

Sinful Motives and Selfish Timing: The Demand for a King (1 Samuel 8:10-22)

1. The Disregardful Desire for a King (v.6, 9, 20)

Why did the elders, on behalf of Israel, request a king?

A. Leadership Crisis:

- Elide Dynasty was corrupt
- The ark has been in Kiriath-jearim for 30 years with no High Priest
- Samuel's sons (Joel and Abijah) are corrupt

B. Growing worldliness and idolatry within the 200 years of living in the Promised Land among the pagan nations

C. Increased military pressure from the Philistines to the west and the Ammonites to the east

- Instead of asking Samuel to appoint another judge, the elders request a king. They are not as forceful in v.6 as they are in v.19, which demonstrates their obstinacy.
- God in His providence had already communicated to the nation that the people will request a king when they enter the Promised Land (Deut. 17:14). This structure of government was never demonized by the LORD; He was concerned for the nation that this kind of power would be abused. He was not opposed to kingship; He was opposed to the type of kingship His people are requesting. Their request will be a demand (v.5, 19-20).
- Israel has already called the LORD king (Ex.15:18; Num. 23:21; Deut. 33:5) yet the nation, since the days of Moses, requested to be "like the nations" (Ex. 32; Num. 14; 25; Judg. 2:11-12).
- The LORD will grant their request. Their request, in and of itself, is a self-indicting verdict. The LORD gives Samuel three commands:
 - I. Listen to (obey) their request for a king (v.7)
 - II. Warn them solemnly (v.9)
 - III. Inform them of the consequences associated with their eventual demands (v.10-18)

2. The Despairing Description of Kingship (v.10-18)

- The profound irony in their request for justice (v.5, 6, 9, 20) is that the very human kingship they desire so fervently will bring about the complete opposite of justice. All the previous judges in the nation of Israel have been innocent of future royal abuses; no previous judge will "take" from the people to the degree of the king.
- This word "take" is used six times (v.11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). By granting their request, the LORD makes an act of judgment. Simultaneously, this judgment will be the means through which He brings about King David and the eventual promised King, the LORD Jesus Christ.

What will the king do? He will:

- Take their sons (v.11): there will be chariots, horses, and soldiers on the ground. The king will maintain a large standing army. Men will be conscripted to fight regardless of their position on war.
- Appoint for himself commanders (v.12): there will be elite administrators.
- Appoint men for himself to collect raw materials and forge weapons of war (v.12).
- Take their daughters (v.13): "perfumers" is a euphemism for concubines. The "bakers" and "cooks" will be providing food for the king's army.
- Take the best of their fields, vineyard and olive orchards (v.14): fields will be seized from Israelite families and given to those who serve the king. Not only will land be taken so food can be cultivated to feed his army, but this land will also be awarded to his most favored "officers" and "servants."
- Take a tenth of their grain and livestock (v.15, 17): the king automatically owns 10% of what you grow, raise, or produce.
- Take your male and female servants (v.16): servants who are working for Israelites (foreigners paying off debt/ prisoners of war) are going to serve the king.
- Take the best of the young men and donkeys to serve him (v.16).

The king will take everything from the people, and when they can no longer give to him, they will serve him (v.17-18). Their position and condition will be more oppressive than when they were slaves in Egypt. The very king that they will look to for justice will instead oppress them. The list (above) are the powers granted to the king; it does not include the abuses of the king.

3. The Determined Demand for a King (v.19-22)

- Israel has created a new idol: kingship. The request itself was not sinful. The motives and their demand for a king now, even under these conditions, were.
- The Canaanite, semi-feudal government system has been their ideal picture. This was more oppressive and barbaric than Medieval Europe's feudalism.
- Despite Samuel's warnings, the people no longer request a king: they demand one. Their "refusal to obey the voice of Samuel" is language that is reminiscent of Pharaoh's stubbornness and refusal to submit to Moses. Both Pharaoh and the Israelites "did not hear" (Ex.4:4, 13, 16, 22; 8:15, 19; 9:12; 11:19; 1 Sam. 8:19). The Israelites are as hardened to divine warnings as Pharaoh was.
- Samuel dismissing the people to their own place (v.22) is going to set the stage for the selection of the king.
- The LORD will use this sinful request of the people to eventually usher in a system through which His King (1 Sam. 2:10) will come about; the One Who takes the sins of the world (John 1:29), and Who will give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 10:28; 26:26; John 10:17-18; Galatians 2:20).