



GOD'S WARNING • The Results of Ultimate Dependence on Man

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 8:1-22

In I Samuel 4-7, we talked about how religion can often be more appealing to us than God Himself. The Philistines were crushing the Israelites in battle, so the Israelites turn to the ark for comfort and victory. Well, it doesn't work out too well for Israel. In chapter 8, we see the wandering Israelites going astray from trusting God after he so graciously brought them to safety in chapter 7. Have you ever heard the saying, "He bites the hand that feeds him?" That is exactly what the Israelites do. They are turning from the only One who can help during trouble in favor of a human king who will not be as kind and gracious (v. 10-18). God's desire is that we let Him reign over our lives as our ultimate King and that everyone else is a distant second. Chapter 8, more than anything, shows that we must trust God for who rules over us in government. Help your students see that having a king is not the solution to problems in the world, but submitting to the true King is.

Israel Demands a King (8:1-9)

Chapter 7 ended with details of Samuel's work and this note: "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life". Chapter 8 starts by saying that Samuel is now old and his sons have become judges. But his sons do not walk in his ways (v. 3). Because of this, the elders of Israel are a tad bit nervous about corrupt young men being in charge of judging. Notice two things here: 1) Samuel, though he's a faithful judge over God's people, is incapable of raising quality, godly children who walk in humility and righteousness (just like Eli's sons!); 2) Israel's elders had enough sense to know what corrupt leadership looks, but their response, as we will find out, is not God-centered.

When the elders approach Samuel in verse 5, they want a king to judge them. But, it doesn't seem as if their desire is pure. They ask for a king so they can be "like all the nations." Evidently, their need for a king is driven by a desire to be like the other peoples around them.

It came down to peer pressure. During this time in history, when a nation had a king, he was most often worshiped as divine. For this reason, Israel had stayed away from being ruled by a king, for their allegiance was to Jehovah. God commands His people to be holy, yet here we see their desire to be negatively merged with the culture. Make sure to discuss with your group the effect that surrounding culture has on our allegiance to our true King.

What's the Big Idea?

Israel demands a king to judge them like the surrounding nations. This passage teaches us that though God's people reject Him as their true king, He gives them what they want to show how badly they really do need Him. Ultimately, this passage points to our need for Jesus, the ultimate and perfect king.

What's the Problem?

Though God is a perfect king who will judge fairly and never leave us nor forsake us, we seek to conform to the world by putting our trust in human leadership.



When Samuel comes to God and tells Him what they have decided, God is by no means surprised. He tells Samuel, “For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you” (vv. 7-8). Though what the Israelites asked for was terribly offensive to God, He grants their request and tells Samuel to give them a stern warning about the results of having a king. As He did with the Israelites, sometimes God gives us over to our sinful desires simply so we will see our brokenness and need for His redemption.

Samuel's Warning, God's Decision (8:10-22)

Samuel obeys God and tells the Israelites what they can expect from a king. The outlook is gloomy, to say the least. God has been perfectly faithful, provisional, loving, compassionate, and forgiving to the Israelites. Yet they want to turn to a man who is sure to let them down. Samuel says that a king will make their sons soldiers and their daughters maids, put their servants to work, and take their best harvest for himself. Finally, Samuel gives them the worst warning: “In that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day” (v. 18). Still, verse 19 says “they refused to obey the voice of Samuel.” In the coming lessons, we'll see how Israel fares with a king. In the meantime, communicate to your group the importance of hearing the Lord's warnings when sin is crouching at the door. Help the group discern areas in their own life where they are not letting the Lord rule and instead want a functional king who is unable to be the ultimate provider, protector, and redeemer in their lives.

Conclusion

As you prepare for your time with the group, pray that God would open their eyes to the deeper meaning in this passage. Similar to the last lesson, God wants to show us that our sinful bent is toward man made things and institutions in order to find guidance, safety, and security. Pray that God would help them understand that even today, though we may not have that deep of a connection to a government ruler, we still seek to have other things or people in place of Jesus Christ, who is the only true and faithful King.

What's Our Response?

We should submit to God's kingship in our lives and reject the desire to be like everyone else and put ultimate trust in human leadership.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 8:1-22

LAUNCH

Talk about a time you wanted something really badly, got it, and then realized that what you got wasn't such a good thing after all.

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 8:1-9

1. If the Israelites were thinking that one of Samuel's sons would succeed him in giving leadership to the people, what concerns might they have had?
2. What solution do the people offer?
3. What problem does God have with the people's desire?

Read I Samuel 8:10-22

4. What does God say it will be like for Israel to have a king?

5. What does God say in verse 18 about whether the people will be satisfied in the end with having a king?
6. What is sobering about God's failure to respond to His people when they cry out to Him in their dissatisfaction?
7. After taking in the consequences of having a king and having God reject them, how do the people respond in verses 19-20?

8. What is sobering about God's willingness to grant the people's desire in spite of their rejection of Him?

APPLY

9. In what ways can you relate to the people's desire to reject God as the source of security and significance and search for those things elsewhere?
10. In what way is searching for these things elsewhere than God an expression of "serving other gods" (verse 8)?
11. How does a desire to be like all the people around you play into this? (See verses 5, 20)
12. Read Psalm 84. How does this picture of God's kingship motivate you to submit to His rule in your life?
13. Read Romans 12:1-2. How do these verses speak to our heart's desire to be like the people around us and look elsewhere than God for security and significance?
14. In light of this discussion, how do you think God is calling you to respond to Him so that you might experience the blessings of His kingship in your life?
15. What are the main things we learn about God and people from this passage?

What Are the Answers?

1. Samuel's sons were corrupt and didn't follow his example of righteous leadership.
2. They want God to give them a king.
3. They only want a king because it's what all the surrounding nations have. This desire amounts to a rejection of God as their king.
4. He will take the best of their people and possessions.
5. They won't be satisfied and will essentially wish they had never asked for a king.
6. It's sobering to think that they could be so far gone in their pursuit of their own desires that God would fail to respond to them.
7. They reject God's warning and persist in their demand for a king.
8. It's sobering to think that even though God is gracious and wants to keep us from sin, He still lets us make our own choices and reap the consequences that come from them.
9. Allow the group to discuss.
10. Anytime we put anything above God, it becomes our primary god. We must have our ultimate allegiance be to Jesus first and keep everything else in priority.
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14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. God is gracious and patient with us when we sin, but part of His graciousness is letting us make our own choices and experiencing the consequences. People can be fixated on doing what they want to do in spite of blatant warnings that their desires might not be good. People tend to look for earthly forms of security and significance instead of submitting to God's rule and the security and significance He provides.

Memorize

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

I Samuel 8:7