

# 1 Samuel 08 - Israel Demands a King; Samuel Warns About the Consequences of a King

III. Samuel and Saul narrative (8:1—15:35)

(1) Israel requests a King (8:1-22)

(A) Israel rejects Samuel's sons as rulers (8:1-5)

(B) Israel rejects God as King (8:6-9)

(C) Samuel warns Israel of the consequences of having a king (8:10-18)

(D) God grants Israel's request (8:19-22)

## 1 Samuel 8

III. Samuel and Saul narrative (8:1—15:35)

(1) Israel requests a King (8:1-22)

(A) Israel rejects Samuel's sons as rulers (8:1-5)

1 Now it came about, when Samuel was old, that he appointed his sons as judges over Israel.

1 And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

1 When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

- This was a poor decision by Samuel

2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judging in Beersheba.

2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judging in Beersheba.

2 The name of his firstborn son was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah. They were judges in Beer-sheba.

2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.

3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest gain, and they took bribes and perverted justice.

3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

3 His sons did not follow Samuel's example. Instead, they pursued dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

- Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, who had been serving as judges at Beersheba in Judah, no doubt reminded Israel of the sons of Eli (2:12,22)

— They were dishonest judges, accepting bribes and perverting, rather than upholding, justice. It is sad to see that Samuel's sons did not follow in their father's godly walk (8:5).

— Parental influence is important, but personal choices are even more determinative in the outcome of one's life

— Note that Eli is censured for his poor parenting (2:27-36; 3:11-14), but Samuel was not, evidence that Samuel was not responsible for the conduct of his sons

— Perhaps he was too busy with the affairs of the nation to train them. Eli had made a similar mistake.

- These events show us the importance of a godly home. The nation fell into sin and defeat because Eli had neglected his home; but God saved the nation because of the prayers of a godly mother (Hannah) and her God-given son. As go the homes, so goes the nation.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;

4 All the elders of Israel gathered together, and came to Samuel at Ramah.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

- The people were probably afraid that they might return to the wicked days the nation had known before Samuel had been raised up by the Lord

5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations."

5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

5 They told him, "Look, you're old, and your sons don't follow your example. So appoint a king to govern us like all the other nations."

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

- Shortly before 1051 BC, the year Saul became king (when Samuel was 65-70 years old), the people of Israel, aware of Samuel's advanced age and of the wickedness of his sons,

demanded that Samuel select a king to rule over them

— Every generation needs leaders who honor God and follow His Word. The elders rightly saw that Samuel's sons could only harm Israel, and presented their concerns honestly to Samuel.

— God made provisions for kings to rule His people in the Mosaic Law (Deut 17:14-20; Cf. Gen 1:26-28; 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10). It was not the request that displeased Samuel and God, but the reason the people wanted a king:

(1) It expressed dissatisfaction with God's present method of providing leadership through judges

(2) The request verbalized their desire to be "like all the nations" (v5)

— Confusion, corruption, loss and tragedy come whenever we turn from God and His way to conform to the world

— God's purpose for Israel was that it be different from the nations, superior to them, and a lesson for them (Ex 19:5-6). God saw their request as one more instance of apostasy that had marked the Israelites since the Exodus (Cf. Num 14:11).

- He granted their request, as He had done many times before (by providing manna, quail and water in the wilderness); however, He mixed in judgment with His grace

— Jehovah God had been King of Israel and had cared for the nation since its beginning, but now the elders of the nation wanted a king to lead them

— Israel pressed their leaders to appoint a king at least twice before: during Gideon's judgeship (Judges 8:22) and during Abimelech's conspiracy (Judges 9:2)

- The nation's "prayer" was for a king to rule them, like other nations; however, sometimes answered prayer is God's judgment, and God's mercy may withhold what we ask for.

God had such a king in mind, one who would be raised up and identified in His own good time (Deut 17:14-15; predicted from the line of David in the closing chapter of Ruth!); but that time had not yet come. Samuel, of course, was grieved that they should seek a king, for God, who had redeemed them from Egypt to be His people, was their King. ***The institution of the monarchy included the separation of the civil leadership from the religious leadership. And this in turn meant that Israel now began to have a political history independent of her religious history, and therefore, of her true calling.***

(B) Israel rejects God as King (8:6-9)

6 But the matter was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

6 Samuel was displeased when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

- Samuel's reaction to their request shows that he fully understood their unbelief and rebellion: they were rejecting Jehovah

Hosea 13:11: I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath.

The greatest judgment God can give us is to let us have our own way... (Cf. Ps 106:15)

7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

7 The LORD told Samuel, "Listen to the people in all that they say to you. In fact, it's not you they have rejected, but rather they have rejected me from being their king.

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have abandoned Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you as well.

8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.

8 Like all the things they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this very day, they have forsaken me and followed other gods. They're also doing the same thing to you.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall warn them strongly and tell them of the practice of the king who will reign over them."

9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them."

9 Now, listen to them, but you are to clearly warn them and inform them about how the king who rules over them will operate."

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

- The request for a human king was not in itself improper, but the refusal to wait for God's timing was clearly displeasing to the Lord and to His prophet

- In the face of impending conflict with the Ammonites (see 12:12-13) the people wanted a king "such as all the other nations have" (8:5)

— Even after witnessing the leadership of the Lord in stunning victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer, Israel demanded a fallible, human leader

God purposed to bless all other nations through His theocratic reign over Israel. This was a rule that God chose to administer mediatorially, through divinely chosen individuals who spoke and acted for God in governing functions and who were personally responsible to Him for what they did. These vice-regents were people like Moses, Joshua, the judges (including Samuel), and the kings, but God remained the real Sovereign down to the end of this kingdom in history (1 Chr 29:25). The Shekinah cloud visibly represented God's presence as the divine ruler. This glorious cloud entered and filled the tabernacle at the inception of the kingdom (Ex 40:34-38). It led the nation into the Promised Land and stood over Solomon's temple (2 Chr 7:1-2). Finally it departed from Jerusalem spectacularly as the kingdom ended, temporarily, at the Babylonian Captivity, when governmental sovereignty passed from Israel to the Gentiles (Ezek 11:23; Dan 2:31-38). God will restore this mediatorial kingdom to Israel when Jesus Christ returns to earth in power and great glory. Christ will then (at His second coming) serve as God's vice-regent and reign over all the nations as the perfect mediatorial king (Micah 4:1-8).

(C) Samuel warns Israel of the consequences of having a king (8:10-18)

**10** So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked him for a king.

**10** So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king.

**10** Samuel reported everything the LORD told him to the people who were asking him for a king.

**10** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

- Here is an illustration of God's permissive will: He granted them their request, but He warned them of the cost

— In the following verses, God could not be more clear on the dangers of instituting a monarchy outside of God, but Israel was stubborn

The enemy tells us that rejecting God's rule in our life leads to freedom, however rejection of God's rule over our life always brings bondage.

11 And he said, "This will be the practice of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and put *them* in his chariots for himself and among his horsemen, and they will run before his chariots.

11 He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.

11 He said, "This is how the king who rules over you will operate: He will conscript your sons and assign them to his chariots. He will conscript them as his horsemen, and they'll run in front of his chariots.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

- The people were interested in the functions of monarchy, but Samuel pointed out the nature of monarchy: the loss of freedoms and possessions that the people presently enjoyed

12 He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to gather in his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

12 He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

12 He will appoint his officers over thousands and officers over fifties—some will plow his fields, reap his harvest, and craft his war implements and equipment for his chariots.

12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 He will also take your daughters *and use them* as perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

13 He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers.

13 He will take your daughters for perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

14 He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants.

14 He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give *them* to his servants.

14 He will take the best products of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves and give them to his servants.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take a tenth of your seed and your vineyards and give *it* to his high officials and his servants.

15 He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants.

15 He will take a tenth of your seed and your vineyards and give it to his officers and servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

- This is the only reference in the OT to the exacting of tithes by the king

16 He will also take your male servants and your female servants, and your best young men, and your donkeys, and use *them* for his work.

16 He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work.

16 He will take your male and female servants, your best young men, and your donkeys to do his work.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.

17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.

17 He will take a tenth of your flock, and you will become his servants.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 Then you will cry out on that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you on that day."

18 Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

18 When all of this comes about, you will cry out because of your king whom you chose for yourselves, but the LORD won't answer you at that time."

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

- The people would regret their decision to request a king, but at that time, the Lord would not hear their pleas. He would not remove the consequences of their choice.

- Their king could have been a great joy to them, instead of a great disappointment, if the people had waited for God to inaugurate the monarchy

— It is clear later in Samuel, as well as in Kings and Chronicles, that David was God's choice to lead the Israelites from the beginning

— If the people had been patient and trusting in the Lord, David would have been their first king

Note Moses' prophecy of this event:

Deut 17:14–20:

14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Samuel told the people God would give them what they wanted, but the king would be a despot, a demanding dictator who would enrich himself at the people's expense. He would press them into his military and domestic enterprises (v11-13,16-17). He would appropriate

their properties to his own use (v14,16), and would inflict heavy taxes on them (v15,17). And when all this happened it would be too late to complain, for the people would have reaped the consequences of their own fleshly desires (v18).

Shortly after Saul ascended the throne, many of these predictions came to pass (14:52) and continued to mark the long history of the monarchy in both Israel and Judah (2 Sam 15:1; 1 Kings 12:12-15; 21:7).

(D) God grants Israel's request (8:19-22)

**19** Yet the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us,

**19** Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us,

**19** The people refused to listen to Samuel. Instead, they insisted, "No! Let a king rule over us instead!

**19** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

- Their idea of a royal leader in battle closed their minds to every one of Samuel's (God's) warnings

— Discontentment or immaturity underlies the desire to "be like everyone else"

20 so that we also may be like all the nations, and our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

20 that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

20 We, too, will be like all the nations! Our king will govern us and go out before us to fight our battles."

20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

- Their request was motivated by several factors:

(1) Samuel's sons were not godly and the elders feared that they would lead the nation astray when Samuel died

(2) The nation had been through a series of temporary leaders during the period of the Judges, and the elders wanted a more permanent ruler

(3) Israel wanted to be like the other nations and have a king to honor

- The powerful nations around Israel were a constant threat, and the elders felt that a king would give them greater security

21 Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD'S hearing.

21 Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD's hearing.

21 So Samuel listened to all the words of the people, and he repeated them directly to the LORD.

**21** And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and appoint a king for them." So Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go, every man to his city."

22 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and appoint them a king." So Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

22 The LORD told Samuel, "Listen to them, and appoint a king for them." Then Samuel told the men of Israel, "Each of you go to his own town."

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.