

THE ISRAELITES' REQUEST FOR A KING

[BIBLE TEXT](#): I Samuel 8:1-22

LESSON 203 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (Proverbs 4:14).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Samuel 8:1-22

¹ And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

² Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.

³ And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

⁵ And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy 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. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

⁷ And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, 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 unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

⁹ Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

¹⁰ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Samuel's Faithfulness

The Prophet Samuel was one of the most beautiful characters we read about in the Bible. Nothing evil is ever said about him. When he was still a child he consecrated his life and service to the Lord; and when he grew older, to please God continued to be his whole ambition. He never broke his vows.

Samuel loved the Children of Israel with the love of a father, and he was deeply grieved when anyone was disobedient. The burden on his heart was to see them saved, and he prayed earnestly for them.

The people loved Samuel for his goodness and justice; and when he was old, and asked: "Whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" the people answered: "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand" (I Samuel 12:3, 4). Not many leaders in history have been able to leave such a testimony.

A Change in Government

The people were content during most of the lifetime of Samuel to let him be their judge, and they lived by the commandments of God as he taught them. But when Samuel grew old, and his sons failed to be good, as their father had been, the Israelites decided to take things into their own hands and not wait for God to raise up another good judge.

The Israelites wanted a king. This was against the wishes of God, because He wanted to be their King. Through all the generations since Israel had come from Egypt — during their wanderings in the wilderness and the conquest of Canaan — God had led them. Whenever the need had risen, God had provided a judge to rule over them and teach them justice. In all this, God had been their King.

God as King

God was a far better King for the people than any man could have been. God knows everything, and could see the trials that would come to them, even before they happened, and could help the people overcome. God is all-powerful, and could bring victory to the Israelites when they had no hope. God had provided food and clothing and homes for them such as no earthly king could. All that God had done for Israel had been for their good.

Rejection

Now Israel was turning her back upon her gracious, almighty, heavenly King, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and was demanding that a man from among themselves be made their sovereign ruler. The news of Israel's vain ambitions grieved Samuel's heart. God was his best Friend, and Samuel

asked of him a king.

¹¹ And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

¹² And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

¹³ And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.

¹⁴ And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants.

¹⁵ And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

¹⁶ And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

¹⁸ And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

¹⁹ Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; 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 rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

²² And the LORD said to Samuel,

wanted the people to love Him even as he did. Instead, they were rejecting the Holy One of Israel and were asking to have their own way.

God knew that Samuel had done his best for the Israelites, and that it was not his fault that they had asked for a king. God said to Samuel: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

There have been other times when God's people have turned from Him, and the results have always been the same: the man or nation who rejects God must suffer for it.

The climax of rejection by the Israelites came when they crucified Jesus. He had cried: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37) Think of the great heart of our Savior weeping over rebellious Jerusalem! And hear their answer: "His blood be on us, anion our children" (Matthew 27:25). It was not long until the Jews were suffering exceedingly, and that judgment *has* followed them to some extent to the present day. That is what comes from rejecting the Lord; and greater judgment awaits at the last day.

The Desire Granted

God told Samuel to tell the Israelites that they could have asking if they wished. It was not His will; but if they insisted, God would let them have their way. If we keep begging God for something, He may let us have our own way, even though He knows that something else would be better for us. We may feel very grateful when our request is granted; but soon we will begin to feel uneasy, or we may even suffer; and then we will begin to realize that we should have asked God to have His way. We should always pray as Jesus prayed, and as He taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done."

The Israelites did not want to know the will of God. They wanted a king, and were not going to give up until they had one. They wanted to be like the other nations who lived near them. In other words, we would say that they wanted to be like the world. And yet, in asking Samuel for a king, it seems as though they wanted God's approval for their own way.

Conforming to the World

We see people today who want to go to Heaven. They would like to be Christians, but they do not want to be different from their sinning friends. Some girls will let a little thing like wearing make-up keep them from giving their hearts to Jesus. They are afraid of the jeers of some undisciplined school friends. Other young people think they have to smoke cigarettes just because "everyone does it." They are like the people who wanted a king just because their neighbors had such a ruler.

The King's Tribute

Samuel warned the Israelites that the king they were choosing would demand great pay from them. He would take a tenth part of their flocks and herds; he would take their finest sons for his army or to be his servants at the palace. Their daughters would have to be the king's cooks and bakers. He would live in a beautiful mansion, eating the finest of foods; and he would spend huge sums of money which they would have to provide for him from their poverty.

Certainly that was not a rosy future to look forward to, but Samuel adds a still more dreadful warning. When the time came that they would suffer such oppression, God would not hear them

Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

when they called on Him for help. Everyone needs help from God. Think what it would mean to have no God to listen to your prayers when you are in trouble, no one to comfort the bereaved, no one to heal the sick, no one to soothe the broken heart.

But the minds of the Israelites were made up. They were going to have a king, no matter what it cost. "Nay; but we will have a king over us."

The Will Yielded

Do we not see such self-willed people around us all the time? They know that they will suffer eternal destruction if they disobey God, but they do not seem to care. The few days they have to live here seem more important to them than their fate when this life is over. They do not stop to consider that a little time of persecution here — a little time of being "different" — will be forgotten in a moment when we see Jesus. And more than that, after a person is saved he does not mind the teasing of his companions about his Christian life. Even when people have had to suffer bodily harm or death for standing true to the faith, Jesus has stood right beside them to help them triumph; and sinners have been won for the Savior by watching the joy with which martyrs met death rather than deny the Lord who had saved them.

Is any sacrifice too great to win eternal life? Sweet will be the joy that will come to every Christian who can stand in the judgment knowing that his prayer has been, "Thy will be done."

QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe Samuel's character.
- 2 What was Samuel's position in Israel?
- 3 Why did the Israelites want a king?
- 4 How did Samuel feel about Israel's worldly desires?
- 5 What did God tell Samuel about the Israelites' request?
- 6 What happens to people who reject God?
- 7 What did Samuel tell the people about their life ruled by a king?
- 8 What part of the Lord's prayer should the Israelites have prayed at this time?