

**People of the Promise:
Samuel, Part 3: Demand for a King
1 Samuel 8, 12**

Introduction

1. Disappointing Leadership

1 Samuel 8:1-3

¹ When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

Unlike the case of Eli, in which God held Eli accountable for failing to remove his blasphemous, wicked sons from their priestly office, we have no record of God's charging Samuel with neglect or wrongdoing regarding his sons.

Sometimes we think that if a parent is godly and does all he or she should do that the children will without fail turn out to be godly too. Biblical history teaches us otherwise. Good parents can have wayward children, good parents can have good children.

Nor is it the case that if the parents are evil the children have no hope of being godly. Bad parents have good children as well as bad.

Every combination is possible. We each answer for our own behavior. Most parents who have godly children freely confess that it is by God's grace that they do. They have made plenty of mistakes.

But this text is less about parenting than about the reality that human leadership is finite and often disappointing. Samuel is a great man, serving God faithfully from his childhood throughout his life. But Samuel has grown old, and Samuel will eventually die. All human beings do. *Do not put your ultimate faith even in good human leaders. They are flawed, and they are mortal.*

2. Disloyal Desire (1 Samuel 8:4-9)

1 Samuel 8:4-9

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not

rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

The request for a king was not wrong in and of itself. God had anticipated that this time would come, and you remember that the refrain in the book of Judges is that there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes. There were hero leaders off and on, but much of that era was a mess. Actually for the same reason that the motivation for this demand is wrong.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

¹⁴ “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has

said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' ¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. ¹⁸ And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

Samuel feels rejected and unappreciated, but the problem is deeper than that. God's words indicate that at the base of their request is a rejection of God reflecting a long-standing disloyalty to Him. There was an idolatrous heart behind their demand.

We tend to think we will solve our problems with a different strategy, a different form of government, or a new set of leaders. But our problems as members of a sinful human race are deeper than that. Rearranging the furniture won't solve foundation problems. A bandaid won't cure us of cancer.

Every election year we are tempted to place too much hope in change that is too shallow to actually fix what's wrong with our nation. *It's fine and good to take part in civic privileges and duties, but it's not enough. Our community, our country, and our world need more than that. They need what only God can do.*

3. Sober Realism (1 Samuel 8:10-18)

1 Samuel 8:9

Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.

1 Samuel 8:10-18

¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹ He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.

¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants.

¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of

your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

There is a price tag for every form of human government. The power and operations of the government require the goods and services of the governed. The NT commands us to pay our taxes and dues and to see human leaders as serving where they do because God placed them there.

No human government is self-sustaining and self-productive. Only God is. Ultimately every one of us individually and all of us collectively are dependent on God. Whatever we create for ourselves we must prop up. A human king makes a weak god. And so does a president or representative in a republic.

4. Willful Determination (1 Samuel 8:19-22)

¹⁹ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, 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.” ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “Go every man to his city.”

This very generation had seen the Lord fight their battles. Somehow they thought having a human king do so would be better. Their hopes were idealistic. Their king would win battles only if the Lord made it possible.

5. Unchanging Accountability (1 Samuel 12:11-18)

1 Samuel 12:11-18

¹¹ And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. ¹² And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ when the LORD your God was your king. ¹³ And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you. ¹⁴ If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. ¹⁵ But if you

will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king. ¹⁶ Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. ¹⁷ Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king." ¹⁸ So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Whether a judge or a king leads the nation, the nation is accountable to God. *Whatever the form of government, God holds nations, their leaders, and their citizens accountable for what they do. He has absolute power to bless them or to destroy them.*

6. Faithful Intercession (1 Samuel 12:19-25)

1 Samuel 12:19-25

¹⁹ And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king." ²⁰ And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the

LORD with all your heart. ²¹ And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. ²² For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. ²³ Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. ²⁴ Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. ²⁵ But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

Throughout this whole transition we've seen Samuel turning to the Lord to talk with Him about it. That's the model we want to follow. *The tide of affairs in our nation or the world may not be what we desire. People may make us feel unappreciated or even endangered. But prayer is always the right response.* Pray to the God who rules over all. Pray to the God we serve for His direction. Pray even for those who mistreat us. Pray for their good, pray for their repentance, pray for their faith in God, pray for God to be glorified whatever they do.

Conclusion

We live in a time and culture many centuries removed from the events of this part of

Israel's history, but the truths we find here are timeless.

1. Disappointing Leadership
2. Disloyal Desire
3. Sober Realism
4. Willful Determination
5. Unchanging Accountability
6. Faithful Intercession