

## Lesson 13     22 April 2012

### Israel Demands a King

**Lesson Scope:** 1 Samuel 8 to 11

#### Lesson Focus

Today's lesson finds Israel at a crossroad. Samuel was old; his sons were not embracing what he represented in his leadership; the present generation was being influenced by the culture in which they lived.

Now that Israel was in Canaan, the appeal of having a king who would go before them and be a figure of renown and glory seemed so right. No doubt the people were also ashamed of Samuel, the simple man through whom God spoke, in contrast to the pompous splendor of a king. God's attitude toward this demand reveals how seriously He saw the request. These people were more concerned about their own image than about obedience to God.

Life frequently brings us to a crossroad. At times like these, we must keep our focus on the One who has led us in the past and who will continue to lead us if we are willing to follow His known will today.

The desires of fallen man naturally run counter to God's will. When men obstinately pursue their own course, God may do as He once did when "he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

What is the difference between a strong will, which may have a place, and self-will, which is completely out of place? One difference is that a strong will can be directed but self-will cannot. The apostle Paul's strong will could be directed away from persecuting Christians, so that he suffered persecution as a Christian and turned "the world upside down" wherever he went. To be self-willed is merely to be stubborn. Self-will accomplishes nothing useful.

**Lesson Aim:** To reveal expressions and consequences of self-will.

**Theme Verse:** [Zechariah 7:12](#). Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

## Lesson Text:

### "A King ... Like All the Nations"

1 Samuel 8:1-8 <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. <sup>2</sup> Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba. <sup>3</sup> And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. <sup>4</sup> Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.

### "The Manner of the King"

1 Samuel 8:9-22 <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers. <sup>14</sup> And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants. <sup>15</sup> And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. <sup>16</sup> And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work. <sup>17</sup> He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

### **"Ye Have ... Rejected Your God"**

1 Samuel 10:17-24 <sup>17</sup> And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; <sup>18</sup> And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, *and* of them that oppressed you: <sup>19</sup> And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. <sup>20</sup> And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. <sup>21</sup> When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. <sup>22</sup> Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. <sup>23</sup> And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. <sup>24</sup> And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"A King ... Like All the Nations"**

1. How did the Israelites manipulate the facts to gain what they wanted?
2. What seem to have been Israel's real motives for wanting a king?
3. How might we make mistakes similar to the mistakes of these people?

#### **"The Manner of the King"**

4. What facts did the people flatly ignore?
5. What blessings from God will we miss if we insist on our own way?

## **"Ye Have ... Rejected Your God"**

6. How did God's choice of a king fit the character of the people?
7. Why is the knowledge of history a gift from God?
8. How do we balance healthy self-doubt with healthy confidence that God is leading?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

God did not rebuke Samuel as He did Eli for the bad behavior of his sons. We do not know all the reasons for this, but the Bible says enough to make it clear that the two men and their situations were different.

The first reasons the Israelites gave Samuel for wanting a king—his age and the misbehavior of his sons—hardly seem to warrant asking for a king. The people were more honest when they said they wanted a king so that they could be like other nations and could have someone to lead them in warfare.

When God told Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me," He was saying, "You do not need to take this personally. I do!"

The king God gave Israel was tall and impressive, just the kind they were looking for. But later, he turned out to be a disappointment.

Samuel could have seen Saul as a usurper, but he chose instead to see him as a son and successor. Samuel's disappointment with his sons may have been one reason why he lavished his hopes on Saul, and why he was so bitterly disappointed later when Saul also failed.

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **"A King ... Like All the Nations"**

1. Rejecting the example of faithful leadership is an expression of self-will (1 Samuel 8:1, 3-5). The people discredited Samuel by implying that they could find better leadership in another man. A king, they suggested, would be a step up. They did not realize that, in God's sight, it would be a great step down.

The rejection of faithful leadership is usually a subtle thing. Certainly there comes a time to shift responsibility from one leader to another, but we need to search our own motives at a time like that.

2. The self-willed hide behind the failings of others to pursue their own objectives (1 Samuel 8:4-5). The people were dissatisfied with Samuel's leadership for no compelling reason. He had done a fine job as prophet and

judge, as they themselves later attested (1 Samuel 12:4). Using his sons' failings to pursue their own agenda was transparently poor strategy.

How easily we can deceive ourselves about why we want what we want! Being critical of others does not justify our own attitudes. Using the failures of others makes a poor foundation for lasting benefit.

3. The self-willed desire to follow the ways of a godless society (1 Samuel 8:5). God had meant for Israel to be a lighthouse to the world. This would culminate in the coming of the Messiah, when "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3). How bizarre it must have appeared to God as He watched His people look to their heathen neighbors for their example.

The ways of the world look especially attractive to those among whom godliness is waning. With the color gone out of life under God's rule, the gaudy colors and raucous noise of a godless society catch one's attention quite easily.

4. The self-willed reject God's chosen method of leadership (1 Samuel 8:7). The Israelites wanted to set aside not only their present leader but also the whole system. Churches that apostatize eventually tend to be guided by committees and interest groups instead of by ordained brethren with the counsel of spiritual members.

God had previously noted that sometime Israel might have a king, and He had given direction on the subject (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Christ would later come through the royal line of David. What the people asked of Samuel was perhaps not so wrong as it was ill-timed. They were rejecting a system of government that God knew was still good for them at this time.

### **"The Manner of the King"**

5. When people follow their own way, they move outside the path of blessing (1 Samuel 8:18). Evidently the Israelites were already outside God's blessing. But instead of considering how to get back in line for God's blessing, they carelessly made choices that led them further away.

Often the choices we make are subconscious. It is easy to ignore the tiny sense that something is not quite right. If we are not alert, we miss the highest and best that God has in mind for us.

6. The self-willed stubbornly refuse to accept counsel (1 Samuel 8:19). Finally, it is no longer a matter of discussion, but a matter of choice. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

True, a little sanctified stubbornness can be quite helpful in defending our-

selves against sinners who can outtalk us. The popular saying, "What part of no don't you understand?" has some apt applications. But it can take a sinister turn when people in effect use it against God.

7. Rejecting the will of God leads people to believe that God's blessing is on rebellious action (1 Samuel 8:22). People can be very credulous, especially when they are making suggestions to themselves. Imagining God's smile may not be very difficult. indeed, it gets easier with practice. But the facts, even if God lets us have our way, may tell a different story.

The only way to keep ourselves from falling into the same snare as the Israelites is to start with God's plainly stated direction (in the context of the rest of His Word), obey it, and bring our senses into line with that.

### **"Ye Have ... Rejected Your God"**

8. The self-willed reject the marvels of God's work in the past (1 Samuel 10:18). Perhaps the most marvelous thing the Israelites should have remembered about God's past work was His patience. Their fathers had tried Him again and again. Instead of learning from history, they were repeating the same mistakes. "History repeats itself," we say. Rather, people repeat history.

We humans are the only creatures on earth that can marvel over God's favors to our ancestors. But self-will can blind us to these things, leaving us with what amounts to no history. On the other hand, if we humbly apply the lessons of history to ourselves, we have advantages our fathers did not have.

9. When people reject God, He may grant their request to their own loss and hurt (1 Samuel 10:24). The Israelites had only a foggy notion of where their request would lead. God knew exactly what was coming. Later, Saul did just what God had predicted. "When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him" (1 Samuel 14:52).

Sometimes, to get what you want is to discover that you do not want it.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Rejecting the example of faithful leadership is an expression of self-will (1 Samuel 8:1, 3-5).

2. The self-willed hide behind the failings of others to pursue their own objectives (1 Samuel 8:4, 5).

3. The self-willed desire to follow the ways of a godless society (1 Samuel 8:5).

4. The self-willed reject God's chosen method of leadership (1 Samuel 8:7).
5. When people follow their own way, they move outside the path of blessing (1 Samuel 8:18).
6. The self-willed stubbornly refuse to accept counsel (1 Samuel 8:19).
7. Rejecting the will of God leads people to believe that God's blessing is on rebellious action (1 Samuel 8:22).
8. The self-willed reject the marvels of God's work in the past (1 Samuel 10:18).
9. When people reject God, He may grant their request to their own loss and hurt (1 Samuel 10:24).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. How did the Israelites manipulate the facts to gain what they wanted?  
The Israelites emphasized Samuel's age and his sons' failures. They ignored the advantages of being under God's direct leadership.
2. What seem to have been Israel's real motives for wanting a king?  
The people liked the idea of being like other nations. They wanted the pomp of royalty and the security of having someone visible to lead them in wartime.
3. How might we make mistakes similar to the mistakes of these people?  
We might want a thing (a pickup, a husband or wife, an electronic gadget, another church fellowship) so badly that we are not honest with ourselves or with God about its advantages and disadvantages.
4. What facts did the people flatly ignore?  
The people ignored the reality that kings commonly taxed their people heavily and drafted the best young people for their service.
5. What blessings from God will we miss if we insist on our own way?  
We do not always know. The missed blessings might include a sense of God's approval and direction, new opportunities to serve Him, and perhaps even blessings like health and enough money (Haggai 1:5, 6).
6. How did God's choice of a king fit the character of the people?  
The descriptions of Saul in 1 Samuel 9:2 and 10:23-24 emphasize his exceptional physical appearance, which brought an enthusiastic response from the people (1 Samuel 10:24). God gave the people what they wanted.
7. Why is the knowledge of history a gift from God?  
God gives us this knowledge to warn us away from mistakes of the past

and to encourage us to follow the right choices our ancestors have made.  
8. How do we balance healthy self-doubt with healthy confidence that God is leading?

The right balance is found in acknowledging that our own preferences are often influenced by our fallen nature. We must honestly seek God's will through His Word, circumstances, advice from godly friends, and the Spirit's direction.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Jesus summarized this lesson when He said, "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:26-27).

### **Research Guide**

Study the passage in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 which prescribes the manner of Israel's king. Notice how God's regulations kept the king "in his place" and protected the good of God's people