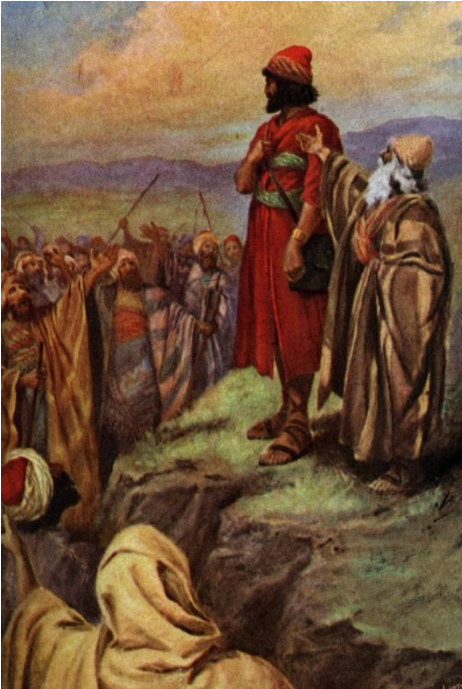


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 4



ISRAEL DESIRES A KING

Scripture Texts: 1 Samuel 8; 1 Samuel 9

Today we study how decisions that people make at a time of low spiritual condition have an effect upon their lives and upon the lives of their posterity. For what reasons did the people want a king? Two reasons – they were alienated from God, and they desired to be like other people. How many professing Christians today are like these Israelites of old? Human nature changes very little! For many people, religion is something beautiful on the outside, but hollow and meaningless within.

To rely on our best judgment to the neglect of God's leading is sinful and disastrous. To neglect the right rearing of children has far-reaching, harmful effects.

MEMORY VERSE: *It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.—Psalm 118:9*

The Elder's Request

1 Samuel 8:1-5 Israel had spent many years under the good leadership of Samuel, judge and prophet, who carried out the dictates of the Lord. Now he was old, and they faced the prospect of losing him and being under the judgeship of wicked men, who were after money, took bribes, and could not be trusted to judge cases fairly. The men were Samuel's sons but were not like Samuel. They **walked not in his ways**. The elders of Israel considered what to do. They looked at the surrounding nations – those God had separated them from to make Israel His **peculiar treasure**, His holy nation (**Exodus 19:5-6**) – and desired to be like them. The elders asked Samuel to **make us a king**. They gave three reasons: **thou art old, thy sons walk not in thy ways, and that we also may be like all the nations**.

The Lord's Answer

1 Samuel 8:6-7 Now that he was old, Samuel was ready to retire from his heavy responsibilities and to enjoy the fruits of his labors. He appointed his own sons as judges, a thing which had never been done before, since God had always appointed the judges. This was a blunder – proven by the fact that his sons walked not in his ways.

Samuel went to the Lord for counsel. Late, but he prayed to the Lord. Surprisingly, the Lord said to **hearken to the voice of the people**. It was too late to change the decision they had made. God has given man a free will and does not take it away, even when they may make the wrong choice. **They have rejected me**. The Lord had been governing Israel by giving directions through His prophets. But Israel forgot Him and turned to others. A sin-darkened heart had resulted, and they were unable to realize their grave error. The Lord, through Samuel, warned of the oppressive ways of the kings, but their sinful desires stopped their ears and blinded their eyes so they could not hear or see the will of God. The devil showed a false picture of what a happy life their heathen neighbors were enjoying and made them forget the great life the Lord had provided for them. God granted their request, even though their motives were wrong.

As the Lord governed and gave direction through His prophets in Israel's day, now He guides His people through true pastors and ministers. He uses holy men of God, called to lead His people in the right way. After weighing almost all the factors, their best judgment was to ask for a king. We, as people of all ages of time, must realize that we cannot depend upon our judgment (**Jeremiah 10:23**). There is a better way, the mind of Christ.

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Saul Chosen King

1 Samuel 9:1-22 Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly. God did not abandon Israel. He chose the man to be their king – Saul. We read in these verses how Samuel met Saul, but it was the direct voice of the Lord that pointed Saul out to him and told him how to proceed. The words *young man* have reference to a man in the prime of life. He was also a man of splendid physique. God had a special work for Saul, and that was to save Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. This is the type of young people God desires and has need of. It takes real men and women to do the special work that God needs done. Saul set out to do faithfully the less important work – that of finding his father’s animals, but he found a kingdom instead. Many times when we are faithfully doing the ordinary things that seem so trivial, God opens our eyes to new opportunities of service that we had never thought of before.

A True Friend

1 Samuel 9:17-27 Saul found a great friend in Samuel. Even though the Prophet was not in favor of having a king over Israel, yet when the request was granted, and the man was chosen by God, Samuel befriended Saul and did everything he could to help Saul in his difficult task. Much of the greatness of Samuel’s character was revealed here in this transition.

There will be times when things are done differently than the way we would like. A true friend will work for its success, anyway. We can never thank God enough for good friends. Many young people, who are head and shoulders above their peers who are seeking for material gain, need a good friend to recognize their abilities and lead them into lives of greater usefulness. There is no greater honor than to be chosen to do a special work for the Lord.

A Real Experience

The troubles of these people began when they put their trust in the ark and forgot the God of the ark. How many people today cling to certain practices or to certain customs without having the experience of a real fellowship with God in their hearts? Do we look upon the Bible as the Israelites looked upon the ark? Some may keep a copy around the house as a sort of good-luck piece to ward off some kind of catastrophe. They rarely read it; they never discover the spiritual blessings contained in it. The true Christian puts his faith in Christ to save and to keep him from sin and not in outward ceremonies and rites.

JUST A THOUGHT

To have strength in the crisis, prepare in the calm.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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