

“Give Us A King”

Introduction. The events of 1 Samuel 8:4-20 recount the Israelites’ desire for a king. God took Israel from slavery and made a covenant with them at Sinai. In the wilderness and the early years of occupation of Canaan, God served as the Israelite’s King. He defeated numerous kings for the Israelites as they made their way to Canaan.

Throughout the history of their wanderings and occupation of Canaan, Moses and then Joshua served as their leaders. After Joshua died, they turned back to idolatry. God raised up judges to rule over them and deliver them from the oppressors that God used as punishment for their wickedness. However, when each judge died, the Israelites would turn back and act more wickedly than their forefathers.

The Israelites simply gave up on God as their sovereign ruler. The final judge, Samuel, was righteous. But the actions of Samuel’s sons, Joel and Abijah (1 Samuel 8:1-3), produced a revolt, and the people demanded a king (1 Samuel 8:4-6). Because of the corruption of Samuel’s sons, the desire to conform to the pattern of other nations, and the desire for a strong military commander, they wanted a human king and rejected God as their true King.

The Lord revealed to Samuel the problems that having a king would bring, but the people insisted on one. Samuel then went, according to the Lord’s direction, and appointed Saul the son of Kish as the first king in Israel.

It is ironic that Israel left God for a king who left God. But leaving God was not only something done by the ancient Israelites. Wanting to replicate the “nations” around us is still an active danger. The Lord’s way seems antiquated and no longer relevant. We too might say, “Give us a king,” but what we are really saying is, “Give us something else.” The Israelite’s choice was a rejection of God, and our desire for a change in the Lord’s way is a rejection of Him.

This lesson will explore Israel’s subversion of God’s will, and how man innovates and rejects God even today.

I. The Israelite’s Subversion Of God’s Will

- A. They got an outwardly good-looking king (1 Samuel 9:1-2).
 1. Saul was not all bad. He was the Lord’s anointed. He did fight battles and set up altars, and he apparently raised a fine son, Jonathan.
 2. The Israelites, like us, wanted something that had a pleasant appearance. We are attracted to a system of religion that will “look good” to the outside world, but the most important question to ask is whether it’s acceptable to God, the Father of all truth.
- B. They got a king who acted on his own initiative (1 Samuel 13:1-14).
 1. The Philistines were assembled to fight against the Israelites.
 2. Saul waited for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice, but Saul offered the burnt offering rather than Samuel.
 3. This was foolish behavior, and demonstrated that Saul was not a man after God’s heart. Instead, he lost the kingdom.
- C. They got a king who led the people to disobey God (1 Samuel 15:1-33).
 1. God’s plan was to utterly destroy the Amalekites.

2. Saul led the people to defeat Amalek, but they spared King Agag and the best of the flocks.
 3. This was rebellion and disobedience. Therefore, Saul would be replaced as king of Israel by David.
- D. They got a king who lost contact with God (1 Samuel 15:34-35).
1. Samuel would not speak to Saul anymore.
 2. God did not answer Saul, who had previously been inspired (1 Samuel 28:6).
 3. Saul then consulted with a spirit medium (1 Samuel 28:3-25).
 4. Samuel appeared to the medium at Endor and reaffirmed that the kingdom was taken from Saul and given to David.
- E. They got a king who died a humiliating death (1 Samuel 31:1-13).
1. The Israelites were losing a battle against the Philistines. Israel's soldiers were forced to flee. Saul's sons were killed.
 2. Saul, after being injured by the Philistines' archers, wanted his armor bearer to take his life. He refused, so Saul took his own life.
 3. Saul and his son's bodies were displayed by the Philistines at Beth Shan. Their bodies were finally buried by some valiant men.

II. Our Subversion Of God's Will

- A. We may desire a "God" like the nations around us.
1. Some want a different Father in heaven.
 - a) Some want a different God than the Old Testament one because they believe that He was too harsh and destructive.
 - b) Some want a God of love only with no punishments.
 - c) Some want to believe that we are "gods" and need not answer to any higher power. This is a main thrust of the New Age Movement.
 - d) Some live like the atheist, as if there is no God (Romans 1:20-21).
 - e) However, we need to believe and obey that there is one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). We need to believe and obey the God the apostles preached (Acts 5:29). We need to believe and obey the God who calls us to repent and who will judge all men (Acts 17:30-31).
 2. Some want a different Jesus.
 - a) Some want a Jesus who will not condemn anyone and is full of love. They want a Jesus who will approve everything done with a good conscience.
 - b) Some want a Jesus who was merely a good man and great philosopher.
 - c) Some want a Jesus who did not rise from the dead.
 - d) However, we need the Jesus who said, "Believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). We need the Jesus who was raised from the dead because this is our hope (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). We need the Jesus who offers us salvation from sins as His name implies (Matthew 1:21).
 3. Some want a different Holy Spirit.
 - a) Some want a mystical, non-being Spirit behind every living thing.
 - b) Some want a Spirit that gives private revelations or interpretations of scripture as men ask for them.
 - c) Some want a Spirit that causes the Pentecostal experience today.

- d) However, we need to listen to the revelation already given by the Spirit (Hebrews 2:3-4). We need to be renewed by the Holy Spirit when we are regenerated by washing (Titus 3:5; John 3:5, 7). We need to await the resurrection of our bodies by the Spirit's power (Romans 8:11).
- B. We may desire a "Bible" like the nations around us.
1. Some have offered other "holy books" such as the Book of Mormon, Science and Health With a Key to the Scriptures, the Koran, the Mahayna (Buddhist), the apocryphal writings, and the Gnostic gospels.
 2. Others have edited the scriptures. Every so often a new edited version comes around. The Jesus Project convened several years ago with colorful notes trying to guess at what parts are spoken by Jesus or His disciples, as if none of it is inspired.
 3. Many offer creed books to establish religious beliefs and practices.
 4. However, we need the scriptures that equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16). We need the scriptures that if handled accurately will not leave us ashamed before God (2 Timothy 2:15). We need the scriptures that contain the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We need the scriptures that were preached by the apostles (1 Peter 1:23-25), allowing believers to be born again.
- C. We may desire a "gospel" like the nations around us.
1. Many want a "social" gospel which points less to heaven and more to heaven on earth. This makes the church the agent for social change: defeating racism, feeding and clothing the poor, educating children, and bringing hospitals to poor countries.
 2. A "faith-only" gospel is also popular. It lowers the requirements of salvation down to a moment's decision, and removes the important elements of repentance, confession, and baptism.
 3. Some have an "others can act to save us" gospel. This teaches that parents can have babies "baptized" or sprinkled and it promotes the Mormons to "baptize" to save the dead.
 4. However, we need to preach and obey the simple gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). This is the "one faith" of Ephesians 4:5. If we preach another gospel, we have rejected God and are cut off from Him (Galatians 1:6-9).
- D. We may desire a "church" like the nations around us.
1. Some want or have:
 - a) Multiple social events such as Avoiding Financial Disaster Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and sporting teams.
 - b) Special non-biblical holy days such as Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter.
 - c) Unscriptural ways of raising funds like bake sales, garage sales, running businesses, schools, gambling events, carnivals or selling books and tapes calling funds received "donations."
 - d) Unscriptural ways of worship such as instrumental music, burning incense or candles, mass as another sacrifice of Jesus, or worship accepted if offered by a priest.

- e) Unscriptural organization like earthly headquarters, women elders, women preachers, bishops, cardinals, or popes.
- 2. We need a church that complies with New Testament characteristics:
 - a) It must call itself by a scriptural name (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 12:23).
 - b) It must be built on Christ, not Peter (Matthew 16:18).
 - c) It must be subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24).
 - d) It must be pure (Ephesians 5:27). It teaches appropriate principles of righteousness, restores those who are in error, and disciplines those who refuse to live soberly, righteously, and godly.
- E. We may desire a “morality” like the nations around us.
 - 1. Our world needs to know the dangers of lewd dancing, drinking, drug use, divorce and remarriage for “any cause,” immodest apparel, mixed swimming, and gambling. These vices have long been in the world, have crept into the denominations, and can creep into the church.
 - 2. Peter and Paul both warn of the vices that are in the world and can be in Christians if we are not careful (1 Peter 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 6:6-9). The punishment is banishment from the kingdom.
 - 3. We want to live like the world. But if we have lives like the world, then we will have churches like the world — if any at all (cp. 1 John 2:15-17). A boat in the water is safe, but water in the boat is disastrous (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17).

Conclusion. We may think a different God, Bible, gospel, church, or morality will fight our battles for us. We think it will be easier to convert people and easier to keep people faithful to Christ. But those who preach a different gospel are anathema to God. All of these desires are a rejection of God’s will (1 Samuel 8:7). We may get what we ask for. Israel got Saul and his foolishness, but we may get eternal punishment.

We can become unhappy with God and His revealed ways. We can come up with innovations replacing God’s ways. And God will let us go that way to destruction. Jesus is God’s way, truth, and life (John 14:6). No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. We had better have the right “king” in our lives. Have you believed in the message of Jesus and obeyed Him? Or have you rejected the message for a message like the nations around us?