

“By Popular Demand” (1 Samuel 8:1–22)

One of my favorite commercials when I was growing up was from Toyota. After promoting the benefits of their cars the announcer proclaimed, “You asked for it, you got it—Toyota.” This slogan sounds like a dream, doesn’t it? You ask for it, you get it! Can you imagine having everything you want? What would your life be like? I’m sure you’d really like to know, right? You’ve heard that money, sex, alcohol, power, popularity, perfect children, toys, electronic gadgets, and leisure don’t ultimately satisfy, but you’d love to test this theory. Perhaps you think you are the exception to this rule.

In 1 Samuel 8¹ Israel approaches Samuel with a selfish request for a king. God tells Samuel to warn Israel of the foolishness of their demand. Despite an unforgettable warning, Israel insists on having a king over them. Surprisingly, God tells Samuel to grant their wish. God’s people eventually realize that their wish isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Hence, they experience the dire consequences of their faulty decision.² The point of the story is: *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.*

1. Israel demands a king (8:1–9). Our story begins with three surprising verses: **“And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.³ His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice”** (8:1–3). Samuel had successfully led Israel as a judge for decades. He was faithful to God’s people and was used by God to bring revival to Israel. However, between chapters 7 and 8 a span of several decades has transpired. Now as Samuel prepares to wrap up his ministry he appoints his sons as judges.⁴ Joel’s name means, “Yahweh is God” and Abijah means, “My Father is Yahweh.” Yet, these boys didn’t live up to their names, nor did they walk in their father’s ways. Instead, they disqualified themselves from leading Israel by disobeying the Law.⁵ Samuel’s sons “turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice” (8:3b).⁶ They were guilty of “white-collar” crimes against the state and God’s people.⁷ They put themselves before those they were supposed to serve. They were users, not servers; they were takers, not givers. Those of us in ministry need to beware of serving like Samuel’s sons. It’s easy to develop a self-centered approach to ministry. We must always strive to put people first.

There is a parallel here between Samuel and Eli. They both judged Israel. They both had two sons. Their sons acted wickedly and were rejected. Perhaps Samuel learned his parenting skills from Eli. The good news is that he doesn’t seem to have been partaking in their sinful behavior the way in which Eli did.⁸ Because his sons were not fit to succeed him, Israel perceived the need for a king. It is likely that Samuel was wrong to appoint his sons as judges. There had not been hereditary judges before; Gideon had rejected the idea (Judg 8:22–23). Judges were individually appointed by God, not by their fathers.⁹ Samuel’s sons have committed the affront against which the prophets warned (Isa 5:23; Amos 5:12).¹⁰ It is tragically ironic that Samuel rose to the top because of the failures of Eli’s sons and now his own boys end up hurting his ministry as well. Samuel should have confronted his sons or taken them before the elders. Instead, his parenting legacy was shaky at best.

Apparently, Samuel had forgotten the moral failure of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 2:12–17) and God’s judgment against Eli and his house (2:27–36). The clear parallel between the end of Eli’s life and Samuel’s makes one thing clear: Israel’s well-being cannot be guaranteed by the sons of their leaders. The best of leaders can have the worst of sons. Samuel’s old age was, therefore, a serious crisis. The peace, security, and prosperity of the years under Samuel were in jeopardy if his sons were to play a role in Israel’s future.¹¹ While we don’t live in a day of judges or kings, we live in a country where it is imperative that we “transfer truth to the next generation.” Will you ensure that you equip your children (and those in your sphere of influence) to surpass you in godliness and kingdom impact?

In 8:4–5 the Israelites make a proposal in an attempt to ensure their security: **“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, ‘Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.’”**¹² After decades of faithful service, God’s people turn on Samuel. Israel asks the question: What have you done for us lately?¹³ Not giving Samuel an opportunity to respond, they demand a king because (1) Samuel is old¹⁴ and (2) his sons are sinful. Israel’s concerns are legitimate, but this doesn’t mean that they should dismiss theocracy and demand monarchy.¹⁵ Tragically, the elders choose to correct one wrong with another wrong.¹⁶ There is no praying and seeking of the Lord’s face. There is no solemn assemblies—no crying out to God. The elders simply demand that Samuel appoint a king to lead Israel, such as all the other nations have.¹⁷ The trouble with this request is that it is a fundamental violation of the Torah, which teaches that Israel is to be distinct from all the other nations (Lev 20:26; Num 23:9). God, and God alone, is Israel’s king (Exod 15:18; Pss 10:16; 24:10; 93:1; 95:3).¹⁸ The elders are asking, in effect, to opt out of the covenant with the Lord and to adopt a pagan model of being the nation. *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.*

So was Israel’s demand for a king sinful? This issue is hotly debated by scholars who wrestle with Deut 17:14–20. I understand this passage in Deuteronomy to look forward to the Messiah who will perfectly fulfill this text.¹⁹ It was certainly God’s will for Israel to one day have a king. However, there are two problems with Israel’s request. ***First, the demand for a king is selfish in its timing.*** The problem with Israel’s demand isn’t that they want a king, but that they want a king now. Waiting for God’s best is always better than settling for something less. But saying “now” may be as disobedient as saying “no” to God. Impatience is a form of rebellion as much as any of Israel’s sins in the desert after the Exodus.²⁰ Isn’t it telling how we excuse and justify impatience? We rarely see it as sin. In what area of your life are you struggling with impatience? Are you seeking to date or get married before you should? Do you want success at work or church prematurely?

Secondly, the demand for a king is impure in its motivation. Israel wants a king for the wrong reasons. They want a king like the nations have. Israel wants power and political influence. They also want the wrong kind of king. God’s people were seeking a military leader rather than a spiritual one. Their model for the kingship was shaped by the people around them and not by God’s Word.²¹ We have a tendency to assess our problems mechanically rather than spiritually. Instead of looking to God for help we are more interested in prescribing what form God’s help must take.²² We have techniques, steps, solutions, and programs to accomplish God’s work without Him. Yet, God is saying all the while: “Look to Me!”

We are now given a snapshot into Samuel’s response to Israel’s request: **“But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to the LORD”** (1 Sam 8:6). A more literal translation is: “The matter was evil in Samuel’s eyes.” Why did Israel’s request bother Samuel so much? (1) On a personal level, Samuel probably thought the request was a rejection of his own leadership. (2) Samuel probably thought an earthly king would cause Israel to lose their focus on their heavenly King. (3) Samuel must have been displeased that the elders had determined to have a king without consulting God’s will. (4) The elders had demanded the wrong kind of king. They did not ask for a man after God’s own heart, but for a king like all the nations.²³

In spite of Samuel’s hurt, he responds rightly to rejection. The text says, “And Samuel prayed²⁴ to the Lord” (8:6b)! He didn’t argue with the Israelites and pray afterwards. He first laid the whole matter before the One who had commissioned him to lead His people. By praying Samuel was able to let go of the problem. In Samuel’s attitude and actions we have the secret of overcoming the debilitating effects of rejection! We are able to discuss everything with the Lord. By prayer we are able to receive an entirely new perspective that keeps us from harboring resentment and blaming others for our situations. Through prayer we are able to receive new direction (see 8:7–9). When we experience hurt and rejection, may we immediately seek God in prayer.

In 8:7–9 the Lord responds to Samuel: **“Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.”**²⁵ **Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day--in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods--so they are doing to you also. Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure²⁶ of the king who will reign over them.”** Twice God commands Samuel to listen to Israel (8:7, 9). The Hebrew verb “to listen” (*shama*) contains the idea of “obeying.” This is not so much a positive order as God’s negative permission or concession.²⁷ The Lord is giving His people over to their own desires. God loves His people enough to let them walk away from Him. The problem of monarchy is theological, not political. In other words, the monarchy is not a rejection of Samuel but of Yahweh; that is the point of the crisis (8:7). Additionally, this rejection is not a new happening but is characteristic in the history of Israel (8:8).²⁸ The whole history of Israel is one of “forsaking” and going after other gods. This request for a king is one more step in that continuing performance of mistrust (cf. Ps 106).²⁹ Thus in 8:9 the Lord literally says “warning you shall warn them.” God wants to give His people the opportunity to repent of their foolishness. *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.*

2. Samuel warns against kingship (8:10–18). Now Samuel warns Israel of the consequences of having a king.³⁰ **“So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. He said, ‘This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.’³¹ He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give *them* to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants”** (8:10–17). Verse 10 states that “Samuel spoke all the words of the Lord to the people.” He didn’t say less than God intended, nor did he say more. He wasn’t a man of biblical subtraction or addition. We too must speak “all the words of the Lord.” There must be no compromise when we speak on behalf of God.

This past week I was teaching Eschatology at Ecola Bible School in Cannon Beach. After class, a female student who sat in the front row began telling me about her dad. She shared that her parents divorced and that her dad was an unbeliever. She told me that she had invited her dad to my final two lectures, but he refused. However, since it was her birthday, he finally agreed to attend. She then asked me what topic I was going to be teaching. When I told her that I was teaching on hell her heart sank, and she was visibly shaken. I assured her that I would be as sensitive as I could. But I also told her that from my experience many unbelievers are willing to hear the truth. After class this young woman’s father approached me and told me how much he appreciated my teaching. Things don’t always work out so well, but the principle remains: We must also not apologize for God’s Word—it is powerful (Heb 4:12–13).

In 8:11–17 Samuel unveils the specific consequences of kingship. Samuel’s description reveals that a king would establish a permanent bureaucratic institution based on two primary branches of government: (1) a permanent military and (2) administrative support.³² To underwrite this form of government, vast quantities of personal family resources would have to be given over to the king.³³ The key word “take” (*laqach*) occurs six times in seven verses (8:11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).³⁴ In each case, that which the king “will take” is placed before the Hebrew verb for emphasis. The kings would be “takers” who would diminish others to further their own interests.³⁵ The verb translated “appoint” (*sum*) in 8:1, 5 ironically is used twice in 8:11, 12. Samuel can appoint a king for Israel, but thereafter that king will do the appointing, and not necessarily in a way that will please the people.³⁶

Tragically, Israel's first king would have the wrong nature, spirit, and character. Saul will oppress his people in atrocious and irreparable ways. He will not be a king who gives, but a king who takes. What a contrast between this exacting king and the true King of kings, who "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Saul will take all he can; Jesus will give all that is His and give all that He is! If you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, would you do so today? King Jesus is the perfect ruler. His word can be trusted. If you believe in Him, you will have eternal life.

Samuel concludes his list of consequences with a final warning in 8:18: "**Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.**"³⁷ Israel asked the Lord for a king, but before it's all over, they will ask God to take their king back! *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.* Through Samuel, God warned Israel that they would soon cry out for relief from the king they were demanding. But on that day, the Lord would not answer them.³⁸ We must understand that when we deliberately choose our own path, we should not expect God to deliver us from the trouble that may result. We must be prepared to suffer the earthly consequences for our sin. *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.*

3. Israel insists upon a king (8:19–22). Even though Samuel warned Israel about the consequences of having a king, they refuse to listen. In 8:19–20 the narrator explains: "**Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, 'No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.'**" The people wouldn't listen to God's Word; their only concern is their *own* interest.³⁹ You've probably heard the expression "me, myself, and I," right? Well, "we," "us," and "our" appear in this short speech.⁴⁰ Israel is caught up in themselves. The people want a king even if this change brings higher taxes, oppression, forced labor, and military enlistment. They don't care; they've made up their mind. Instead of the Lord's kingship, they look to a visible human kingship.⁴¹ Israel is concerned with their own battle! Yet, God was (and is) more than capable of leading His people into battle (7:10). He is a warrior! Please don't assume you can do better than God. Let Him fight your battles. Trust in Him to guide you and lead you through the challenges of your life.

Our story concludes in 8:21–22:⁴² "**Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD'S hearing. The LORD said to Samuel, 'Listen to their voice and appoint them a king.' So Samuel said to the men of Israel, 'Go every man to his city'**" [Samuel sent the elders away because he *first* wanted to receive word from the Lord before choosing a new king.] The people failed to give Samuel the recognition that should crown an honorable career.⁴³ Sadly, leaders who are faithful to God may not always appear successful to men. Nevertheless, Samuel did the only thing he knew to do . . . he takes the matter to the Lord in prayer! Despite being rejected by God's people, Samuel remained faithful to the Lord to the end! For the third time (cf. 8:7, 9) the indignant and reluctant prophet is commanded to listen to the people. It's easy to read these words and rub our eyes in disbelief: Is God really giving into Israel's smallness, their unbelief, and their worldliness? If having a king is so bad, why is God giving them one? If demanding a king is, in effect, rejecting God as King, why does God assent to being rejected? The answer seems to be that God tends to exhibit more grace and patience than we suspect. He gives Israel over to her own desires. Yet, the Lord was setting in motion events that gave Israel a king who was far more "like all the other nations" than anyone could have imagined.⁴⁴ *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.*

Three principles stand out from this chapter: ***First, beware of jumping on various popular bandwagons.*** Don't follow the crowd by blindly jumping on programs and techniques that promise success. Ask God to show you the difference between His leadership and worldly proposals. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any areas of your life where you have been following the crowd after worldly desires. God, and God alone, must remain King of kings.

Secondly, we're most prone to forsake God during times of prosperity. Prosperity seems to be a more fertile breeding ground for discontent and sin than poverty. It's commonly assumed that people walk away from God in the midst of test, trials, and tragedies; however, these difficulties often break people and draw them to Christ. Conversely, God's abundant blessings can lead to lethargy and rebellion. (Contemporary America is a prime example of this phenomenon!) Samuel's excellent leadership as God's prophet in Israel achieved a high level of justice among the people and peace with historic enemies. But in his old age, the people became restless and dissatisfied. They decided it was time for a change in government.⁴⁵ In the process of this paradigm shift, they began to wander from the Lord. Be on guard when you are experiencing various forms of prosperity and blessing. If your marriage, family, and church are experiencing blessing, expect spiritual attack. Seek community and accountability. Remain humble and teachable.

Thirdly, knowledge of the truth is insufficient. There is a difference between having the truth and loving the truth; only the latter leads to obeying the truth. We should pray for a soft heart, for a teachable spirit, for preservation from arrogance of our own stupidity.⁴⁶ First Samuel 8 is your mirror.⁴⁷ When you look into the mirror of God's Word you may discover that, like Israel, you are prone to wander, you are arrogantly independent, and you are selfishly motivated. Let God's Word treat these symptoms. Don't stop with just knowing the Word—apply it! Being a “doer of the Word” (Jas 1:22) will bring heaven down to earth in your Christian experience.

We leave this chapter with a sense of nostalgia for a lost opportunity. How would Israel's history have developed if they had followed Samuel's warning, refused to be like other nations, and stubbornly lived by faith, with the Lord as their King? What we get instead is about a five-hundred-year history of monarchy in which every detail of Samuel's forecasting came true.⁴⁸ Similarly, if you are considering a sinful prospect today, don't go down that road. It's not worth it! Instead, heed the warnings of God's Word.

The classic line in the movie *Love Affair* is when Katherine Hepburn advises Annette Bening: “The trick in life isn't getting what you want, my dear, it's wanting it after you get it.” What are those things that you want today that may turn out to be curses? Will you commit to seeking the Lord and His desires for your life? Psalm 37:4 says: “Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.” When you delight yourself in the Lord, His desires become your desires. When you seek God and enjoy Him, He then gives you the desires of your heart in His time and in His way. Wait on the Lord—He is worth waiting for. Always remember: *Watch what you want; you might get what you ask for.* Instead, may we ask: “Lord, what do you want?”

Scripture References

1 Samuel 8:1–22

Genesis 17:16; 49:8–12

Exodus 15:16–18; 22:23

Psalms 74:12–15; 47:2–3

Psalms 118:8–9; 146:3

Deuteronomy 17:14–20

1 Chronicles 22:12–13; 2 Chronicles 7:17–22; 15:2; 31:20–21

Study Questions

1. Israel jumped on the kingship bandwagon (1 Samuel 8:4–5, 19–20). Name some of the bandwagons that Christians are tempted to climb on in modern society. How can we avoid jumping on such bandwagons? How can we help those who have already climbed aboard? How can we help one another stand against the crowd? Holy Spirit, please reveal any areas of my life where I have been following the crowd after worldly desires.
2. Do I ever persistently pray for the wrong things? Has God ever given me what I asked for and then I was distressed with the consequences? Am I careful to pray: “Your will be done, Lord?” How does God in His sovereignty bring good even out of my stubbornness, rebellion, and bad decisions? Take a moment to thank God and praise Him for His awesome and sovereign majesty.
3. Samuel was hurt by Israel’s rejection (1 Samuel 8:6). When have I experienced rejection from God’s people? How did I deal with this rejection? How did Samuel deal with his rejection? What can I learn from this episode? What are the consequences of becoming bitter and resentful toward God’s people? Have I ever seen this happen in my own life or another believer’s life? What could have been done differently?
4. Is it especially difficult for Americans living in a democratic society to understand the concept of kingship? Can we acknowledge God as King and still function within a democratic society? Are there any parallels to church government issues? How can I respect my church leaders and still honor God as King? How do I deal with poor national and church leadership? Read 1 Timothy 2:1–4; 1 Peter 2:13–17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; and Hebrews 13:17.
5. Can I trust God to provide the church with faithful servant-leaders? What should I do when my leaders are not faithful? Has God called me to leadership? If so, will I seek Him in private first and trust Him to reveal it publicly in His time? If I have been called, will I ask God for the grace to trust Him to publicly confirm my call and not seek the approval of men? Read Galatians 1:10.

Notes

¹ Chapter 8 begins a new unit that continues through chapter 12.

² Eaton aptly states: “God disciplined Israel by giving them what they wanted. Sometimes if we are insistent on going our own way, God administers a powerful rebuke by giving us our desires.” Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 39.

³ Samuel’s boys are approximately fifty miles from his hometown in Ramah. Thus, Samuel’s control over his sons or even knowledge of their actions would always be at least two days after the fact.

⁴ Firth insightfully notes: “. . . Within the period of Israel’s occupation of the land they [Samuel’s sons] are the first males to be described by the noun ‘judge’ (see Judg. 4:4), all the previous judges have been described through the verb they had ‘judged’ Israel. This shift in terminology may be significant since previous judges had been raised up by Yahweh, something not said of Samuel sons.” David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 112.

⁵ A basic requirement of a judge in the days of Moses was to hate “dishonest gain” (Exod 18:21).

⁶ “Turned aside” and “perverted” are identical in the Hebrew text and tie the three sins—“dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice”—together. Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

⁷ Gary D. Vreeland, *The Darker Side of Samuel, Saul, and David* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 97.

⁸ Deffinbaugh notes that “our text in no ways suggests that Samuel is another Eli, a weak and pathetic leader. There is no greater judge in all of Israel’s history than Samuel. Samuel often speaks to the Israelites for God. No prophecy of Eli is recorded. In fact, Eli receives his revelations second-hand (see 2:27-36; 3:1-18). Samuel is a great man of prayer (see 7:5; 8:6, 21; 15:11). We do not read of Eli’s prayers. Samuel is a decisive leader, who acts where Saul would not (1 Samuel 15:32-33). Eli could not be called decisive, and some may not even call him a leader. Samuel is instrumental in the military defeat of the Philistines (7:13), but Eli is associated with a period of military defeat (compare 4:9 and 7:13-14). Samuel is a man of great personal integrity (see 12:1-5), while the same cannot be said for Eli, who seems to have gotten fat off the meats his sons wrongly acquire (see 2:29). Samuel’s death is the occasion for national mourning (25:1; 28:3), but this is not so with Eli’s death (4:12-22).” Bob Deffinbaugh, “Give Us a King!” (1 Sam 8:1-22): www.bible.org/seriespage/give-us-king-1-samuel-81-22; accessed 4 December 2011.

⁹ Dumbrell writes: “What appointments were needed were made by Yahweh as a crisis in Israel occurred. Moreover, the office of judge had ascribed the final governmental decisions to Yahweh alone. Not only could no successor be predicted from a human point of view, but even the center from which a consequent rule would be exercised was not known in advance.” William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 134.

¹⁰ Leithart notes: “Samuel was responsible for putting his sons in office (8:1), and the Torah explicitly says those appointed to office must reject bribery. When Moses set up judges and elders of Israel, he selected men who were free from love of money. Samuel must bear some responsibility for the situation. He is often compared to Moses in the early chapters of 1 Samuel, but he failed to imitate Moses’ care in selecting rulers and successors. The text issues a sharp warning to Christian leaders: Even leaders who are not Elis but are as faithful as Samuel, may see their work undone by dishonest ‘sons.’” Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 67.

¹¹ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 142.

¹² Constable notes: “The Israelites had pressed their leaders for a king at least twice in their past history. The first time was during Gideon’s judgeship (Judg. 8:22), and the second was during Abimelech’s conspiracy (Judg. 9:2). Now in Samuel’s judgeship they demanded one again.” Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Samuel,” 2010 ed.: www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf, 33.

¹³ Admittedly, instead of seeking a king on their own, Israel sought the right man from the spokesman of the Lord. This is commendable.

¹⁴ Samuel’s death is not recorded until 1 Sam 25:1.

¹⁵ Theocracy is a system of government where priests rule in the name of God. Monarchy (Gk. *monarkhia* the rule of one) is a form of government where kings rule.

¹⁶ These elders are presumably the same body who decided to use the ark of the covenant as a good luck charm in the war with the Philistines (4:3). Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 149 n. 5.

¹⁷ Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), Electronic ed.

¹⁸ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 115.

¹⁹ See Deffinbaugh, “Give Us a King!”: www.bible.org/seriespage/give-us-king-1-samuel-81-22 for an outstanding defense of this position.

²⁰ Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 154.

²¹ John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 223.

²² Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*. Focus on the Bible (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000 [1988]), 70.

²³ James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 119.

²⁴ Various words for “prayer” occur only eleven times in 1 Samuel but five times referred to Hannah’s activity (1:10, 12, 26, 27, 2:1), four times to Samuel’s (7:5, 8:6, 12:19, 23), and twice in Eli’s speech to his sons (2:25, 25).

²⁵ The Hebrew word order in 1 Sam 8:7 is emphatic: “not you [their judge] have they rejected, but me [their true King].” Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 120 remarks that the term translated “rejected” (*maas*) is a technical term for the people’s sin (2 Kgs 17:15). He also writes: “The rationale for Yahweh’s acquiescence is not offered in the text. A parallel may be found in God granting Balaam permission to go with the princes of Midian even after he told them that was not the divine will (Num 22:12, 20).”

²⁶ The word rendered “procedure” (*mishpat*) is built on the same consonants which are the basis for the verb “to judge” (*shaphat*) and for the noun “judgment” (*mishpat*). There is a play on words: “Do you want a king to judge you? Then I will declare to you the custom or procedure [same word, essentially] of the king who will rule.”

²⁷ David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 251.

²⁸ Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 75–76.

²⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 62.

³⁰ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 117 remarks that this is the third longest recorded speech by Samuel in the Bible (eighty-five words in the Hebrew).

³¹ Klein, *1 Samuel* 76 calls attention to the subtle wordplay in this chapter between (“custom, justice”) in 8:9 and 11 and the root from which that word comes which is used six other places in this chapter. While the people had protested the perversion of “justice” by Samuel sons, Samuel indicates the kind of “justice” which they could expect from future kings.

³² Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed.

³³ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 117.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 63 notes that it is the business of centralized government to “take,” whether by taxation, confiscation, or the draft.

³⁵ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 117.

³⁶ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 121.

³⁷ The LXX (the Greek OT) adds the phrase “because you have chosen for yourselves a king.”

³⁸ The combination of “cry out” (*zaaq*) and “answer” (*anah*) appears only in 1 Sam 7:9; 8:18; Mic 3:4; and Hab 2:11.

³⁹ This is a direct repudiation of their calling as a nation of priest set apart as holy to the Lord (Exod 19:5–6). Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 233.

⁴⁰ The pronoun “we” is even emphatic in the Hebrew (1 Sam 8:20).

⁴¹ Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 261.

⁴² Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” Electronic ed. observes: “The eight speeches in chapter 8 constitute a remarkable chiasm in which the second element in each pair reverses the roles of speaker and addressee:

A. The people to Samuel (v. 5)

B. Samuel to the Lord (v. 6)

C. The Lord to Samuel (vv. 7-9)

D. Samuel to the people (vv. 10-18)

D’. *MV The people to Samuel (vv. 19-20)

C’. Samuel to the Lord (v. 21)

B’. The Lord to Samuel (v. 22a)

A’. Samuel to the people (v. 22b).”

⁴³ Samuel remained loyal to the people of Israel in spite of their rejection of him. His role was reduced, but his lightened responsibility gave him the opportunity to spend more time training promising young men in the schools of the prophets.

⁴⁴ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 118.

⁴⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 55.

⁴⁶ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 73.

⁴⁷ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 74.

⁴⁸ Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*, 58. Peterson also observes: “And Israel will finally learn who their king is, for when the Babylonian exile takes place some four or five hundred years later, putting a definitive end to kings in Israel, they will spend those years of captivity singing and praising the marvelous psalms that proclaim and praise God as King. Those approximately five hundred years of mostly negative ‘king’ experience, quite unlike what they anticipated along the lines of ‘the other nations,’ will play their part in the revelation and recognition and reception of Jesus as King.”