

## **“Long Live the King”**

**1 Samuel 10:17-27**

**By [Dr. Derek Thomas](#)**

1 Samuel, chapter 10 — and we are going to be reading tonight from verse 17 to the end of the chapter; 1 Samuel chapter 10, beginning at verse 17. Last Lord's Day evening we were introduced to Saul, the son of Kish, who went looking for donkeys and couldn't find them. And you remember in the process he met with Samuel, the prophet, who took him aside, and in a private ceremony and ritual, anointed him as king of Israel. Now tonight we are going to look at the more public face of that inauguration or coronation of a king. Before we read the passage together, let's look to God in prayer.

*Father, we are thankful again for the Scriptures, the Word of God, sharper than any two edged sword, sweeter than the honeycomb, able to make us wise unto salvation, a light unto our feet, a lamp unto our pathway. Come, O Lord, come by Your Spirit. Help us to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest, and all for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Now this is God's inerrant Word — verse 17:

Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah. And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us.’ Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.”

Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot; and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. So they inquired again of the Lord, “Is there a man still to come?” and the Lord said, “Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.” Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There

is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”

Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. But some worthless fellows (and the Hebrew has ‘sons of Belial’) said, “How can this man save us?” And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

Amen. May God add His blessing to that reading of His holy and inerrant Word.

It's an easy fact for me to remember that Queen Elizabeth II, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, took place the year I was born - in June of 1953. She became queen, in a technical sense, the year before, but the coronation was three months after I was born. Every child that was born that year received a special coin, which I have but I can't find. I searched and I couldn't find it. It's in my house somewhere. I was going to show it to you. It was specially minted for children born in 1953. I'm sure it's worth a fortune.

When Princess Diana died in 1997, it sparked a debate in Britain about the monarchy and about the abolition of the monarchy. All of the conspiracies surrounding her death and some dissatisfaction with the heir apparent, Prince Charles, have sparked that debate. Last year, the British press carried a story that the United Nations had asked Britain to hold a referendum, that the people might be asked whether they wanted a monarchy. The British government was singularly unimpressed by the United Nations. (laughter) In a poll taken last year in 2008, 54% said they were in favor of the abolition of the monarchy. When asked if they held it to be a high priority, only 3% said so.

Well, I tell you that because Israel has asked for a king and they are about to get one — Saul, the son of Kish. Yes, this tall, handsome, young man who went looking for donkeys but couldn't find them. This young man is the king of Israel. Now four “R's” encapsulate the text this evening. The first is rebuke.

## **I. Rebuke**

Samuel gathers all of Israel to Mizpah. Mizpah is terribly significant because it was at Mizpah that Samuel had led a defeat of the Philistines in an earlier chapter in Samuel. It was noted as a particular place of some importance. A stone of remembrance called Ebenezer had been erected at Mizpah. It was in the national consciousness as a place of triumph.

Now, coronations are meant to be breathtaking and happy and joyful occasions.

In Britain, in 1953 in June, there were tea parties held in the streets. Cakes and balloons and jelly and ice cream - and this is just a few years, of course, after the close of the second World War. Much of the country is still on ration books. They couldn't purchase certain items, at least not more than a certain amount of certain items. At the coronation there was great fanfare, Handel's *Zadok the Priest*, Hubert Parry's piece that this choir loves to sing, *I Was Glad*, was sung on that occasion.

Samuel begins with a rebuke. You're meant to gasp as to what Samuel is doing. This is not the way to begin a coronation. He rebukes them in verse 17 — in verse 18:

“He said to the people of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God who brought you out of Egypt, delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you, but today you have rejected God.’”

He's about to announce to Israel their king, their first king, but he begins with a word of rebuke. He begins by reminding them that, in effect, by asking for a king just like the nations, they are in effect denying God, rejecting God. I think you could have heard a pin drop. Samuel is God's prophet. Everybody recognizes Samuel as God's prophet. When Samuel spoke, people listened. Even if they rejected what Samuel said, they knew this was the word of the God of Israel — the God who had delivered them, the God who had saved them, the God who had rescued them from the hand of the Egyptians, the God who had show His love and mercy and grace and tenderness and compassion again and again and again — but they are now rejecting Him. And then Samuel does something that is extraordinary. He asks them all to gather by the representative tribes and in representative clans within those tribes and he brings out the lots. I have no idea what they were — some means or other to decide who of the tribes of Israel would be chosen.

You've got to put yourself back in the sandals of an Israelite on that occasion, because the last time that had been done was in Joshua chapter 7, when Achan, you remember, had been chosen. A certain tribe had been chosen, a certain clan had been chosen, a certain family had been chosen, and Achan had been chosen, because Achan had taken, he had seen, he had coveted, he had taken, and he had hidden the Babylonish garment, the shekels of silver, the wedge of gold, and he had hidden them in his tent. On that occasion, they had taken Achan and his children and his livestock, and they had stoned them and killed them and burned them.

When Samuel says, ‘Gather by tribes and by clans,’ there was a hush. There was a sigh of relief among the other tribes when the tribe of Benjamin was chosen — “At least it's not going to be us.” And the name of Saul - this young man, this tall, handsome young man, out of nowhere with no military reputation whatsoever, is chosen. He begins with a rebuke. Israel has sinned. They have

asked for a king, but in asking for a king just like the nations, they had actually rejected God.

## **II. Revelation**

The second “R” is revelation. Samuel, and more importantly God, reveals - He discloses - to Israel Saul, the son of Kish. He's going to be the next, well...he's going to be the first king of Israel, except he can't be found. You know there's been this hushed expectancy. Not knowing what Samuel was up to, perhaps following Samuel's rebuke there would be another stoning execution event, and Saul's name is called, but he can't be found — he's not there, he's vanished, he's disappeared. He's hiding in the baggage. Boxes, food supplies, kettles, pots, pans, what baggage? Saul is hiding among the baggage, but you cannot hide from God, ever. You can never hide from God. God will always find you. God will always see you.

Some are of the opinion that this is an example of Saul's humility. When Samuel had pulled him aside in the previous section and done that private anointing he had expressed a certain humility. “Why should I, of this particular tribe and nonentity, be the next king of Israel?” Matthew Henry, for example, in his commentary on this passage talks about Saul's extraordinary humility. Most of the commentators I read, and there were many, were of the opposite opinion — that this is terror that has gripped Saul. And you had to put yourself in Saul's shoes, or sandals. What is Samuel up to? Had Samuel changed his mind? Was he, after all, perhaps going to be executed? He's dragged out and placed before the people, and Samuel says, “Behold, the man whom God has chosen. This is God's king now. You've asked for a king. You shouldn't have asked for a king, but now that you've asked for one, this is God's choice. He is God's representative in government over the people.” And they shout, “Long live the king!” It's hard for you, as members of a Republic, to enter into that I'm sure. (laughter)

## **III. Rights**

The third “R” is rights — rights and duties of kingship. You see it there in verse 25 — “Samuel told the people the rights and duties of kingship and he writes it in a book and he laid it up before the Lord.” Most commentators think that this is Deuteronomy 17. There's a large section toward the end of Deuteronomy 17 that gives legislation for a future king. God had actually predicted that Israel would want a king to be like the other nations. Back in the time of Moses, in the time of the desert wanderings, before they had even come into the land of promise, God had foreseen this day. He had written down in Deuteronomy 17 that the king, for example, must not accrue to himself great wealth and hoard great personal treasure, but more importantly, he was to hand write — he was to write by hand

— the Law of God, in a book, and he was to read from it every single day. That was God's requirement of a king in Israel. The king must live under God's Law. The king must be subject to the Word of God and to the Law of God.

In the 17th century, the time of the writing of the Westminster Assembly, actually the year before the completion of the Assembly, at least the completion of the document we know of as *The Westminster Confession* and the *Catechisms* that we've been talking about this evening - that was in 1645, and this is in 1644 - Samuel Rutherford wrote a book that still causes great waves in our circles and it's called, *Lex Rex*,<sup>1</sup> the "Law of the King." Rutherford was saying something to you and me that sounds not as dramatic to you and me as it did in 1644. He was saying that Scottish kings must live in accordance with God's Law, and that if a king attempted to live in any other fashion than God's Law, his kingship, his right to be a king, was forfeited. Our own *Westminster Confession* says that God's Law is binding. Not the civil code, not the code that was part of the theocracy that was Israel, but the Ten Commandments for certain, the Moral Law of God is binding, and it's binding upon all people at all times. The general equity of that law is still binding on the nation today.

We're not Theonomists.<sup>2</sup> We don't believe in this church that the civil code of the Old Testament should be applied in the modern secular state. The Westminster divines didn't believe that, but we do believe that government and civil government and rulers in civil government, whether they be kings or they be presidents, they are subject to God's law, and that the land itself ought to be subject to the moral law of God.

That's why we pray in this church for leaders who love God's law, who love the Ten Commandments, who want to live their lives in accord with the Ten Commandments. That's what Samuel did here. He wrote the law in a book and he laid it up before the Lord. He was saying something that is very, very important. They wanted a king that was just like the nations surrounding them, but the king that they've got was a king who was to be subject to God's Law. He was a king that was to be subject to the Word of God. Do you see? They got a king, but they didn't get a king like the kings of the nations. They were getting a king, in theory at least, who was to be subject to the Law of God.

Oh, the heart of that prayer by our ruling elder tonight — that the heart of that prayer would be heard in heaven, and that abortion, and the murder of unborn children, would come to an end, as it should; that right would be rewarded and wrong would be punished. We pray for civil leaders, judges, and legislators, and presidents, here and all over the world, that would be subject to the rule of God's Law and not man's law. The rights and duties, not of the king, but of the kingship,

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Rutherford. *Lex Rex*. <http://www.constitution.org/sr/lexrex.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Theonomy

<http://search.blossom.com/geturl?&o=0p&i443&KEY=theonomy&URL=http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/apologetics/Covenant%20Theology%20%26%20Justification/ligonreconstruction.htm>

Samuel says, the office, this office must be subject to God's Law.

Now in the 17th century, that was huge. James I did not like that one bit — he was the law — and he saw that as an attempt to abolish the monarchy all together, which by some, of course, it most definitely was.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV. Rogue

The fourth “R” is rogue. Rogue. You see at the end, Samuel told all the people the rights and duties of the kingship. Verse 26 — “Saul also went to his home.” Don't you love that? Samuel tells everyone to go home. He's just told everybody, “Saul is king.” And Saul goes home because Samuel told him to go home. Saul is doing what Samuel told him to do — he goes home. This king is subject to God's prophet, because God's prophet Samuel is the mouthpiece of God. He is to be subject to God. So he goes home to Gibeah, and with him “went men of valor whose hearts God had touched.” Strong men, perhaps? An armed guard, perhaps? To deal with those Philistines because there was a garrison at Gibeah, perhaps? But some worthless fellows, in the Hebrew, sons of Belial, said, “How can this man save us? And they despised him and didn't give him a present.”

There were some, you see, that said “No” — not because they were Republicans - don't go down that road — they said no because they were saying no to God's choice. They weren't just saying no to Saul, they were now saying no to God's choice. Samuel had said, “This is God's choice.” They were saying no to God; to God's king. Does that remind you of something? Of folk who said no to God's king?

We sang a hymn at the beginning, just before I got up to speak — *Hail To The Lord's Anointed*. We weren't singing about Saul. Nothing in that text was about Saul. It was about King Jesus, the Lord's Anointed. They put a crown of thorns on Him, pushed it down on His head until He bled. They put a purple robe around Him and they slapped Him and they said, “Hail King of the Jews” in mockery. They were saying no to God's King.

My dear friends, the story we're looking at tonight happened three thousand years ago. That's a long, long time ago, but there may well be some in this building tonight who are doing the exact the same as the rogues at the end of this passage. You are saying “No” to God's King. You're saying “No” to Jesus. Maybe it's some of you teenagers, and in your angst to grow up and rebel against parental authority and any kind of authority, you're saying no to King Jesus. Now I want you to understand. I want you to understand this — it is never safe to say no to King Jesus. It is never safe to be on the wrong side of God's

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<sup>3</sup> James I — Hampton Court 1604. <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotland/chap7.htm>  
<http://www.dominionpublico.gov.br/download/texto/gu001592.pdf> p.32

choice of King.

Let's pray together.

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