

Israel Demands a King

Key Verse: *“The LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”*
—*I Samuel 8:7*

Selected Scriptures:
I Samuel 8:4-7;
10:17-26

SAMUEL JUDGED ISRAEL faithfully and intended that his sons, Joel and Abijah, continue after him when he was old, but they manifested wickedness, took bribes, and perverted judgment. Accordingly, the elders of Israel came to Samuel declaring that his sons' conduct was unrighteous. Additionally, they demanded a king as their replacements so they could be like other nations. Samuel was greatly displeased with this request, interpreting it as a rejection of him and a failure to appreciate the sterling service

he had rendered to the nation.—*I Sam. 8:1-6*

In our Key Verse, the Lord counseled Samuel to accept the people's plea for a king, noting they were actually rejecting God who had reigned over them and provided for all their needs as his covenanted nation. Israel did not properly appreciate that divine intervention delivered them from Egyptian bondage nor the fact that their serving other gods was an abomination in God's sight. Nevertheless, Samuel forewarned the people of the harsh treatment they would experience from the kings who would reign over them. Despite all this, the people did not heed his warning and continued to ask for a king.—*vss. 10-20*

The Lord then directed Samuel to call the people together at Mizpeh and emphasize that in requesting a king, they were failing to take into consideration the marvelous manner in which he had cared for them as their ruler. This did not change their minds, so the Lord allowed Samuel to acquiesce.—I Sam. 10:17-19

Ultimately, Saul was selected by the Lord as Israel's first monarch. He was not seeking this position, because when the choice fell on him, he was hiding "among the stuff." Nevertheless, God knew his whereabouts and brought him forth to receive his anointing. Saul was taller than any of the people, and Samuel informed them that he was the one that God had chosen.—vss. 20-24

Although Saul initially served Israel well in his capacity as king, as events proceeded, he became disobedient to the Lord. Many years later, Samuel, again in conformity with God's instructions, anointed the boy David as Israel's second king. This was Samuel's last recorded official act in serving the nation. Paul in Hebrews 11:32-35 identifies him as one of the ancient Biblical heroes who endured much, by faith, to obtain a better resurrection.

It is important for Gospel Age saints to reflect upon the experiences of natural Israel for the purpose of avoiding some of the mistakes that they as a covenanted nation made, thereby causing them to lose out on the privilege of becoming priests and kings in God's kingdom. (Exod. 19:6) The duty of every Christian is to follow the course that is outlined in the Bible that merits our Heavenly Father's approval. The Lord will not coerce his people into doing good, but will allow us, if we so choose, to persist in an evil course and to suffer the fruits of unrighteousness.

May our attitude of obedience and reverence for the Creator always embody this spirit. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth."—Ps. 96:10 ■