president, or in someone who can improve the economy, or anyone else. Psalm 146:3-4 says,

- <sup>3</sup> Put not your trust in princes,  
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.  
<sup>4</sup> When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;  
on that very day his plans perish.

Any prince, or king, who is merely human cannot save us from the true enemy. He will die like the rest of us. Psalm 118:9 says,

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

Let us take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, our true King. He reigns right now in heaven (Eph. 1:20-22), and one day he will return to reign over a new heavens and earth. And on that day, every knee will bow to him (Phil. 2:9-11). Let's come under Jesus' rule by obeying his word.