Turn with me again if you would to the book of First Samuel in the Old Testament; today to chapter 8:1-22.

We are continuing in our series on discovering Jesus in the Old Testament, and we are currently in the Book of Samuel.

We are at the end of the period in Israel's history when Judges ruled and led the people of God. And we are at the very beginning of when they transitioned to the rule of Kings.

Samuel is the pivotal person God used in that transition. He is the last of the judges of Israel, and the one God used to call and anoint the first kings of Israel.

The transition, as you might imagine, was not an easy one, and Samuel did not have an easy time of leading it. But he was “God’s man for the job,” and his story is a rich one as told here in the Book of Samuel that bears his name.

Last week we met Samuel’s amazing mother, Hannah, and we read of Samuel’s birth, and how Hannah consecrated her son to the Lord, and gave him to the Lord to be raised at the Tabernacle by Eli, the high priest.

She set him apart from the earliest age to serve the Lord all his life. And that’s what Samuel did.

Well, today we come in much later in Samuel’s life at that critical turning point when the people of Israel cry out for a king to lead them.

A king instead of a judge like Samuel has been for them. A king more like the nations around them had.

Let’s see how Samuel handles this seeming rejection of his leadership.

Read I Samuel 8:1-22.
So the people of Israel are clamoring for a king.
-And the big questions all through this chapter are:
  -what kind of a king are they clamoring for? And why?

I mean, if you read the chapters leading up to this one,
-you would see that Samuel has actually been leading the people of Israel remarkably well for many, many years.

That little boy that we saw Hannah leave with Eli the Priest at the Tabernacle in last week’s reading,
-well, he grew up to be a great judge of Israel.
-And if you’ve been with us the past few weeks, you know that the kind of judge we’re talking about here
  -is not a person in a black robe who sits in a courtroom adjudicating crimes and disputes.

The “judges” of Israel at this time were men and women,
-from various tribes of Israel, who God raised up to lead Israel in times of conflict and battle with surrounding enemies.
-They listened to God and had a prophetic function of speaking God’s word to the people of God.
-And they had a military function of following God’s battle plans and leading God’s people in battle against the surrounding enemies.

But most of the time their sphere of influence was relatively local.
-Rarely were all of the tribes of Israel unified under any one judge.
  -The 12 tribes were too spread out geographically.
  -And each tribe sort of did its own thing under its own tribal and clan leaders.

But when trouble came from invasions against the northern tribes, a judge would be raised up from one of those tribes,
-who would gather his own people to fight,
  -and would often unite some of their neighboring tribes to fight with them.
-And if trouble came from the west, a judge would be raised up from one of the tribes most affected.
  -That’s the way it worked.
However Samuel was something else indeed.
-He was a “judge” of a whole new kind of order.

First, as we saw last week, he grew up at the Tabernacle and was raised by the High Priest of Israel.
- His parents were not of the tribe of Levi, but of Ephraim.
- And so technically, Samuel was not to be a priest.

But he was raised by the High Priest, and in a rather dramatic fashion,
- Samuel was raised up by God to function as the High Priest of Israel instead of Eli, or Eli’s two rotten sons, Hophni and Phineas.

Do you remember last week how Hannah sang of the ways of God,
- and how God raises up the lowly and brings down the high and mighty.

Well, that is exactly what happened at the Tabernacle with Samuel and the house of Eli.
- God raised up the little boy Samuel, and brought down the High Priest of Israel and his haughty, sinful sons.

So Samuel became widely known throughout all of Israel because he was there at the Tabernacle,
- leading the Israelites in worship when all of the tribes of Israel would go up to Shiloh for the yearly festivals.

And Samuel also from the earliest ages began to function prophetically.
- He heard from God. God spoke to him.
- And Samuel would speak God’s word to the people.
And he would travel around Israel from town to town, and tribe to tribe speaking God’s word to God’s people.

And at various times Samuel would call for covenant renewal gatherings,
- when he would call the elders from all the tribes of Israel to come as God’s law commanded,
- and to gather to renew their covenant with God, reciting the blessings and the curses of the covenant.
And the leaders would come!
-Samuel had that kind of authority, and for the first time since the time of Moses and Joshua,
-he began to unify the people of Israel into a nation.

And amazingly enough, it was at one of these covenant renewal gatherings at a place called Mizpah,
-that the rulers of the Philistines came with their armies to attack the Israelites.
-They figured the Israeliite leaders were all gathered in one place, why not go and wipe them all out at once.

And so they attacked while the Israelites were worshipping and making their sacrifices.
-But the Bible says that the LORD thundered from heaven and threw the Philistines into such a panic,
-that they began to run away, and the Israelites rushed in pursuit and routed the Philistines that day.

And Samuel took a large stone and set in up at Mizpah and named it, “Ebenezer,” which means “Stone of Help.”
-And he put it up as a reminder of how God had been their help, and their deliverer that day.

So why is it, that in the very next chapter of the Bible, the people of Israel are clamoring for a king like the nations have?
-God had shown them in so many ways that He was their true King, that He was their true help, that He was their true leader.
-And Samuel had been God’s “right hand man.”
-He had been God’s prophet, and priest, and when need-be, the military leader of the people against their enemies.

Why do they need a king all of a sudden?
-Well, there are two reasons that the people give to Samuel when they clamor for a king.
1. First, they say, that Samuel is getting old.
   -They are not denying that he has been a great “judge” of Israel,
   -uniting them as a nation and leading them in God's ways.
But they say, “Samuel, you are getting old now, and your sons aren’t anything like you.  
-Who are we going to pass the leadership of Israel on to when you die and are gone?”

2. And then they give their second reason, “We want a king like the nations around us have.”

And later in chapter 12 we find out specifically that it was Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, who had so captivated their imaginations.

He was a king at the time who had unified the Ammonites in the east, and made them into a formidable powerhouse next door to the Israelites.

The Israelites under Samuel had gotten a taste of what it would be like to have a unified nation under one leader, -and Nahash looked to them like a great model of what they should be looking for to replace Samuel when he died.

Not just a judge, not just a priest, not just a prophet,  
-but a king!  
That’s what they wanted.  
-And that’s what they thought would ensure their security and protection and prosperity.

And we can understand that, right?  
-But God says to Samuel, “Warn the people that they need to be careful what they ask for.  
-Because the kind of a king they are clamoring for might not turn out to be as good as they were expecting.”

And God had foreseen that this day would come.  
-In our earlier reading from Deuteronomy 17, God spoke to Moses and Moses spoke to the people, and said,  
“When you enter the land the LORD is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in, you will say,  
‘Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us.’  
Be sure to appoint a king the Lord chooses from among you.  
Do not appoint a foreigner over you who is not an Israelite.
And the king must not acquire a great number of horses for himself, or take many wives, or accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. Rather he is to write out the law of God and meditate on it day and night and follow carefully all the ways of God as he rules the people justly."

You see, it's not that having a king was a lousy idea, or was against God's will, even at the time of Samuel.
- The problem was about what kind of a king the people were clamoring for.
- They wanted a king like Nahash, King of the Ammonites.
- And God was warning them just like he had warned Moses hundreds of years before.

Be careful what you ask for!
- A king like the world has will be all about himself, all about power and wealth and subjugation.
- Read Machiavelli's famous book, "The Prince."
- It's all about how to dominate and rule by force and power.
- It's quite far removed from the Sermon on the Mount and the ways of the Kingdom of God.

And God warns his people through Samuel, that such a king may bring a certain kind of power and a certain kind of security and a certain kind of "greatness,"
- but he will also bring subjugation, and taxes and slavery, and all kinds of forced labor.
- He will take your lands and your vineyards by immanent domain.
- He will take your sons and daughters for servants in his court.

Be careful what you ask for, God says.

But the people want what they want, and so God sees a teachable moment in the life of His people.

So in the coming chapters, this is what happens:
- God instructs Samuel to anoint Saul to be the first King of Israel.
- And Saul is exactly the kind of King the people were clamoring for.
He is a big strong soldierly man. He is a head taller than most every man in Israel.
-When the people see Saul, they say, “That’s just the kind of guy we were looking for.”

The only trouble is, Saul is self-absorbed, proud, but also insecure, and testy.
-He wants everyone to think he is great and is doing a great job, and is jealous when anyone else gets the limelight.
-He is disobedient to God, and does things his own way.
-He doesn’t trust in God or depend on God’s strength,
 -he is always worried about whether he has enough men in his army to fight the battles he faces.

He’s just the kind of king God had warned the people about,
 -and Saul ends his own life by falling on his own sword at the end of a battle which was a major defeat for Israel.
-It’s a bad first king of Israel.

But what it does is set the stage for the next king of Israel,
 -which would be King David.
 -As the tall and high and mighty King Saul is brought down so young David is raised up.
 -God takes the “shepherd boy” and anoints him to be king.

And David, in spite of all his faults, will be a man and a king “after God’s own heart.”
 -His story we will tell in the weeks to come.

But for today, where is Jesus in all of this, and what does it have to do with you and me?

Well, first Samuel himself is an “archetype.”
-But in his case, Samuel is not so much an archetype or prototype of Jesus, as he is of John the Baptist.
-Samuel is the last of the judges and the prophet of God who points to David and anoints him King.
-In the same way, John the Baptist would be the last of the Old Testament prophets,
 -and he would point to Jesus and baptize him, saying “This is the One to come, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”
And in this same way, Samuel’s whole life, and this whole book that is called by his name point us to Jesus in a myriad of ways.

As I said, this book shows us the
• Transition from the rule of “judges” the rule of kings.
• But it’s not just any king, but particularly King David and the “line of David” which will lead to the Christ.
• It is also under David that Jerusalem becomes the capitol city of Israel,
• And plans will be set in place for the building of the Temple, where the sacrificial system will all take place.
• It is in this book that the roles of the prophet, priest and king are established, all of which will be fulfilled in Christ.

And all of these themes make this whole book a sort of: “Prologue to the Son of David.”

David will be the true archetype of the Christ,
- and when Jesus finally comes along, many will call him the Son of David.
- They will look for him to be a king like David was.

So Samuel points us to the Christ is all of these ways.

But for us, Samuel leaves us with the same questions he asked of his own people in his day:
- What kind of leadership are you clamoring for in this world of ours?
- What kind of king, or president, or governor, or mayor, or pastor do you pray God might give us?
What defines your concept of greatness?
- The ways of God, or the ways of the world?
What freedoms are you willing to give up in order to try and get more security or safety or prosperity?

The questions Samuel asked his people are not bad questions for us to ask ourselves.
- Let’s pray.