

1st Samuel 8:1-22
Israel Rejects God and Demands a King

Introduction

1. As we come to our passage today, we've been reminded of a number of theological themes:
 - a. The Lord saves
 - b. He opposes the proud, but exalts the humble
 - c. He protects His people, but destroys those who oppose Him
2. We've seen these themes played out in the first seven chapters of the book:
 - a. We've see how the Lord blessed Hannah and Samuel, His humble servants
 - b. We've seen Him oppose Eli, his wicked sons, the Philistines, and even the wicked priests who profaned the Ark of the Covenant
 - c. We've even seen His favor return to Israel after they confessed their sins by providing them with not just victory over the Philistines but lasting peace through the judgeship of Samuel
3. This brings us to the striking events of chapter 8, where Israel once again forgets all this and rejects God once again.

A. The elders of Israel demand a king (1-5)

1. Samuel was "**old**" (about 60) and had appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, to serve as judges over Israel
2. However, his sons had become corrupt: "**His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.**" (3):
 - a. The Law gave specific rules for judges (Deuteronomy 16:18-20): "**You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19 "You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 20 "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you."**"
 - 1) They were supposed to judge with "**righteous judgment**"
 - 2) They were not to "**distort justice**"
 - 3) They were not to be "**partial**"
 - 4) They were not to "**take a bribe**"
 - 5) They were to pursue "**justice, and only justice**"
 - b. Samuel's sons were guilty on all accounts!
3. The leaders of Israel take advantage of these two things—Samuel's age and the corruption of his sons—to demand a change in the way they were governed (4-5): "**Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 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."**"

- a. In some respects, this demand was made under false pretenses (in this case, giving one reason for something when there is another, hidden motive or reason behind it)
- b. It's reasonable, even righteous, to demand new leadership when the existing one is corrupt
- c. So, you can't blame the leaders here for complaining about Samuel's two sons
- d. However, there was something else—a more sinister motive—in approaching Samuel
- e. They wanted a change in the WAY they were governed.
- f. The Law spelled out that Israel was to be governed ultimately by God through elders (as read above), but the leaders rejected that and now wanted a human king who would judge them **"like all the nations"** around them
- g. This last phrase reveals their real motives—they wanted to be like every other nation who had a king who could protect them from their enemies (this is clear at the end of our passage)

NOTE: They had been at peace for decades, but it appears the Amorite king, Nahash, was on the rise and may have been threatening them. This may have precipitated their call for a king

B. God agrees to give them what they want (6-9)

- 1. Samuel is distressed by their request so he brings it 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."**
 - a. Samuel was likely distressed because he understood the serious nature of what they were demanding (the CSB renders this verse very loosely as **"Samuel considered their demand sinful"**)
 - b. It's also possible that he took it personally as a rejection of his leadership (as indicated by God's words below)
- 2. We learn, however, that their call for a king was ultimately a rejection of God (7-8):
 - a. The Lord tells Samuel to heed their request and that they were not rejecting him, but ultimately God and His reign 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."**
 - b. We get a deeper understanding of this offense in 1 Samuel 10:17-19 (READ):
 - 1) God had rescued them from Egypt
 - 2) He had protected them in the wilderness
 - 3) He delivered them from all their enemies when they came into the Promise Land
 - 4) He was the one who delivers them from all their calamities and distress
 - 5) Yet, they were rejecting Him for a human king
 - c. God reminded Samuel that this was a pattern for Israel throughout their history (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."**
 - 1) It had been this way since God rescued them from Egypt
 - 2) They continually forsook Him for other Gods
 - 3) And, they were doing it again

- 4) By the way, this wasn't the first time they demanded a king—they tried to get Gideon to become their king but he rejected their calls knowing that God was ultimately to be their king (READ Judges 8:22-23)
- d. Even so, God directs Samuel to heed their request, but to warn them of the consequences first (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."**

C. Samuel warns the leaders of the consequences of their demand (10-18)—he mentions two

1. The first consequence was that the king would take, and take and take from them (11-17a)
 - a. The word **"take"** is used six times in this passage:
 - 1) He would take their sons (11-12): **"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. 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."**
 - a) For military service
 - b) For working in his fields
 - 2) He would take their daughters to perform his domestic duties within his kingdom (13): **"He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers."**
 - 3) He would take the best of their farm land for his own gain (14): **"He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants."**
 - 4) He would take a tenth of their crops to feed his army and servants (15): **"He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants."**
 - 5) He would take their servants and donkeys to work for Him (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."**
 - 6) He would take a tenth of their flocks (17a): **"He will take a tenth of your flocks, "**
 - b. They would ultimately become the king's servants (17b): **"and you yourselves will become his servants."**
2. The second consequence is related: as a result of this, they would cry out to the Lord for relief but He would not answer them (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."**

D. The leaders reject Samuel's warning and harden their resolve (19-22)

1. When they heard Samuel's warning, they hardened their hearts and refused to listen (19): **"Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel"—**in reality, they were refusing to listen to the LORD
2. They hardened their resolve (20): **"No, but there shall be a king over us, 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."**
3. Once again, Samuel takes his concerns to the LORD (21): **" Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD'S hearing"**

4. And again, the LORD relents and commands Samuel to give the people what they want, a king (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."**

Conclusion

A number of things stand out in the text today:

1. The leaders of Israel rejected God and settled for a human solution even though God had demonstrated over, and over, and over again His faithfulness, loyalty and ability to protect and deliver them from their enemies—do we ever fail to trust Him when faced with challenges, even though He has more than proven Himself to us?
2. In opposition to God's Word, and even when warned by a GODLY PROPHET AND JUDGE, Israel stiffened their resolve for a king—do we ever want something so bad that we reject God's Word and the counsel of other Godly believers?
3. We see a contrast between Samuel and Israel in this:
 - a. When Israel was faced with a challenge (their enemies), they reject God's Word and counsel for a human solution
 - b. When Samuel was faced with a challenge twice he seeks God's word and counsel
 - c. Who are we more like?
4. Lastly, this passage reflects the awesome long-suffering and patience of God:
 - a. God has demonstrated over and over again that He is a God who saves, most dramatically by sending His own Son as an atoning sacrifice for sin
 - b. He has provided ample proof of Who He is, His love for mankind, and the Gospel
 - c. Yet, man continually rejects Him and seeks satisfaction in this life and salvation in the next life through their own means
 - d. Yet, God is long-suffering and patient: see 2 Peter 3:1-10
 - e. Even after we are saved, He is long-suffering and patient with us when we sin