



# GOD OF THE FATHERLESS

The Story Of God  
& Samuel

3



## Yes, No & Maybe

1. I have spent a great deal of effort to build security for myself and those I love.
2. My home is a safe place and in no danger of crime.
3. When faced with a challenge in a group setting, I cringe when people appoint me their leader.
4. If we could get better political leaders, our country would be much better.
5. Most people in our community live in fear, rather than in freedom.

## Dig Deeper

### READ 1 Samuel 8:1-22

#### DESPERATION CAUSES BAD IDEAS:

► **8:1 When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders.** Because of his age, Samuel appoints his sons to help him be leaders (literally judges) and share the responsibility. Unlike Eli's sons, becoming a judge was not hereditary. God had appointed all judges before, as he had Samuel.

► **8:3 But his sons did not follow his ways.** The specifics of the young judges' misconduct are briefly but starkly described, that is, they deviated from the straight and narrow. Instead of pursuing "justice," which is the task of a "judge," they went after "gain." This word seems to have a violent connotation. The sense is "a piece that is cut off, (illegal) profit or gain." A basic requirement of a judge in the days of Moses was to hate "dishonest gain" (Exodus 18:21). It is worth noting that Joel and Abijah were judges in the far south, in Beersheba, some fifty miles from Samuel's home in Ramah.

This introduces a further difference between Samuel and his two sons and the earlier situation with Eli and his boys. Hophni and Phinehas were working in Shiloh under the direct supervision of Eli. Eli could not escape some considerable measure of responsibility for the conduct of his sons (see 1 Samuel 2:29). However, Joel and Abijah were a long way from Samuel's direct observation and influence.

► **8:5 "Now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."** They wanted to rely upon a strong military leader, and not on God and His leadership alone, for help in dealing with enemies. What was offensive to God, and to Samuel His spokesman, was the people's yearning to look for help in another direction.

- What was it about kingship, in particular kingship "like all the nations," that was so appealing to the elders of that day? How do we still struggle with this?

#### HOW GOD RESPONDS:

► **8:7 "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.**" - It was not so much that the people had rejected Samuel (which they had, according to the end of verse 8), but they had rejected God from being king over them. All acceptable forms of leadership in Israel had always acknowledged the absolute priority of the Lord's rule over his people (cf. Judges 8:23). It is interesting to note that prior to this point in the Biblical narrative God had only occasionally been called "king" (Exodus 15:18; Numbers 23:21; Deuteronomy 33:5). This may have something to do with the negative connotations of the term that we are about to hear from Samuel (1 Samuel 8:11-17). The much more frequent use of the vocabulary of kingship applied to God after Israel had a king (more than twenty times in the Psalms alone!) may reflect the need then to emphasize the kingship of God over against human kingship. Be that as it may, the request here for a king "like all the nations" was a clear repudiation of their calling as the Lord's people

## Dig Deeper... Continued

- How does God respond to rejection? What does this tell you about His character?

### TAKE, TAKE, TAKE:

► **8:11-16 “He will take...** - The “ways” (or the “justice”) of the king who would reign over them are characterized by the repeated verb “take.” He will “take” their sons (v. 11), their daughters (v. 13), the best of their fields, vineyards, and olive orchards (v. 14), a tenth of their produce (v. 15), their servants, young men, and donkeys (v. 16). The verb “take” also characterized the “ways” of Eli’s sons (see 1 Samuel 2:14, 16), as well as those of Samuel’s sons (8:3). The implication seems to be that with the king they had asked for, the problems of self-serving power that they had experienced at the hands of these young men would only be intensified.

• What does it say about God that His first concern is that his people will be in a relationship with a leader who is a taker instead of a giver?

• Is our relationship with God a “give & take” relationship, or a “give & give” one...or something else?

► **8:17 And you yourselves will be his slaves** - Samuel’s catalog of the “justice” they could expect from their king came to a dramatic climax with the words, “and you yourselves will be his slaves!” If they insisted on rejecting the divine King who redeemed them from slavery in Egypt, they would find themselves in slavery again. And this time, He says he won’t spring them free.

• With slavery in Egypt so fresh in their minds, what do you think drives humans back into this kind of desire?

► **8:22 Listen to them and give them a king** - Many years later, the Son of God stood before the great pagan political power of that day—the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Pilate put a question to Jesus: “Are you the king of the Jews?” His reply was: “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36).

Do you see what he was saying? “I am not a king like all the other nations.”

The good news is that there is a king worth having, but he is a king whose kingship is altogether different from the king demanded by the elders of Israel in 1 Samuel 8. His is not “of this world.” To think that leaders like the leaders of this world can give us security, peace, and justice is very foolish.

The message of the gospel is that there is a king whose justice is altogether different from the “justice” Samuel warned the people they would get from their king. For Jesus is a king who does not take, he gives.

• What kind of king do you want? What kind of king is God offering?

• What does this story reveal to us about God’s character?

## My Prayer...

1. How am I rejecting God’s leadership in all areas of my life?
2. What kind of king is God offering for my life?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?