

**1Samuel 8:1** ¶ And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

**1Samuel 8:2** Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.

**1Samuel 8:3** And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

The narrative fast-forwards to closer to the end of Samuel's life. He is getting old and has appointed his sons as judges over Israel—Joel and Abiah. These two sons were sent to serve in Beersheba in the south. They were total opposites of their dad. They did not follow his example and were known for taking bribes to enrich themselves and perverting justice in the process.

It seems that just as with Eli, Samuel exerted no control over his sons after establishing them in positions of authority.

**1Samuel 8:4** ¶ Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

**1Samuel 8:5** 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.

**1Samuel 8:6** But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

The older men of Israel gathered together to confront Samuel in Ramah about the actions of his sons. They noted that he was now old and that his sons did not have the same character and morals as their father. They demanded that Samuel give them a king to be their judge, just like they had in other nations.

Guzik makes a good observation: "There was a difference between a king and a judge. A judge was a leader raised up by God, usually to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. When the crisis was over usually the judge went back to doing what he did before. A king not only held his office as king as long as he lived, he also passed his throne down to his descendants. Judges did not make a 'government.' They met a specific need in a time of crisis. Kings establish a standing government with a bureaucracy, which can be both a blessing and a curse to any people.

The demand for a king really displeased Samuel, so he went to the LORD in prayer. He didn't react in the flesh; he sought the LORD's guidance.

**1Samuel 8:7** 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.

**1Samuel 8:8** 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.

**1Samuel 8:9** 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.**

The LORD told Samuel that he should give the people what they wanted. He told them that the people weren't rejecting Samuel's leadership; they were rejecting His. Though they identified the wicked actions of Samuel's sons as the reason for their demand, they were actually acting no differently themselves. Both Samuel's sons and the people were living in accordance to their own judgment without consideration of God's law or His will for them. The LORD told Samuel to give them a king; however, he was to warn them how the establishment of a king would affect them personally.

It should be noted that this request for a king did not surprise the LORD. I remember from my study of Deuteronomy that He had already given instruction for when this time came.

*Deuteronomy 17:14–15 “When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.”*

**1Samuel 8:10** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

**1Samuel 8:11** 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.

**1Samuel 8:12** 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.

**1Samuel 8:13** And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.

**1Samuel 8:14** And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants.

**1Samuel 8:15** And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

**1Samuel 8:16** And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

**1Samuel 8:17** He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

Samuel did as the LORD told him and warned them of the consequences of establishing a king.

- He would commandeer their sons to work for him to take care of his chariots and horses and serve as bodyguards as they ran before him.
- He would draft their sons into his army and appoint some of them as captains and officers.
- He would commandeer some to plant, plow and gather the harvest.
- He would appoint some to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

- He would take their daughters and make them perfumers (from the Hebrew), cooks and bakers. The IVP Old Testament Commentary offers the following insight: “Perfumers performed a number of different duties at the court. The king’s garments were regularly perfumed, and spices were burnt in order to maintain a pleasing aroma around the palace. Additionally some spices were recognized as having medicinal value, in which case the perfumer might be performing the task of pharmacist.”
- He would claim the best of their fields, vineyards and oliveyards and give them to his servants.
- He would take a tenth of their seed and vineyards and give them to his officers and servants.
- He would take their male and female servants, their best young men and their donkeys and make them work for him.
- He would take a tenth of their sheep.
- Everyone would be required to serve the king.

Though serving under different titles—king, president, prime minister, czar, etc.—these warnings are true of all still today. Though carried out in different ways, in essence their tyranny is the same. The rights of the people are abused to provide according to the rule and will of the established leader.

**1Samuel 8:18** 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.

**1Samuel 8:19** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

**1Samuel 8:20** 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.

Samuel warned that they would end up crying out for help from the LORD because of the tyranny of their king, but the LORD would refuse to hear them when you did. The people seemed to disregard everything Samuel said or just didn’t believe him. They insisted that they wanted a king like all the other nations, a king that would serve as their judge and protector, a king that would lead them as needed in battle.

The people of Israel wanted to “be like all the nations.” Peer pressure and “keeping up with the Joneses” are other examples of this warped mentality that almost always have a negative impact. The LORD wants His people to stand out as different; we should strive to be like Jesus.

*Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

*Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:”*

*1 John 2:1–5 “...And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ*

*the righteous....And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."*

**1Samuel 8:21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.**

**1Samuel 8:22 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.**

Samuel listened to all that the people said and told the LORD everything. The LORD told Samuel to give them a king. So Samuel told the men to go home—implied, and I will do what you ask.