

**“Who’s Your King?”**  
**1 Samuel 16:1-14**  
**July 11, 2010**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

We’re looking today at the anointing of David as Israel’s king. The character of David, son of Jesse, dominates the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Though he doesn’t appear on the scene until chapter 16, he has hovered over the earlier chapters by way of contrast. Israel has become a barren wasteland, just like Hannah’s womb had been barren at the beginning of the book. Israel’s barrenness is seen clearly in the loss of the Ark of the Covenant to the Philistines in the early chapters of this book. Israel needs a king to lead her into fruitfulness. Of course, the Lord was willing to be their King, but the Israelites wanted a flesh and blood king like the other nations around her. God granted their request and gave them precisely the kind of king they wanted in Saul. That didn’t turn out so well. Israel continues to languish, not because of having no king, but because of having a bad king.

David is introduced to us in the chapter before us this morning. In this scene and the two that follow, he is presented to us as a shepherd, a musician and a mighty (though unlikely) warrior. These three scenes portray the three primary qualities of an Israelite king. Like a shepherd, he is to be humble and to care for his subjects, as individuals as well as a whole. As a musician, he brings joy to the hearts of those around him, and like a warrior, he defeats the enemies of the nation.

We are faced with a problem as we try to understand and apply this passage. The problem is that we Americans haven’t had a king since we renounced the rule of King George III of Britain in 1776. We are unfamiliar with the mindset that accompanies a monarchy. Even the monarchies with which we are familiar, such as the one in Britain today, are very different from ancient monarchies such as Israel’s. There is one particular aspect of a monarchy that must be understood if we are to know how to apply this passage to ourselves. The crucial point of an ancient monarchy is that the welfare of the nation was completely dependent on the quality of its king. This point is evident in the books of Samuel and Kings. Israel prospered in every way when the king was godly, just and righteous, and languished when the king was wicked and unjust.

So the central application for us as we move through this passage is going to be that of answering the question posed in the sermon title: “Who’s your King?” Your king is the one to whom you have pledged your ultimate allegiance and obedience. Only the Lord’s anointed will bring good into your life. So the right answer to this question is to follow the king anointed by God. Let’s keep

these issues in mind as we look today at the anointing of David as king of Israel, and relate this to the anointing of David's great son, Jesus.

## I. The Failure of the False King

Saul is the false king of Israel, and his failure brought grief to Samuel and to the nation. So we read in verse 1 a question from God to Samuel. **“How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?”** God rejected him because his heart did not trust the Lord in a way that led to obedience. False kings always lead to sorrow and disappointment. Saul's failures are portrayed clearly in the next chapter, the well-known story of David and Goliath. Remember that Goliath came forth to challenge an Israelite champion to come and do battle with him in a “winner-take-all” contest. Like any good storyteller, the author is not content to state that Goliath was a scary man. Rather, he describes him in such a way that we can feel the fear of the Israelite soldiers. He describes his massive size and his intimidating weaponry. Goliath was something of a walking tank, with armor covering all of his considerably-sized body, and weapons too heavy for any but the strongest to lift. Goliath came forth to taunt the army of Israel. **“Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul?”** (17:8). He was attacking their identity, and their response was to be **“dismayed and greatly afraid.”** All of this happened because Israel's king was a false king. Saul was Israel's “giant”, **“from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people”** (9:2). What's more, as Israel's king it was his duty to fight for his people. False kings bring disappointment and sorrow into our lives.

False kings also bring tyranny into our lives. When Samuel was told to go and anoint another as king of Israel, he was terrified and asked the Lord, **“How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me”** (v. 2). His fear is understandable. Anointing a new king when there is already a king on the throne is inherently dangerous. Kings, especially false kings, don't give up their authority without a fight. So these false kings are both disappointing and dangerous.

Who are the false kings in your life, the rulers to which you give your allegiance? One of the challenges in identifying them is that, like Saul, they often look good. Even Samuel was fooled by a good appearance when Jesse's first son stood before him. He was tall and regal in appearance, leading Samuel to say to himself, **“Surely the Lord's anointed is before him”** (v. 6). The Lord had to rebuke him and remind that it was the heart, not the outward appearance that counted. The same mistake had been made with Saul because of his impressive height and appearance. Who are your false kings? You may be thinking to yourself, “I don't have any kings; I am free to do whatever I want.” Such a statement reveals the presence of a king, the king of self-rule. This king will both disappoint and destroy. The period just before Israel's

monarchy is known as the time of the Judges, described in the book by that name. Listen to the theme verse of Judges, repeated several times. **“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes”** (17:6). It was a period very similar to our own in that each man and woman was a king or queen, doing whatever seemed right at an individual level. It would have destroyed the nation had God not intervened to give them a good king in David. Or maybe the false king in your life is just following the crowd. The values and practices of the crowd become your values and practices.

How can you spot a false king? Though they can fool us by their pleasing appearance, by the fact that it just feels right to follow them, they will always be exposed in the presence of the true King. In the later chapters of 1 Samuel, Saul, the false king, always wanted to kill David, Israel’s true king. The false king can always be identified by the presence of this conflict. The true King tells us to seek first his kingdom and trust our king for our personal needs. The false king tells us to look out first for our own needs, and give the King the leftovers. The true King tells us to be generous with our money. The false king says to make it a higher priority to use our money for ourselves.

## **II. The Search for the True King**

God told Samuel to go in search of Israel’s true king in Bethlehem, in the family of Jesse, who had eight sons. Samuel went there on the pretense God had given him, to make a sacrifice to the Lord. But his real reason, known only to Samuel and the Lord, was to anoint Israel’s next king. The narrator describes the scene in such a way that we are forced to wait for the true king. Jesse’s first seven sons are paraded before Samuel, but God reveals to him that none of these are to be Israel’s king. Jesse seems to run out of sons, with no future king in sight. Could it be that this was a false errand, that no king would be found on this day? But Samuel knew that the Lord had directed him to Jesse’s household. So he asked, **“Are all your sons here?”** (v. 11). The only one left was the youngest, whose name is not given. He was out doing the job that, in this culture, was given to the one with the least status. He was tending the sheep. Samuel’s response is significant. **“Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here”** (v. 11). I wonder how long it took. Since sheep grazed on common land, and shepherds led them to the places where grass could be found, it was likely a long time. Those who went of search of Jesse’s youngest son would not have been sure where to begin their search. And yet Samuel made them all stand while awaiting his arrival. Remember that the elders of the city were also present on this occasion. One commentator summarizes this scene as follows:

It is an awesome and unlikely scene, all the elders standing and waiting deferentially for this eighth son, the one whose name we are not even told... Verse

11 is a brilliant stroke of narrative strategy and design. The narrator makes Jesse's household wait, and makes the reader wait, for the arrival of David. The story waits, just as Israel has waited." (Brueggemann, p. 122)

The point of the story is that the search for Israel's true king was a long search, with a surprising conclusion. His seven older brothers were inside the house, meeting with the important prophet and Judge, Samuel. David was the outsider, the one with the least status and the youngest age. From the Goliath story in the next chapter, we get a glimpse of the relationships between these brothers. David wasn't the well-loved little brother, doted on by the rest of the family. Instead, he was the despised little brother who was probably persecuted by his brothers. When David's oldest brother, Eliab, saw David talking to the soldiers who heard the taunts of Goliath, he despised him. **"And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle'"** (17:28).

How does this long search for the king apply to us? It shows us that our King, David's greater son, Jesus, is worth waiting for. Perhaps you have gone through the other candidates for king and been disappointed in them all. Maybe you thought doing what someone else wanted you to do would give you the kind of life you wanted, but it didn't work out. Maybe you thought just doing what you wanted to do would be the answer, but that too hasn't worked so well. Jesus is worth waiting for because he is God's chosen one to be the anointed King, the Messiah. He is a king like David, only better. Jesus was an outsider, coming from Galilee, a remote region in a remote country, far from the corridors of power. But, also like David, he is a shepherd king, able to care for the sheep, being willing even to die for them. He is also a musician, being able to bring joy to the heart. And he is a warrior, able to conquer all our enemies. Don't give up. Keep standing, like Bethlehem's elders, until this king comes in. No one who follows him as king will ever be disappointed.

### **III. The Anointing of the True King**

After this long wait, David is finally anointed the new king. Note the results and the timing of this anointing. As a result of this anointing, **"the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward"** (v. 13). Not only that, but **"the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul"** (v. 14). The definitive act in the transfer of royal power from Saul to David wasn't some marketing campaign or special political ability possessed by David. It was simply this act of anointing, an act resulting from the fact that God had chosen him to be king. God would also equip him to be king. That's why David was able to slay the God-defying Goliath in the next chapter. That's why David's music was played with such skill and such positive effect.

Note also the timing of this anointing. It would be years before David would become king. He was still a boy at this time, as seen in the next chapter about Goliath. David is old enough to be sent on an errand to his brothers, but not old enough to be a soldier in Israel's army. He is perhaps a young teenager at this time. But the definitive act of his life had occurred—he had been anointed Israel's king. It was God's initiative and God's act of anointing that made the difference. As a result, David's rise to power was inevitable. He was God's choice for Israel's king. The central matter was not who Israel should choose as their king, but who God had chosen.

It is the same for us. If Jesus is God's anointed King, then he is the one we should follow. The New Testament portrays him as the anointed Messiah. The Spirit descended upon him at his baptism in a visible manner. Like David, he is a shepherd who is willing to put his life on the line for the sheep. But unlike David, he actually did die on behalf of the sheep. Like David's music, Jesus brings joy to his followers. And Jesus is also Israel's warrior, defeating our great enemy of death that, like Goliath, leaves us all in fear and trembling. And as a result of his victory, there is victory for all of his followers.

## **CONCLUSION:**

I want to make two applications. First, follow this king, no matter what the cost. He is God's anointed one. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of Jesus. David's brothers didn't think much of David either. Jesus is the one God has anointed to bring salvation and deliverance. To follow him means to do what those following David did between his anointing and his crowning. They threw in their lot with him and forsook all else. They were willing to stand with him, obey him, fight for him and die for him, because he was the anointed one. Jesus said it like this, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”** (Matt. 16:24-25).

Second, don't underestimate this king. It is the duty of a king to care for his subjects. Our lack of familiarity with the culture of a monarchy impedes our ability to understand this. During several trips to Uganda, which has more a culture of monarchy, I noticed this difference, particularly with regard to my property. The view of the Ugandans is that the move of the rich Americans to live among them brought with it our obligation to share our wealth with them. They were not bashful in asking for this. Jesus is our wealthy king, and he has demonstrated his willingness to help us. So he says to us, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matt. 11:28). He tells us not to be anxious, but to trust him, for he cares for us. Your king is able to provide for you abundantly. Trust him and follow him.