



# THE STORY Sermon Study Guide

## Week 4: The Kings - God's Rule Through Human Authority Phil Gaudion

24 August 2025

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

We all long for good leadership. Whether in our families, workplaces, or nations, we want leaders who are trustworthy, wise, and truly care for those they serve. This week we explore Israel's demand for a king and discover that whilst human leadership may disappoint, God's response reveals His incredible patience, humility, and faithfulness—qualities perfectly displayed in Jesus, our true King.

### Read 1 Samuel 8:4-22

It was a striking moment in Israel's history. God had already led his people out of Egypt with miraculous power, parted the Red Sea, and brought them through the wilderness into the promised land. Along the way, he'd raised up judges and prophets to guide them and to help them live in community with Him at the centre. But now, just a couple of hundred years later, the people wanted something different: "Give us a king, like all the other nations have."

They wanted a visible king—a leader they could point to and rally behind. God warned them through Samuel that this choice would come at a cost. Kings would demand taxes, claim land, send their sons to fight wars, and take their daughters into service. But the people insisted. So God allowed it.

From there unfolded centuries of monarchy—forty-three rulers in all—and even the best of them fell short.

**Saul**, Israel's first king, began with humility but quickly fell into pride. He disobeyed God, making sacrifices on his own terms, and became self-absorbed. His reign set the pattern: human kings, however promising, always came with flaws.



**David** followed. Many know David as the shepherd boy who defeated Goliath, the poet who wrote psalms, and the man “after God’s own heart”. David loved God deeply, and he modelled worship for the nation, calling people to sing, repent, and seek God’s presence. But even David fell. His adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent choices showed that even the best human leaders are not immune to sin.

**Solomon** came next. The king who famously asked God for wisdom instead of wealth. For a while, he embodied that wisdom, building the temple and establishing peace. Yet later in life, he married foreign wives who led his heart astray toward idols. His reign unravelled in compromise.

We love the idea of a strong leader who will fix everything. The Israelites wanted a king they could see, touch, and follow into battle. And if we’re honest, aren’t we often the same? We put our hopes in politicians, CEOs, influencers, and cultural heroes. But history tells a sobering story. There is no human authority that can bear the weight of our ultimate hopes and expectations.

1. Think about leaders in your life (political, business, church, or personal). Who is someone you admire as a leader, and why? Where have you experienced disappointment with a leader and how did you navigate it?
2. Who or what are you tempted to look to as your “king”—a person or system you hope will fix everything for you?

## Read 2 Peter 3:9

Despite Israel’s rejection of his leadership, God didn’t abandon them. He allowed them to have kings, but he continued to work patiently, guiding history toward his ultimate redemptive plan.

Phil reflected on the sheer scale of God’s patience and faithfulness. The closest human comparison he could think of was the love of his wife—thirty years of putting up with his flaws, day in and day out. Then he thought of his parents’ marriage, approaching sixty years. That kind of long-term commitment gives a glimpse of faithfulness, but even that pales compared to God’s.

Imagine multiplying the patience and humility of the kindest person you know across millions of people, across a whole country, across the entire globe. Then stretch it across not just years, but millennia. That’s the kind of faithfulness God demonstrates. His patience is bigger than we can imagine. His desire is that more people come to know His love, but the choice is ours.



God gave humanity free will because love cannot be forced. He doesn't want robots. He wants people who choose him freely. And so, he allows us to decide whether to keep running after our own kings or to turn back to him.

1. Why do you think God values free will so highly, even if it leads us to poor choices?
2. When you think about God's patience in your life, where have you seen him stick with you even when you wandered?
3. The word "repentance" can feel heavy, but it simply means "changing our minds"—deciding to go God's way instead of our own way. Where might God be inviting you to change your mind about something today?

## Read John 13:1-17

Israel longed for a visible king, and in time God sent one—but not the kind they expected. The invisible Father sent his visible Son, Jesus.

The perfect example of patience, humility, and faithfulness, Jesus embodied everything the kings of Israel failed to be. He commanded the wind and waves yet washed His disciples' feet. He had all authority yet chose a donkey over a warhorse. He could call down angels but instead went to a cross.

The image of Jesus washing the disciples' feet captures the essence of His kingship. Peter's resistance—"You can't wash my feet!"—reflects our discomfort with a king who serves. But Jesus insists: "Unless I wash your feet, you can have no part with me." This king comes close, serves humbly, and calls us to do the same.

1. Like Peter, do you sometimes resist letting Jesus get too close or serve you too personally?
2. What might it look like for you to "wash the feet" of someone in your life this week?

## Optional Activity

- **Pray:** Take a few minutes to pray for those who lead us (e.g. pastors, teachers, local council, national leaders, workplace managers). Ask God to guide them with wisdom, humility, compassion, and courage. You may also like to encourage each person to pray for one leader during the coming week.
- **Serve:** Brainstorm one way your group could serve together—something practical and humble that reflects Jesus' heart.



## Suggested Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the King of Kings. Thank you for showing us what true leadership looks like—humble, patient and faithful. Help us to receive your love, to trust your grace, and to follow your example in humility. Teach us to wash the feet of others and show us how to love. In your name, Amen.

## Bible Reading Plan & Resources

As we engage in this sermon series and reflect on ‘The Story’ of God’s redemptive pursuit of humanity, we invite you to practise the discipline of regular Bible reading. You may like to use the [NewHope Bible Reading Plan](#) which has been developed to accompany each sermon over the next 12-weeks. Get a physical copy at church, download a digital copy from our website or follow NewHope in the Bible App for daily updates.

There are also many other wonderful ways to engage with Scripture and you can find a collection of resources, such as books, apps, courses, and more at [newhope.net.au/the-story](http://newhope.net.au/the-story).