

The First King

Scripture Reading — 1 Samuel 10:17-24

“You have now rejected your God . . . and have said, ‘No, -appoint a king over us.’” — 1 Samuel 10:19

When cultures and nations tell about their first king, the stories are often impressive. Mythical births, epic quests, heroic achievements, and magical ceremonies fit into the mix. But today’s passage tells us of the first time Israel gets a king, and the tone is surprising.

The Lord speaks through Samuel and sounds almost heart-broken (see also 1 Samuel 8). The choosing of Saul as king is orchestrated by the Lord through a method of casting lots. When Saul is chosen and the people look around for him, he is hiding. In a way, it’s remarkable that this story is even mentioned in Israel’s history.

Who is actually Israel’s first king? Israel’s first and true king is none other than the Lord. Saul is merely a temporary, earthly stand-in. And so are all the flawed, human kings who come after Saul. There is a tension and paradox in the history of Israel’s kings. Should a nation with the Lord as King also seek a human king?

But in this we see God’s good, gracious, and long-term plan. Humanity needs God as King first of all. But humanity also needs a human king. The paradox remains a riddle until it is solved in the kingship of Jesus. God sent his Son—fully God and fully human—to be our first and forever King!

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Alpha and Omega, the ruler of the kings of the earth. We praise you as our first and forever King. Amen.

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