

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 8:1-22

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

1 Samuel 8:1-22

(Samuel was Israel's Judge for 20 years. During his reign as judge, Israel prospered and lived in peace. In this passage we approach the end of Samuel's time as Israel's leader. Monarchy, as opposed to Theocracy, is the normal form of government for nations during this time. Israel is the only theocracy. The people of Israel desire to be "Woke," they want to be like all the other people of the world.)

Verses 1-3

¹ When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

- Samuel was old. He knew that his time was short. He was Eli's prodigy. So, he did what his mentor had done, he appointed his sons to lead Israel after him. However, his sons were evil and did not follow his ways or the word of YHWH (see 1 Samuel 3. Samuel had become like his teacher).

Verses 4-5

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

- The Elders of Israel met and reached consensus. They all agreed. They asked Samuel to appoint a king over them to rule them such as had ALL the other nations. This king would replace Samuel's sons as Israel's leader.

Verses 6-9

⁶ But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. 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. ⁸ 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 warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.”

- Samuel did not agree with the Elders’ request. So, he took the matter to God in prayer. He is in a difficult position. He must stand against the united voice of the Elders. This is a difficult thing to do. It is always good to take a difficult matter to the Lord before acting.
- YHWH explained to him that the request of the people as voiced by the Elders was not a personal rejection of Samuel, but was, instead, a rejection of Him by the people. Israel has been rebellious from the start. God knew they were constantly rejecting Him as their leader. They were only doing what they always did. They were rejecting the leadership of God and doing what seemed right in their own eyes.
- God’s instruction to Samuel was to listen to the people. He was not to say “no” but to warn them of the cost they would pay if their request for a king was granted. They must understand the consequences associated with their choice to be like everyone else.

Verses 10-18

¹⁰ Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, “This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. ¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. ¹⁶ Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

- Samuel did as YHWH instructed him to do. He laid out the cost of kingship; conscription into the king’s service, taxes to support the king’s household. He told the people that they would eventually cry out to God for relief from

the king's oppression, but when that day came, YHWH would not listen to their cries because they were only suffering from the consequences of their decision to reject Him as their king.

Verses 19-22

¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

²¹ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. ²² The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."

Then Samuel said to the Israelites, "Everyone go back to your own town."

- After explaining what would happen to the people if their request for a king was honored. The people insisted that they wanted a king to rule them. They expressly said that they wanted to cease to be different from all the other nations and wanted to be like them.
- Samuel took all this back to YHWH just as he should have done.
- YHWH was not caught by surprise. He knew what Israel would do. He told Samuel to give them their way. He lifted his hand of protection and let Israel have what they so much desired.
- Samuel told them to go home. Israel was following the wrong road. They no longer wanted to be holy, different from all the other peoples. They wanted to be like the others and so rejected the rule of God over them.

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