

# *The* UNITED KINGDOM *of* ISRAEL

**SAUL, DAVID & SOLOMON  
FORESHADOW CHRIST THE KING**

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**WHEN YOUR DAYS ARE FULFILLED**  
and you lie down with your fathers,  
I will raise up your offspring after you,  
who shall come forth from your body,  
and I will establish his kingdom.  
He shall build a house for my name,  
and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.  
—*Second Book of Samuel 7:12–13*



# *The* UNITED KINGDOM *of* ISRAEL

## SAUL, DAVID & SOLOMON FORESHADOW CHRIST THE KING

### 1 SAMUEL 7:3–9:25

**7** [...] <sup>3</sup>Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your heart to the LORD, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” <sup>4</sup>So Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only.

<sup>5</sup>Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.”

<sup>6</sup>So they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, “We have sinned against the Lord.” And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah. <sup>7</sup>Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard of it they were afraid of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup>And the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” <sup>9</sup>So Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. <sup>10</sup>As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel.

<sup>11</sup>And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.

<sup>12</sup>Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and called its name Ebenezer, for he said, “Hitherto the LORD has helped us.” <sup>13</sup>So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. <sup>14</sup>The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel rescued their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. <sup>16</sup>And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all these places. <sup>17</sup>Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he administered justice to Israel. And he built there an altar to the LORD.

**8** <sup>1</sup>When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. <sup>2</sup>The name of his first-born son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. <sup>3</sup>Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

<sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, <sup>5</sup>and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.” <sup>6</sup>But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup>According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. <sup>9</sup>Now then, listen to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

<sup>10</sup>So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking a king from him. <sup>11</sup>He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; <sup>12</sup>and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup>He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup>He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup>He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. <sup>16</sup>He will take your menservants and maidservants, and the best of your cattle and your donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup>He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. <sup>18</sup>And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

<sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No! but we will have a king over us, <sup>20</sup>that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.” <sup>21</sup>And when Samuel heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their voice, and make them a king.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “Go every man to his city.”

**9** <sup>1</sup>There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth; <sup>2</sup>and he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the sons of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

<sup>3</sup>Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul’s father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, “Take one

of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys.”<sup>4</sup> And they passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them.

<sup>5</sup>When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, “Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us.”<sup>6</sup> But he said to him, “Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man that is held in honor; all that he says comes true. Let us go there; perhaps he can tell us about the journey on which we have set out.”<sup>7</sup> Then Saul said to his servant, “But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What have we?”<sup>8</sup> The servant answered Saul again, “Here, I have with me the fourth part of a shekel of silver, and I will give it to the man of God, to tell us our way.”<sup>9</sup> (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, “Come, let us go to the seer”; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)<sup>10</sup> And Saul said to his servant, “Well said; come, let us go.” So they went to the city where the man of God was.

<sup>11</sup>As they went up the hill to the city, they met young maidens coming out to draw water, and said to them, “Is the seer here?”<sup>12</sup> They answered, “He is; behold, he is just ahead of you. Make haste; he has come just now to the city, because the people have a sacrifice today on the high place.”<sup>13</sup> As soon as you enter the city, you will find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat; for the people will not eat till he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those eat who are invited. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately.”<sup>14</sup> So they went up to the city. As they were entering the city, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

<sup>15</sup>Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel:<sup>16</sup> “Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the affliction of my people, because their cry has come to me.”<sup>17</sup> When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, “Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall rule over my people.”<sup>18</sup> Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate, and said, “Tell me where is the house of the seer?”<sup>19</sup> Samuel answered Saul, “I am the seer; go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind.”<sup>20</sup> As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father’s house?”<sup>21</sup> Saul answered, “Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?”

<sup>22</sup>Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, who were about thirty persons.<sup>23</sup> And Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the portion I gave you, of which I said to you, ‘Put it aside.’”<sup>24</sup> So the

cook took up the leg and the upper portion and set them before Saul; and Samuel said, “See, what was kept is set before you. Eat, because it was kept for you until the hour appointed, that you might eat with the guests.”

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. <sup>25</sup> And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul upon the roof, and he lay down to sleep.



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## GOD’S PEOPLE ASK FOR A KING

Link to a free lesson video and other study materials at [www.turningtogodsword.com](http://www.turningtogodsword.com).

**T**he *First* and *Second Books of Samuel* and the first 12 chapters in the *First Book of the Kings* are historical books written with a theological purpose. They provide an account of the time a thousand years prior to Jesus when God’s people made the transition from a theocracy directly under God’s rule and protection to a monarchy headed by an earthly ruler. The king was to serve as God’s representative in political matters, and he was expected to be obedient to God.

This did not always happen, which led to development of the office of prophet as a corrective measure. The prophet prayed and interceded for the people, spoke for the LORD in counseling and admonishing the king and the people to do right, and issued warnings from God about punishment the king and people could expect when they disobeyed God’s commandments.

The kingdom ruled by Saul, David, and Solomon represents a critical time in the development of prophecy, which builds a foundation that foreshadows the coming of the Messiah. David’s genius is that he unites the political and religious aspirations of the people of God in his own person. His kingdom is an Old Testament type of the kingdom established by Jesus.

All Christians are called to share in Jesus’ roles of priest, prophet, and king. We can learn much by studying the kingship of David as a foreshadowing of the kingship of Jesus. The reigns of Saul and Solomon are significant primarily because of these rulers’ relationship to David, who is described in the *First Book of Samuel* 13:14 as a man after God’s own heart. It is well worth reflecting on what specific qualities David shares with God, and on how we can become more like God ourselves.

**1** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 7:3–17, which describes the relationship between God and his people prior to establishment of the united kingdom of Israel. What might be the most important characteristic of that relationship? Who has been threatening the descendants of Jacob? How do God’s people deal with the threat? What is unexpected about the part that Samuel plays? Consider what has been included in the job description of a judge of God’s people.

**2** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 8:1–5, in which the people ask Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them. What three concerns are prompting the people’s request? Which concern might best justify their request? How are kings usually chosen? What might be motivating the people approach Samuel to appoint a king?

### ISRAEL’S ENEMIES ARE RELATIVE

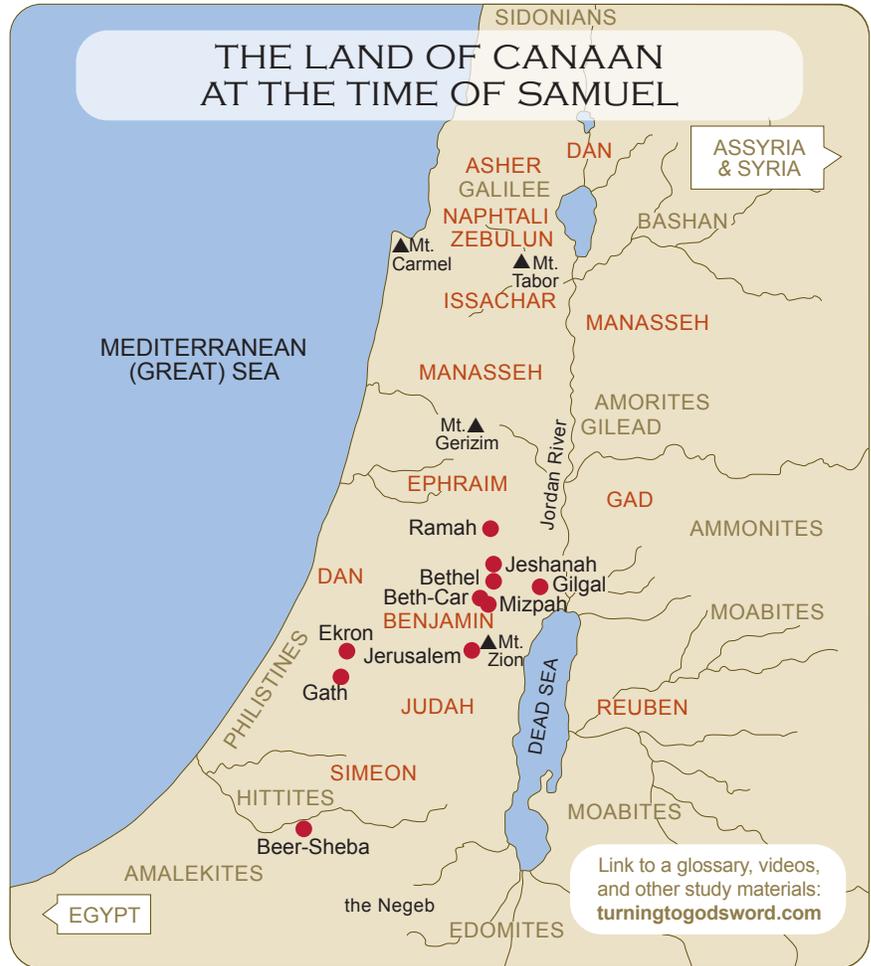
The *First Book of Samuel* 7:3–17 identifies two primary enemies of the descendants of Jacob. The Philistines and the Amorites both are descended from Noah through Ham’s sons Egypt and Canaan, respectively, as recorded in the book of *Genesis* 10:1–20.

### WHO IS SAMUEL?

Many Catholics are familiar with Samuel's call to serve the LORD, described in detail in the third chapter in the *First Book of Samuel*. The Philistines' capture and return of the ark of the covenant is recounted in the *First Book of Samuel* 4:1—7:2. The *First Book of Samuel* 7:13 records that "the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel," though Saul's later battles suggest that the depiction of Samuel as an undefeated military leader is somewhat of an exaggeration.

Samuel nevertheless holds a unique position in the salvation history of the Old Testament, serving a dual role as prophet and judge for the 12 tribes of Israel.

Although Abraham is called a prophet in the book of *Genesis* 20:7, and Moses refers to himself as a prophet in the book of *Deuteronomy* 18:15, Samuel is the first to hold the office of prophet and to advise Israel's kings. Samuel's significance lies in the role he plays in anointing the first two kings to rule over all of the descendants of Jacob, and in counseling them—particularly Saul—on behalf of the LORD.



**3** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 8:6. Why might Samuel be displeased by the people's request for a king? Consider whether his concerns are more political or more religious. Who has been governing Israel? With whom does Samuel discuss his concerns?

**4** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 8:7–9. What is implied by God twice instructing Samuel to listen to the people? If necessary, refer to paragraph 144 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. What has God determined to be the reason that the people want a king? What does this suggest about their relationship with God?

### Is•ra•el 12 tribes composed of descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob

In the *First Book of Samuel* 8:4–5, the elders of **Israel** are representative descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob (renamed Israel in the book of *Genesis* 32:28\*). These descendants are called tribes of **Israel** or sons of **Israel**. Saul, David, and Solomon are anointed to rule the united kingdom, which consists of all of **Israel's** descendants. At Solomon's death, 10 of the tribes will consolidate to form the northern kingdom of **Israel**, while two will remain under the rule of David's descendants in the southern kingdom of Judah.

\*See the **Index of Scripture Citations** beginning on page 176 for different verse numbering in the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE).

**5** Read the *First Book of Samuel 8:10–18*, in which Samuel solemnly warns the people about what to expect if they insist on having a king to rule over them. What about this warning suggests that the people are looking for a king to replace God in protecting their interests? What does Samuel predict the people will do when they realize that they have become enslaved to their king? What will be the LORD's response to their predicament at that time?

**6** Read the *First Book of Samuel 8:19–22*. What might explain why the people have asked Samuel to appoint a king for them when they are unwilling to listen to his warning from the LORD about the negative consequences of such a plan? What two things do the people expect that a king will provide for them in respect to other neighboring peoples? What does the LORD instruct Samuel to do?

**7** Read the *First Book of Samuel 9:1–10*, which introduces Saul. From which of the 12 tribes of Israel is Saul descended? For what characteristics is he praised? Why is Saul traveling the countryside? What does Saul's servant suggest that they can learn if they visit the city of a nearby man of God? What concern does Saul raise? How does the servant solve this problem? What does the biblical text disclose about the role of the man of God?

#### CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

#### WORDS OF CAUTION

The warning in the *First Book of Samuel 8:10–18* can seem irrelevant. Most of us are not concerned about the possibility that our children will be drafted to drive chariots or to work as perfumers. How then can we interpret this passage? Though God had been acting as king over his people, they decide they prefer an earthly king. The LORD's message is clear: Abandoning our trust in God in order to behave as our secular neighbors do can carry with it serious consequences.



## WHO IS TALKING & WHO IS LISTENING?

Voices are strikingly emphasized in the biblical account of events leading to the establishment of an earthly monarchy for God's people. In the *First Book of Samuel 7:8*, the sons of Israel beg Samuel to speak to the LORD in order to ward off an attack by the Philistines. Samuel does so, and God's thundering response determines a favorable outcome.

The *First Book of Samuel 8:1–3* strongly suggests that although Samuel is a man of God, his own sons have not listened to him and are engaging in corrupt behavior, reflecting the way that the rest of God's children are behaving.

The LORD listens to the people's request and encourages Samuel to do likewise, explaining that it is not Samuel who is being rejected as ruler. Samuel is instructed to issue a solemn warning about what the people can expect from an earthly king. Samuel is listening, and he does what God has asked of him. Samuel cautions the people that if they later change their mind about wanting a king, God will not respond; God will not listen.

Not surprisingly, the people refuse to listen to Samuel's warning. God instructs Samuel to listen and to provide them with the king that they desire. God continues to talk with Samuel about the choice of a king, and Samuel continues to listen.

Communication is at the heart of Samuel's relationship with God. The LORD talks, and Samuel listens—the core definition of a prophet. We know that Samuel is listening because he obeys God.

Repeated references to voices and listening in this section of the *First Book of Samuel* call attention to the much overlooked virtue of obedience. Paragraph 144 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the critical connection between listening and obedience in regard to religious faith.

The point seems to be that Samuel's close relationship with the LORD is dependent on the fact that Samuel listens when God speaks, and vice versa. The evidence is seen in Samuel's obedience. He does what God asks. This offers practical application for anyone desiring to know God better.



### A SOLEMN WARNING

In the *First Book of Samuel* 8:15–17, tied up in Samuel’s cautionary words about the dangers of following an earthly monarch is the idea that a king will require a tenth of the people’s material goods. The implication seems to be that since the king will be taking God’s place in fighting the people’s battles, the king also now will be entitled to claim the best offerings formerly reserved for God alone.

**8** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 9:11–14. As they enter the city, Saul and his servant encounter some maidens. What do the maidens tell them? Saul and his servant then meet Samuel. What is Samuel’s home city? If necessary, refer to the *First Book of Samuel* 7:17. For what purpose is Samuel going to the high place?

**9** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 9:15–19. Who has the LORD told Samuel to expect to encounter? What is suggested by the detail that God instructs Samuel to anoint a prince instead of a king to rule over God’s people? What reason does the LORD give for why he is sending Saul to Samuel? What invitation does Samuel issue to Saul? What does Samuel promise to tell Saul the next day?

**10** Read the *First Book of Samuel* 9:20–25. After Samuel tells Saul that the donkeys for which he has been searching have been found, Samuel makes a cryptic statement concerning Saul. What is Samuel implying about Saul’s future? How does Saul respond? What reason might Saul have for mentioning that as a Benjaminite he is from the least of the tribes of Israel? Consider what point the biblical author might be trying to make.

**se•er** a person with insight to look into the future

Samuel is described as a man of God, a **seer** known for being able to predict the future accurately as a result of his close relationship with the LORD. The ninth chapter in the *First Book of Samuel* equates a **seer** with a prophet, firmly establishing Samuel’s relationship with the LORD and shedding light upon his role in establishing a king for God’s people.

### A PROMISE OF KINGS

It is easy to fault God’s people for clamoring for a king to rule over them, but no one should lose sight of God’s ultimate control over all of history. The covenant promises made to Abraham in the book of *Genesis* 17:6 indicate that providing his chosen people with an earthly monarchy is not outside of God’s long-range plan: “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.”

### THE LORD REIGNS

“ Say to the nations,  
“The LORD is king.” This exhortation in *Psalms* 96:10 sets the tone that colors the whole hymn. Today we would like to make room for the Christian re-reading of this *Psalms* by the Fathers of the Church, who saw in it a prefiguration of the Incarnation and Crucifixion, a sign of the paradoxical lordship of Jesus Christ.

Thus at the beginning of his address in Constantinople on Christmas Day in 379 or 380, St. Gregory Nazianzen uses some expressions of *Psalms* 96: “Christ is born: Glorify him! Christ comes down from heaven: Go to meet him! Christ is on earth: Be exalted! Sing to the LORD, all the earth!” and, to combine the concepts, “Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad” because of him who is of heaven and then of earth.

In this way the mystery of the divine lordship is manifested in the Incarnation. Indeed, he who reigns by becoming earthly, reigns precisely in humiliation on the Cross. It is significant that many of the ancients interpreted *Psalms* 96:10 with this thought-provoking Christological integration: The Lord reigned from the tree. ”

—Pope St. John Paul II  
18 September 2002