

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
I Samuel - Chapter 8
Replacing God

1 Samuel 8:1-22 (NIV)

¹ When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah (A-bee-yah), and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. ⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." ⁶ But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. ⁹ Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do." ¹⁰ Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. ¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for 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 groves and give them to his attendants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. ¹⁶ Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day." ¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." ²¹ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. ²² The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."

1. In what ways have people allowed "church folks" to keep them from a relationship with God?
 - A. How can you minister to someone to let them know; what someone else did or did not do is not a valid reason to "replace God" or not follow God?
2. How can Samuel's predicament help us to keep perspective when we are rejected because of our stand for Christ?
 - A. Why is it so hard not to take it personal when we are rejected after we have done so much for someone?
3. Why did God include the request for a king in the same category with idolatry?
4. Explain the following statement and why is it true? Whatever we seek to replace God with, will enslave us, oppress us and will destroy us...
5. In what way is the desire to be like the people around us more of a hindrance than a help to our spiritual lives?
 - A. In what way is your life not "like other people" and yet it is good because God has ordained it?
6. Before you make requests of God this week, how could you go about seeking His perspective on what is best for you?
7. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

A. The Demand of Israel for a King: Choosing the Ways of the World and Rejecting God, 8:1-22

(8:1-22) Introduction— World, Appeal of— Motive, Seeking the World— Focus, Seeking the World— Israel, Motive, Focus of, Seeking the World: the world has much to offer any person who diligently pursues and seeks after the things of the world. The world can offer possessions, riches, recognition, honor, position, authority, power, pleasure, recreation, and a host of other benefits and enjoyments. There is nothing wrong with what the world offers unless the things of the world become the focus of our lives. Or unless we twist the benefits of this world and make them evil. However, our primary focus—our motivating drive in life—must be God, to know Him and to fellowship with Him.

Focusing upon the ways of this world was the tragic mistake of the Israelites. The driving motivation of their hearts became the ways of the world, not God and His righteousness. For thirty-plus years, the Israelites had followed the leadership of Samuel. But now Samuel had aged and would soon be passing from this world. As a result, the Israelites craved to establish a monarchy, the rule of a king just "like all the nations." Ever since the days of Moses, they had lived under a theocracy, the rule and reign of God Himself. In fact, under Moses' leadership, the Israelites had made a covenant, an agreement with the LORD. The terms of the agreement stipulated that the LORD was to be the Savior and Deliverer, the Protector and Provider of Israel. And all the Israelites had to do was obey the LORD, keep His commandments. Ever since the days of Moses, this covenant had been agreed upon by both the LORD and the Israelites. But now, after centuries of looking around at other nations and observing them, the Israelites began to covet the form of government adopted by them. They desired a king just "like all the nations." They wanted to break their covenant with the LORD and make an agreement with some charismatic man. They wanted this man to be just like the kings of most other nations: an attractive man, a charismatic leader, a man who would agree to rule over them and become their savior and deliverer, protector and provider.

The people's desire for a king became a craving lust, a lust that made them stubborn, stiff-necked, and hard-hearted. They insisted upon, even demanded, a king just "like all the nations." This is the subject of this pivotal Scripture: *The Demand of Israel for a King: Choosing the Ways of the World and Rejecting God, 8:1-22.*

1. The reasons for demanding a king: corruption and worldliness (v.1-5).

2. The tragedy of demanding a king: a picture of forsaking God (v.6-9).

3. The warning—the consequences of being ruled by a king (a monarchy): a picture of reaping what one sows (v.10-18).

4. The insistent demands for a king: a picture of being stubborn, hard-hearted (v.19-22).

1. (8:1-5) King, Reasons for— Leadership, Need for—Leadership, Corrupt— Judicial System, Corrupt— Judges, Corrupt— Justice, Perverted— Bribes, Accepting— Greed, Example of— Israel, Demand for a King— King, of Israel, Demanded: the reasons for Israel's demanding a king were threefold. The four reasons are clearly stated in the Scripture and outline:

. An aged leader was clearly a reason for demanding new leadership (1 Samuel 8:1). Samuel had grown old, and apparently his age was beginning to affect his ability to lead the nation. It appeared he would not live much longer and the people feared that the nation might slip back into the lawless days of the judges. To prevent this from happening, new leadership was demanded.

2. A corrupt leadership and judicial system was a reason for demanding a new system of government (1 Samuel 8:2-3). Because of his age, Samuel had appointed his two sons to succeed him: Joel, which means "the

LORD is God," and Abijah, which means "my father is the LORD." With Samuel as their father, they had received a godly upbringing. But they lived hypocritical lives: they did not follow in the steps of their father. They turned away from God and became greedy for money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice. In determining controversial cases, they accepted bribes and ruled in favor of the oppressor or guilty party. This wickedness reminded the people of Eli's two sons, and they feared returning to the lawless, corrupt days of the judges (see outline—' 1 Samuel 2:12-36 and notes—' 1 Samuel 2:12-36 for more discussion). Thus, a desire arose within the people for new leadership, the leadership of a king.

3. A desire to be like the surrounding nations was a reason the Israelites requested a king (1 Samuel 8:4-5). Note that the tribal leaders of Israel gathered together and traveled to Ramah. In conference with Samuel, they laid out their three reasons for desiring a king: Samuel was old, and his sons did not walk in his godly ways; therefore, they desired to have a king just "like all the nations." Note what they emphasized and what they did not emphasize:

⇒ they demanded a king just "like all the nations."

⇒ they did not demand a king "after God's own heart."

The people should have desired a king who had the *heart of God*, a man who was totally, wholeheartedly committed to God. This should have been their emphasis, their focus; but instead, they emphasized a king just "like all the nations." Their eyes and hearts were set upon the world and its ways instead of upon God and His way of righteousness. They were interested in the world's way of securing peace, security, prosperity, position, authority, power, honor, ceremony, and pleasure. They would never deny that they had an interest in the man's being a godly ruler, but their emphasis was not upon the spiritual or righteous commitment of the man. Having a king with a heart "just like God's" was not their focus. They wanted a king just "like all the nations."

Thought 1. There are two strong lessons for us in this point:

- 1) We must not be controlled by greed: coveting money, position, fame, or power. And we must not pervert justice: accepting bribes, kickbacks, or payoffs, a practice common in politics, construction projects, and far too often in legal cases. God forbids these sins time and again:

"And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him" (Mark 14:11).

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18).

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

"Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause....And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous" (Exodus 23:6, 8).

"Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous" (Deuteronomy 16:18-19).

- 2) We must not focus upon this world, seeking after the ways of this world. We must not develop carnal, fleshly minds, desiring the things of this world more than we desire the things of God. The Christian believer lives *in* this world, but he must not become a part *of* this world. This is the strong declaration of Scripture.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

2. (8:6-9) Rejection, of God— Forsaking, of God— Israel, Demand for a King— Israel, Rejecting God— King, of Israel, Demand for: the demand of Israel for a king was most tragic. By demanding a king, they were forsaking God and rejecting His kingship, His authority and rule over their lives. Note that this is exactly what Scripture says:

1. The request of the elders for a king displeased Samuel and clearly caught him off guard—a complete surprise (1 Samuel 8:8). Apparently, he had had no idea what the elders were going to be requesting. Requesting a king meant that there were grumblings against his leadership among the citizens of the nation and that some had already rejected his leadership. The elders would never have come on their own unless there were serious grumblings and complaints from the people. Utterly shocked, Samuel requested time to seek the LORD in prayer. But the shocking request of the elders was not to be the only surprise Samuel received. God's response also amazed him.

2. God instructed Samuel to grant the elders' request for a king (1 Samuel 8:7-9). To relieve Samuel's uneasiness, God assured him that the people were not rejecting Samuel, but God Himself. Just as the Israelites had done since their deliverance from Egypt, so they were now doing once again: they were rejecting their Savior and Deliverer, their Protector and Provider. Remember, the Israelites had a covenant relationship with the LORD, an agreement that the LORD would be their Savior, their Provider and Protector—if they would just obey Him, accepting His rule of righteousness. But here they were, ready to break their covenant with the LORD in order to make an agreement with a king just "like all the nations." Forgetting how often the LORD had saved and delivered them in the past and forgetting how He had constantly provided for them throughout their lives, the Israelites requested the right to establish a monarchy, to live under the authority of a king.

Note this fact: their desire for a king was not wrong, not in and of itself. God Himself had even made provisions in His law for the appointment and rule of a king over His people (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; see also Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:7, 17). What, therefore, was wrong with Israel's request for a king? It was their motive, their purpose. They wanted a king just "like all the nations," not a king "after God's own heart" (13:14). Consequently, in requesting a king just "like all the nations," they were rejecting God. They were breaking their covenant, their agreement with Him.

Thought 1. There is a strong lesson for us in this point: we must never forsake God, rejecting and turning away from Him. Our desires may not be the desire expressed by Israel, the craving for a king to rule over us, a king just "like all the nations." But if we have other desires that focus upon the worldly or carnal ways of this earth, then we too reject God. If we turn to any sinful or wicked way of this world, we reject God. For God cannot look upon evil. God will have nothing to do with the sinful, wicked ways of this world. Scripture warns us against rejecting the LORD.

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8).

"Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells

without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (2 Peter 2:14-17).

3. (8:10-18) Reaping, What One Sows— Judgment, Judicial— Judgment, Cause of— King, Rights of— King, Prerogatives of— Monarchy, Rights of— Warning, against Living under Kings— Monarchy, Consequences of: there was the warning of Samuel: there would be consequences if Israel was to be ruled by a king. This is a sober, thought-provoking picture of just what Israel could expect from a king.

1. There would be the severe restriction of liberty if the people chose to live under a monarchy, the rule of a king. Eight oppressive restrictions of liberty are spelled out by Samuel.

- a. Under a king, there would be oppressive, compulsory military service for sons (1 Samuel 8:11-12). Men would be needed to care for the military horses and chariots and other equipment, as well as to serve in the king's honor guard. A large standing army would be required to protect the nation. Manpower for the military would be an absolute essential; consequently, the sons of the nation would be taken from their homes and be compelled to serve the king.
- b. Under a king, there would be oppressive, compulsory service for a core of laborers (1 Samuel 8:12). A large force of laborers would be necessary to work in the fields and factories of the nation. Both food and weapons of war and equipment for the king's chariots would have to be mass-produced.
- c. Under a king, there would be oppressive, compulsory service for the daughters of the nation. They would be required to serve the royal palace as perfumers, cooks, and bakers (1 Samuel 8:13).
- d. Under a king, there would be confiscation of property (1 Samuel 8:14). The very best fields, vineyards, and groves would be needed to provide food and supplies for the king's attendants. Daily supplies and provisions would be needed by the people serving in the royal court, the loyal officials or nobles, the military, and the core of laborers serving the king and his administration.
 - e. Under a king, there would be a system of taxation instituted. Taxes would be an absolute essential to maintain the government of the king and to ensure the continued loyalty of the king's officials and nobles.
 - f. Under a king, there would be confiscation of the nation's labor force and of the best animals (1 Samuel 8:16). This is a reference to the menial, common labor force of the nation. Even they would be enlisted by the king when needed. Moreover, the farmers and ranchers of the nation would be forced to give their very best animals to the king.
- g. Under a king, there would be additional taxation instituted when needed (1 Samuel 8:17). Animals, as well as crops, could be taxed as needed. Indeed, as much as one-tenth of the flocks could be confiscated by the king.
- h. Under a king, the entire population would, in a sense, be enslaved. People would be forced to surrender some rights, some freedoms. There would be the loss and restriction of people's freedom. The demands of the king and his decrees would receive first priority, stripping and eating away at the freedom and liberty of the people. Just how much freedom the people would have would depend upon the righteousness and morality of the king.

2. The restriction of liberty would not be the only consequence of living within a monarchy, under the rule of a king. There would also be severe suffering, a cry for deliverance (1 Samuel 8:18). Note, this was a prediction that would definitely happen to the Israelites (1 Samuel 8:18). Under a king, the day would come when they would cry out for deliverance from his oppression and enslavement. They would cry out for relief from their own king who had become their oppressive enemy.

But note what God's response would be: the LORD would not answer the cry of His people. When that day came, it would be too late. The oppressive, lawless, and violent ways of this world would have become too embedded in both the king and his subjects. Thus, the LORD would allow them to continue in the way they had chosen, to have a king just "like all the nations." They would suffer under the judicial judgment of God, reaping exactly what they had sowed.

Thought 1. The lesson for us is strong: we reap what we sow. Just as Israel requested a king just "like all the nations," so God would give them a worldly king, a king just "like all the nations." The result would

be catastrophic: they would reap the results of a worldly king. They would reap exactly what they had sown.

So it is with us: we reap what we sow. If we live a life of wickedness, we will reap a wicked end, the judgment of God—an eternity of doom, separated from the presence of God forever and ever. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about the sowing and reaping:

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2).

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6).

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

4. (8:19-22) Stubbornness, Example of— King, Israel's Demand for— Israel, History of, Demand for a King: tragically, Israel insisted on—stubbornly demanded—a king. They refused to listen to Samuel and his warnings, even shouting out "No!" They refused to continue under the authority of God alone. They wanted a king to rule over them. They were deaf to reason and blind to the evil of their craving desire. They wanted a king who could unite the nation, build an army, and lead them to victory over their enemies. Simply stated, they wanted a king who could be...

- their savior and deliverer
- their protector and provider

Rejecting God as their Savior and Deliverer, their Protector and Provider, the Israelites were now ready to put their destiny into the hands of a human being rather than into the hands of God. They were ready to make a covenant, an agreement with a man and to forget their covenant with God.

Again, Samuel did all he could: he went before the LORD, seeking His will (1 Samuel 8:21). Once more, the LORD commanded the prophet to give them a king. Granting their request, Samuel sent the leaders or elders home (1 Samuel 8:22).

Thought 1. The Israelites persisted in their stubborn desire for a king. They stiffened their necks against God, hardened their hearts against Him and insisted on living as they wanted. History has shown that their stubborn resistance to God was tragic. Down through the centuries, Israel had suffered terribly for their continued stubbornness against God.

There is a strong lesson for us in this experience of the Israelites. We must not be stubborn, stiff-necked, and hard-hearted against God.

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

"Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear" (2 Chronicles 24:19).

"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalms 32:9-10).