

1 Samuel 8:1-22 | “Rejecting the King for a king”  
*Preached on November 14, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to 1 Samuel 8.

We are continuing in our series in the book of 1 Samuel, as this morning we will study about the time that Israel demands a king. *[pause]*

Have you ever witnessed someone reject something great for something not so great?

Maybe this has happened as you considered someone’s job choice.

Maybe they had this really good job with good pay and benefits, and a good situation with a promising career...

...Only to choose a different job that wasn’t great at all, in all respects...

And you’re thinking, “How could they leave that job, for this one?”

They had rejected a great job and career for a not so great one. *[pauseeee]*

Or imagine a hungry person who is offered a feast, yet they reject that offer, and choose a crumb they found while walking, instead.

You would be thinking, “What are you doing?! How could you do that? You had the opportunity for a feast, yet you chose a crumb!”

Yet isn’t that how we can often be?

We have a better thing available, but we reject it by seeking out and being content with something way lesser.

It doesn’t make sense, yet we do it. *[pause]*

So likewise, that’s the thing that we find Israel doing in the story today.

They reject the true, all-mighty, all-gracious King for a flawed, imperfect king.

**Let’s READ THE STORY.** *[pause]*

In verses 1-3, we are told about the circumstances surrounding Israel’s demand for a king.

We first find out that Samuel is old. *[pause]*

So Samuel, the great leader of Israel, who has led them into a state of peace and security is near the end of his life.

That sort of situation can bring a lot of uncertainty.

Like, “What’s going to happen when Samuel dies? Who will take his place? Will they be a good leader like him?”

Knowing that a leadership transition will happen soon after having such a good leader can be scary, as it brings with it a lot of question marks. *[pause]*

So losing Samuel soon is enough to make their future uncertain, but also notice how Samuel’s sons are not so good guys.

We find that Samuel gives his two sons some leadership responsibility, and they don’t use it well at all.

They take bribes and pervert justice in order to make money off of their leadership role. *[pause]*

So Israel is looking at Samuel’s sons and thinking, “Oh man, our future definitely doesn’t look too good, just look at how bad Samuel’s sons are. We don’t want them to be our next leaders.”

These circumstances bring uncertainty in Israel’s mind, and that is partly why they take matters into their own hands and demand a king.

*And that’s the first point that I want to bring forth this morning...*

### **I. Uncertainty about the future can lead us to take matters into our own hands.**

Israel considers their future, looks at Samuel’s old age, looks at Samuel’s corrupt sons, and thinks, “Yeahhhh, let’s come up with a plan.”

The elders gather together, go to Samuel, and tell him to appoint a king. *[pause]*

But did you notice that they didn’t seek what God wanted, they didn’t even ask what Samuel thought they should do, but they *told* Samuel to appoint a king.

And this displeased Samuel. *[pauseeeee]*

Samuel was a great leader, and things were going well, as the Philistines were kept at bay, and there was peace.

So Samuel sort of felt rejected. *[pause]*

Yet notice Samuel’s response: he goes to God in prayer.

Isn’t that the correct response whenever we face rejection by others?

And notice how God encourages him, he says in verse 7, “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” *[pauseeee]*

Brother or sister in Christ, when you faithfully obey God and share His Word with others, and you are rejected...

...They are not ultimately rejecting you, they are rejecting God. *[pause]*

This is encouraging because we could so easily get discouraged time and time again if we take on the weight of rejection.

But God simply calls us to be faithful, and He handles the rejection, for He is God. *[pauseeee]*

So when Samuel goes to God, God tells him to listen to the people, for they have rejected Him.

God makes it clear that this demand is not a good one.

He goes on to explain that this rejection is really just following their pattern of forsaking him and serving other gods.

It is foundationally a rejection of His Kingship. *[pause]*

Yet what's interesting is that God *had* promised that kings would come from Abraham.

Jacob predicted a king from Judah, and even Moses included a "law of the king" in the renewal of the covenant.<sup>1</sup>

And of course, God the Father had the plan of His Son in mind who would be the ultimate King.

So then what's the problem, if God did seem to have a king planned for Israel? *[pause]*

Well first, the people were supposed to wait for God to raise up a king, that is, God would provide a king in His timing.

They should have been content with the current setup, and trusted God's timing and plan. *[pause]*

So the problem was the timing, but also the other problem was their motivation and *kind* of king that they wanted.

They wanted a king who would "go out and fight their battles," so that they could be "like all the other nations." *[pause]*

So the truth was that they wanted security and conformity.

But this is different from what God's king was supposed to be.

Ultimately God's king was supposed to be a king that would bring the people under covenant obedience, and who was serving under God's ultimate Kingship.

That's exactly how Samuel instructs the people when Saul becomes king.<sup>2</sup> *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>1</sup> Promise about Abraham's line (Gen. 17:6,16), Jacob's prediction (Gen. 49:10), and Moses' law (Deut. 17:14-20).

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Samuel 12:14-15.

So this all demonstrates that though a king was in Israel's future, demanding a king here was taking matters into their own hands. *[pauseeee]*

You see, Israel's fear for their national security led them to seek security in a human king.

Interestingly, later on, Samuel brings it out that it was because of their fear of the rising threat of the Ammorites that they wanted a king.<sup>3</sup>

And then on top of that the Philistines were always a threat.

So rather than finding security in their covenant with the Lord, they sought it in another avenue. *[pause]*

You would think that Israel would understand the security that they already had in the Lord.

Just back in chapter 7, God had powerfully fought for them when they went to him in repentance and recommitment.

They didn't need a king, for God was their King, and God was winning the battles for them and providing the security they needed.

All they had to do was to be silent.<sup>4</sup>

And so they could have trusted the Lord to protect them and sought Him to provide a new, godly leader after Samuel.

Yet even after all of this history with the Lord, they *still* sought to take matters into their own hands. *[pauseeee]*

This is what we often do.

We trust ourselves, time and time again, even after all that God has done for us.

Even though he has been with us and has helped us through prior uncertain times, yet in our current ones, we take matters into our own hands. *[pause]*

We see an uncertain future, we fear, and this leads us to look inward for the felt security of a man-made plan.

But this is merely an earthly, worldly, and God-less mindset. *[pause]*

To Israel's mind, focusing on human might alone, they thought, "Well, this just makes sense, doesn't it?"

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<sup>3</sup> See 1 Samuel 12:12.

<sup>4</sup> An allusion to Exodus 14:14.

“We just need to centralize more around a military king so that we can be better prepared and defended against assaults.”

But that’s the thing with a worldly mindset, it makes sense to us, but it is devoid of power and of God. *[pauseeee]*

Uncertainty led Israel to take matters into their own hands.

*Is that how you respond to uncertainty in your life? [pause]*

So often I catch myself doing this...

*I face an uncertain situation, and I feel some fear arise in me, and so I look for a plan.*

I start coming up with plan A and plan B.

*I look for articles or websites that might help me in this situation, and then after enough research and planning, I think, “OK, I think I got this.”*

But then when I think about it a little more, it hits me, and I say, “Wait a second, I didn’t go to God!”

*“What does God say? How would He want me to respond? What’s His plan? I need to go to him in prayer, and seek His way.”*

Do you ever find yourself doing that type of thing? *[pauseeee]*

*How do you respond to uncertain situations?*

There’s uncertainty in our country’s future, there’s uncertainty maybe for your personal future, or for your kid’s future.

*How do you respond to this uncertainty?*

Do you go to God in prayer and cling to His promises, or do you look inward? *[pauseeee]*

*It would be easy to blame how we respond in these moments on the uncertain situations that we face.*

Like, “If only there wasn’t so much uncertainty, then I wouldn’t have to take matters into my own hands, but I would trust the Lord more.”

*But like Israel, the unsureness of life isn’t the ultimate cause of our decisions, for it goes deeper.*

The truth is, uncertainty simply spotlights our faith in God, or lack thereof.

*And so our response to these situations reveals a deeper issue, and it’s this...*

**II. Taking matters into our own hands reveals that we are rejecting God’s Kingship.**

God knew the truth.

God knew that it wasn't just the uncertain future that alone caused Israel to demand a king, for He makes it clear that it was really rejection of Him. *[pauseeee]*

When we take matters into our own hands, we are essentially rejecting God's Kingship.

We are saying to God, "I know a better way. I have a better plan. I have better timing. I know better than You." *[pause]*

And when we take matters into our own hands, it means that we are taking it out of the Lord's.

Not that God can ever not have control of a situation, but when we try to take the matter into our own hands, we are trying to be in control.

We are saying, "I have the power, so let me handle this, God." *[pause]*

And in reality, in those moments *in our minds*, God fades out of the scene, and we alone think we are holding the keys, we alone think we are holding the answers.

But what often happens?

We realize that we should have never been holding the keys and they were merely *imaginary* keys, for we don't have the answers, we don't have control, as all goes wrong.

And we fall on our knees, admitting, "You alone are King, I am not. Your ways are higher than mine. Your wisdom, unfathomably deep - mine, shallow." *[pauseeee]*

Taking matters into our own hands comes from dissatisfaction and distrust of God.

What Israel did showed a lack of confidence in the Lord, and the situation they faced only highlighted it. *[pause]*

Instead of trusting God with their future, they tried to forge a secure future for themselves.

But in so doing, they were rejecting God's leadership, plan, and warnings. *[pauseeee]*

God was their King; He was their ultimate Leader.

He led them to this point, he judged them, and he went to battle for them.

And yet did you notice what they said? "We want our king to judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." *[pause]*

Wait a second, you had a good judge, don't you think that God can provide another good one like Samuel, if they asked in faith?

They wanted a king to fight for them? God was fighting their battles for them, just like he did in chapter 7 with the Philistines.

What more did they need?

They had a perfect, all-powerful leader in God.

He is the true Judge and the true Warrior-King, what more do you need?

Yet they say, “Nah, we want a different leader, he’s not good enough.”

They wanted a savior, but not the true Savior. *[pauseeee]*

They were essentially saying, “We don’t want the Lord to lead us into battle, we want someone else.”

“We don’t want God to set up a judge for us, we want a different one.”

“We don’t want to be a distinct people anymore, we want to be like all the other nations.”

*[pause]*

God’s leadership wasn’t enough for them, and they weren’t content with who God made them to be. *[pause]*

What a stinging challenge for us!

Is God enough for us, or are we looking elsewhere for more?

Is what he has given you right now, enough?

Is his Word enough?

Is His grace sufficient for you in hard circumstances? *[pause]*

When “the rubber hits the road” is when what God wants you to do goes up against what you want to do.

What do you do then?

Is His leadership all that’s needed in your life, or did you try to take the reins? *[pauseeee]*

We are such discontented people, but may we become people who are content in the Lord.

May we say, “The Lord, He is King, and He is all that I need.”

“His authoritative word is my sole authority. His leadership, I will follow. His power, supreme.”

So may we bow the knee to Him, rather than try to seek something or someone different.

He has all that we need.

He is enough, for He is the perfect Leader, and none can compare. *[pauseeee]*

Not only did they reject God's leadership, but they also rejected God's *plan*.

They thought that they had a better plan.

They felt as though God's plan couldn't be trusted, and that's why they created their own solution.

They were basically saying, "We don't like the way that You have set things up. We want our way."

And so they figured, "We just need a better political set-up, and all will be well." *[pause]*

They didn't like God's way, so they decided to turn away from it.

A couple times in this passage, they say they want a king, "like all the other nations."

It's almost like they thought being God's people and following God's ways made them inferior to the world.

And so they sought out conformity with the other nations around them. *[pause]*

Inherently, they were thinking, "Those other nations have it better. They have the real deal. They are experiencing true security, true success, true joy, and true satisfaction."

"So we want more acceptance from them, more respect - we want to be like them!"

But this goes against God's design, as Israel was supposed to be *distinct* from the nations! *[pauseeee]*

What about you?

As one of God's people, even in the New Covenant age, we are to be distinct from the world around us.

We are not to live like the world, or try to conform to them, but we are to be holy like our God is holy.<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Do you ever find yourself thinking, like Israel, "Those other people who aren't Christians have it better. They have the real deal. They are experiencing true security, true success, true joy, and true satisfaction."

"I want more acceptance from them, more respect - I want to be like them!" *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>5</sup> Allusion to both Romans 12:2 & 1 Peter 1:14-15.



You see, we can fall into the same sort of thinking as Israel, who said, “We want a king like all the other nations.”

Our demand isn't for a king, but could it be for their popularity?

Could it be for their apparent happiness and fun? Their approval from others? Their relative ease in life?

When we do this, we are rejecting God's ways.

We are saying to God, “I know you said not to be conformed to this world, but their way is so much better!”

“I know that I'm supposed to be different, but I don't want that way, it doesn't seem fulfilling.”

And in so doing, we are rejecting God's ways, and really, rejecting God Himself in a way.  
[pauseee]

So for Israel, their rejection of God's plan was rejecting God's ways, but also His *timing*.

They thought, “We want a king now!”

It didn't matter to them that God disagreed with the timing, it didn't matter that it displeased Samuel, their God-appointed leader...

...And it didn't matter to them that God had warned them of the consequences.

They wanted things done in their way and in their time. [pauseee]

Israel at this point kinda reminded me of this one commercial that I used to see.

It was a J.G. Wentworth commercial, and different people would throw open their windows, stick their heads outside and yell, “It's my money, and I need it now!” [pause]

Well for Israel, it was like they were yelling, “It's our king, and we need him NOW.” [pause]

Isn't that such a childish thing to do?

It's like a small child saying, “Mine! I want it now!” [pause]

You see, Israel thought it knew better than God.

For them, God's ways were wrong and his timing was off, and their ways were right and their timing was perfect.

That is a very arrogant attitude to have when you approach God Almighty.

Yet I find that we can be the same exact way.

We act as though we know better than God.

We act as though our timing is better than God's...

“If only God would give me a boyfriend or girlfriend now.”

“If only I didn't have to wait for my health to get better.”

“If only He would give me that job right now, then all would be better.”

We are people, checking our watches, impatiently demanding that God would work according to our time.

But instead, we should be people, who set our watches to God's time, and everytime we look down at our watch, we say, “It will come when God wants it to.” *[pauseee]*

In each of these things, rejecting God's leadership, plan, ways, and timing - we think we know better than God.

We act like we are on the throne and He is not.

We act like we are all-knowing, all-wise, and in control - only to be humbled by God, time and time again. *[pause]*

This mentality is seen vividly when God tells Samuel to warn Israel about a king, and Samuel gives a long list of warnings about having a king.

In verses 10-18, Samuel warns Israel of what exactly they are asking for. *[pause]*

You know how sometimes, we want something, but we don't think about all the negative things that could happen?

Well God, through Samuel, shared with Israel beforehand all the negative things that come with having a king.

And so Samuel's warnings about a king are warnings about the kind of king that they wanted.

They wanted a king “like all the other nations,” well this is what having that kind of king entails. *[pause]*

And if you could give a summary word or theme for these warnings, it would be this: *take*.

The king you want will take, take, and take.

He will take your sons for military work.

He will take your daughters to serve him as perfumers, cooks, and bakers for the royal court.

He will take your fields and a portion of your produce for his administration.

He will take your servants, young men, and donkeys as his servants.

He will take a portion of your flocks, and through all of this “taking” you will become his slaves, and cry out because of it. *[pause]*

Talk about a warning!

Having a king will involve huge social and economic changes for Israel that Israel isn't really thinking about.

A king will need an army, servants, food, and tons of other things in order to function as a king and have an administration.

Yet even after all of these warnings, Israel still demands a king. *[pause]*

Before having a king, they seemed to have lived in a lot of freedom and independence as people, yet they were choosing an option that would bring oppression and less freedom.

But isn't that just like sin?

Sin promises all of these good things, and we can become blind and only focus on the short-term good feelings, and not think about the long-term effects. *[pause]*

What I mean is this: sin promises a good time now, and blinds you to the bad consequences.

And even someone could warn you of the long-term, bad consequences, but you are so wrapped up in the short-term thrill. *[pause]*

All Israel could think about was the military power and leadership of a king.

All they could think about was how they could be just like everyone else.

But they didn't think about all the details of what it involves having a king.

Their mind was set, and warnings couldn't touch it. *[pause]*

Sound familiar?

Our minds get set on a path that seems so good, and seems like it will bring such joy - and Biblical warnings have no effect on us.

We tune them out because we are so desiring, so wanting of what we want.

We aren't trusting God's wisdom, but our own, for we think our plan will bring us true happiness. *[pause]*

I see this all the time in marriages.

A Christian couple is married, and they are going through a really hard time.

And one of them, or both of them, thinks, “I would be so much happier if I got a divorce.”

And they know God’s commands about divorce, yet they ignore them, for they are just so focused on the “happiness” that they think will come when they get a divorce.

And then they go through with it, and what happens?

There are consequences.

There is hurt, there is cost, there are ramifications for the kids that they didn’t quite think about in detail, etc. *[pause]*

This can happen, really, with any sin that we give into.

It looks so good, it looks like it will bring such joy and satisfaction.

You know what God thinks about it, yet what God thinks about it, sorta gets faded into the background in that moment - and you give in. *[pause]*

But once the thrill of the sin subsides, you regret it.

It didn’t bring the lasting joy and satisfaction that you were thinking.

And it brought some side-effects that you really didn’t think through, as people are hurt by your sin, or you get in trouble in some way. *[pause]*

We can be just like Israel when they demanded a king, even after hearing God’s warnings.

So how can we start to grow in this area, and not be like Israel in 1 Samuel 8? *[pause]*

We can recognize and submit to God’s Kingship.

Realize that He is on the throne, and His leadership, plan, ways, timing, and word is always right.

Even when it feels like it isn’t, it is!

Bow the knee to the King of the Universe, trust Him - His ways, His wisdom, His power, and His Word are perfect. *[pauseeee]*

And as we bridge this Old Testament text with our day, who is our King?

Isn’t it King Jesus? He is the Lord!

*And so may we remember that....*

**Jesus is King and He is all we need!**

And this King Jesus went so far as to humbly take on flesh, being “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”<sup>6</sup>

He left the place of perfection in Heaven to live in a sin-cursed world and wear a crown of thorns.

And he did it out of love for us, so that through him, he would be the way to reconcile our relationship with the Father, forgiving our sin and crediting his righteousness to our account.

So now through him, King Jesus, who died and rose again, we stand forgiven and free new creations, who have eternal life. *[pause]*

What a King he is!

**That is our King! That is our Lord!**

Will you trust His Kingship, or will you take matters into your own hands? *[pause]*

King Jesus has all authority on heaven and on earth,<sup>7</sup> will you submit to Him and obey His commands?

King Jesus possesses all wisdom, grace, and truth - will you look to Him for those things?

He is enough - He has all that we need.

Do you believe that? And do you live like that is true?

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<sup>6</sup> See Philippians 2:5-8.

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 28:18.