

**October 21**

**Scriptures:** Read 1 Samuel 8

**Key Verse:** "... they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Samuel 8:7)

### **Overview**

Since the time of Moses and Joshua, the Hebrew nation had not had a strong centralized government, nor had they a strong leader to bring national unification. Their corporate worship, faith in God, and life under His theocratic rule should have been sufficient to bring unity, but, more often than not, Israel was in a very poor spiritual condition and did not walk in the ways of the Lord.

Samuel's leadership brought about some order and unification, but now that he was growing old, the elders of Israel were concerned because there was no other spiritual leader worthy to take his place. His sons were certainly unworthy, for it was widely known that in their position as judges in Beersheba (in the far south of Israel) they would pervert justice for selfish personal gain (8:3). Because of the moral failures of Samuel's sons and the growing strength of the Philistines and of other nations, the elders feared for Israel's future. They therefore approached Samuel with the request for a king.

Samuel's displeasure was not so much because the request itself was wrong, but because of their motivation behind the request, which as the Lord expressed was a rejection of Him (8:7). They did not have enough trust in God to rule over them. They clearly stated the main reason for their request: "that we also may be like all the nations" (8:20; also 8:5). Rather than an "unseen" leader, they, like the surrounding nations, wanted a great man, a hero — one to lead them into battle and one they could point to as being their deliverer and leader.

In spite of Israel's wrong motivation in requesting a king, God commanded Samuel to "heed their voice" (8:9; also 8:7). He had already made provision to establish this new office, for He had promised Abraham that kings would come from him (Genesis 17:6) and had given Moses instructions concerning the selection of a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The monarchy was to be yet another phase in God's plan of progress for the nation. However, Samuel pointed out many disadvantages. Unlike the theocratic rule under God who was always giving, the king would never stop taking. He would draft their children into his service, tax their goods, and take the best of their land (8:10-18). Nevertheless, the people still insisted on having a king in order to be like the other nations, both politically and socially.

The Lord graciously consented to their request, accommodating Himself to their weakness. He permitted them to have a king who might unify the nation, since they refused to be governed by God alone. Thus, the era of the judges came to a close. In this chapter, we see the transition to the monarchy. Although the former system of judges was often lacking, it did, however, recognize God as sole Sovereign. The judges were merely acting under the authority and power of God in order to bring deliverance from enemy oppression. So many

times God had miraculously delivered them. They should have remembered that He was really all they needed, and they should not have sought security outside of God.

### **Prayer**

Lord Cod, You consented to the request of Israel for a King, even though it meant rejecting You as their only King. We make You our only King. We are Your subjects. Please lead us in Your way.