God Rejects a King

Summary and Goal
In this session, we will see the Israelites ask for a king to judge them and lead them in their battles against the nations around them. They believed a human king would do better than Samuel and his sons to protect them from their enemies. But in rejecting the leadership of Samuel, they were actually rejecting the kingship of the Lord. The king they would get would fail to be one devoted to God’s own heart. Instead, he would fail to trust the Lord for provision and protection and he would fail to obey the Lord’s word. The people got whom they wanted, but who they wanted didn’t measure up.

Session Outline
1. The people reject God as their true King (1 Sam. 8:4-9,19-20).
2. The people’s king fails to trust God (1 Sam. 13:6-9,13-14).
3. The people’s king fails to obey God (1 Sam. 15:10-11,22-23).

Session in a Sentence
God is our one true King in whom His people should place their full trust.

Christ Connection
The people of Israel rejected God as their King and demanded a human king like the nations around them. God warned them and gave them Saul who failed to trust and obey God. Israel needed a lasting kingdom ruled by Someone who would trust and obey God fully. Through the perfect obedience of Jesus, God would establish His rule over His people forever.

Missional Application
Because we have trusted in Christ, the King of kings, for our salvation, we seek to put away all disobedience and submit fully to Him, so that the world will experience redemption through Him and enter into God’s kingdom.
EXPLAIN: Reference the paragraph on page 29 in the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG) to raise the issue of contentment with the seasons or weather patterns we experience.

Our perception of the weather and the seasons is a curious thing because so often we find it hard to be content in the weather we are experiencing. When it is winter, we want the heat of summer. When it is summer, we want the cool of fall or winter. When the sun is beating down, we long for a rain cloud. But when the sky has been pouring, is it too much to ask for a break to see the blue sky and the sun once more?

INTERACT: Ask group members the following questions as an easy ice-breaker for group time. If feasible, gently encourage everyone to give a response, but don’t force anyone to do so.

What is your favorite season and/or weather pattern? What season or weather pattern do you least enjoy? (be prepared to give answers of your own to jump-start the conversation)

SAY: We likely struggle with contentment in the weather because we have an ideal weather pattern that is always short lived or never materializes. So often we don’t get what we want. Similarly, while trying to settle into the promised land, the Israelites wanted something in their lives, but when they got what they wanted, things didn’t turn out as they hoped.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will see the Israelites ask for a king to judge them and lead them in their battles against the nations around them. They believed a human king would do better than Samuel and his sons to protect them from their enemies. But in rejecting the leadership of Samuel, they were actually rejecting the kingship of the Lord. The king they would get would fail to be one devoted to God’s own heart. Instead, he would fail to trust the Lord for provision and protection and he would fail to obey the Lord’s word. The people got whom they wanted, but who they wanted didn’t measure up.

For session-by-session training videos, please visit MinistryGrid.com/GospelProject.
For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
Point 1: The people reject God as their true King (1 Sam. 8:4-9,19-20).

READ 1 Samuel 8:4-9,19-20 (DDG p. 30).

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. 5 They said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have.”

6 When they said, “Give us a king to judge us,” Samuel considered their demand wrong, so he prayed to the Lord. 7 But the Lord told him, “Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king. 8 They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning me and worshiping other gods. 9 Listen to them, but solemnly warn them and tell them about the customary rights of the king who will reign over them.”

10 The people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We must have a king over us. 20 Then we’ll be like all the other nations: our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles.”

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 30) as you explain that the Israelites’ request for a king was not necessarily bad, but the heart behind it was—to be like the other nations around them. The Lord had promised kings to His people, and He had also called them to be separate from the world and holy to Him.

The Israelites experienced a déjà vu moment as Samuel’s two sons took advantage of their position as judges, just like Eli’s sons (1 Sam. 8:1-3). The last time, they lost in battle, lost the ark, and lost God’s presence and glory. Naturally, the Israelites wanted to change their path, so they asked Samuel for a king. The people’s request was not necessarily bad, but the heart behind it was—to be like the other nations around them.

• Scripture reveals that it was always God’s will for a man one day to sit on a throne over His people. In His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, He included the promise of kings to come (Gen. 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10; Num. 24:7,17-19). He even gave instructions for how a king should be chosen and reign in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Furthermore, the Book of Judges showed the necessity of a king to rein in the sinfulness of God’s people (Judg. 21:25), and Hannah prophetically praised God for raising up a king to do just this (1 Sam. 2:10).

• God called His people to be separate from the world and holy to the Lord (Ex. 19:5-6; Lev. 18:24; 20:26; Deut. 7:1-6). He called Abraham out from his family to obey Him in faith. He redeemed the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt. He gave them His law in the wilderness to govern their nation, their worship, and their behavior. His people were to be unique, set apart, different, the Lord’s own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a blessing to the whole world—not like the other nations.
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some reasons we struggle with wanting to be like the world?
(the way of the world seems more fun; it seems like it works better; it can be awkward and painful to be different; we have a sinful nature that resists the way of God)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 30) to identify another reason the Israelites’ request for a king was problematic—*they were rejecting God as their King*. Then use the leader content below to emphasize that *prayer and faith in the Lord* would have preserved them from the consequences of their selfish choice.

The Israelites’ request was problematic for another reason—*they were rejecting God as their King*. The people wanted a human king to judge them and lead them in their battles, but the Lord Himself had commanded them, led them, provided for them, fought for them, and ruled over them. They needed no one else, but that didn’t stop them, so God gave them what they wanted.

- Had the Israelites *prayed* and asked for the Lord’s direction, had they asked Samuel for advice or even listened to his warnings (1 Sam. 8:10-18), they would have fared better for the next forty-two years (the length of Saul’s troubled reign as the first king over Israel). Instead, they suffered under the consequences of their selfish choice to reject God’s leadership through Samuel.

SAY: Often we try to fix things in our lives without seeking God in prayer. Many times we choose to rely on our habits, our plans, or our self-sufficiency. In these times, like the Israelites, we should consider the warning that God may give us the foolishness that we want. But if we run to the Lord in faithful prayer, we can trust His sovereign protection and goodness either to answer our requests or to refrain for our good.
Point 2: The people’s king fails to trust God (1 Sam. 13:6-9,13-14).

SAY: After the people’s insistence on a king, Samuel sent them home. Then God arranged a private meeting for Samuel in which he anointed a man named Saul as king over Israel. Following a public recognition, Saul and his army camped at Gilgal in opposition to the Philistines, and there he waited for Samuel’s promised arrival.

READ 1 Samuel 13:6-9,13-14 (DDG p. 31).

6 The men of Israel saw that they were in trouble because the troops were in a difficult situation. They hid in caves, in thickets, among rocks, and in holes and cisterns. 7 Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul, however, was still at Gilgal, and all his troops were gripped with fear. 8 He waited seven days for the appointed time that Samuel had set, but Samuel didn’t come to Gilgal, and the troops were deserting him. 9 So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” Then he offered the burnt offering.

13 Samuel said to Saul, “You have been foolish. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. It was at this time that the Lord would have permanently established your reign over Israel, 14 but now your reign will not endure. The Lord has found a man after his own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over his people, because you have not done what the Lord commanded.”

EXPLAIN: Comment on Saul’s identity and temperament regarding his anointing as king over Israel. Then use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 31) to emphasize how Saul’s faith and patience for Samuel ran out, revealing the state of his heart toward God.

• Saul was thirty years old when he became king (13:1), but he was a reluctant king initially. At his public coronation, he hid from the people until the Lord pointed him out (10:20-22). He seemed to fit the part, however, being a head taller than everyone else (10:23-24). He stood out, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, he led with strength and conviction (11:1-11). He even demonstrated wisdom and grace, rejecting the execution of some of his early detractors (11:12-15).

Saul looked the part of a king, and his first actions as king secured the approval of his people. But faithful leadership is more than skin deep—it is a matter of the heart. Saul was commanded by Samuel to wait for him for seven days in Gilgal, when he would come to offer sacrifices and give instructions for the battle (10:8). Saul waited, but all the while his troops were deserting him in fear. When he couldn’t take it any longer, he gave up waiting and made the sacrifices himself; in his own fear, Saul took into his own hands a responsibility that belonged to priests alone. And then Samuel arrived (13:10).
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What is the relationship between fear and patience? (fear causes us to lose patience; patience requires trust in the God who overcomes our fears; fear takes our eyes off of the One who inspires and encourages patience)

EXPLAIN: Reference the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 31) as you show that Saul’s impatience with Samuel stemmed from his lack of faith in God. Note that Saul’s consequences fell on him because he followed his own heart and failed to trust in the Lord’s wisdom and timing.

Samuel listened to Saul’s excuses: he saw his people deserting, he had not yet seen Samuel, and he feared the Philistines (13:10-12). But no excuse justified Saul’s rash action. He disobeyed Samuel’s command and thereby disobeyed God. The people’s foolish request for a king like the nations’ had resulted in a king who made a foolish decision on behalf of his people. Saul’s lack of faith led to disobedience and to consequences—there would be no dynasty for Saul and his descendants.

Saul’s impatience with Samuel stemmed from a lack of faith in God.

• Saul saw his army dwindling while Samuel seemed to be dawdling. How could he fight against the Philistines, much less defend against them, with his army shrinking day by day from fear? He must have forgotten about Gideon and his army of three hundred selected by God to rout the Midianites (Judg. 7).

• Saul needed God’s favor to defeat the Philistines, and for that, he reasoned, sacrifices had to be made, as if God were a deity who needed to be placated. His misunderstanding of the nature of God “forced” him to disobey, but soon he would learn that the Lord desires obedience rather than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22).

Commentary: Saul’s lack of faith and trust in the Lord stood in contrast with an unnamed man who did trust the Lord, described as being a man after God’s own heart. He would eventually succeed Saul and reign as God’s king. This king was David. With a heart primarily focused on the glory of God, David would be promised an everlasting dynasty, which would be fulfilled in the eternal kingship of his descendant Jesus.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What is the relationship between faith and obedience? (obedience without faith does not please the Lord; faith must work itself out in obedience for it to be true faith; faith in God encourages obedience to God; a lack of faith in God leads to actions done out of fear)
**Point 3: The people’s king fails to obey God (1 Sam. 15:10-11,22-23).**

**SAY:** King Saul showed himself to be an able defender of the people of Israel from their surrounding enemies (1 Sam. 14:47-48). But he still couldn’t shake his lack of faith and resulting disobedience, which led to even greater consequences for Saul.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 15:10-11,22-23 (DDG p. 32).

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 32) to explain the context of Saul’s disobedience to God’s command regarding the Amalekites. Then warn your group about how easily we can justify our own sins.

(Use the **commentary** below, if needed, to address our difficulty with God’s command against the Amalekites.)

The time had come for God’s judgment to fall on the Amalekites for attacking the Israelites during the exodus. According to God’s command through Samuel, Saul was to kill all the Amalekites and their animals (1 Sam. 15:1-3; see Ex. 17:14; Deut. 25:17-19), but he spared King Agag and the best of the animals to use as sacrifices to the Lord. When confronted by Samuel for his disobedience, Saul insisted that he had obeyed; he could neither see nor hear how he had fallen short of God’s command.

- Saul’s blindness and deafness to his disobedience all around him, in the form of animals and their sounds, shows how easy it is for us to justify our sin. Often we think we know better than God about what we should say or do; we think our ways are better than God’s; we think we are smarter than God. We must beware our own sin because we come by it naturally and we often come by it intentionally.

**Commentary:** “Moments like this in the pages of the Old Testament must not be avoided. They must not, of course, be lifted out of context and caricatured. Sometimes such terrible Biblical incidents are condemned as ‘genocide’ or ‘ethnic cleansing.’ This is to measure the events by modern moral categories, while disregarding the Bible’s own evaluation of them. These episodes should remind us that God always has been and still is ‘the Judge of all the earth’ who does only what is just and right (Gen. 18:25). Israel or Israelites could find themselves falling under this judgment (see Deut. 13:12-18; Josh. 7:10-15), just as those to whom this judgment came could seek and find mercy (see, for example, Josh. 6:25).”

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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 32).

Sin as Missing the Mark: One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God’s standards set for humanity. This missing of the mark is not a simple mistake but a falling short of God’s glory through conscious choosing of sin.

Essential Doctrine “Sin as Missing the Mark”: One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God’s standards set for humanity. This missing of the mark is not a simple mistake but a falling short of God’s glory through conscious choosing of sin. We may refer to sin as a failure on the part of humans to live according to God’s standards, but we must recognize this failure is intentional. We miss the mark when we deliberately choose to cast aside God’s intention for us.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 32) to emphasize the Lord’s delight in faithful obedience.

The Lord “regretted” making Saul king over Israel, not because He didn’t know the end result of his appointment but because Saul refused to obey the Lord’s commands. Further, Saul justified his disobedience in the language of worship and sacrifice. The Lord, however, was not pleased; He rejected Saul’s intended worship, Saul’s excuses, and Saul as king because the Lord delights in faithful obedience.

- Sacrifices served as visual illustrations of atonement, repentance, fellowship, thanksgiving, and worship. The Lord prescribed these for His people to help restrain their sin and to restore their relationships with Him. Ultimately these sacrifices pointed forward to Jesus, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). But these sacrifices were never meant to replace a desire for faithful obedience.
- Saul’s disobedience was equivalent to divination, or sorcery, and idolatry, sins for which the nations were driven out of the promised land (Deut. 18:9-14). Saul couldn’t worship the Lord under these circumstances because he had rejected the word of the Lord. Furthermore, he blamed his troops (1 Sam. 15:21,24). Instead of leading his people in holiness, this king followed his people into rebellion. Therefore, the kingdom was ripped from him and given to a man after the Lord’s own heart.

Commentary: The Lord’s “regret” in 1 Samuel 15:11,35 over making Saul king in light of his rebellion is reminiscent of His “regret” in Genesis 6:6 over the evil in the world that led to the flood. This does not indicate a flaw in God’s omniscience but a change in the way He responds and relates to His image bearers because of their sin. The use of “regret” is anthropomorphic language, attributing human qualities to God to teach something about God. This idea must be understood in light of 1 Samuel 15:29, in which it is said that the Lord does not lie or change his mind, or have regret, because He is not a man.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some characteristics that accompany faithful obedience? (humility; a repentant spirit; a desire to please God; a heart for the Word of God; reliance upon the Holy Spirit; dedication to God’s glory in Jesus)
My Mission

EXPLAIN: The Israelites wanted a human king like all the other nations had, and God gave them exactly what they wanted—Saul, a rash, foolish, disobedient king who followed his own heart instead of the Lord’s. While the people’s request for a king was sinful, God would turn it around for good. One day He would raise up the King after His own heart to lead His people. King Jesus was and is perfect in His trust and obedience to the Father, and He is reigning even now as Savior and Lord for all who believe. Until the day we see His reign in its fullness, we strive for faithful obedience in the Spirit to help lead others into His salvation and His eternal kingdom.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 33), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have trusted in Christ, the King of kings, for our salvation, we seek to put away all disobedience and submit fully to Him, so that the world will experience redemption through Him and enter into God’s kingdom.

- What are some ways you will stop following your own heart to follow the Lord’s in faithful obedience?
- How can your group lead one another toward holiness and away from rebellion?
- Whom will you confront in their rebellion and call them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You are great and You are holy, and You desire obedience rather than sacrifice. But so often we come with halfhearted sacrifices the honor neither Your greatness nor Your holiness. Thank You for sending Jesus to be our perfect sacrifice through His perfect obedience. Now with the gift of Your Holy Spirit, help us to obey in faith, to repent of sin, and to live sowing the seeds of the gospel in the world. Amen.

PACK ITEM 4: MOTIVES: Cut out these bookmarks and pass them out to group members to remind them that our motives for obedience—to love and honor Jesus—matter as much as our acts of obedience.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 34-36), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 37) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 34-36) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 37) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 34-36) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: The root reason why their demand for a king displeased God was because the people chose the pagan nations around them as a template for their lives rather than God and His word.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 4: “Sometimes doing something is the worst thing we can do. Sometimes the best thing we can do is nothing.”
- Day 5: “We cannot proclaim the glory of God from a posture of disobedience. Obedience and worship are fused together.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 37) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to consider how their sin patterns reveal areas of life where they are not acknowledging and trusting God as King.
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

Point 1: The people reject God as their true King (1 Sam. 8:4-9,19-20).

“Since Samuel is growing old and his sons prove unworthy, the elders of Israel come to Samuel with a demand for an alternative form of leadership: a king such as all the other nations have (8:4-5). This desire to be like other nations violates the fundamental call of Israel to be distinctive (Lev. 20:26; Num. 23:9). So this is a decisive moment that will determine the nation’s future. Samuel is displeased and takes the matter to the Lord (8:6). Perhaps not altogether unfairly, he felt slighted (8:7). The Lord equates Samuel’s rejection with his own, since Samuel’s prophetic leadership was the Lord’s way of ruling his people. Events have demonstrated that the Lord is capable of leading them through internal as well as military crises. By asking for an earthly king, they are in effect rejecting the Lord as their King. The Lord reminds Samuel that the Israelites’ rejection and search for alternative leaders is an old habit that goes back as far as the exodus (8:8). So he instructs Samuel to warn them solemnly about the consequences of this choice (8:9).”

“God was not opposed to a human king over Israel and had said in Deuteronomy that they could have one (see Deut. 17:15). The problem with the Israelites’ request for a king here was their desire to be like all the other nations (vv. 5,19; see also Deut. 17:14). This motive was at odds with God’s will for them to be ‘a holy nation’ (Ex. 19:6), set apart from the others (Ex. 19:5; Lev. 20:24,26; Deut. 7:6). Furthermore, it was a rejection of God as their King (v. 7; 10:19).”

Point 2: The people’s king fails to trust God (1 Sam. 13:6-9,13-14).

“Saul had summoned the army to meet at Gilgal, the place where he had ‘waited’ (10:8) and been crowned (11:15). Again, ‘waiting’ at Gilgal seems to have a special religious meaning. After this period of time, however, Saul offers sacrifices and breaks the commandment of the Lord (13:13). Some interpreters take this to mean that he did not obey the Lord’s word through Samuel recorded in 10:8, to the effect that Saul should wait seven days for Samuel to come and offer burnt offerings and show Saul what to do. Others think the statement in 10:8 occurred several years earlier, and that Saul violates another (unrecorded) command from Samuel, or the command that only a priest should offer sacrifices (Num. 18:7), or the general principle that he should have waited to learn God’s will through the prophet. In any case, Saul knows he has done wrong, for he starts making excuses (1 Sam. 13:11-12). Apparently he had been told not to make any move until Samuel gave him the word of the Lord. Here Saul shows his tendency to be moved by circumstances and to rely on religious ritual to gain God’s favor (see 14:24 and the incident in 4:3) rather than to trust and obey the word of the Lord.”
“In Genesis 49:10, Jacob prophesied that a member of the tribe of Judah would rule over Israel; yet Samuel suggests that Saul—a member of the tribe of Benjamin—might have seen his family ‘permanently established’ in the monarchy had he not been disobedient. Some have suggested that Samuel was lying to Saul, but this need not be the case. The territories of Judah and Benjamin were sometimes treated as the land of one tribe (1 Kings 11:36), so that promises made to Judah were applicable to Benjamin as well. Alternatively, God foresaw that in a later era Israel would have two kings, one in the north (Israel proper) and one in the south (Judah). During that time both the house of David and the house of Saul could have had enduring dynasties. In either case, Samuel was truthful with Saul, especially in confronting his foolishness.”

**Point 3:** The people’s king fails to obey God
(1 Sam. 15:10-11,22-23).

“The verb regret with God as its subject occurs only here and in Genesis 6:7, where it denotes God’s regrets over making humanity and his ultimate decision to bring the great flood. In both cases, people made wrong moral choices, and God’s foreknowledge meant he knew what people would do. Nonetheless, it pained him to see the disobedience come to pass. The word translated turned away commonly means ‘repent’ when it speaks of turning away from sin, but here it describes Saul’s conscious decision to cease following the Lord. Samuel was frustrated by Saul’s failing kingship, particularly as he remembered he had anointed him (10:1). Saul had indeed turned out to be a king just like the ones of ‘all the other nations’ (8:5,20), but the people had persisted in their request despite his sober warnings (8:11-18).”

“The degree of similarity suggests that the writer was making a deliberate connection between the Genesis and Samuel narratives. Certainly similarities exist between the outcomes of the stories. The sins of humanity in Genesis 6 caused the Lord to destroy the sinners, yet they also gave rise to the Lord’s selection of Noah, a man with a remarkable heart for God (cf. Gen. 6:8,10). Saul’s sins here destroyed his kingship, yet they also served as a springboard for the Lord’s selection of David, a man after God’s own heart. Clearly both passages teach that God is aware of and responsive to choices made by people, reacting favorably only when people choose the option of obedience to the divine will … Nothing short of strict obedience to the Lord’s instructions was acceptable; anything less produced grief in heaven and pain and loss on earth.”

**References**

In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel’s heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them— one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God’s character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God’s people wanted and needed, each one proving God’s warnings true. Bookending God’s people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God’s people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God’s people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?