



# LifeLight

*"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." John 1:4*

## 1 and 2 Samuel

### LEADERS GUIDE



To anoint is to apply oil to consecrate a person who has been chosen for the Lord's service. Samuel heard the requests of the Israelites for a king. He obeyed the Lord by anointing first Saul, and then David, Jesse's youngest son, to be king of Israel. We, too, have been anointed, or chosen by divine rite, into the family of God, but our anointing is through Holy Baptism. We are chosen not to be kings or queens, but heirs to the inheritance of eternal life in Christ Jesus, the true Anointed One.

This fresco showing Samuel anointing David (ca. third century AD) was found in the synagogue of the ancient city of Dura-Europos, Syria, in the late 1930s. It is one of more than fifty paintings found there that tell the story of God's people in the Old Testament.



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Cover: Samuel anoints David, fresco, ca. 239 AD / © Art Resource, NY

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## Introduction

### Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

### LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

*In-depth* means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

### LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

### LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

#### The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership-team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

#### The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

#### The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;
- prepares worship activities (devotional thought,

- hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other, outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
  - encourages prayer at weekly leadership-team and discussion leaders meetings.

### The Small-Group Coordinator *(optional; the director may fill this role)*

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership-team and discussion-leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

### The Small-Group Discussion Leaders

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. **(Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 47.)** There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than twelve participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (see p. 47);
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;
- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;

- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion leaders training meetings.

### Leadership Training

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1½-hour program with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

### The LifeLight Weekly Schedule

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.
2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of twelve or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week.

Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). Those congregations may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

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## Recommended Study Resources and Worship

*The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009. This resource contains more than 26,000 study and application notes, a most thorough reference guide (pp. lxxv–cx), and over 90,000 cross-references, as well as a 31,000-entry concordance, maps, charts, and timelines.

*Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and timelines.

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages and is tailored for lay use.

*The Concordia Organist* is a 31-CD collection of pipe-organ accompaniments for all the hymns and liturgical music in *Lutheran Service Book*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (order no. 99-2264). Use these CDs for worship hymn accompaniment.

*Every Voice a Song: Pipe Organ Accompaniment for 180 Hymns and Liturgy*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. Use this music CD for worship hymn accompaniment.



# The Word of the LORD Was Rare

## 1 Samuel 1–6

### *Preparing for the Session*

### Central Focus

In Samuel's time, and in our time as well, knowledge of God's Word may be lacking even among those who are surrounded by God's gifts of grace.

### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. remember and rejoice in the power of God's Means of Grace—His Word and His Sacraments;
2. realize that faith is not guaranteed by mere exposure to the Means of Grace; and
3. resolve to be active in the use of the Means of Grace through regular Bible reading and active membership in a faithful congregation.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 49.

### For the Lecture Leader

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Service Book* or *Lutheran Worship*. (Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *The Concordia Organist*. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.) Follow with this prayer:

#### Prayer

Jesus Christ, Head of the Church, You call Your people through Your Word and Your Sacraments and keep us united with You by the same Word and Sacraments. By Your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to You through these

Means of Grace. Guide us that we never take them for granted or ignore them, for apart from You we cannot live, and these are the ways You have chosen to keep us close to You. We ask this in Your holy name, the precious name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

### Lecture Presentation

## 1 Introduction

Ray Bradbury was a twentieth-century writer most known for his short stories and novels of science fiction. In some of his writing, such as the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury imagined a future society in which knowledge was banned and all books were burned. In other stories, though, Bradbury suggested the opposite approach: he described a society run by people who hid the truth by providing so much information that citizens were unable to sort through it all and discover what is important and what does not matter. So far, at least, it seems as though the twenty-first century resembles this second vision of Bradbury far more closely than his depiction of violent censorship.

People in today's world are all but drowning in information. Every week, the news warns us of new risks and dangers in our lives. We hear and read so many warnings that few of us really know how to measure risk and danger, or how to avoid the real threats while not worrying about the smaller and less likely problems. Science and history and other ways of understanding the world are presented to us with such a bewildering variety of approaches and viewpoints that we often find it hard to know what to believe. As a result of this relentless barrage of information, our opinions are not necessarily determined by truth. Rather, it seems that most people will often make up their minds what to believe first, and then they seek the books and Web sites and television shows that confirm them in their beliefs. News about the present and predictions about the future are offered in exactly the same fashion. No idea is so outlandish and bizarre that it is not somewhere presented as truth, with just as much conviction and aura of authority as any genuine truth.

## 2 Starving though Surrounded by Abundance

Speaking of the bizarre and outlandish, imagine a society where people were starving to death even though they were surrounded by food. Does that sound ridiculous to you? Perhaps it does. But of course, as ludicrous as it sounds, even this scenario does not require all that much in the way of imagination. All we have to do is to consider our present society. Western civilization has made food—good nutritious food—more available than ever before in the history of the world. Many people eat healthy diets every week, yet the abundance of food has also made the distortion of healthy diets more possible than ever before.

We can think of any number of examples of this. Some people experiment with faddish diets that promise weight loss and other benefits through recommendations of dubious value. Following these diets, a few people actually destroy their health and their bodies, seeking an image presented in society as ideal, but far from what their bodies were meant to be. At the same time, many more people satisfy their cravings for sweets and fats and salt, taking advantage of the highly advertised abundance of such foods. These people forget that our cravings for such foods are appropriate only in a world where food is not abundant and where most food comes from grains and fresh vegetables—the world where most people live today and nearly all people have lived in past centuries. Desires for sweets and salt led people to correct and balance their diets because such things were rare. Today, in our part of the world, those foods are easily acquired. The unfortunate result is that some people tend to over-eat these unneeded foods and avoid the food that is good for them. We can very easily find ourselves starving, in a sense, while being surrounded by food. Food, just like information, surrounds us and confuses us so badly that we cannot sort the good from the bad or learn to be good stewards of the bounty that is ours.

We see a similar problem at work in the Book of 1 Samuel. At the time Samuel was born, we are told in the Bible, “the word of the LORD was rare” (1 Samuel 3:1). This is a very significant statement that needs to be understood properly. First of all, we can note that reading this one statement may cause us to overlook the abundance of blessings God was giving to His people at that time. Those blessings He had given them were truly amazing! Only a few generations after the time of Moses, families could easily pass down to their chil-

dren the memory of the escape from Egypt, the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and the entry into the Promised Land. The written books of Moses and of Joshua belonged to the Israelites. They had a record of all that God had said and done in the lives of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had a complete record of the life of Moses and of God’s commands, given at Mount Sinai. The history of the way God kept His promises and gave the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel was inscribed and preserved for God’s people. God had commanded that the members of the tribe of Levi be scattered throughout the land, living in every town and village to teach the people God’s Word and to remind them of what God had said and done.

More than that, God’s people had visible reminders of the Lord and His promises. They had the tabernacle, built in the days of Moses according to God’s commands, which had accompanied God’s people into Canaan and now stood at Shiloh. Within that tabernacle was the ark of the covenant, a symbol of the throne of God among His people. In that ark were the Ten Commandments, inscribed on tablets of stone, along with other reminders of the history of Israel. At that tabernacle, regular sacrifices were offered to the Lord, which were pictures of the coming Savior and His sacrifice that would save the world. The ark and the tabernacle, the priests and the sacrifices, all were there to be God’s message to His people—a reminder of judgment but also a promise of salvation.

Therefore, when we read that God’s Word was rare, we can recognize what that really means. His Word was rare not because people needed special revelations from the Lord, but because they were ignoring the message God already had given to them.

## 3 Abusing What Was Holy (1 Samuel 1–3)

God’s Word was rare not because it was absent, but because it was simply ignored. As bad as that was, there was also something even worse. God’s Word was not merely being ignored; it was being abused. The sons of the high priest were guilty of the most flagrant abuse of God’s Word. They used the sacrifices of God’s people as opportunities to take what they wanted from the people (see 1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22). They ignored their father’s warning that such abuse of the people whom God loved, and of God Himself, would bring judgment upon them.

There were also other, less visible ways, that the Word of God was being ignored and abused. Samuel, the boy whose life was dedicated to serving the Lord, did not even recognize the name of the Lord. When God called to him repeatedly, Samuel thought each time that Eli the priest was calling him and ran to ask Eli what he wanted. Eli eventually realized that God was calling the boy and told him what to say: (1 Samuel 3:9) "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears." (Notice that there the word *LORD* is printed in our Bibles all in capital letters. When we see this, we know that the word actually found in the original Hebrew is not the title "Lord," but rather the very name of God, usually rendered as either Jehovah or Yahweh. Our English Bibles generally follow an ancient tradition of, as an act of reverence, substituting another word for that holy name. The title is then usually printed in all capital letters so that the reader knows that this substitution has been made. That is what we see here in 1 Samuel 3.) Eli used that special name of God, the name God explained to Moses in Exodus 3:14, the name that means "I AM WHO I AM." Samuel did not know this name, so when God called to him again, he actually forgot God's name and said only, (1 Samuel 3:10) "Speak, for Your servant hears." For this reason, the Book of 1 Samuel says that (3:7) "Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not been revealed to him." Surrounded by the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the priests, and the sacrifices, Samuel still was a stranger to God. In the midst of pure spiritual food, he was starving.

God had answered the prayer of Hannah and provided her with a son, as she had asked. God poured out His grace on Samuel by calling out to him, even three times. He made him a messenger of the Lord, speaking God's Word to sinners, warning them of the cost of their sins, but also providing opportunity for repentance and forgiveness.

## 4 Judgment and Grace (1 Samuel 4–6)

God's grace is always more powerful than His judgment. God's judgment is real, because He must condemn sin and punish sinners. Sin damages and destroys the good things God has made. Sin is bad for the people God loves. Sin, as rebellion against God, takes the side of death against life and takes the side of hate against love. God must speak against sin. When sinners refuse to repent, God must bring the punishment He has threatened. Yet God is patient, not wanting to judge and condemn and destroy, but wanting to rescue and restore. Therefore, at

the center of His plan is a Savior. God poured out His wrath against sin upon His Son. God allowed Jesus of Nazareth to go to the cross, to suffer and to die so that all the punishment that sinners deserve could be consumed in the obedience of Christ. Thanks be to God, God's judgment and God's grace meet at the cross. Grace triumphs, so that even the worst of sinners can be rescued, forgiven, and brought back into God's family.

God's grace is met at the cross. For that reason, every reminder of God in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is a reminder of the cross. The animals that were sacrificed to God were pictures of the death of Jesus. Even the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were reminders of Jesus, the Son of God, dwelling among God's people and bringing God's mercy into their lives. Of course, the sacrifices, the priests, the tabernacle, and the ark were more than pictures or reminders of God; they had the real power of God's presence and of His grace and mercy. Therefore, every rejection of these gifts and every distortion of these gifts was a genuine attack upon God and upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God's judgment on the sons of Eli was potent, not because their sins were worse than all other possible sins, but because their sins blocked the very stream of forgiveness that God had established for His people.

The ark of the covenant was a source of mercy for those who approached it in faith; but, for those who did not have faith in God, it was a source of judgment and destruction. When the Philistine army captured God's ark, they brought a destructive power into their cities. Their own god toppled and broke to pieces before the presence of the God of Israel. Judgment hit their cities as a plague because they were lacking faith in God. When God's ark was returned to Israel, it brought comfort and blessing. For those who knew God's promises and had faith in Him, the presence of ark was good and not destructive.

## 5 Pharisees and Philistines

Similar to Old Testament times, Christendom today is filled with powerful promises of God's presence. Cities in Europe and the Americas are dominated by beautiful church buildings. Bibles are available in nearly every bookstore. Radio, television, and the Internet all share messages about Christ. Yet in the midst of this spiritual plenty, millions are starving to death spiritually. Like Samuel, they do not know the Lord, even though His presence fills everything that surrounds them.

Among the many places identified as churches and labeled with the name of Jesus Christ, nearly every heresy rejected by the Bible and by the Early Christian Church can be found. The attitude of the Pharisees is common, focusing upon obedience to God's commands, even at the price of resisting or rejecting the guarantee of forgiveness through the promised Savior. Holy things are despised and removed, or they are allowed to remain and are ignored. Some groups bearing Christ's name have taken away the Word of God, declaring it to be nothing more than human opinions, antique and curious but not meaningful or powerful. Some groups bearing Christ's name have taken away the sacraments of the Church, changing them into acts of obedience that demonstrate our love for God rather than acts of grace that deliver God's love and forgiveness to us. Some groups bearing Christ's name have changed the church into a social club, or into a political-interest group, or into a lodge that encourages good deeds while accepting anyone, regardless of their beliefs about God and Christ. Even today, while surrounded by so many reminders, the Word of the Lord can still be rare.

The Word of God is powerful, because God is present in His Word. Yet God speaks two messages in His Word, messages that together tell a complete story, even though at times they appear to contradict each other. The Law of God reveals the reason people were made, what we were put on earth to do. That same Law shows us that we have fallen short of God's plans and deserve His punishment. We have not met the expectations of our Maker. The Gospel tells us that God loves us in spite of our flaws. He wants to rescue us and so has sent His Son to be our Savior. Through the work of Jesus, we are restored to God's original plan. The Law requires obedience, but the Gospel tells us that Jesus has fulfilled the commands for us. The Law threatens punishment, but the Gospel tells us that Jesus has taken away our guilt and has been punished in our place. In the end, we are transformed by the Gospel so we can perform the deeds of the Law; anyone who tries to please God by obeying the Law without relying on the power of the Gospel will still fall short of God's plan and will be condemned by the Law.

Those who seek power from God's Word without faith in Christ are like Philistines capturing the ark of the covenant without faith in the God of Israel. God's power will only humble and destroy those who approach Him by means of the Law. Their false confidence in their own good works will be shown to be empty as those good works crumble in the face of God's demand for perfection. The Law threatens sinners with death; only the

Gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ brings life. Even Holy Baptism and Holy Communion have no power to save unbelievers by themselves. Both sacraments become effective through the Word of God, which gives participants the benefits of forgiveness, life, and salvation. When unbelievers reject these gifts from God and fail to recognize Christ or to remember His work as Savior, even these Sacraments can, like the ark of the covenant, convey judgment and death rather than grace and life.

## Conclusion

God's people deserve wrath and judgment for the many ways we have abused and distorted His Word and His other gifts to us. In spite of our sins, God remains patient. He continues to call to the people He loves, as once He called to Samuel. The Word of God has not lost its power, even where it is distorted or ignored. The water of Holy Baptism still washes away sins, and the bread and wine of Holy Communion still convey Christ's body and blood, bringing forgiveness and life to those who eat and drink with faith in Christ's promises. Jesus is still found wherever two or three gather in His name, and He remains with His people always, even to the ends of the earth. We can know that where His Word is preached correctly and His sacraments are observed in purity, Christ is present. Where sinners fall short of perfection and purity, Christ is willing to forgive and to claim His people in spite of their sins. Though He threatens judgment against all who despise and reject His grace, He also promises grace and mercy to all who turn to Him in faith. Even that faith is His gift, given by the power of His Word. Those who trust in the Lord remain secure in all His promises, even to all eternity.

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## Concluding Activities

Speak a closing prayer, make any necessary announcements, and distribute study leaflet 2.

# Appoint for Us a King

## 1 Samuel 7–12

### *Preparing for the Session*

### Central Focus

Our attitude toward the authority of human government reflects and reveals our attitude toward the Lord of lords.

### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. understand the reasons why Samuel did not want to anoint a king over Israel;
2. understand the reasons why God chose to place a king over Israel; and
3. see the relationship in their lives between human authority and God's authority.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 51.

### For the Lecture Leader

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Service Book* or *Lutheran Worship*. (Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *The Concordia Organist*. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.) Follow with this prayer:

#### Prayer

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be King of kings and Lord of lords. Grant that we may faithfully follow His rule. As we look forward to the eternal kingdom of Your new creation, help us also to respect those who rule over us in this world, honoring

them for the sake of Your Son, our King, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

### Lecture Presentation

## 1 Introduction (1 Samuel 7–8)

Disagreements within governments and about governments are part of life in the contemporary world. In the United States, two large political parties dominate most elections, while small parties strive also for their voices to be heard. In other countries, governments are formed in Parliament by a coalition of parties when one party cannot win the majority of seats in an election. People expect a voice in their government; they vote, they write letters to their leaders, they publish messages in newspapers or on the Internet, and they gather in rallies to call attention to their political opinions. Some people speak to support those in positions of power, while others speak to replace those in positions of power with new leaders. Only rarely, though, does anyone advocate a completely different style of government. Very rarely in the history of the world have the citizens of a country had an opportunity to determine the form of government under which they would live.

During the lifetime of Samuel, the Israelites seized just such an opportunity. The people were ready for a change; they thought that their lives would be greatly improved under a different form of governance. The people met with Samuel and asked him to choose a king to rule over them. They wanted a king! This is amazing when we recall all that the Israelites had gone through over the centuries. Their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt, living under the authority of the Pharaoh, but God had set them free from slavery—from slavery under a king. At Mount Sinai, God claimed the Israelites as His people and promised to be their God, but He spoke to them through Moses and defended the authority of Moses to lead the people. When Moses died, Joshua was chosen to replace him. After Joshua died, the Lord raised up other judges to lead Israel. Now, Samuel was the last of the judges. The Israelites wanted a different form of government. They wanted to have a king.

## 2 Reasons for and against Having a King (1 Samuel 8:10–18)

When Samuel heard what the people asked, he argued against them. Samuel did not want Israel to fall under the rule of a human king; he wanted them to continue to regard the Lord as their only king. Even after God had forced Samuel's hand and told Samuel to do as the people wished, Samuel still argued with them and told them that having a king was a bad idea, that they would not be better off. However, in the end, the people got precisely what they wanted, and they even got it with God's permission. Samuel, though, very quickly came to regret the fact that the people got what they wanted. He must have been tempted more than once to say to them, "I told you so."

The people wanted a king for three reasons: First, they feared the disorder in Israel due to the lack of a central government. For generations, God would raise up judges where and when He chose, and the people often had to wait years for help against their enemies. Sometimes, the Israelites did not even recognize the judges that God had chosen and so they ignored them or resisted their leadership. Tribes of Israel at times even fought against one another, sometimes because of confusion due to the fact that they had no central authority other than God Himself. Second, Israel was prey to bad rulers because they lacked a king. This had been the case repeatedly. For instance, the son of Gideon, and the sons of Eli the high priest, and even the sons of Samuel sinned against God and against the people. When things like this happened, the people saw no authority to help them resist such evil. Third, the people of Israel wanted to be like the other nations around them. All those nations were succeeding, in the eyes of Israel, under the leadership of kings. Since the office of king seemed to work well for the neighbors, Israel also wanted to be ruled by a king—surely, they assumed, then their lives would be better.

To counter these arguments, Samuel issued several warnings about what harm a king might do to the lives of the people. First, Samuel warned, their sons and daughters would be drafted into service to the government. And not just their sons and daughters, but even their animals would be forced into government service and taken away from them. A king would reorganize the nation for the benefit of the government, and the personal rights of the people would suffer. They would lose control over their families and the things that were theirs, all for the benefit of the strong central ruler whom they requested.

A second warning of Samuel was that the king would require taxes of the people. Samuel threatened that the king would demand 10 percent of their income and the best of their property. A 10-percent tax might not seem very high by modern standards, but Samuel chose that figure to remind the people that the king would make claims equal to those made by God Himself.

Samuel's third warning was that the Israelites would become slaves to their king. A 10-percent tax and the loss of the best of the harvest, the best animals, the best servants, and even their sons and daughters, were all seen by Samuel as mere symptoms of the real problem. The real problem was that by choosing to be ruled by a king, the Israelites were surrendering their freedom. With God as their only king, they were free; but, with a human king placed over them, Samuel was convinced, the people of Israel would no longer be free.

## 3 Rules for a King (1 Samuel 8:19–22; Deuteronomy 17:14–20)

Samuel objected to the request of the people, but God told him to give the people what they asked for. Samuel's words about the dangers of a king were so harsh that the Israelites actually apologized for their request and asked to be forgiven, but God had approved of what they asked. While Moses was still alive, God had anticipated this request. In the farewell sermon of Moses, we find that God had prepared His people for the day when they would have a king. In Deuteronomy 17:14–20, God listed four requirements that the Israelites should keep in mind when they chose a king for themselves.

First, their king would actually be chosen by God—and only by God. The people were not free to choose a king for themselves. When they wanted a king, they had to accept the man God had chosen for them. They were not to accept a volunteer who offered to be their king. If they were to be ruled by a king, then they had to be ruled by a man that God had chosen to be king.

Second, their king would be a fellow Israelite. God did not permit His people to seek a king from outside the nation God had chosen to be His own people. It might have seemed reasonable to select a king from the royal family of some neighboring nation, to select a man who had been trained in the ways of royalty, but God did not permit this choice. He insisted that any king to rule over His people had to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel.

Third, the king was not to do all those things that Samuel said a king would do. He was forbidden by God to amass many horses, many wives, or much wealth. Especially, he was forbidden to turn to Egypt to acquire such things, since God had set His people free from slavery to the Egyptian rulers. The king was not to be a burden to His people, but instead was expected to be a servant to His people. Therefore, expecting the nation to support many horses, many wives, or a luxurious palace was contrary to the spirit that God required of a king.

Fourth, the king was to be guided by the Word of the Lord. Especially, he was to be guided by the Book of Deuteronomy. He was to keep that message from God close at hand, to study it often, and to be prepared to apply it to all the challenges that faced him as he ruled God's people. The words God spoke to His nation through Moses were the words that would tell a king how to rule and would guide him in all his responsibilities as he took care of the chosen people of God.

## 4 Three Kings

Saul was the first king to rule the twelve tribes of Israel. Saul was chosen by God. God communicated His choice in several ways so that Samuel and the people of Israel, as well as Saul himself, would have no doubt about God's choice. Saul was an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin. He began his career humbly, without demanding wealth from the people he ruled. He appears to have been a genuine servant to Israel and to have been guided by the Word of God, at least early in his rule.

Before he died, though, Saul had become a failure as a king. As we read the rest of the Book of 1 Samuel, we will see Saul fall short of God's plan in two important ways. Saul will begin to defy the Word of the Lord, deciding which of his enemies to destroy and which to spare, rather than obeying the commands that God gave to Saul. Also, Saul will begin to perform tasks that are not his job to do. Saul will do the work of a priest, offering animals to God before battle. That is not a trivial matter. By combining the tasks of king and priest, Saul will make of himself more than God intended for him to be. Only one person in Israel would combine the offices of priest and king, and that chosen ruler was not Saul.

Therefore, we will read about a second king over Israel in the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel. David also was chosen by God to rule the Israelites. David also was one of

God's people, from the tribe of Judah. David also was a humble king, although he did have several wives and did build a palace. Still, David did not go to the extent that foreign kings did in gathering wealth of various kinds at the expense of his people. David was guided by God's Word, though at times he strayed from that Word and disobeyed God's commands. David, in the end, can be seen to resemble the king of Deuteronomy's commands more closely than he did the king of Samuel's warnings.

In the Book of 1 Kings, we also learn about Solomon, the son of David, the last king to rule all of the twelve tribes of Israel. He was chosen by God and was an Israelite, but Solomon proved to be essentially the kind of king that Samuel threatened would take power over the people of God. He did acquire many horses, many wives, and much wealth. He did gather the wealth of the nation to himself, although much of his wealth came from foreign nations rather than from taxes on Israel. He wandered away from the commands of God, building temples to the false gods of his wives and even worshipping those gods in those temples. Solomon's sins were so serious that, after his death, God allowed civil war in Israel, splitting the tribes into two countries that spent centuries competing with each other and sometimes fighting against each other.

## 5 Another King

Samuel was right to warn the Israelites about the problems they would face under the rule of a king. After all, we can recall that God did intend for the Israelites to have a king. These earlier kings, like Saul and David, in spite of their sins and their failures, were preparing God's people to be ruled by a greater king. Such a king finally would come, a thousand years after Saul and David. He would be chosen by God and anointed by Him. He would be an Israelite, from the tribe of Judah and the family of David. He would not acquire the wealth of the world, would not gather horses or wives or money, and would not force people to serve Him. Instead, He would be a servant to the people. He would be guided by God's Word and would never stray from God's commands. He would even be what Saul tried to become—a king who would also serve as a priest for the people of Israel.

All these promises were fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of David. Though He is as human as were His forerunners, Jesus never sinned or fell short

of God's plan. The commands of God vividly describe the life that Jesus lived. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus did not fall into temptation. Instead, three times He quoted the words of Deuteronomy to the tempter, proving Himself to be the king described in that book, the king who was to be guided by the words of that book. Pontius Pilate and his soldiers would mock Jesus, calling Him King of the Jews, but Jesus truly is the King of the Jews. More than that, He is King of kings and Lord of lords, in charge of all people, and the source of authority in every nation under the sky. He is even our King who also serves as our great High Priest. For it was Christ Himself who performed for us the greatest priestly service that there ever could be. It was given to the priests to offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people and to intercede with God on their behalf. Our God fulfilled these duties to the utmost in our Lord Christ. It is He who offered Himself as the eternal, once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. And it is Jesus who prayed to the Father on our behalf on the night in which He was betrayed, and still continues to intercede for us always.

We cannot consider these three Old Testament kings without recalling that God has placed them before us to draw our attention to the greater—even infinitely greater—King whom He promised would come to us. Therefore, we can easily see that Saul, anointed by Samuel to be the first king of Israel, was a picture of Jesus, that ultimate king of Israel. Keeping this in mind will help us understand one of the repeating themes in the later part of the Book of 1 Samuel. What can jump right off the page at us—and be a little difficult for us to appreciate—is David's tremendous respect for Saul, even when Saul does not deserve that respect. David will not harm or defy the one who was anointed of God for two reasons. First, in a very practical vein, David sets an example of how he wants to be regarded when he is king. Second, in a more significant sense, David respects the authority of Saul, not only as king over Israel, but also as one anointed to represent the Christ, the future King of the Jews.

We should bear in mind that this is true not just of Saul and David, but of all kings. All kings, even bad kings, rule with authority that comes ultimately from God. All leaders, even bad leaders, rule with authority that comes ultimately from God. Even when their authority comes from a ballot box, from the consent of the people, still the fact that they have authority makes them pictures of Jesus. In a democracy, citizens are able to advise their rulers and even, on occasion, to fire and replace their

rulers. According to God's Word, though, Christians are not free to despise their rulers. The respect we show to those in authority reflects the authority we have for Jesus. When we defy, mock, or ignore our rulers, we defy, mock, and ignore our Lord.

This does not mean that we must take the bad with the good. When we are forced to make a choice, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In our form of government, we often do not need to make such a choice. We can speak against wrong laws without breaking the law. We can respect our rulers even when we disagree with them and choose to vote against them. We can honor Jesus by taking a stand for what is right, while we can also honor Jesus by honoring the authorities who rule over us. Like David, we can refuse to harm the Lord's anointed, while we put all our trust and faith in the Christ, the ultimate Anointed One of the Lord.

## Conclusion

Samuel feared that the Israelites were rejecting God by asking for a king. In a sense, they were; but in another sense, they were not. Certainly, by rejecting the organization of governance that God had already established for them, they were despising one of His bountiful gifts and asking for something that would be harmful for them, as Samuel warned them. Yet, as we have seen, there was another side to this. Without even realizing it, by asking for a king, the people were pointing forward to our Lord Jesus, the King of kings, who would come among them. They were inviting God to continue His rule over His people, just in a different way. Though they said that they wanted to be like the people around them, adopting the same form of government that the other nations had, still there would remain a significant difference between them and the other nations. Though now they were ruled by a king, God's people continued to be different because the King of all creation was promised and guaranteed to rise up from among them.

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## Concluding Activities

Speak a closing prayer, make any necessary announcements, and distribute study leaflet 3.