



Going to start off this series by playing a little game...



Top 15 most-mentioned people in Scripture... Call out names...

#	Person	Primary book
1088	King David	1 Samuel
846	Moses	Exodus
375	King Saul	1 Samuel
354	Aaron the priest	Exodus
353	Jacob (Israel)	Genesis
316	Abraham	Genesis
290	King Solomon	1 Kings
240	The Apostle Paul	Acts
220	Simon Peter	Acts
206	Joshua	Joshua
202	Joseph	Genesis
146	Joab	2 Samuel
142	Samuel the prophet	1 Samuel
137	Isaac	Genesis
136	Jeremiah the prophet	Jeremiah

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Get together in groups of 3-5... list them as “good guys”... “bad guys”.... “I don’t know who they are” guys....

(after they have some time, go through each name... raise hands)

One thing you’ll notice is that it is dominated by certain sections of Scripture... Genesis... Exodus... Acts, and then the section of 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and 1 Kings: David, Saul, Solomon, Joab, and Samuel.... We’re going to be looking at the top four from this section: David, Saul, Solomon, and Joab...

You guys said David was a ‘good guy’... [what they thought about Saul, Solomon, Joab]...



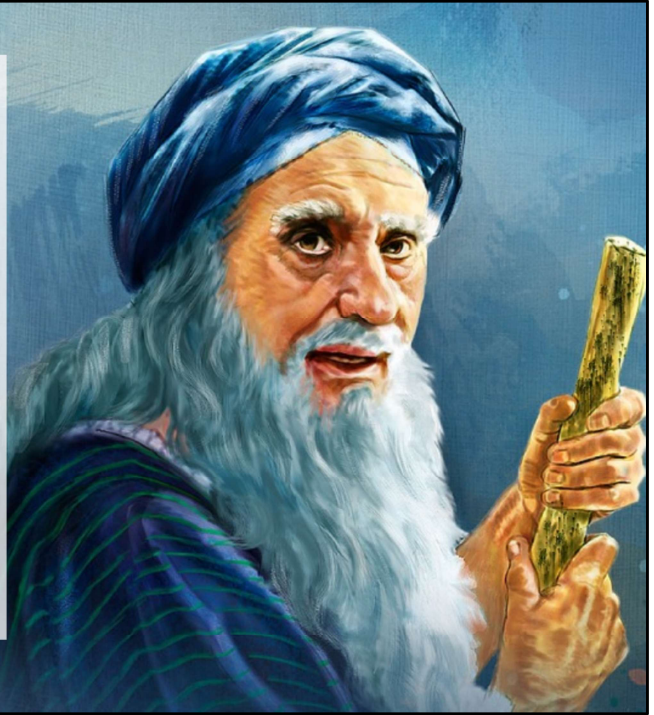
Four characters whose stories are told in great detail 1-2 Samuel and 1 Kings... all had their distinct high points, but all were poor finishers... 3 of their lives ended tragically, and one not so good.

Despite strengths, each had fatal flaws that damaged or destroyed their effectiveness as national and spiritual leaders.

If we look around in our churches right now, we might be able to recognize Sauls, Davids, Joabs, and Solomons...

Particular set of strengths come with particular set of flaws... yet God used each of these men—and he still uses people like them—as key figures in the story he was unfolding and the kingdom he was building...

The LORD said to Samuel,
“How long will you mourn
for Saul, since I have
rejected him as king over
Israel? Fill your horn with
oil and be on your way; I
am sending you to Jesse of
Bethlehem. I have chosen
one of his sons to be king.”
- 1 Samuel 16:1



At the heart of the narrative about these four men is 1 Samuel 16.

God calling Samuel to action... Samuel stuck in shattered expectations...

1 Sam. 16:1—“*read*”



King Saul, part 1: The King the People Demanded

Samuel was in mourning over Saul... had great hopes for him... trying to understand what happened...

Many of us might have the same questions...

How many of you think of Saul as a non-believer? Just an evil guy?

How many think of him as a tragic hero with fatal flaws?

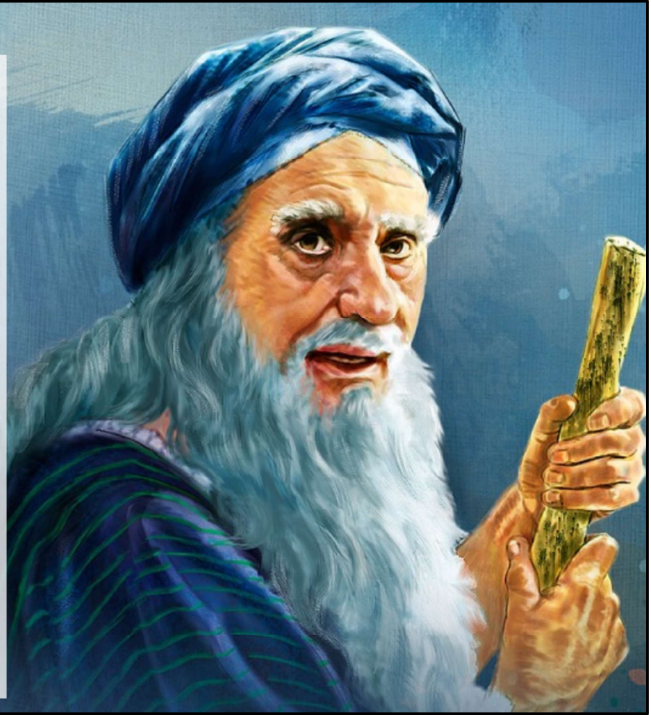
How many of you don't know what to think?

Samuel was immobilized by it all... but God gave an answer...

God's answer: selection of David, which would tell us as much about Saul's shortcomings as it did about David

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

- 1 Samuel 16:7



Samuel sent to Jesse... first son Eliab comes out...

Important, fundamental verse about the difference between our eyes and God's eyes: **1 Sam. 16.7**—*"read"*

Saul was big, but David was handsome... difference is more profound...



King Saul

Judged himself by how others judged him: by outward appearances.

“...Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

- 1 Samuel 16:7

David would be a king who judged himself as God judged him—by his heart—but Saul was chosen by man’s criteria, and he judged himself and based his actions on how other judged him: by outward appearances.

God’s rejection of Eliab parallels rejection of Saul and helps us understand the downfall of Israel’s first king.

David: name worthy of Messianic prophecy

Saul: too much like the people who demanded him.

So to understand Saul, we have to look at the people’s demand for a king and God’s choice of David after Saul failed.



Context (Philistine oppression, destroyed national shrine...)



Israel rejected the kingship of God

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

- 1 Samuel 8:4-5

Their solution: 1 Sam. 8:4-5—"read"

Sinful request... why?

- Deut. 17... David's line...
- Covenant in Joshua 24 established kingship of God... Gideon in Judges 8:23—"the Lord will rule over you."

And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.”

- 1 Samuel 8:7-18

Back to 1 Samuel 8:7-18—*“read”*

Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."

- 1 Samuel 8:10-18

Back to 1 Samuel 8:7-18—*"read"*



Israel rejected the kingship of God

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

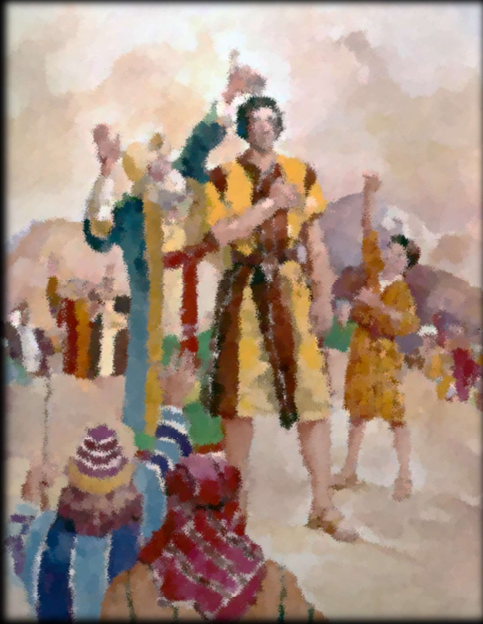
- 1 Samuel 8:19-20

Here’s where their sin is really revealed: 1 Sam 8:19-20—“*read*”

“be like all the other nations”: opposite of God’s desires!

“lead us and go out before us and fight our battles”: God had led, prepared the way, and led them to victory better than any human king could.

Their faith req’d a visible leader, a king they could see.



Violation of the Second Commandment

“No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

Their request was a violation, in spirit, of the **Second** Commandment against graven images.

Refusing to put their faith in what cannot be seen

Replaced God with what can be seen, touched, manipulated

Familiar pattern for Israel...

Moses at the mountain...

Did not want to trust God or know God but instead to follow a leader they could believe knew God for them

Familiar pattern for us...

Key question: Do we want God as our leader or not?

We'll get back to that one... Let's look at Saul



King Saul: Gifted and Charismatic Leader

There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish ... He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites – a head taller than any of the others. - 1 Samuel 8:19-20

Saul: a **charismatic** and **gifted** leader

Saul is introduced in 1 Samuel 9:1-2—“read”

All positives... glaring omissions

Matthew Henry: “As sometimes [God] crosses us in love, so other times he gratifies us in wrath.”

People wanted a visible leader with a commanding presence. God gave them exactly what they wanted.



Marks of God's favor:

- *Lowly birth*
- *Chosen by a prophet in lowly circumstance*
- *Signs of the Spirit of God*

Still, there are marks of God...

Lowly birth for a king (a Benjamite...)

Chosen in circumstances that weren't very regal (chasing a lost donkey)...
perhaps symbolic...

Samuel anoints him, gives him three signs to look for an instructions on what to do when the signs are fulfilled...



The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

- 1 Samuel 10:6-7

1 Samuel 10:6-7—“*read*”

All of the signs Samuel gave were fulfilled, but Saul went back home and told no one about what had happened. Two reactions:

Saul is humble and patient, waiting for God...

Saul does not trust the Spirit of God/needs a public ceremony—***this set a pattern...***

Samuel brought leaders together and they cast lots... Saul was hiding among the baggage.



They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.” Then the people shouted, “Long live the king!”

- 1 Samuel 10:23-24

Saul had the physical presence they wanted.

Despite his humble birth and his actions, when they brought him out, the people were excited: 1 Sam. 10:23-24—“read”

Why were they excited?

text seems to indicate it was because of his looks

Saul had the physical presence they wanted.



King Saul: Spiritually gifted to lead.

Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. But some troublemakers said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent.

- 1 Samuel 8:19-20

Saul was also **spiritually** gifted to **lead**

1 Samuel 10:26-27—*"read"*

Spirit on Saul gathered others whom God had touched to him.

Saul had the wisdom to keep silent...similar patience to David when Spirit was on him)

"Charismatic" → "charisma" → Spirit

Shown in chapter 11, when an Israelite city came under attack by the Ammonites...

Jabesh Gilead: in the north, East bank of Jordan, Manasseh's territory.

Benjamin/Gibeah in south: chance to unite



Spiritually gifted to lead.

When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they turned out as one man.

- 1 Samuel 11:6-7

1 Samuel 11:6-7—"read"
"terror of the Lord" (not Saul)
Spiritual power to unite the people

They told the messengers who had come, "Say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, 'By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be delivered.'" When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated. They said to the Ammonites, "Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever seems good to you." The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. The people then said to Samuel, "Who was it that asked, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring these men to us and we will put them to death." But Saul said, "No one shall be put to death today, for this day the LORD has rescued Israel." Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there reaffirm the kingship." So all the people went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.

- 1 Samuel 11:9-15

1 Samuel 11:9-15—"read"

So this is Saul at his best: victory in the Lord, giving glory to God for the victory, not taking personal revenge

This represents the great potential of people like Saul in the church... those who can command a room, can sing a beautiful song, takes a good picture **and** has the Spirit of God working in them.

Those with visible gifts... **what are they?**

(the ones that make people naturally follow... be attracted to them....)

These people are designed by God to be out front... need to look at Saul and see what made him be at his best...



Saul at his best:

- *Boldness in following the Spirit's leading*
- *Relying on the power of the Spirit.*
- *Serving people to please the Lord (not people)*

Boldness in following the Spirit's leading,

relying on the power of the Spirit in what he did,

-serving people to please the **Lord**, not the people...



Saul's Fatal Flaw: Showcase religion

Saul's Fatal Flaw: "showcase" religion

Began at a time when the Israelites were mustering for all-out war with the Philistines...

Philistines: losing to them for generations

People: wanted sacrifice from Samuel before battle

Began to desert... Saul made the sacrifice.

Saul believed outward act of sacrifice was more important than whether it was done according to the Lord's directives

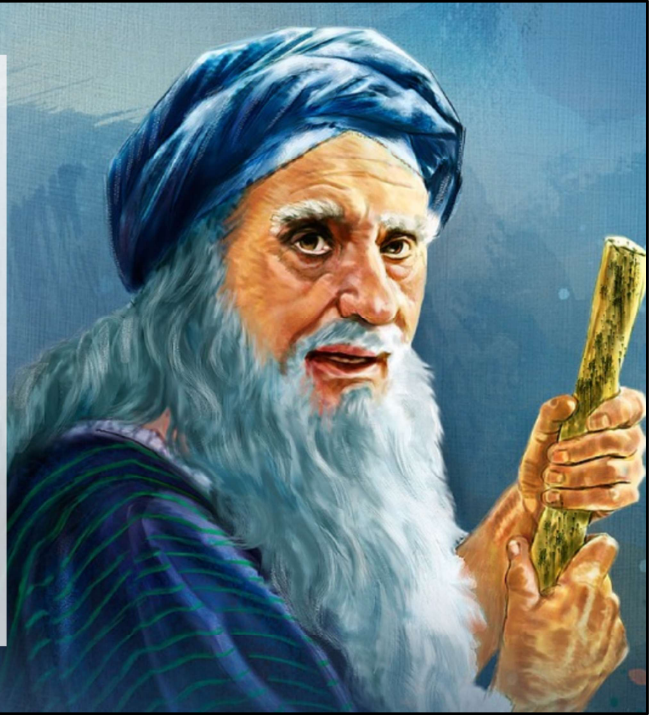
Believed he could win God's favor through disobedience

Superstitious attitude toward God—victory depended on religious things they did rather than God's purpose/power

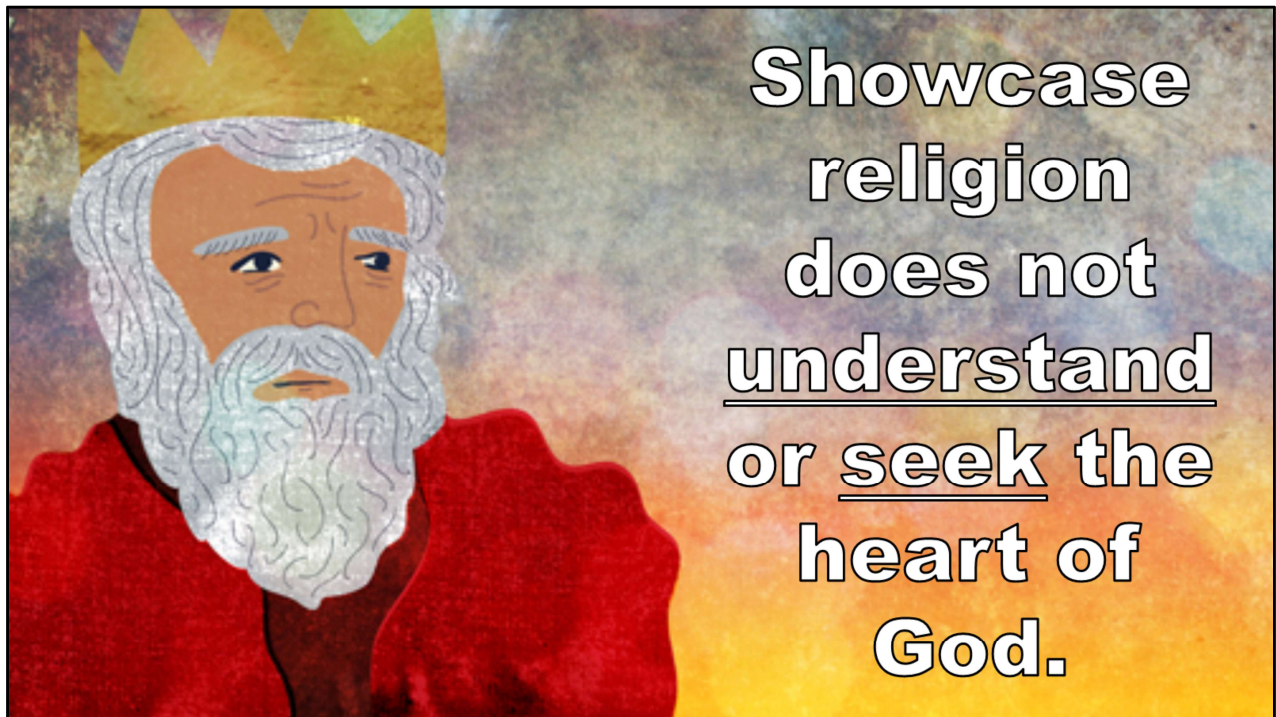
Appearance of piety, but really disobedience

“You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.”

- 1 Samuel 13:13-14



Samuel’s harsh response: 1 Samuel 13:13-14—“*read*”



Showcase religion does not understand or seek the heart of God.
You end up following your own made-up religion...

Saul valued appearance over substance... surfaced again in incident that broke Saul's fellowship with Samuel & the Spirit...

Amalekites... Agag... the command... Saul's actions



Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.’ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?”

“But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.”

- 1 Samuel 15:17-20

Response is most telling: 1 Sam. 15:17-20—“read”
Saul: “I did obey the Lord”... he had lost touch
Thought he could do it his way and still be obedient

Blamed soldiers (wanted sacrifice)...



“The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

- 1 Samuel 15:21-23

vv. 21-23—“*read*”

Saul still didn't get it, wanted outward show:



“Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”

But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!”

As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors – to one better than you. He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.”

Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.” So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.” **(1 Samuel 15:24-31)**

Saul still didn’t get it, wanted outward show: vv. 24-31



Showcase religion's audience is people, not God.

One of the last bits of instruction from Samuel → Saul: "God is not a man"...

God sees what man doesn't and his desires are not for surface-level honors than mean nothing. Saul wanted to win God's favor with sacrifices, excuses and other shows, but he would not change his heart.

Would not change to go God's direction, and God is not a man who would change to go Saul's, so Saul and God parted ways.



Brings us back to chapter 16... Samuel is grieved... “what went wrong?”... Comes down to this: Saul was too much like the people who demanded him.

Key question: “Do you want God as your leader or not?”

Saul has *uses* for God (unite the people, law of the land, answers to tough questions, strength in battle) but he didn’t know him and would rather follow his way and the whims of the people

We have our uses for God (right and wrong, feeling righteous, meaning, comfort, salvation) but do we want him as our *king*?

Saul won the approval of the men, but was rejected by God

Challenge for This Week

- Offer yourself to be led by God, rather than using Him.
- Ask God to show you ways that you are pretending to please him but are looking to please people.

Who are you trying to please? What kind of leader do you want?

This week's challenges...

Questions? Comments?