



Study #4: Shattered Nation

1 Samuel 8
Week of 10/11

1 Samuel 8:6–7 (NIV) But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. 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.

Samuel didn't have a good role model in Eli. As far as raising children was concerned, Samuel's own sons were like Eli's. The people asked for a king so they wouldn't be stuck with the evil sons of Samuel leading them. It is the nature of men to want a human leader they can see. We always look for our superman. We want someone visible to follow. But when man has that much power and influence, he almost always becomes corrupt. The temptation to take advantage of the situation for personal pleasure is too great. Then you have the great disappointment of all who have elevated him and proclaimed his worth.

The grace of God allows leaders who are worshipped to fall. That failure turns our eyes back to God. Samuel warned them that this would happen. Still, they insisted on having a king. Samuel was displeased. He knew something in his spirit was saying that this was terribly wrong. God helped him understand by explaining, "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."

Churches and ministries, heed the heart of God. One elevated man with final say and authority is the way of man. It is a rejection of God. God has always worked through men whose hearts are seeking Him, not the man with the best capabilities of being a CEO. Look at the disciples Jesus chose. They were a group of equals, with the real Leader, Jesus. The church should be the same today. The most capable of being a CEO among them was Judas.

Consider: Exalting man leads to disappointment. Exalting Christ keeps us on track.¹

Open It

1. Describe a time when you looked forward to a certain occasion only to have it turn out to be a disaster.

¹ <http://www.daily-devotions.net/devotions/05-11.html>

Get It

There is probably no passage in the Bible which better reflects the dangers of human government than 1 Samuel 8. Israel seeks a king to bring them security and prosperity, but Samuel warns them that they will pay a great price for the ruler they demand. Our politicians often campaign as messiahs promising change which will make us secure from war, disease, injustice, and poverty. Sadly, they too fail to deliver.

This passage, however, is not primarily about politics. When Israel's leaders seek a king, they are guilty of rejecting God as their king. They want to be like the other nations, instead of being holy (separate) as God is holy. They look to a man to give them victory in battle, rather than the LORD who has repeatedly delivered them.

The church, God's kingdom on earth, is often guilty of looking to men (both political and spiritual leaders) rather than God. Those who put their hope in men will reap the consequences, which include having leaders who take away their possessions and their freedom. There is another King who gives instead of taking. The majority rejected Him, but all who follow Him find His yoke to be easy and His burden light. He alone brings salvation to His people and heaven to earth. He is worthy of our devotion and our praise.²

7. Read 1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–25; 1 Samuel 8:1–3. Why was a change in leadership needed?

In what ways did the elders of Israel show wisdom in their request?

When is it proper for a people to seek the removal of their leaders, especially spiritual ones?

How are we to go about this removal?

² <http://grcbible.org/2008/06/01/israel-demands-a-king/>

8. The elders of Israel sought to coerce a blessing from Samuel with regard to a decision that went against the plan of God at the time. Why are we so prone to seek superficial approval from others while we seek our own desires instead of God's?

When the elders approach Samuel in verse 5, they want a king to judge them. But, it doesn't seem as if their desire is pure. They ask for a king so they can be "like all the nations." Evidently, their need for a king is driven by a desire to be like the other peoples around them. It came down to peer pressure. During this time in history, when a nation had a king, he was most often worshiped as divine. For this reason, Israel had stayed away from being ruled by a king, for their allegiance was to Jehovah. God commands His people to be holy, yet here we see their desire to be negatively merged with the culture.

9. The elders of Israel request a "king who will judge us." Why are we more open to be led by feeble and fallible men that we **can** see and touch instead of being led by an omniscient and omnipotent God we **can't** see and touch?

10. The main reason behind the Israelites' request for a human king was their desire to be like the other nations. In our context, "**other nations**" could refer to "**the world**" (which is filled with unbiblical belief systems, ungodly ways of living, and societal structures that are opposed to God).

What causes us to desire the things that run contrary to God and His Word?

When have you wanted to be like the "other nations," and why?

According to verse 7, how does God view this desire to “be like other nations”?

11. In what ways do you see people trying to blend in or be different in our culture?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being like everyone else?

What about being different?

12. Read Deuteronomy 17:14–20. What characteristics and qualities does God demand for Israel’s future leader?

According to 1 Samuel 4:20, what characteristics and qualities do the people of Israel demand of their future leader?

In our search for those who will lead us, what superficial characteristics and qualities do we look for?

Samuel obeys God and tells the Israelites what they can expect from a king. The outlook is gloomy, to say the least. God has been perfectly faithful, provisional, loving, compassionate, and forgiving to the Israelites. Yet they want to turn to a man who is sure to let them down.³

13. The Israelites were fully warned by God and Samuel about the undesirable consequences of having a human king, yet they still wanted a human king! Why do you think people do unwise things even though they should know better?

How can we protect ourselves from turning a deaf ear to godly wisdom?

14. The Israelites felt the pressure of the surrounding political powers closing in on them. Instead of trusting in God for relief, they came up with their own solution. Think about the times you've felt under pressure. How did you handle those situations?

Who or what do you find yourself turning to for relief in such times?

In what other ways do you find yourself resisting God's leadership in your life?

³ <http://crupressgreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/godswarning.pdf>

When Samuel comes to God and tells Him what they have decided, God is by no means surprised. He tells Samuel, “For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you” (vv. 7–8). Though what the Israelites asked for was terribly offensive to God, He grants their request and tells Samuel to give them a stern warning about the results of having a king. As He did with the Israelites, sometimes God gives us over to our sinful desires simply so we will see our brokenness and need for His redemption.⁴

15. Although they rebelled against His will and plan, God gave the people what they desired. What valuable lessons can we learn when God allows us to go our own way?

16. When an important decision is before us, what can we learn from Samuel’s example in this text that might allow us to decide according to God’s will instead of our own?

17. Spend some moments in prayer before God reflecting on the following questions:

- What is my attitude about God’s **rule** over my life?

- Do I submit to Him **readily** in all areas of life, or do I find myself **resisting** in some parts?

Ask God to help you recognize your desperate need for His leadership. Ask God to reveal to you the ways you rebel against Him and spend some time praying a prayer of repentance. Ask God to change your heart so that in times of pressure, your response would be to turn to Jesus and nothing else for relief!

⁴ <http://crupressgreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/godswarning.pdf>