**The Kings of Israel**

Israel has not had a consistent ruler/leader since Moses and then Joshua. The Judges were raised to meet specific needs, unifying the tribes of Israel by bringing them back to the Lord God as well as defeating common enemies.

The judges hint that the Israelites must do three things:

a. They must have unity amongst the tribes

b. They need to establish a continuity of rule.

c. Maintain purity of faith worshipping the God of the Exodus.

Frequently practicing Polytheism – worshipping many gods, many as personifications of nature.

**The Philistines** were a “Sea People” who migrated form the Aegean and especially Crete to Canaan about 1175 B.C. The Philistines learned the uses of metal from the Hittites and eventually had a monopoly on iron, using it to form agricultural equipment and military weapons. They were a frequent problem for the Israelites especially Saul while he was king. Goliath was a Philistine.

**Samuel**

Samuel is the last of the judges. He has become old. So the time has come when the Tribes of Israel have begun to ask for a King of their own.

1. What is their reasoning? 1 Samuel 8:5
2. What did God say about the request for a king? 1 Sameul 8:7-9
3. Samuel has a long talk with the people of Israel about having a king. What can they expect?

As we begin to look forward to kings, let us look back briefly to see what kind of leadership Israel has had. It has been several hundred years since Moses and Joshua. For a moment, let us look at Moses. What were the qualities of his leadership?

**MOSES**

**Moses’ Strengths**

* 1. Exodus 2:5-10 Learned in all of the wisdom of Egypt
  2. Exodus 3:1 Herdsman in the wilderness/desert
  3. Exodus 3:2-6 He is called by God
  4. Numbers 10:29 Faithfulness to God, trusting

**Moses’ Weaknesses**

* 1. Exodus 4:1 What if they don’t believe me
  2. Exodus 4:10 He is not eloquent
  3. Exodus 4:13 Finally just asks that someone else have to it.
  4. Exodus 5:22

***A great strength of Moses was his relationship with God, intimate and honest.***

1. **For discussion:** What is your reaction to the request for a permanent leader, a king? Put yourself in the shoes of an Israelite who is sick of this cycle of dealing with the Philistines. What could have been the
   1. Pros to having a King
   2. Pros to having some version of a Unified Israel leader, meaning one leader for all twelve tribes.
   3. Cons to having a unified leader
   4. What could be the price of bringing all twelve tribes together as one country? (for comparison, think of the United States with all of the states coming together to form one country).

**Isaiah 44:6-8** (Apart from Me there is no God.) (CEV)

***6****I am the Lord All-Powerful, the first and the last, the one and only God. Israel,*

*I have rescued you!    I am your King.*

***7****Can anyone compare with me?  If so, let them speak up  and tell me now. Let them say what has happened since I made my nation long ago, and let them tell what is going to happen.*

***8****Don’t tremble with fear! Didn’t I tell you long ago?    Didn’t you hear me? I alone am God— no one else is a mighty rock.*

1. Isaiah wrote these words near the end of the exile in Babylon. They almost sound like “I told you so!”
   1. How might the people of Israel have heard these words differently if spoken in contrast to the request for a King?
   2. What is your reaction? How can these words speak to us today as examine the direction of the church, the country, our own lives?
2. **LAW and GOSPEL** The law tells us we must do this and that for a relationship with God. The Gospel is God’s love and grace. At this point in our study, reflect on where you see Law and Gospel as the Israelites request a king.

**A KING IS CHOSEN**

1. 1 Samuel 9:1-2 describes Saul.
   1. What is his ancestry?
   2. What was Saul like –
   3. Would you vote for him? Explain
2. Samuel anoints Saul in 1 Samuel 10:1 What is Samuel’s explanation for anointing him?
3. Saul is made king but God has His hand involved. What happens in 1 Samuel 10:5-6?
4. What happens to Saul in 1 Samuel 10:9?
5. Samuel is obeying God but he is in God’s court about Israel having a king. Read 1 Samuel 12:1-6.
6. Saul gets off on the wrong foot. Has “he gotten too big for his britches”? What does he do in 1 Samuel 13:7-10?
   1. Samuel has just begun and already he is in trouble. The Lord will find another to be king.
   2. 1 Samuel 14:52 ***“****Saul was at war with the Philistines for as long as he lived. Whenever he found a good warrior or a brave man, Saul made him join his army.”*

What does this tell us about living under a king?

1. **Saul continues to mess up, not making wise decisions or trusting God.** At the battle of Gilgal Saul and his army are instructed to kill everything. But they spared the king, Agag, and the best of everything good. Saul tried to explain his actions as proper when they were not. In 1 Samuel 15:24-25 Saul explains that he was afraid and disobeyed. But it was too late. God had rejected him, preparing to choose another.

Samuel dies (only to appear again in the next chapter anoint David). We’ll look more closely at David next time.

1. 1 Samuel 16:14 Reflect on what Saul became like when the Spirit of the Lord left him. (see NIV notes). Unreasonable.
2. Are there other favorite stories of Saul that come to mind for you?

**The End of Saul 1 Samuel 31**

The Philistines kill Saul’s sons, and wound Saul. Saul kills himself. It is a gruesome end as the Philistines cut off the heads of Saul and his sons and then hung their bodies on the city walls.

The men of Jabesh Gilead had not forgotten how Saul had come to their defense when they were threatened by the Ammonites in chapter 11. Although cremation was not normally used they probably cremated them to prevent any further abuse of the bodies.

Have you seen the Gospel in our look at Saul?

Where is God at work with Saul?

What is the message for us today?