

LESSON 3. Give Us A King

1 Samuel 8

MEMORY VERSE: “Ye shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear Him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice” (Deuteronomy 13:4).

ISRAEL WANTED TO BE LIKE OTHER NATIONS

Peer pressure! You have heard about it most of your life! Most of us tend to want to be like others. We want to be accepted by our friends or those about us. Have you noticed that often when a popular classmate gets a certain brand of shoes (or other clothing), many others in the class buy the same brand? Or, how many people try to follow the style worn by a famous movie star, ball player, or other famous person? Imitating others is not always bad, but it can be wrong when we attempt to follow the things of the world instead of listening to God.

God had made a great nation of the Israelites and had given them laws for both their civil and spiritual development. He was their King. He had given them great leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, and Samuel who had guided, and judged them according to God’s commandments. God had promised to provide all their needs, and protect them from their enemies as long as they obeyed His voice. But Israel often forsook God, and found themselves in submission to other nations.

The Israelites were not content in having God rule over them. They wanted a man for a king. Perhaps they envisioned a king whom they could see and hear, and who (they thought) would once more make them a great and powerful nation. The nations around them had kings, and the Israelites wanted one too! They no longer remembered the great wonders that God had done in leading them out of bondage, and into the land of Canaan. Israel felt the “peer pressure” of wanting to imitate the wicked ways of the nations around them.



THE PEOPLE REJECTED GOD

Samuel was a prophet of God. He judged Israel in a good and righteous manner. He had appointed his sons to be judges in Beersheba. But, Samuel’s sons were wicked. They took bribes, and based their decisions on how much they were paid. They followed the path that the sons of Eli had taken in becoming evil judges. They forsook God. The elders of Israel did not want Samuel’s wicked sons, Joel and Abiah, to be their judges. This was the reason they gave Samuel for wanting a king (1 Samuel 8:5).

Samuel thought the people were rejecting him. He prayed and asked God for guidance. God told Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). God knew the hearts of the people. He knew they were using Samuel’s sons as an excuse to demand a king so they could be like other nations. He told Samuel to warn the people what a heavy price they would pay if they insisted on having a man become their king.

ISRAEL TOLD WHAT A KING WOULD DEMAND OF THEM

Samuel told the elders what God had said. If they chose to have a king, the king would:

1. Take their sons and use them for himself in waging war, and other tasks he needed done.
2. He would rule the army and determine who would be its leaders and captains. He would use the men under them to work his ground, harvest his crops, and make weapons of war.
3. He would take their daughters to be do the household tasks of baking and cooking.
4. He would take their fields, vineyards and olive groves and give them to his servants.
5. He would take a tenth of everything they grew for food and give to his officers and servants.
6. He would take their servants and work animals for use in working his own fields.
7. He would take a tenth of their flocks of sheep.
8. He would make servants of all the people.

Finally, Samuel reminded the people that if they insisted on having a king, that one day they would need God's help and cry out to Him, but He would not hear their pleas.

ISRAEL REFUSED TO OBEY GOD

The people heard all that Samuel said. But, it was as if their ears were closed. Even after hearing all the hardships a king would bring about, the Israelites still insisted they wanted a king. They wanted to be like other nations, and have a king who would judge them, and go out to lead them in battle. They refused to obey the voice of Samuel. In doing this they refused to obey the voice of God. Just as their fathers had done in the wilderness wanderings, and many times in the land of Canaan, the Israelites rejected God and His rule over them. They chose to be like other nations, which were wicked and idolaters. They wanted a king even if it meant hardships, and losing the comfort and bountiful benefits of being ruled by the God of heaven and earth. The people made a poor and unwise decision! God gave them a king!

SOME LESSONS ILLUSTRATED BY THE ISRAELITES DECISION

Many hardships came upon the Israelites because they forsook God. Eventually the nation was split into two kingdoms. Years later, both kingdoms were carried away into bondage. We can see the results of what their rejection of God cost them. Yet, we sometimes have trouble seeing what our own disobedience to God is doing to us. It is easy to deceive ourselves!

It is important for us to realize that we cannot "follow the crowd" when it is doing wrong. At Mount Sinai, God had commanded the Israelites, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). A second lesson we can glean from this study is that we must listen to God's Word. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15). The Israelites thought they were making a good decision, but they refused to hear and obey God. James wrote, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). This illustrates a third lesson; man's wisdom is foolishness compared to God (1 Corinthians 1:20). We must also understand that when we ignore God's Word (the Bible), we are disobeying God!

God has made precious promises to us in His Word. I pray that you and I will be wise enough to make the right decisions so that one day we may rejoice with our Lord in heaven.

LIST FOUR THINGS SAMUEL SAID A KING WOULD DO TO THE ISRAELITES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

1. Samuel's sons were named _____ and _____ (1 Samuel 8:2).
2. Samuel had learned to minister unto the Lord under _____ the priest (1 Samuel 2:11).
3. "The Lord is not slack concerning his _____, as some men count slackness; but is _____ to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to _____" (2 Peter 3:9).
4. "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of _____; and they said, Nay; but we will have a _____ over us" (1 Samuel 8:19).
5. "[B]e thou _____ unto _____, and I will give thee a _____ of life" (Revelation 2:10).
6. "Be not deceived; God is not _____: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also _____" (Galatians 6:7).

TRUE OR FALSE

- ___ 1. God wanted the Israelites to have a king.
- ___ 2. Samuel thought the Israelites were rejecting him when they insisted on having a king.
- ___ 3. Samuel's two sons were fair and impartial judges of the people.
- ___ 4. God said we should not give in to peer pressure (follow the crowd) when it is evil.
- ___ 5. The Israelites had forsaken God many times in the past.
- ___ 6. God knew that the Israelites were rejecting Him when they asked for a king.
- ___ 7. There are many valuable lessons we can learn from a study of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 10:11).

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Have you ever felt "peer pressure" to do something that is wrong? Can you discuss it in class?
2. Why did the Israelites want a king?
3. Who were some of the great leaders that God had given Israel before the time of Samuel?
4. There are many lessons we can learn from this study. Can you name one?
5. Does obedience to God mean that sometimes we have to give up things we would like to do?