

“Make Us a King”

For a long time the people of Israel obeyed the Lord and worshipped Him in truth. However, as Samuel grew older and less able to travel and hold court, so his own two sons took over many responsibilities of state. Sadly, just like Eli's sons, Samuel's sons were corrupt and the people did not wish to return to the days of Eli.

So, they demanded a king. Though their dislike for the evil priests was acceptable, their answer to their activities was not. God did not wish them to have a king like the other nations – He wanted them to obey Him alone, without intermediaries. But, they insisted. In our churches we often jettison what is of God for the sake of a humanly substituted remedy. We must not allow ourselves to be led by emotion or human factors. Our continual measure must be God's word alone. Once we stray from this holy and just measure we lose God's favour and dilute anything He might give us.

Verses 1-3

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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

Because of his age, Samuel had to delegate his tasks of government to his two sons, Joel ('Jehovah is God') the eldest, father of the singer, Heman, and Abiah ('Jehovah is my father'). Both operated out of Beersheba ('well of the seven-fold oath') at the southernmost part of Israel. They 'walked not in his ways'; their lives were not holy, but were led by the love of 'lucre', which does not just refer to money – it means unjust gain or profit, procured by violence. They were

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

simply thuggish thieves in priests' clothing. They did not care how they made their riches and gladly accepted bribes (gifts in return for favours and corrupt judgements). They also 'perverted judgement', literally meaning to 'bend' their judgement to suit a bad conclusion. No wonder the people were against them!

Verses 4-9

1.

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

2.

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.

3.

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

4.

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.

5.

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.

6.

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."

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

So it was that Samuel found himself facing an irate eldership. The elders visited him at Ramah with the express purpose of demanding a king. This was serious, as the entire eldership of the nation was there. They pointed out that Samuel was now old and unable to keep control over everything as he once did. In particular, he could not control his own sons who were, unlike him, unholy and unjust. They feared the time when they would take over completely. Their answer, unfortunately, was equally unjust and unholy – they wanted Samuel to elect a king, so that they could be like other nations. In modern days, when leaders are not holy, they influence others along a path of ungodliness.

Samuel was upset and displeased with them, for they knew, as he did, that God had said *He* would be their King and Lord. Even so, he went aside and prayed to God for help. The Lord spoke, his words probably surprising Samuel, who likely expected Him to strike the nation in His anger. He said Samuel must do whatever the elders requested. Why? Because their demands were not a rejection of Samuel, but of God. To reject God's words is to despise Him and His commands. Few Christians think of it in this way. They honestly believe they can hold any view they wish about God and His word. But, this is not what God says. He expects total and absolute obedience to His word. This involves us in close reasoning and exact Biblical exposition and interpretation! (Something few Christians and pastors attain to! Instead, they resort to eisegesis).

That is why modern 'leaders' of the churches are under the cloud of His wrath – by imposing their own ways upon the people, they not only reject His word, they also despise it and the Lord Himself. This they strenuously deny – but the meaning of 'reject' includes the despising of the Lord. When you think about it, this is true, for to reject even a small part of God's word is proof enough that the person rejecting it despises God and what he says. How else can a rational person oppose God? The rejection of God's word is the rejection of His rule over them. That is how serious the rejection of His word is. Today, this rejection is widespread.

God told Samuel to spell out to the people what their unfortunate choice would really mean. It is the duty of every pastor and preacher to do this. That is why a portion of their ministry must include criticism of error and opposition to what is wrong, both inside and outside the churches.

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

If people are really insistent on following their own way, then it is the task of watchmen to warn them of the consequences. Why? Because unlike those who do not wish to be reminded of their errors, God has a policy of 'I told you so!'. When we finally realise our error, He will remind us of how we got into the mess in the first place. Sin cannot simply be brushed aside – we must remind those who sin that they did so against proper Biblical counsel.

Verses 10-13

1.

“And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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

We can sum up God's response to His people as “*You have made your bed – now lay in it!*” When God gives commands, He expects obedience. If this is not forthcoming He can punish us. He can also allow us to go our own way, to reap the sour benefits of disobedience and stupidity. In this instance He allowed His people to experience the sad but sinful demand for a king. A king would stand between him and them, introducing a 'layer' of authority that ought not be there. God is all-sufficient, yet the people wanted someone else to stand in His place. He had effected many victories and wonderful times for Israel, yet they decided to have a human, created leader instead!

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

We cannot really complain about this – we are all just as sinful. How many times have you gone after human ways and means instead of relying totally on God? I have done it, to my discredit. But, a national disregard for God's rule brings national problems. And these came aplenty to Israel! They continue to arrive on Israel's doorstep, even to this day.

Samuel went back to the elders with a heavy heart, for he knew that this particular error would be costly in many ways, both spiritually and earthly. Though God graciously still looks after His chosen people, the benefits He gives are nothing like those we could enjoy if only we adhered to His will instead of our own.

Samuel told the elders what having a human king meant: the king would circle himself with an army and servants, all taken from their natural and designed place in their own families. The army before kings came was ad hoc and formed whenever necessary. Now, the king would demand a standing army to serve him and the country, plus servants to serve him alone. The army would need many men, as charioteers and foot-soldiers. The army, being permanent and larger, would need leaders – captains and generals. Yes, they would have the prestige and status, with accompanying rewards, but these would not equal the freedom and grace of God's rule alone.

The captains would be able to command free-men to serve the king. One task would be to 'ear his ground'. That is, to plough his fields and harvest the wheat, etc. Men would be commandeered to manufacture weapons of war, including chariots and chariot parts.

Women would be taken into royal service, to be cooks, bakers and confectionaries. The cooks firstly had to kill the animals to be eaten. 'Confectionaries' mixed a variety of compounds to make perfumes. All of this is quite common to us today. We expect to work for the state and to help pay for its upkeep. But, it has not always been so. Under God we would have to just keep ourselves and be subject to no man, except His appointed spiritual shepherds. Do we *really* have a better deal today? People today have become used to acting like sheep and being given everything by the state, so none of us is free.

Verses 14-18

1.

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

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

2.

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

3.

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

4.

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

5.

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.”

Not only would the king take people, but he would also take possessions, such as fields, vineyards and olive groves. These would be given as presents to his favoured servants and courtiers. Indeed, that is exactly how kings and queens obtained their wealth in every part of the world! It is also the origin of taxation, for king and queens demanded much money and resources.

Not only would the king take their best fields and products, but he would also take a tenth of their produce to give to his own servants. Affairs of state automatically lead to a decline in one's own personal wealth! On top of that, the king would take the people's own servants for himself and the cream of the nation's young men, with asses, to work for him. He would have one tenth of all the sheep in the land and all the nation would become subject to him.

Then, when the people shout to God about the sins of their king against them, God would not listen to them! They chose human intervention, so they could not then demand divine intervention to clear up the mess. Often, God will let His people suffer for a long time before

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

once more sending His mercy and gifts. Therefore, do not assume that your present sufferings are due to God's testing. They could be the result of avoiding or rejecting God's will. Think carefully and repent if necessary.

Verses 19-22

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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."

Samuel finished telling the people what would happen, yet they continued in their sin. No, they cried, we want a king over us! We can tell this was sin, for they 'refused to obey the voice of Samuel' after he had specifically been told by God to give them His message. They wanted to be like the other nations, though all other nations, without exception, were considered to be pagans and godless by God. As Christians we often follow after what is godless, including the following of men not called by God. Thus, we show a preference for sin instead of righteousness.

The elders let their sin proliferate, for they said the king would judge them and fight their battles. Before this, God did all these things through His appointed judges, Samuel being the very last of them. God has given us His own men, not to rule us but to give godly counsel – pastors, teachers, and so on. When we ignore these men, we ignore God, Whose servants they are. And when we do so, we enter into the world and sin. How many join a church because they like the pastor, ignoring 'differences' in doctrine? How many refuse to judge false pastors and teachers, and refuse to defend scripture and oppose heresy? How many allow sin to slip by rather than 'rock the boat'? These are all examples of rejecting God's rule over our lives.

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

Distressed, Samuel went back to God in prayer, relating all that had been said to him. Of course, God already knew what they had said. He knew their hearts and knew what they would say even before the world was made! Perhaps Samuel expected God to bring disaster and plague upon the people, but God can be surprising in how He deals with us. He told Samuel to give the people what they wanted. Give them a king! So, Samuel gave God's response to the elders and told them to return to their homes. Satisfied, they travelled back to their respective cities and villages, carrying what they thought was 'good news'.

But, this 'good news' was a false gospel. Do not think that getting your own way is a sign of God's approval! God will allow us to go our own ways without, it seems, a sign of disapproval at the time. How often do we go our own ways, stupefied by our own human wilfulness? We do what we wish and because God does not bring punishment to our door straight away, we assume all is well. My friends, when God does this, it is not a sign of His approval, or of His will to let sin go unpunished.

When this happens, it is a sure sign of a far worse punishment that has *already* been given to us – the withdrawal of His favour and active presence! This state of affairs can last to the end of our days on earth, if we are not careful. Repent before it reaches such an awful end! Humble yourself before Almighty God and return to His old paths. The withdrawal of His active Presence is the worst possible punishment a Christian can have, though he might enjoy the 'rewards' of his sin for a season. His life is lived out in shame as the Christ he ignores watches in dismay. Do not dismay the Lord! Follow Him. Obey His commandments and live.

The people of Israel, even to this day, continue to suffer for their rejection of God's Messiah, already sent. You might say they are our examples, for they observe the rites and traditions of their fathers. Some Christians even mimic the Jews by using Jewish words like 'shalom', as if this somehow brings them closer to God.

This is a mistaken view. The Jews have been cast aside for an indefinite period of time. They rejected God and His Son, Jesus Christ. For their disobedience God brought down Jerusalem by the hands of a pagan army and dispersed the people, to wander the earth like nomads. Throughout their roaming the Jews have known immense suffering and violence, including the terrible holocaust in the 20th century. Like their forebears kept in bondage to Egypt and Babylon, they suffer now for the sins of their ancestors and for their own sin of rejection today.

1 Samuel 8

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 26 January 2018 16:50

The time will come when God will again release them from their captivity to their own sin, and from the evils forced on them by a sinful, hate-filled world. When this happens, it will not be to return to their traditions and Judaism – it will be to take up the mantle of God’s word. The Jews will become the heralds of the kingdom and after millennia of Gentile activity as preachers to the world, the Jews will take over as God’s chosen proclaimers of His message of hope. Until that release, they will remain in their sorrow and violence. Such an interpretation of Jewish history is not popular, but it is closer to the truth than the idea of Jewish supremacy!

Do not, then, follow Jewish custom and tradition. Do not hearken back to Old Testament rites and observations, for Jesus superseded these in His words, teachings and sacrifice on the cross. Let us continue to proclaim His Gospel while we are able, for one day – and it might be soon – this immense privilege will be removed from us as Gentiles. The Jews are still God’s chosen nation (those who obey, that is), though he has put them aside for a season. He will again cause them to arise, this time in a spiritual sense, to be His ambassadors to a fallen world.

Only this time they will obey and live as Christians, not Jews! They will discard their old ways and customs and will teach and preach salvation by grace alone. (Note. This is an accurate portrayal of the facts. It is not anti-Semitic. There, but for the grace of God, go I. Many Christians today live under a similar cloud of judgement, so there is no real difference between us all).

© July 2001 (Revised January 2018)

---oOo---

{loadposition btm_address}