

Give us a King! 1 Samuel 8

INTRODUCTION

Here's a truth to ponder: When we encounter adversity, we have an opportunity to figure out what we ultimately trust in. In 1 Samuel 8, we see the elders seek comfort in clarity and a solution, while Samuel immediately seeks God for guidance.

In chapter 7 the nation of Israel finally reached a point of brokenness. There was a confession of sin. There was repentance, and there was genuine revival, which ended in God giving them a great victory, which then led to peace and prosperity in the land. Literally, it is the first time this generation had ever experienced that in the land. If you look at the way chapter 7 ends, it's the typical formula for the ending of a judge's cycle. If you go back to the book of Judges, it's the story of many judges. At the end of each judge cycle, that's how it ends. It indicates that, even though Samuel continues to be in the story, the period of the judges officially ends at the end of chapter 7.

Starting in chapter 8, we technically start a new season, which is the beginning of the monarchy, which will take us to the story of Saul and into the story of David.

In fact, we could outline 1 Samuel this way:

- **Samuel: the leader God provided (1 Sam 1-7)**
- **Saul: the leader the people asked for (1 Sam 8-15)**
- **David: the "leader according to God's own heart" (1 Sam 16-31)**

1 Samuel 8 is a remarkable chapter, because Israel asks for something against God's will, and God actually says yes! That's a scary thought, and one we need to take to heart as we examine our petitions before God.

I. A king is _____ (8:1-5)

Samuel was one of the great leaders of the Bible, who **"judged Israel all the days of his life"** (1 Sam. 7:15). He played a historically pivotal role in the nation's transition from a tribal confederation to a monarchy. The years after his great victory over the Philistines saw a return to peace, prosperity, and national vigor. **But there was one problem with Samuel. Being a man, he was mortal.** Chapter 8 thus begins with this troubling reality: **"Samuel became old"** (1 Sam. 8:1).

Adding to the problem of Samuel's age is the realization that his succession plan failed miserably.

Samuel attempted a possible solution to the difficulties of his old age and the approaching crisis of his own demise. It was a bold decision: **"... he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba"** (vv. 1b, 2).

The old leader sharing his responsibilities with his two sons adds to the impression that this is a situation we have seen before. Old Eli's two sons shared the responsibilities of the priesthood with their father at Shiloh.

However, there was a difference. The priestly office in Israel had always been hereditary in some sense. There is no surprise in Eli's sons functioning as priests. The priesthood was passed on through the descendants of Aaron (see 1 Samuel 2:30). **However, the role of judge in Israel was not hereditary.**

The problem that brings up this conversation is that Samuel is old, which is going to happen. But his sons have now been put into positions of leadership to be the heir apparent to the leadership roles. **They do not walk in Samuel's ways. They do not follow after God.** They are abusing and using and corrupting the people.

II. The _____ from Samuel and the LORD (8:6-9)

There's no question that Samuel takes this personally. They have rejected Samuel. So, God comes along and says to Samuel, ***“Samuel, they haven't rejected You. They have rejected Me as king.”*** He goes on to say, ***“This has been the pattern of My people since the time they left Egypt. The pattern, the default mode, has not been to be faithful.”***

God is saying that the consistent pattern of the people of God has not been primarily faithfulness with a little bit of rebellion. He's saying that the pattern has been primarily rebellion with seasons of faithfulness.

III. The _____ of having a king (8:10-18)

The way this text reads is very dramatic in the original language. In the original language, what's going to be lost is always at the front of the sentence (we would say “the emphatic”, the emphasized part of the sentence) followed by the line, He will take. So, it basically reads like this: ***Your sons...he will take. Your daughters...he will take. Your servants...he will take. The best of your land...he will take. Your crops...he will take. Everything you have...he will take. You, yourself...he will take.*** It's very dramatic to the people where they will finally reach a point where they will cry out to God for mercy because life under their king has become unbearable. And God says, ***“In that moment I will remind you—this is what you said you wanted, and this is what you got.”***

This is talking about what happens when God is King, when God and His ways and His values are moved to the sideline and the ways of the world come in and rule the day. This isn't just about something that happened three thousand years ago. This is what's happened to every nation of the world throughout history when God—God's values, God's morality, God's influence—gets pushed aside and we set ourselves up as our own gods, whether that's a king, whether that's a dictator, whether that's a democracy.

IV. The Israelites get what they _____ at the expense of not keeping what they _____ (8:19-22)

In answer to Samuel's prayer, God once again instructs him to give the people what they demand. And so, not knowing who this king will be, Samuel sends the Israelites to their homes until the time when God will indicate the identity of their new king (verse 22).

God will discipline them by giving them what they wanted, a monarchy. A monarchy they would come to bitterly regret. Something very sad happened in Israel that day. Israel was throwing herself back into bondage, a bondage that God had so mightily delivered them of in the Exodus.

The monarchy will last 500 years and then end in failure. When Israel faces its greatest threat, the Babylonians, the king is powerless to do anything to save his people. Following the exile, there was no king. Israel has never had a king since.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? Here are a few truths to ponder:

- **Our reflexive reaction to problems _____ the truth about who we are.**
- **We will reap the _____ of trying to have both the _____ of following Jesus and the _____ of those who do not follow Him.**
- **The _____ people are not the ones who have _____ to eat but the ones who have _____ themselves with what they thought would _____ only to realize that they are still _____.**
- **We can be _____ that God's purposes in the world will never be frustrated even by the sins and the rebellion of sinful humanity, even the sins of His own people.**
- **We can rejoice in knowing that when God _____ us that ultimately all things work together for our good and His glory, He _____ it!**