

# 1 SAMUEL 8 - LOOKING FOR A LEADER

## Study 9

### OUR PASSION FOR SUBSTITUTES

“Appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations” (v. 5). This was the demand of the elders. It seemed reasonable. Samuel had become old and there would need to be a transition soon. Furthermore Samuel’s sons were scoundrels. No one wanted a repeat of Hophni and Phinehas. The solution? A new form of government, long live the king!

However, God sees the motive of the request “they have rejected me from being king over them” (v. 7). Israel had a long tradition of rejecting God and serving other gods. The requested King would be a substitute not simply for Samuel, but for God. This is the old idolatry with a new twist.

Bill Arnold highlights three reasons why the request for a king was sinful:

1. It was wrong in its motives. This was a rebellion against God’s rule, Israel was tired of being forced to rely on God at every stage of their life.  
The strong nations around Israel that were led by kings led by Kings seemed more appealing than trusting in the sovereign yet invisible hand of God.
2. It was selfish in its timing. They demanded a king ‘NOW!’ How quickly do we get frustrated when God doesn’t answer us NOW? They wanted a king at the time of their choosing, not willing to wait for God’s timing.
3. It was cowardly in its spirit, no longer would they have to trust in faith for God to act, they could now call upon the king to act, and fight their battles.

### READ 1 Samuel 8:1-9

#### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Samuel’s warning about the kind of king they demand (vv. 10–18) repeats a key word six times. What is this word, and what is its significance here?
3. What do you think is meant by these statements: “a king ... like all the nations” (v. 5), “that we also may be like all the nations,” and “that our king may ... go out before us and fight our battles” (v. 20)? Why is this tantamount to rejecting God (v. 7)?
4. Read Deuteronomy 17:14–20 with 1 Samuel 8 in mind. What is wrong about Israel’s demand for a king? What contrasts do you see between these two passages?

## THE HEAVY YOKE OF THE EARTHLY KING

Verses 10-18 provides an account of a typical tyrannical government. What was Lord's purpose in providing this warning?

1. First the Lord wanted Israel to think carefully about what they were getting into. It was true that it was God's purpose to bring about a king. But the emphasis in Deuteronomy 17, is that God would choose the king. It was not Israel's prerogative to decide when the king would be appointed. But they could not wait. They knew what they wanted. 'All right,' said the Lord, 'you want a king ... then count the cost!' And that cost would be great, for all that there would be certain benefits as well. Whatever a king would give to the nation, it is certain that he would take much more. The king would take their sons, their daughters, their vineyards, their grain, their servants, their flocks and, in the end, themselves. They would be enslaved by despotic tyrants. As things turned out, they did not have to wait long—it was just such enslavement that precipitated the division of Israel upon the death of Solomon! (1 Kings 12:1–20).
2. The Lord provided his objection to the request. By doing so he asserted his innocence in all the evil that would follow in Israel. "...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" (1 Sam. 8:18). This was not vindictiveness on God's part, He was simply stating the consequences of going against the known will of God

When we live in intentional rebellion against God, we forfeit the consolation of answered prayer and have to face alone the evil fruit of our sin.

We must seriously consider the solemn warning here, of taking any course that is contrary to the revealed Word of God. For people who insist on their own way, life will be full of heartache and purposelessness. Heaven will not condone our sin, and we should expect silence from God, until repentance restores us to God.

### READ - 1 SAMUEL 8:10-18

#### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?

2. Samuel’s warning about the kind of king they demand (vv. 10–18) repeats a key word six times. What is this word, and what is its significance here?

## IN MY ANGER I GAVE YOU A KING

Confronted with a clear choice between God’s will and her own desire, Israel insisted on her own way. They must have a king! The Lord will let Israel experience the consequences of their desire, so he gives them what they want: ““ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king”” (1 Samuel 8:22). The Lord cuts Israel from her moorings and lets her float with the current down the river of rebellion.

Ralph Davis summarises the chapter this way:

First Samuel 8 is your mirror; it reveals Israel and you. How easily you misplace your trust; how ashamed you are to be different; how resistant to any word that does not agree with your opinion. There—you are revealed.

Over all, the monarchy of Israel would cast a long oppressive shadow over the history of the nation. Three hundred years later, God would summarise this period with the words: “I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath” (Hosea 13:11). The king they wanted was the wrong kind of King. The kings let the people down, and their removal was a signal of the wrath of God.

But in another sense, the monarchy, particularly in the person of David, was a “Shadow” of a greater king. The King, who was not like the other nations. Who would give his life, and take away sin.

## READ - 1 SAMUEL 8:19-22

### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. How should we understand God’s granting Israel’s desire for a king? (Read Rom. 1:24, 26, 28 before you answer.)
3. Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Deuteronomy 14:2. What key pillars of faith had God’s people forgotten?