

Can God Be Replaced?

1 Samuel 8:1-22

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.

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."

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."

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."

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."

The State of Things

Scriptures reveals to us the hearts of people. In this chapter, the sad state of affairs in Israel is made known to us. After years of being under Samuel's godly leadership, Israel still compared herself with the surrounding nations and concluded that having God as their King was not good enough for them. God was not sufficient. They wanted something else.

The Sons of Samuel

1. Samuel appointed his two sons as judges in Israel. They did not fare any better than Eli's sons. They perverted justice and exploited the people for dishonest gain. Like Eli's sons, they too were scoundrels.
2. The love for money is the root of all evil. Greed unchecked will pervert justice and exploit people.
3. Samuel gave both his sons significant names. Joel means 'Yahweh is God' and Abijah means 'My father is Yahweh'. Sadly, their character did not, in any way reflect what their names stood for. They were one of the reasons why Israel is asking for a king. These men have failed in their tasks and now Israel is asking for a leader in the form of their neighbouring kings.
 - Will this solve anything? When people fail God, does it mean God has failed?
 - Do we turn to God when things go wrong or turn to the world for a better solution?

We Want a King

1. God called His people to be a nation that is holy unto Him. Israel is a Theocracy; God is their King. Israel was to stand apart from the neighbouring nations. They were called to be different, and to make a difference because God was their King. Yet Israel did not want to be different, they wanted to be like the surrounding nations.
 - In our pursuit of holiness, are we willing to be different?
2. Israel also believed that the surrounding nations are doing better with their kings and rulers. The worldly system appears to be more effective, successful, and desirable when compared to what God has instituted.
 - Will substituting one thing for another solve our problems or do we need God to step in? Is there an appropriate substitute for God?

1 Samuel 8:7-8, *"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."*

3. The person who is being rejected is God. Israel is rejecting God as their King. This is a recurring story in the Bible.
 - Adam and Eve rejected God by wanting to be like god so that they may determine what is good and evil and rule over their own lives
 - During the Exodus, the people of Israel rejected God and Moses, God's appointed leader. They murmured and complained against God accusing Him of ill intentions. They turned away from God and replaced Him with idols.
 - When Jesus, the Son of God came, they rejected Him as King. Jesus endured this rejection for our sake.

Reflect on the following verses:

John 1:9-11

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Luke 19:14

¹⁴ “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’”

Hannah’s Request Compared to Israel’s Request

Hannah request (1 Samuel 1:10-11)	Israel request (1 Samuel 8:19-20)
“ ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life,””	“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.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell the difference between both the request? There is a glaring difference. 	
Hannah, being broken and contrite, wanted God in her life	Proud, arrogant and demanding Israel wanted God out of the way so that they may have what they desired

- When we pray are, we pursuing God or is He standing in our way?

Having an Earthly King

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

¹⁴ When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,” ¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you a king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite. ¹⁶ The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” ¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

¹⁸ When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees ²⁰ and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

1. Long before this request was made, God had anticipated a time where Israel would ask for a king. God did not outright reject this idea but made it clear that the king they appoint should not follow the ways of the kings from the surrounding nations.

V. 16	The king must not acquire great number of horses
V. 16	He must not make ungodly alliances
V. 17	He must not take many wives
V. 17	He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold
Vv. 18-19	He is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, and meditate on it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord and follow His ways.

- Did Israel want a godly king or a king that will lead them like the kings of the surrounding nations?

2. The King will take from you:

V. 11	The king will take your sons
V. 13	The king will take your daughters
V. 14	The king will take ... your fields and vineyards and olive groves
V. 15	The king will take a tenth of your seed crops and vineyards
V. 16	The king will take your male and female slaves, your cattle and donkeys
V. 17	The king will take a tenth of your flocks

1 Sam 8:18, 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.*”

Having a king would change everything. The king would place a heavy burden on the people to a point where the people would cry out for relief as they did under the rule of the Egyptians. Still, the people refused to listen. They would rather endure all of this than to follow God’s advice. They were stubborn and adamant that this was the better solution. They have not been listening to God for some time, why change now?

- What kind of habits have we cultivated when it comes to listening to God?

When God Lets Us Have Our Way

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.”*

God gives in to the demands of the people. Israel had to learn the hard way. For now, they could not see what was coming. They were very confident that what they wanted was the right thing.

- Were there occasions where misplaced confidence has blinded you?
- Are there times when you realized God’s “no” is good for you?

Jesus Our King

- What kind of King do we seek?

Jesus is a very different King when compared to the rulers of this world. There is none greater than Him, and yet Jesus is humble and has no interest in the power, glory, and wealth of this world. He is gentle, just, and compassionate. He is a kind of king who makes intercession for us. He calls us His friends and He would lay down His life for us. Here is a king who embraced the cross for our salvation. There are those who seek to substitute him for something more worldly. They just cannot accept the fact that He is so different from what the world has to offer. There are those who would give Him a makeover, hoping to make Him more marketable (the rich Jesus, the successful Jesus). The world is slowly being deprived of good leadership because they have rejected the kingship of Jesus. There is a leadership crisis because people have substituted God for something else. Only Jesus can lead us.

Prayer Items

1. Life Church

- A church dedicated to Prayer, Word and Worship
- Families – salvation
- Personal encounters
- Open doors – the surrounding community
- Deepen our love for one another and make us eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit
- Courage to speak the Gospel, stand for truth in our schools, marketplace and in our neighbourhoods

2. Ministries:

- Life Explorers
- Redeeming Roses
- Destiny Kids & Teens
- Sunday School
- Lifeline
- Worship

3. Healing

- Si Yun, Ee Khai & Jayden: colon cancer (Si Yun); physiotherapy treatment (Jayden)
- Francis: neck, arthritis
- Shoban: slip disc
- Bro Harold (Connie & Mel's dad): mass in lungs

4. Covid-19 Pandemic

- Protection
- Vaccine
- Those affected: sick, foreigners, poor & those who have lost their jobs

5. Malaysia

- Churches
- Leaders
- Unity