

# WE THREE KINGS

*Snapshots from the lives of Saul, David and Solomon*

Israel Demands a King  
1 Samuel 8

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## into discussion

Encourage everyone to share a brief answer to this question... Which leader from history, apart from Jesus, most impresses or inspires you? What particular quality is it that causes you to admire them the most?

## into God's presence

For this first study we are going to combine a time of worship with a time of sharing and prayer. The actual Bible study is not a long one today so please don't be afraid to allow enough time for this part. Begin by encouraging the group to meditate upon Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 3:16-21. Play some quiet worship music in the background if you are able, and read the passage out loud slowly. Then leave a few minutes for the group to quietly re-read it and reflect on what it is that Paul is asking God to do.

Then allow anyone who feels able to share one thing in the coming week where they are particularly going to need God to strengthen them with power through his Spirit. Having done this, pray for one another using Paul's words as inspiration for your own prayers.

## into God's word

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22 and think about the following questions together:

- What difference do you imagine they thought having a king would make?
- Why did the people's request upset Samuel so much?
- What did Samuel tell the people it would cost them to have a king?
- Is it fair to say that this passage teaches us that God will sometimes give us what we ask for, even if it is not in our best interests?
- What does this passage suggest is God's attitude towards the 'perks of office' that a leader might be tempted to enjoy? You might also want to look at Deuteronomy 17:14-20, where Moses prophetically predicted most of the events of this chapter.

## into life

God places high expectations on those in positions of authority, and especially those who govern nations. Perhaps it is with those expectations in mind that Paul instructs that we should regularly pray for our government (read 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Discuss together what today's study has revealed of what those expectations are, and then spend some time praying for our government and others in authority over us.

Leave enough time at the end for everyone to share any personal prayer needs and to pray for one another.

## back-page background

Under the leadership of Joshua the children of Israel entered the promised land and made their home there. Following his death, for the next 170 years or so, Israel was ruled over by a series of Judges. It wasn't a particularly glorious period in the nation's history; over and over again we read that Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord and so He gave them over into the hands of one enemy or another. However, each time this took place we go on to read that God subsequently raised up a Judge to lead and deliver his people. Some of those Judges have become heroes of our faith: Deborah, Samson and Gideon are probably the best known of them. Yet even these were not selected for their perfect, godly lives – just take a read through the account of Samson's life for a reminder of God's gracious ability to use even the most wayward of characters! The people were rebellious, the leaders were flawed, but on paper at least Israel was still a Theocracy – God appointed a leader who was

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*The period 1250 to 800 BC. Samuel appeared on the scene shortly before our three kings; Saul, David and Solomon.*

to serve as his agent, and when he or she died it was up to God to appoint a successor. By the end of this period, faith in God had been reduced to little more than superstition. Marching out to battle against the Philistines, the people carried the ark of the covenant,

assuming that its presence would somehow call down God's favour upon them. They were mistaken, the ark was lost and the army was routed. At about this time a new and godly Judge came to the fore;

Samuel, who gives his name to the two books we will be studying for much of this series. Samuel was a prophet to whom God spoke directly (1 Samuel 3:20-21).

Despite the leadership of Samuel, and despite the eventual return of the ark of the covenant by a severely chastened Philistine people (1 Samuel 7), the people of Israel were still slow to place their full trust back in the Lord. Perhaps what they were lacking was a more powerful kind of ruler, the kind of ruler the other nations had. Perhaps what they needed was a king...