

## Israel Rejects God as Their King

1 Samuel 8:1-22 (Key verse 7)

*And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."*

How do we deal with rejection or disappointments? Who really is the king of our lives as we sit here today and those watching from home? How do we know that we have accepted God as king over our lives? These are the points we will be dealing with in today's passage. We will also learn from Samuel what it means to have God as king over us. I pray that we may be encouraged today to re-commit our lives to God as our lord and king.

We read from verse 1-2, that Samuel grew old and then appointed his sons as judges over Israel [1-2]. However look at verse 3, "But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside toward dishonest gain, accepting bribes and perverting justice." Samuel's sons were not like Samuel their father, they did not have the fear of the lord like their father. Instead they did as they pleased. A role of a judge is a very important one since it brings order, peace and justice in the society. However, Samuel's sons did not take their duty seriously. And so all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel [4]. Look at verse 5, "Look," they said, "you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king to judge us like all the other nations." They came to Samuel with three issues, first, that Samuel was old, second, his sons did not walk in his way and third, that they wanted him to appoint a king over them. They came with valid concerns over the running of the land, there was no honesty and there were bribes with no hope of justice been fulfilled. There were probably complaints every year about the injustices in Beersheba. And so the elders of the land decided to confront Samuel regarding the office of his sons. However, not only did they come with a problem, they also came with a solution. Basically they were telling Samuel that he was old and as such he could not lead or serve as judge over them. Furthermore, they were saying, also for your sons it is hopeless to trust in their judgement since they had become corrupted. It is clear that what the elders wanted was best for the people. Their concerns to Samuel were valid. Even to want a king might not have been a bad thing, however, their reason to want a human king is so that they may be like other nations. The issues and concerns they came with regarding Samuel and his sons were simply a cover up. Their real heart desire was to be like the other nations. This actually reveals their spiritual condition. Because in Exodus we learn of God's desire for the nation of Israel, the Lord said, "you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." [Exodus 19:6] The Lord had called Israel to set them apart from other nations. It was through Israel that other nations would repent and turn to the God of Israel. However, by requesting for a king so they may be like other nations was revealing their spiritual and heart condition. We shall see later on what their fallen spiritual condition was.

Look at verse 6, "But when they said, "Give us a king to judge us," their demand was displeasing in the sight of Samuel, so he prayed to the LORD." All along while listening to their concern Samuel was alright till they said, "GIVE US A KING TO JUDGE OVER US" this was greatly displeasing to Samuel. This hurt Samuel personally because he was still a judge over them. The very people whom Samuel loved and cared for, rejected Samuel. To demand to have a king judge over them meant they were counting Samuel to be ineffective. The very people Samuel was committed to teach the bible and show them the way of the Lord, were seemly rejecting him as judge and asking to have a king instead. I cannot even imagine how painful and discouraging this was for Samuel. This could even result into bitterness in Samuel, since he had been serving them as judge sacrificially and now when they faced a challenge all they could think about is to demand their own carnal worldly way. In the midst of this hurt, what did Samuel do? Let us look at the last verse of 6, "...he prayed to the LORD." Samuel did not argue with them that he was capable of been a good judge for them, or even tried to defend the issue regarding his sons. Samuel fell on knees and prayed to the Lord. This is a great sign of a good servant of God. Samuel understood that he was first and foremost a servant of God, he became judge not because he had a good heart or out of his human efforts. He was made judge, a God servant, because of God's calling and appointment. So when those he was serving displeased him, he returned to the Lord his king and master by prayer. May we learn and grow in this kind of servanthood before the Lord.

Let us look at verse 7, for the Lord's response, "And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king." The Lord did not say they were rejecting Him, but rather they had rejected him as king. It means the people had already made up their minds beforehand, their desire to be like the world had clouded their hearts and minds. They wanted things their way. According to them, the world's way was the best way, the way of the other nations. Placing their lives on human hands or human power seemed more comforting that placing their lives in God's hands. The Lord revealed their real spiritual problem, which was to reject the Lord God as king. This was a serious sin problem actually. We read in Matthew 6:24 that "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money". Rejecting God as king and choosing to follow the ways of the world means to also hate God. As the saying goes money makes the world go round. So it is easy to follow the ways of the world that can make us more money. We then try to use money as our future security instead of submitting to God as our king for future security. We think we can fight our battles when we have money, however as we shall learn living like the world will only result in enslavement and more distress. This was their fallen spiritual condition. The Lord consoled Samuel and revealed their heart condition, that it was not Samuel the people had rejected but rather God himself.

Rejecting God was their real life problem, it was not a new spiritual problem. They have always had this problem ever since they left Egypt. Look at verse 8-9, "Just as they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. 9 Now listen to them, but you must solemnly warn them and show them the manner of the king who will reign over them." However still, we can see God's love and genuine care for Israel, the Lord insisted that Samuel listen to the people and also warn them of their decision. The Lord provided Samuel with the manner in which the human king would reign over them [10-11a], which are the following [11b-18], he will take your sons and appoint them to his own chariots and horses to run in front of chariots, others will be appointed as commanders of thousands and of fifties, others to plow his ground, to make weapons of war. This king will take daughters to be perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will take over their fields, take tenth of their plant produce, take menservants and maidservants, their best cattle and donkeys. He will take a tenth of their flocks and make some of them into his slaves. **If you observe carefully the word take is repeated, 5 times, this king will take and not give.** The Lord closes up his warning in verse 18, "When that day comes, you will beg for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you on that day." This was a strong warning of what will happen under the human king due to their desire to be like other nations. In fact the Lord did have a plan to give Israel a king, however not so that they may be like other nations. The king the Lord would provide would be the king of kings, our lord Jesus who said of Himself, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28).

Other nations looked good and all great and powerful, prosperous and successful. However, God's warnings are also true about trying to be like everyone else. It is a life whereby that king always takes and is never giving, it is a life of enslavement, a life of being used and your human dignity or God given identity taken away from you. For he will take their sons to his chariots to run in front of chariots like animals, **there is no human dignity there.**

How did the people respond to these warns? Look at verse 19-20, "Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We must have a king over us. 20 Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to judge us, to go out before us, and to fight our battles." They were more than adamant to be like other nations, to have a king judge them, to go before them and to fight their battles. Their response to the Lord was an absolute "NO!" wow, this is unimaginable, they had rejected God in clear view. They were determined and intentional, being fully convinced that they wanted to be like the other nations. They were so fixated in what they wanted that they refused to even listen to the Lord. Even though the Lord was willing to listen to them. Look at verse 22a, "Listen to their voice," the LORD said to Samuel. "Appoint a king for them...." The lord accepted to give them what they wanted so as to teach them a lesson.

They wanted a king who would go out and fight their battles. The Lord said since they left Egypt this had been their sin problem. I mean in the times of judges they had seen the deliverance of the Lord countless times. The Lord had fought their battles countless times raised great judges for them. Yet they wanted a king so they may be like the people in world. To desire to be like the world is to reject God as your king. Moreover, it means to also hate God or the ways of the Lord for they are in constant opposition to the worldly ways. In 1 John 2:5 we read, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them." This was their reality and truth even though they were not directly saying they have rejected God. Outwardly, It may have looked innocent that they too wanted to be like others. However, in the depth of their hearts they had rejected God. I was listening to a short clip by RC Sproul, talking about people who say God does not exist. He said something interesting, that actually the Bible teaches that all creation reveals the glory of God, that through creation we cannot but conclude that God does exist. However, to say that God does not exist is not an intellectual or moral position but a spiritual issue. That it is a rejection to submit to God's rule or kingship because nature does prove his existence.

God has given all of us free will. God has come through for us many times. Yet we still find ourselves still influenced by the world. Wanting to be like the world. I remember when I used to be a student, friends would be free to do their own things on Sundays and here I was having to go to Church. Fears of failure when I had tests or exam on Mondays would be great challenge for me. However, missionary Rebekha would challenge me to first seek God. I could then learned that when I surrendered to God instead of my fears I could still have the peace of God in my heart. Looking back I can see that, everyone else feared failure of the course and responded and submitted to that fear. So responding like everyone else meant that I too was making fear my king. However, I thank God's servants who challenged me to first seek God. God indeed fought my battles and learn practically what it means to accept him as my king. By the grace of God I was appointed a shepherd in our ministry and made the commitment to serve God through campus mission. This is my identity and purpose before my God as king. I am a lecturer at Wits and desire to be a professor one day. However to be a professor is demanding, I must supervise students MSc and PhD, produce research papers, conduct good lectures and admin work. This is how other professors are, however I have been finding myself falling short most especially in research which is at the heart of an academic life. I have a master's student who is like a constant thorn under my foot. I have also become part of a programme that is geared towards promoting future professors in the country and have small hope that will assist with mentors. However, All these things have given me a sense of helplessness and meaninglessness. This has resulted in me not thinking about my bible students, God's sheep, but thinking more about my life and future. I even sometimes find myself wondering, what is the purpose of my life. Why am I actually here in this world? What is the point of doing all these things? I am learning through this passage that I should not want to be like the other professors. I should not worry about my future. I am realizing that I have been struggling to fight my battles with my human efforts, that I have made myself the master of my fate and king. In this way though I come to church, conduct bible studies and so on, actually I have already rejected God as king. That is why the sense of meaninglessness in my life because the worldly king will only take. May

07 February

South Africa

the Lord help me repent of my sin of rejecting him as king. But rather return to my identity of being a servant of my Lord and king for campus missions. May God raise me as a professor shepherd who can genuinely care for the young lives of campus students. Please pray with me that I may not reject God as king, but surrender my life and cares of this life to God my king.

There is a nice story of a young missionary by the name of John Gibson Paton I read about from the references I used for this message. He was a pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides, one of the Islands off the coast of Australia. The Island's name was Tanna and was known to be inhabited by vicious cannibals. One of his senior pastors strongly encouraged him not to go there because of the danger of being eaten by cannibals. John Paton replied, "You are pretty old, aren't you? Soon you will die and be eaten by worms. I would rather serve the Lord and be eaten by cannibals. What difference does it make, to be eaten by worms or by cannibals?" Soon after they arrived in Tanna, his beloved wife died of tropical disease. His eldest son Peter died soon after. John's heart was broken. But he said, "I will not run away from God." He believed in God's absolute sovereignty, ruling over man's life and became loyal to his personal Lord and King, Jesus."

We have seen how life can easily be lost. Our lives are like grass however God wants to turn our lives into something special and not be like everyone else. Which actually at the end is fatal. Jesus came to give us life and life in full... The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. [John 10:10]. Jesus laid down his life for me and you, so we may live a great life he has called us for. Going to God as Samuel did for advice or help is sign that God is king over your life. I pray that we may not chase what our hearts desires rather chase what the Lord is calling you and me for. Amen.