

Israel Asks for a King – I Samuel 8:1-22

Introduction:

Be careful what you ask for! Many years ago, when I was young and more foolish than today, I let myself fall in love with a Toyota Camry. I just had to have it! I begged and cajoled Lise until she gave in, ignoring the voice of reason she tried to provide. I remember the day we brought the car home. I sat in it and listened to the radio – it sounded so wonderful. But the honeymoon was soon over, because it was soon time to start making our monthly payments. Since this was a newer model car, the payments were quite hefty on our meager salary. Lise soon learned to hate the car, and I learned to say nothing!

In our study the leaders of the tribes of Israel come to Samuel with a request. They want a king. Did they know what they were asking for? In this chapter Samuel tries to explain the cost of having a king over them. It will cost them dearly. Yet the people would not listen – they wanted what they wanted.

What was the cost of choosing a king to be over them? This chapter helps the reader understand, and hopefully learn something about choices.

The Request of the Elders – 1 Samuel 8:1-5

1. What do we learn about Samuel in verse 1? In chapter 12:2 how does Samuel describe himself? (FYI – one scholar suggested he was 54 years of age!)
2. According to verse 1, what has Samuel commissioned his sons to do? Why? (there is no indication why Samuel practiced this kind of succession, though maybe it was what he learned from Eli as he grew up in the temple)
3. Samuel's sons were named Joel ("The Lord is God") and Abijah ("The Lord is Father"). What might these names indicate about Samuel's hopes and aspirations for his sons?
4. Where did the sons serve as Judges? (v. 2) Where did Samuel serve? Looking at that geography, what might be a reason for Samuel appointing his sons as Judges?

5. The NIV starts verse 3 with the word “But,” ESV “Yet” and NASB “However.” What is this telling us?
6. What do we learn about the sons of Samuel in verse 3? What were they doing? Explain.
7. Who comes to see Samuel at Ramah (v. 4)? Who are they?
8. What request d the elders ask of Samuel (v. 5)? What two reasons do they give for this request?
9. What point in their argument might have been the most difficult to hear by Samuel? Explain. (cf. Romans 12:2)



Samuel's Outburst – 1 Samuel 8:6-9

10. What was the response of Samuel when he heard the people ask for a king (v. 6)? What might be going through his mind?
11. In his disappointment, anger, frustration, what does he do (v.6)?
12. In verse 7 the one speaking shifts. Who is the speaker? What truth is revealed in verse 7 in regards to the request of the elders?
13. In verse 8 God reveals a pattern in the life of the children of Israel. What is it?
14. Does this come as a surprise to God? (ref. Deuteronomy 17:14-20) What instruction does God give to Samuel in verse 9?

Counting the Cost – 1 Samuel 8:10-18

15. Samuel is about to explain to the people the cost of having a king over them. Are these his ideas? (cf. v. 10)
16. The people want a king to rule over them for what he can give them – unity, leadership, military cohesion. Look at verses 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17. What one word do all these verses have in common? Do you think Samuel is intentional in speaking this way?
17. In verses 11-12 what will be the price paid for a king? How important was this to the families
18. What is the price paid to have a king according to verse 13?
19. What is the price to be paid according to verse 14? Did this ever happen in Israel's history?
20. What is verse 15 referring to? Has that ever gone away? What would be an alternative to this?
21. What is the message of verse 16?
22. What is the ultimate consequence of choosing to have a king rule over the nation according to verse 17?
23. This is quite the list of costs to have a king over the nation. The people will soon get tired of paying the costs to the king (like car payments) and will cry out to the Lord for deliverance. What will God's response be to them (v. 18)? Why? Do people get this wrong today as well?

Warned, the People Make their Choice – 1 Samuel 8:19-22

24. What was the response of the people to the high price they would pay for a king (v.19)?

25. Verse 20 reveals one of the primary reasons the people want a king over them. What was that reason? Think about Jesus' time, about 1000 years later. What were the people looking for?
26. No doubt this response was disappointing to Samuel, if not annoying. So where does he go with this response of the people (v.21)?
27. What is God's instructions to Samuel (v. 22)? Why might this be?
28. What is Samuel's final instructions to the elders (v. 22)? Why?

Conclusion:

What if God always gave us what we asked for? Would that be a good thing? Think about some of the prayers you have prayed and God said "No" to. Are you glad he said "No"? God loves us too much to give us everything we ask for, so "No" is a perfectly legitimate answer to our prayers (notwithstanding the misuse of the verse "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:14) Of course "Wait" is another perfectly good answer, and seems to be the one given the elders by Samuel – go home and wait for God's timing in this.

Why is it we can ignore the costs of what we ask for sometimes, and end up regretting our decisions? Is it pride that closes our ears to the truth? Or is it selfishness? Maybe it is impatience! Whatever it is, we all might find ourselves in the position of the Israelites that stood before Samuel that day: we want what we want and nothing you say can change our minds.

Maybe it is good to hear the words of Proverbs 3:5-6 again:

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

