

FIRST SAMUEL
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 8

- Vv. 1- 5 *The people ask for a king.* God had long foreseen the day when Israel would have a king. He had told Abraham that kings would come out of his loins (Genesis 17:6). Moses had received instructions from God to pass along to the Israelites to guide them in the selection of a man to rule over them (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The people of Israel, however, were presumptuous in demanding a king before it was evident in God's good providence to establish a king over them. Their motive was also quite bad inasmuch as they wanted a king over them ". . . like all the nations" (v. 5).
- Vv. 6- 9 *The Lord instructs Samuel.* God told Samuel to hearken to the request of the people. He also instructed him to protest solemnly and show them the essential nature of a king.
- Vv. 10-18 *Samuel describes a king.* This passage is a classic description of the nature of a monarch. His demands upon the lives of his subjects are spelled out in large letters. Much of what Samuel predicted was fulfilled in the very first king of Israel. Other succeeding kings only verified what Samuel had said.
- Vv. 19-22 *The people persist.* Regardless of the consequences, the people were insistent in seeking a king. They heard all that Samuel had to say, but they were not diverted from their intentions of changing their society from one that has been described as a theocracy to one that is best known as a monarchy.

STUDIES IN SAMUEL LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The pull of the world.* A great deal of pressure is brought upon individuals, communities, and countries as social custom prevails. What others do matters a great deal to all of us. Style of dress is dictated by what everybody seems to be wearing. Moral standards in non-Christian countries fluctuate with the changing social scene. Christian doctrine may also be interpreted differently according to what seems to be the prevailing opinions. It was this desire to conform that led Israel to ask for a king.
2. *The patience of God.* Although God had not instigated this movement towards the monarchy, His great love dictated that the request of the people should be granted. Samuel thought that the people had rejected him from being their judge. God declared that in reality the people were rejecting Him. Still, God did not turn His back upon them and forsake them to flounder in their foolish ways.

The Installation of Israel's First King, 8:1—10:27.

The people ask for a King, 8:1-5

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

2 Now the name of his first-born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beer-sheba.

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

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

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.

4. *When Samuel was old, whom did he make judges over Israel?* 8:1

He made his sons judges over Israel. The reasons assigned for the appointment of Samuel's sons as judges stem from his own advanced age. The inference which we might draw from this alone is that they were simply to support their father in the administration of justice and that Samuel had no intention of laying down his office and still less of making the supreme office of judge hereditary in his family. This is still more apparent from the fact that they were stationed as judges of the nation in Beer-sheba, which was on the southern border of Canaan.

2. *What are the meanings of the names of Samuel's sons?* 8:2

Samuel chose very appropriate names for his sons. His firstborn's name means "Jehovah is God." The other one had a name which means "Jehovah is my father." This is some indication of the faith which Samuel had, and it should have been an encouragement to his sons to walk in Godly ways.

3. *What sort of men were they?* 8:3

The sons did not walk in the way of their father. They set their hearts upon gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. All of this was in opposition to the command of God (see Exodus 23:6, 8; Deuteronomy 16:19). One can only marvel that having witnessed the failure of Eli to train his sons Samuel failed to curb the lusts of his sons. It is not enough to say that this is just the common experience of the Orientals. This is just another instance of a good father without the blessing of faithful sons. It is this very failure on the part of Samuel that occasioned the Israelites' demanding a king.

4. *Who were the elders?* 8:4

The elders of Israel were the leaders of the people. They were not elders in the same sense as leaders of the New Testament church (I Timothy 3). Each tribe would have

its appointed leaders. These men represented the tribes as they came to Samuel.

5. *What request did the people make of Samuel?* 8:5

The request was for a king. They used the age of Samuel, and the iniquity of his sons as an excuse. The people were represented by their leaders; and although in I Samuel 5:20 the desire is grounded in a need for a leader in war, the express reason here is the maladministration of justice. Samuel viewed this request as a sinful demand. He knew that the theocracy was the divinely appointed constitution for Israel. The substitution of another form was treason to God.

The Lord instructs Samuel. 8:6-9

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

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

6. *What was their real reason?* 8:6-9

They wanted to be like other nations. That is what many are saying today. We have to have a great association with offices and headquarters. Somebody is leading us around. Israel's request was based on a desire to follow the customs and institutions of other nations. These nations had been set aside for destruction when the people entered the land. These Israelites might have reminded

Samuel of his old age, which rendered him less able to attend to the duties of his office, and also of the avarice of his sons and the corruptness of the judges. They might have complained that his sons did not walk in his footsteps and asked God to choose suitable men. If they had done this, there could be no doubt that they would have received a gracious and suitable answer. They did not think of calling on God, however; they demanded that a king should be given them.

Samuel Describes a King. 8:10-18

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

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.

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

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 the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

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

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.

7. *What was the king to be like? 8:10-18*

With divine insight Samuel told the people that their king would demand of their best young men for his chariots and his horsemen. He knew that the king would need an army. Captains would be appointed from their midst over thousands and over fifties. Other men would be required to till the ground of the king and to make his instruments of war. Moreover the king would demand young women to serve as his cooks, bakers, and confectionaries. Their property would be confiscated by the king (I Kings 21). In addition to supporting the priests with a tithe, the people would also be required to give another tenth to the king. Samuel foresaw the day that they would cry out for relief, but God ordained that once they had committed themselves to such a form of rule, they would have no chance to return to the former times. God had ordained the theocratic form of government. Their rejection of His ordinances was the same as the rejection of Him, the Author of the ordinances (v. 7). It is rebellion against God to rebel against God's form of government. Church people should be very careful not to make such moves.

The People Persist. 8:19-22

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have 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 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, Harken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

8. *In what way had they rejected God? cf. I Samuel 8:20*

They had rejected God in that they wanted to be like all the nations. God had delivered them by judges. Samuel as a judge had delivered them, but they took it upon themselves. They were now saying, "We must have a king." In rejecting the judges, they were rejecting God. God was King. This is the verdict of God. In declaring Samuel incapable, they were founding their arguments upon mistrust in the Lord. In the person of Samuel they rejected the Lord and His rule. They wanted a king, because they imagined that Jehovah their God-King was not able to secure their constant prosperity. Instead of seeking for the cause of the misfortunes that had befallen them in their own sin, they searched for it in the constitution of the nation itself. In such a state of mind their desire for a king was a contempt and rejection of the kingly government of Jehovah.

9. *Why did Samuel rehearse the words of the people in the ears of the Lord? 8:21*

Samuel evidently went before the Lord again and again about the problem. This would be a rehearsal of these things in the ears of the Lord. Samuel's heart was heavy, and he found release in prayer. He was anxious about his people, and he wanted to be sure that he was doing the will of God in this matter. This demand of the people and the subsequent anointing of a king mark a turning point in the history of the people of Israel.

10. *Why did Samuel send the people back home? 8:22*

The elders of the people of Israel had come from various tribes. Some of them had come from across the Jordan in Gilead. Some had come from the far north near the Sea of Galilee. Others had no doubt come from Beer-sheba, the southern city half way down the length of the Dead Sea. Samuel was awaiting the will of the Lord in this matter, and he wanted time for this will to be made known to him. He would call the people again when a

king was picked out for them. The people evidently had respect for Samuel, and were willing to wait until the time was right. We find none of them rebelling openly against this dismissal, but they must have returned with thoughtful steps. What they were doing had brought sadness to the prophet. It had brought a statement from the Lord that forced them on in spite of the warning which Samuel had given them. Some of them may have entertained doubts about their actions as they waited in their home tribes to see what would happen. Much discussion must have transpired. All Israel was agog. The monarchy was about to be born.

CHAPTER 8 IN REVIEW

1. Whom did Samuel appoint as judges in Israel? _____
2. Where did these judges reside? _____
3. What were the names of Samuel's sons? _____
4. What reason did the people give for asking for a king? _____
5. What was the real reason? _____
6. What did Samuel say the king would do with Israel's young men? _____
7. What did Samuel say the king would do with with Israel's young women? _____
8. What did Samuel say the king would do with Israel's land? _____
9. What portion of their income did Samuel say the people would have to give to support their king? _____
10. When Samuel said the people had rejected him, whom did God say they had rejected? _____