

## 9. Who is in charge?

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One of the favorite sayings by one of my step daughters, when she was a teenager, was, "Don't tell me what to do." Now she is a mother of 4 children, she has 2 daughters who tell her pretty much same thing.

We are not creatures which want to be ruled by anyone, but ourselves. The last thing we have in mind is that we bow down to someone other than ourselves and be ruled by that person, because we are egoistical and self-centered sinners.

However, we as born-again Christians must be submissive to our God completely. Because Jesus bought us with His atoning sacrifice for our sins. In other words, He paid our ransom with His own life and He owns us now. And He is our Ruler and in charge of our lives – believers or unbelievers alike – throughout eternity whether we admit the fact or not.

Again, we find the Israelis forgot who their king is. They'd rather have a human self-centered king just like their neighbor kingdoms – trying to keep up with the Joneses. What a horrible way to live!

### A. UNLIKE FATHER, UNLIKE SONS

*1 Samuel 8:1-3 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. 3 But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.*

What is your interpretation of this?

Probably 20 or 25 years elapsed between the events recorded in chapter 7 and those in chapter 8. Samuel was now an old man, about to pass from the scene, and a new generation had emerged in Israel with new leaders who had new ideas.

Samuel was one of the most godly men in the entire Bible. Other than one lapse of faith in the Lord regarding anointing of David, he presented himself godly and holy to the people and obedient to the Lord. Yet, I believe that this may be a big sin on his part. It is almost like Samuel was following the example of the former high priest Eli's bad parenting.

In the Bible, we do not see that the judges were appointed by men, or of the office of judge was passed from father to son. Samuel was not right in appointing his sons judges over Israel.

This kind of nepotism, favoritism shown to members of one's family is still common, but a harmful mistake many leaders in ministry make, especially as they grow older. Sometimes, I see this kind of thing happening in Calvary Chapels. I am not against a son, who is capable to teach the Word of God, works in the father's church. But if the son is not appointed by the Lord to be the senior pastor as the father retires, he should not be in that position. Because the church is not any individual's kingdom, but God's.

A terrible example of that is Joel Osteen. His father, John Osteen started the Lakewood Church in 1959. Before he passed away, he appointed Joel Osteen as

the senior pastor of the church. As you can tell, Joel has no call of God. All of his teaching, if you can call it that, is nothing more than motivational mumbo jumbo.

## **B. TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE JONESES**

*1 Samuel 8:4-5 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."*

What do you see here?

Was desiring to have a king over them wrong?

While it was wise for the elders of Israel to reject Samuel's sons as leaders, it was wrong for them to say, "Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

In and of itself, the desire to have a king was not bad. God knew that one day Israel would have a king. 400 years before this, God gave instructions to Israel about their future king in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. In fact, having a king was in His plan for Israel to bring Jesus in the lineage of king David.

Yet, they wanted to have a king with a wrong reason. Being like all the nations is no reason at all. We often get into trouble by wanting to be like the world, when we should instead be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

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

'Like all nations' they said. They wanted to be like other nations with frail human kings who often became dictators. They just wanted to keep up with the Joneses.

The styles of government can be divided in 5 different ways:

**1) Social government** – One step before a communist government. Under the concept of sharing everything equally, nobody gets anything worthwhile. However, the elite ruling class is above the law and they get to keep the majority of the wealth.

**2) Monarchy** – A system of government in which the chief ruler is a king or queen.

**3) Democracy** – Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives. It runs by the majority votes which can be very dangerous.

**4) Utopia** – An ideally perfect place, especially in its social, political, and moral aspects. If it is run by humans, there is no such a place is "Utopia." It only exists in LALA Land people's dreamy concept.

**5) Theocracy** – A government ruled by or subject to God Himself

## **C. KING VS. JUDGE**

What was the difference between a king and a judge for these ancient Israelis?

This judge was not the same kind of judicial judges like now, but it has been a leader raised up by God, usually to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. When the crisis was over, usually the judge just went back to doing what he was doing before. A king can stay in his office as a king as long as he lives, and he can also pass his throne down to his descendants.

In Judges 8:23, Gideon was offered the throne over Israel. He refused it, and saying, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." This was the heart of all the judges, and why Israel went on some 400 years in the Promised Land without a king.

#### D. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE UNGODLY DEMAND

*1 Samuel 8:6-9 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, 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 to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."*

Please give your interpretation of this.

No doubt, Samuel was hurt by the rejection of his sons. But even more than that, Samuel saw the ungodly motive behind the elders' request for a king. The Israelites decided that they were going to fire God as their leader and wanted to hire a man as their new leader.

With hurt and disappointment, Samuel went to the Lord in prayer. This is the right thing to do whenever we are displeased. Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over to our God. Unfortunately, more often than not, we'd rather worry instead of trusting our God and we pray so little.

It is easy for God's servants to take such rejection personally when they should not. Jesus warned His disciples, "he who rejects you rejects Me," in Luke 10:16. As long as we are not being personally offensive or obnoxious, we shouldn't take such rejection personally.

God was not surprised, nor was He at a loss to know what He should do. God told Samuel to fulfill the people's request. This was not because their request was good or right, but because God was going to teach Israel through this. Sometimes, when we insist on having something so much that God will allow us to have it, and then learn the consequences.

There is a sense in which their rejection of God as their king is prophetic. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the assembled Jewish mob declared, "We have no king but Caesar," in John 19:15. Jesus was a rejected King also.

Information creates responsibility. In telling Israel this, Samuel was not only helping them to make an informed choice, but also he was increasing their responsibility for making the right choice. Later They couldn't say, "We didn't know, because you didn't tell us this before."

#### E. YOU'VE BEEN WARNED

*1 Samuel 8:10-18 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will **TAKE** your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties,*

will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will **TAKE** your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will **TAKE** the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will **TAKE** a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will **TAKE** your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will **TAKE** a tenth of your sheep. And **YOU WILL BE HIS SERVANTS**. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

What kind of interpretation do you have here?

In Israel's view, they had problems that could be solved by having a human king. But God wanted Israel to know there would be problems connected with having a human king. Many people fail to do this properly today as well. When a problem comes up, they think up an answer that will bring worse problems with it eventually.

If you've noticed, there are a lot of "TAKES" from the people by this human ruler. Most kings are takers, not givers; and they come to be served, not to serve. If Israel wants a king, they must realize that he will be a taker, not a giver, and they will be his servants.

Not every king is a "taking" king. The King of Kings is a giving King. Jesus said of Himself, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" in Matthew 20:28. The apostle Paul carried the same thought in Philippians 2:5-8.

*Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

## **F. THEY JUST DON'T GET IT**

*1 Samuel 8:19-22 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, 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 repeated them in the hearing of the Lord. 22 So the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."*

What kind of interpretation are you getting from this paragraph?

Some people are so stubborn in their ways that they could care less what is right or wrong. They are willing to risk everything for the sake of getting their own ways. We all have been in there. God gives Israel "their" king, Saul. Later, after "their" king fails and God will give Israel "His" king, David.

God never insists on His ways over ours. If we demand our ways, He allows us to have our ways. As an idiot, I insisted my own ways over God's a long time ago. I miserably failed and ended up with \$10,000 debt in 1984. I highly recommend you to listen to God's advice, because He will never give us any wrong advice.

Israel had the Lord God as their king. But they wanted a human. What the Israelis really wanted was the image of a king. Their desire for a king was really the desire for someone to look at with their own eyes that looked like what they thought a king should look like.

### **G. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Let's not try to be like the people who don't have Jesus in their hearts.
- 2) We should submit to God's ruling in our lives
- 3) If we put a human as our ruler of our hearts, it is the same as if we put satan in that position.
- 4) If we insist on our way, God will allow us our ways so that He can teach us through the ugly consequences that will be upon us by our own choice.