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Listen To Their Voice!

Samuel's Sons (1 Sam. 8:1-3)

1 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.

- Samuel has now grown old, perhaps about 60 years old.
- His two sons have names that are theological statements: *Joel* means *Yah is God*; *Abijah* means *My father is Yah*.
- They probably assisted him because of his age, perhaps covering the bottom half of the country.
- Samuel is one of those few people in Scripture who seems not to have sinned that we are told of. However, his parenting might not have been the best. Certainly he himself didn't have a good father to imitate in Eli.

Foolish Request... Surprising Answer (1 Sam. 8:4-9)

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 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." 6 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.”

- We’re not sure who these elders of Israel are. They are probably representatives of the different tribes and clans within the tribes.
- They bluntly tell Samuel that he is old and that there needs to be a change.
- The disturbing and disappointing part of this conversation is that they want to be *like all the nations*.
- Samuel seems to have taken this a little bit personally, but God says this is really about rejecting Him, so that He should not reign over them.
- Historically, Yahweh had had servant leaders under Him, but a king might reign and do his own will in a way that no leader of Israel had ever done.

The Sin of Wanting a Monarchy

1. Were the leaders afraid that Samuel was setting up hereditary judgeships?
Gideon had told the men of Israel, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.” (See: Judges 8:22-23)
2. A second, more disturbing thing here: the people are overlooking that in the past, God delivered them all by Himself.
3. In the 20 additional years that have passed the people’s hearts are starting to turn away from Yahweh once again. Now they were rejecting their own mission and calling as God’s unique people.

4. Finally, as we will soon see, the people were beginning to fear their enemies.

God Allows Their Request

- It’s a frightening truth that sometimes God will give the people what they want, if they are insistent enough upon it. Sometimes He will give you over to something.
- God says: listen to them, but tell them what their kings are going to be like.

The Behavior Of The King (1 Sam. 8:10-18)

10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. 11 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. 12 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. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18 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.”

- Samuel tells the people exactly what God said. Then he elaborates on the nature of the king.

- Whereas previously they had been free people, now they would not even have personal liberty. They would become servants.
- There would be no going back from this. They would come to regret it, but God would not eliminate the monarchy once they had chosen it.

God's Plan For a King

A king was indeed part of God's plan, but the people were asking prematurely, and the people were asking for foolish reasons. What was God's intended king supposed to look like?

14 "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' 17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

18 "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. (Deut. 17:14–20)

Notice the qualifications for kingship:

1. He must be an Israelite.
2. He cannot multiply horses, meaning he is not allowed to rely upon human strength and human war-making power.
3. He cannot multiply wives, because they will pull his heart away. This refers among other things to serving their gods and making political alliances with surrounding nations.
4. Finally, the king can't multiply gold and silver.

We are meant immediately to think of Solomon, who did all these things. Instead of losing his heart to these things, there were things the king **was** supposed to do:

1. Write out by hand his own copy of the Torah.
2. Keep it with him.
3. Read it every day.

The People Insist (1 Sam. 8:19-22)

19 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."

- Even after hearing Samuel reciting all this, including God's own words, the people doubled down and said they wanted to be like all the Gentiles.
- Moses had said, *Fear not... Yahweh shall fight for you...* (Exodus 14:13-14)

- God’s command to them had been: *When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, “Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”* (Deut. 20:1-4)
- This was a powerful rejection of their past, and of the Living God with whom they were in covenant.
- Now the people would wait to see who their asked-for king might be.

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