

**INTRO:** “Just last week James Harden turned down \$103M to play for the NBA’s Houston Rockets because he disagreed with owner Tilman Fertitta’s political opinions.”<sup>1</sup> Happily James Harden can probably make \$103M playing for some other team. Sadly, though, we are about to see OT Israel make the same kind of decision, for the same kind of reasons, but because they disagree with God’s ways, and at even greater cost to themselves. If you’ll turn with me to 1Sam 8, page 230 in your pew Bible, we’re going to think together on the time when Israel asked Samuel to appoint for them a king like all the other nations had. We’re going to see how God responds to that request, and what it will cost Israel to get it. And I hope we’ll be cautioned not to do the same ourselves, but rather to trust in Christ as the only King for the church and the soul.

8:1-3 *When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.<sup>2</sup> Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after [illicit]<sup>3</sup> gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.*” Decades have now passed since chapter 7. Samuel is old. And in his old age, he tries to prepare Israel for his departure. But oddly, the prophet never seems to pray about this. He just does it. “*He made his sons judges.*” The optics on this are not good, and they get worse, because his sons have good names, but bad reputations. Joel means Yahweh is God, and Abijah means My Father is God,<sup>4</sup> but they both trade justice for money. They are just as corrupt as Hophni and Phinehas were in chapter 2. Dt. 16:19 specifically says of judges “*You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe....*” They’re violating the ninth commandment by violating the eighth—false witness for the sake of forbidden wealth.

Yet the text doesn’t fault Samuel here like it faulted Eli. Samuel’s ways were God’s ways, and God never rebukes Samuel as He did Eli. Samuel’s sons just refused to follow his example.<sup>5</sup> But then why would Samuel make them judges? The text doesn’t say, but he probably has mixed motives like the rest of us. He doesn’t want his death to leave a leadership vacuum in Israel. That’s fine. But it looks like he wants to cement his own legacy in a family dynasty of judges built on his own sons. Hmmmm. Regardless, their corruption becomes the occasion for national (congregational) discontent in vv.4-5.

**1S 8:4-5** *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.’* This is not a full on congregational meeting or national convocation. This is the leaders, the influencers, the heads of households, approaching Samuel. They call the meeting, and they confront Samuel. Samuel is too old to keep leading, and Joel and Abijah are unqualified to lead. Their diagnosis is right. And they even have the law on their side, or so it seems. When they say “a king...like all the nations”, they’re alluding to Dt 17:14 “*When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you.*” It goes on to say that the king couldn’t be a foreigner. He couldn’t lead the people back to Egypt or multiply wives for himself. And he had to write out his own personal copy of the law to keep his heart low. That would be the way to keep the kingdom (Dt 17:14-20).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dailycaller.com/2020/11/17/report-james-harden-tilman-fertitta-donald-trump-houston-rockets/> accessed 11/19/20.

<sup>2</sup> Why is it significant that Joel and Abijah were judges in Beersheba? This place apparently comes out of nowhere—not Mizpah, where Samuel judged Israel; not Kiriath-Jearim, where the ark rested for 20 years. Not Bethel or Gilgal, where Samuel made a circuit. Not Shiloh where the ark used to be. So, why mention Beersheba?

<sup>3</sup> Tsumura, NICOT, 246.

<sup>4</sup> Tsumura, NICOT, 246.

<sup>5</sup> More likely, Samuel did things right and his sons were still wayward, as happens later with Judahite kings and their sons in 1&2Kings. Some of the best kings had some of the worst sons, and vice versa.

These leaders are presenting their idea as obedience to Dt 17:14. Their saying “it’s time for us to do Dt 17:14 now.” And you can see their point. It looks reasonable and even obedient. The period of the judges was a mess. Eli’s sons were immoral. Samuel’s sons are greedy. And Samuel has one foot in the grave. So it must be time for a king. Samuel’s gotta go for this, right?

1S 8:6-8 “*But the thing displeased Samuel when they said ‘Give us a king to judge us.’*” Now, why did it displease Samuel? Well, maybe because Samuel is so godly and he knows it’s going to displease God as we’ll see shortly. But it looks like Samuel is also taking this a little too personally. God’s answer kinda gives that away. “It’s not you Samuel; it’s me.” What do they want a king to do? Judge us. But judging the people was Samuel’s job at Mizpah in 7:8. So Samuel may be taking their request as a referendum on his own ministry. But judging Israel was also the job Samuel saved for his boys to do. So this request for a king to judge them calls into question Samuel’s faulty fatherly judgment in appointing his own sons as judges over Israel in 8:1. The elders are also rejecting Samuel’s idea of a family dynasty in his sons. This is not how Samuel saw things going. They’re jeopardizing Samuel’s legacy.<sup>6</sup> Now, now he prays; so what will God say to all this? Let’s keep reading in v.6.

“*And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.’*” God interprets not only the elders’ request but also the heart that motivated them to ask it. In effect, God says “Get over yourself, Samuel. It’s not you; it’s me. OK, it is also kind of you, but it’s only you because you represent me.” Now, on the face of it, the elders have Deut 17:14 in their back pocket—legal eagles, right? God allows us a king according to the law, even a king like all the nations. It’s time for hope and change. Let’s pull the trigger and Make Israel great again (MIGA). But if Samuel was wrong to take this personally, God was right to take it personally.

Yes, Dt 17 allowed for a king, foresaw a time when they’d ask something like this, but it would have to be “*a king whom the Lord your God will choose.*” They want Samuel to do the appointing, and the following context will indicate that they want a king that the surrounding nations would like, not a king that God would choose. What’s more, God interprets it right here in terms of the exodus, Sinai, the Ten commandments, rejection of the first commandment, rejection of God as king. To God, this is not an innocent implementation of Dt 17. The elders’ hearts are in this for apostasy and idolatry. They are rejecting the first command of the Ten Commandments again, just like they always have. They’re idolizing the prospect of pagan kingship, and passing it off as obedience to Dt 17.<sup>7</sup>

But God sees it as rejection of Ex 19, the whole Sinai covenant that God made with them in **Exodus 19:5-6**.<sup>8</sup> “*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured*

<sup>6</sup> Tsumura, *NICOT* 245, following R.P. Gordon, who “sees here Samuel’s ‘little dynastic experiment.’ This ‘experiment’ of Samuel’s was certainly a breach of the old practice of waiting for the divine appointment of a new judge and was possibly a cause of his family problems. It certainly foreshadows the problems of hereditary kingship in obviating divine choice.” So also Firth, “Samuel is concerned that they have rejected him, and has sensed that his judgeship is questioned” (AOTC, 116).

<sup>7</sup> So also Firth: “The language of being ‘like the nations’ evokes Deut. 17:14-20, and so cloaks their request with apparent legitimacy” (Firth, AOTC 116).

<sup>8</sup> I saw this on my own and am encouraged to see the approach confirmed by Baldwin (TOTC 90-91), Tsumura (NICOT, 250-252), Firth (AOTC 114), and Brueggemann (62, 66). Here are the questions that led me to the right understanding. What is different about 1Sam 8 that disobeys Dt 17? Dt 17 makes it seem like Israel is well within their rights here in 1Sam 8. So where are they going wrong here? Is it them asking Samuel to do the appointing instead of God doing the choosing as in Dt 17? Is it in the complete absence of the judging function in Dt 17 as part of God’s design for human kingship under the OC? Is it that judgment in Dt 17:8-13 was for priests to mete out rather than kings (priestly breastplate of judgment in Ex 28:29-30)? Is it that the people are impatient in initiating this change rather than waiting for God to initiate in His own time? Is it in what they mean by a king to judge us like all the nations” rather than in what God means in Dt 17:14 “I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me”? Is it that they actually want a foreigner to rule over them as king in disobedience to Dt 17? Is that what they mean by “a king to judge us like all the nations?” Or maybe most likely, is it that they have not waited for God

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*possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*” The elders want out of THAT. God calls their bluff. You’re not trying to obey the covenant. You’re trying to get out of it. Israel had committed to that covenant and its judgments/rules (*mishpat*) in **Ex 24:3** where Moses presented them with all God’s judgments and rules, and “*all the people answered with one voice and said ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do’*” (cf. Dt 26:16-17). But now, now they want a different king to judge them, with a different set of judgments. That’s how God takes it. If God established Israel as a kingdom to Him at Sinai, then what did that make Him to them? King. They are his kingdom; therefore, He is their king. That is what He says they are rejecting—Him as king. Therefore, they don’t want to be His kingdom of priests anymore; they don’t want to be a holy nation to Yahweh. That’s how God takes it. God takes this not as “we want in on Dt 17,” but “we want out of Ex 19. We want out of the covenant altogether.”

It’s **understandable**. The covenant doesn’t look like it’s working. The judges were a mess. Eli and his sons were immoral. Samuel is retiring. His sons are unqualified. So what’s the use? Let’s just assimilate and be a nation “like all the nations”. Israel...out. Understandable...but no matter how reasonable it sounds, no matter what bible verse they can quote—for all that, it is still apostasy in God’s eyes. And reasoned apostasy is not acceptable to God just because it can rationalize its way to seeming biblical.

This is a National Fall Narrative. It is the forfeiting of covenant relationship with God. National Israel, as Corporate Adam, is again rejecting God’s moral rule and taking the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They are asking with Satan all over again, “Did God really say? You will not surely die...” They want out from under God’s law to be ruled by a different set of judgments altogether, because they think that’s a better way to secure a better life than God has given them thus far. Just as Adam wanted to be King of his own moral world, so now Israel wants to be ruled by a king and a law from its own moral surrounding. The tabernacle itself was designed as a creational and mobile palace, a palatial tent for God to live in among his people as their king. It’s very presence at the center of Israel’s life communicated that the God of all creation had made himself present among them as their Covenant King. And here in 1Sam 8 they are saying, “Forget Him! What has He done for us lately?” They want out of the covenant with God and out from under the Ten Words that gave spiritual and moral structure to that covenant. Therefore, if they won’t obey God’s voice through Samuel’s voice, then God tells Samuel to obey the people’s voice, but with one qualification in v.9.

*“Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”* That word “ways” is not the same word as in v.3 “*Samuel’s sons did not walk in his ways.*” The contrast here is not with Samuel’s ways. This word is the same word as the Israelites used in v.6, give us a king to judge us. This is the word “judgments,” not “ways”. Samuel’s whole response and warning to Israel is one big ironic wordplay on the word judge and judgments (Heb. *mishpat*) in this paragraph.<sup>9</sup> You want a king to judge you? Be careful what you ask. Let’s preview the “judgments” of the kind of king you want. You want a king like all the other nations to judge you? I’ll show you his “judgments”.<sup>10</sup>

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to make a suzerain-vassal covenant treaty with His own chosen covenant king as human representative of the covenant and its people? That’s what it looks like when God says “they’ve rejected me from being king over them.” He takes it as Israel’s rejection of Sinai in **Ex 19:5-6**.

<sup>9</sup> Vv.5, 6, 9, 11, 20. So also LXX, dikai,wma, not o’dw/| as LXX translates of Samuel’s way in vv.3, 5. I saw this on my own by trying to connect ESV ‘ways’ in vv.9, 11 with Samuel’s ‘ways’ in v.3 and realizing the Heb. in vv.9, 11 is *mišpat*, not *derek* as in v.3. Firth (AOTC 110) confirms and employs the ironic interpretation with such confidence that he puts ironic quotes around “justice” in his own translation of vv.9 and 11. He argues “Although *mišpat* can mean ‘pattern of conduct’ as an extension of its basic meaning of justice, judgment’, the use of the emphatic form of ‘testify’ in v.9 [ESV ‘solemnly warn’] indicates that the forensic sense [of *mišpat*] is present” (AOTC, 114). Baldwin (TOTC, 92) and Tsumura, following both him and McCarter (NICOT, 253 n.49, 252 n.46), recognize the possible irony but do nothing with it. Tsumura recognizes the forensic witness character of the Hebrew verb in v.9 and translates it “legally declare”, but uses it instead to go the direction of “the rights of the king” in vv.10-18 (NICOT, 252-254). Brueggemann (INT) and Davis (FOTB) remain silent on the possible irony of *mišpat* in vv.9, 11.

<sup>10</sup> It’s also a wordplay on the word appoint. Samuel appointed his unworthy sons as judges in v.1. Israel wants Samuel to appoint a king. The king will appoint their sons to his chariots in v.11, and the king will appoint for himself commanders and plowmen in v.12. If you appoint this kind of guy to be your king, then Paul Alexander ©2020

I wonder too if there's a contrast between the judgments of the king they want, and the good and life-giving character of God's judgments and statutes in the law.<sup>11</sup> Lev 18:5 You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules, which, if a person does them he will live by them," and Lev 25:18 if you do them, "you will live in the land and dwell securely." Dt 32:4 The Rock, his work is perfect and all his ways are justice.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the case, the import is, you do NOT want to do this! because in v.19 "*the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel.*" So Samuel is warning and testifying against them in court, what you're about to do is wrong, you will pay dearly for it, and you will regret it. Look there in v.10.

**8:10-18** *So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him.*<sup>11</sup> *He said,*<sup>y</sup> "*These will be the ways [judgments; LXX dikai,wma, not o`dw|/ as in vv.3, 5] of the king who will reign over you: <sup>z</sup>he will **take** your sons and **appoint** them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. <sup>12</sup> And he will **appoint** for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some <sup>a</sup>to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will **take** your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> <sup>b</sup>He will **take** the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup> He will **take** the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. <sup>16</sup> He will **take** your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men<sup>1</sup> and your donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup> He will **take** the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. <sup>18</sup> And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, <sup>c</sup>but the LORD will not answer you in that day.*"<sup>13</sup>

God had been the ultimate Giver. Israel has no idea how good they had it under Yahweh. But the kind of king they want, a king like the nations? He will take, he will take, he will take, he will take, he will take. According to the commentaries, this is not worst case scenario. This is just the way it was under ANE kings. This is what a king does when he is a king like all the other nations. This is what it costs the other nations to have the kind of kings they have.<sup>14</sup> He will take your sons as chariot drivers,<sup>15</sup> as army generals, farmers, and weapons manufacturers. He'll take your daughters to work in his kitchen. He'll exercise eminent domain over the best of all your land. He'll take the cream of your crop, your kids, and your flock, and he will tax you into the poor house. In fact, he will take and take and take and take from you, until he takes you all the way back to the way you were in Egypt. You will not be a special kingdom of priests to him like you have been to God. **You will be his slaves, nothing more, just like you were to Pharaoh.** The only difference will be that the king who enslaves you will not be foreign; he'll be

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this kind of guy will appoint your boys to do his bidding. The same verb occurs 4x in **Dt 17:14-15**. You may indeed set a king over you whom the lord your God shall choose. The same verb occurs for the first time of Adam in Gen 2:8 when God sets/puts the man in the garden. Gen 13:16 of Abraham's offspring, "I will make/put/set your offspring as the dust of the earth." Gen 32:12 Jacob says to God "*But you said I will surely do you good, and **make** your offspring as the sand of the sea....*" Ex 1:11 "they set taskmasters over them." Ex 2:14 who set you as a ruler and judge over us?"; cf. Ex 5:14. Ex 18:21 set such men over the people...

<sup>11</sup> Among the commentaries I consulted—Baldwin, Bergen, Brueggemann, Davis, Firth, Tsumura—none mention this possible contrast, at least that I saw.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lev 26:15; Dt 4:1, 5, 8 where Gods rules are good; Dt 11:1 where doing God's rules is loving and remembering Him. See esp. Dt 30:16 "If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it."

<sup>13</sup> Are any of these related to the curses for covenant disobedience in Lev 26 or Dt 28-32?

<sup>14</sup> "What it describes is the contemporary reality of the monarchical regime known to the people from the Canaanite examples. References to the duties and levies also appear in the context of formal exemptions and release from tax and service in Mesopotamian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Alalakh royal documents from the second half of the second millennium (Tsumura NICOT, 255 with sources cited in n.55, n.56). He goes on to note that "...members of the court received land-grants from the king, who in turn confiscated them from the people, as is known in the societies such as ancient Ugarit: for example, 'From this day Niqmaddu son of 'Ammittamru, king of Ugarit, has taken up the estate (house+field) of PN1...and has given it to PN2, his servant (ardišu), in perpetuity. In the future no one shall take it from the hand of PN2 forever. (It is) a gift of the King' (RS 16.247:1-14), cited by Rainy in RSP2, p.97... [such gifts were given] either as a reward for services rendered or as a means of ensuring loyalty" (Tsumura NICOT, 258). Brueggemann agrees "this characterization of monarchy is not particularly polemical in tone, It is simply a statement of fact" (INT, 64).

<sup>15</sup> The Gk. of "chariots" in LXX is highly concentrated in Ex 14-15 of Pharaoh's failure at the Red Sea! Your kind of king will drown you and your sons in judgment. See also the fate of Sisera's chariots in Judges 4-5. If so, then this kind of king will not only take you back to slavery in Egypt; he will reverse the salvation of the Exodus such that you now experience the judgment of the chariots of both Pharaoh and Sisera.

domestic.<sup>16</sup> And whereas Israel of old cried out to God from Egypt and God saw and heard and knew, God won't hear you, because you made this bed, so you're gonna sleep in it all night long. The only one you'll be able to cry out to is the king you set over you, but he's won't be merciful and compassionate like God, he's won't be slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness like King Yahweh. Samuel is warning them here with a love that tells the truth. He's trying to walk them back from the ledge: If you forfeit the Lord's goodness like this, then you will see severity, and you will regret it.

Now you'd think that a warning like we just read would give them pause. But in 8:19-22 *the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, <sup>20</sup> that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."*<sup>21</sup> *And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD.*<sup>22</sup> *And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."* The dye has been cast. Their mind is made up, and now they're dug in and stubborn. They refuse to listen to godly reason. So God tells Samuel to listen to them. Give them what they want. The elder meeting ends. Everyone turns tail to their tents.<sup>17</sup> And we're left to wonder, how in the world is this going to play out?

**POINT: A church trusting in cultural conformity is rejecting Christ's authority at its own expense.** This is an issue of trust. Who will fight the battles? Well, who fought them in chapters 4-7? God Himself fought. God needed no army.<sup>18</sup> But Israel doesn't trust that God can protect them and prosper them in Canaan if their national life is so different than that of other Canaanite nations. And **doubting God proves more expensive than trusting Him.** Israel did not just forfeit their material prosperity in vv.10-17. Nor was it even just their family prospects in their children, costly as that was. They forfeited God's protection in v.18. They would cry, but he would not listen. And most tragically of all, they forfeited their very identity, their specialness as God's chosen people. They had this appetite for material prosperity, military protection, and cultural power. They themselves admit it v.20 They wanted a king like all the nations, "so that we also may be like all the nations." We don't want most favored nation status with God anymore. We want to be one of the guys. And God took that as a rejection of his own kingship over them. He took it as suing to get out of the covenant they made with God. And God was not misunderstanding their intentions, because He is the Knower of All Hearts. They were showing their hand. They didn't want to be his people anymore.

Grace Covenant Baptist Church, we cannot trust our own imitation of cultural patterns without Christ Himself taking that as a rejection of His covenanted authority over us. Jesus himself says as much to us in **Mark 8:38** *Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*" We're not allowed to be ashamed of trusting in the gospel of a crucified Christ, and then turn around and act as if we've been loyal to Him. We are to proclaim God as sovereign creator and ruler and judge of all. We have to proclaim the through-and-through sinfulness of the human race, and God's righteous wrath against our sin that would rightly send us to hell as the just punishment for sinning against an infinitely holy God. We have to proclaim that this same holy God sent His own eternal Son Jesus to take on human flesh as the God-Man, to live in sinless obedience to God's covenant law, in our place, for our benefit,

<sup>16</sup> "Israel's oppression will come from her king, not from the enemies as in the time of the Judges" (Tsumura NICOT, 260 commenting on v.18). So also Brueggemann, "Monarchy is presented as the undoing of the exodus and the whole course of liberated covenanting" (INT, 64).

<sup>17</sup> Oddly in v.22, LXX has *avpotrece,tw*, run away, run off, for "Go." It's like the LXX is interpreting this as stranger-danger (cf. Gen 12:19; 24:51 both of which are "Take her and go" with the tone of "good riddance", so also Pharaoh to Moses in Ex 10:24. Most other x's don't have this connotation, but it seems relevant in context here. If not a tone of disdain, perhaps of fear or danger.

<sup>18</sup> "They want a king to reign over them. Again, they affirm that this will make them like the nations, in that their king will 'judge' them, though they also desire the king to lead them into battle. Yet both ch. 7 and the account of the ark have proved this unnecessary" (D. Firth, AOTC 115).

and then to suffer the curse of that law that we deserved to suffer for our sins. We proclaim that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and ascended to heaven to prove that God accepted His sacrifice for us and appointed Him as King, Savior, and Judge. And we now call all people everywhere to turn from their sinful self-rule and trust in King Jesus to rule over them in righteousness, truth, and love.

We cannot be ashamed of any of these things, even though the culture around us smirks at us behind our backs. We cannot be ashamed of God's monogamous, matrimonial, binary design for human sexuality. We cannot agree that abortion is a human right. Nor can we trust in our own cultural savvy or pragmatic programs or catchy music to keep us #relevant and give us a kind of success that makes us feel safe and valuable and wanted. Christ keeps us safe, and the fact He made us in His image and then shed his blood for us is what makes us valuable. He wants us. Jesus is our Good Shepherd Warrior-King.

**Jesus doesn't reject God's Kingship or Covenant.** 1Sam 8 is an Israelite Fall Narrative. They rejected God as their King just like Adam did in the Garden. And it cost them dearly. Jesus doesn't do that. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of this world and said "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Jesus obeys the kingship of His heavenly father. Jesus was faithful subject of His heavenly king, and faithful son of his heavenly father, John 5 he did only what he saw his father doing, and spoke only as His father directed. And that is why Jesus deserves to be King of the world, King of the church, and king of my heart and yours. Jesus didn't fall. Jesus stood. And he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning because of Jesus' own faithfulness and power as the Second Adam and the True Son of God, True and Better Israel in the flesh.

Jer 23:5 says *I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and do wisely... In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: the Lord is our Righteousness.*" Jesus doesn't corrupt justice like Samuel's sons. He achieves it, and then he shares it. Jesus doesn't take and take and take from us. Jesus is the king who *came not to be served but to serve, and [not to take but] to give His life a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45). He is the king who emptied himself, made himself nothing, took on our frail humanity, took the form a servant, and gave himself to the death of a cross. He's the kind of king we've always wanted. Wise and Humble. Powerful and kind. Transcendent, yet understanding and compassionate. Divine...and Human. Church, our security is in not in our savings account. Our security is in Jesus. He is our Good Shepherd-Warrior-King. We are safe and we are rich in Him and under His rule.

**God App.** One thing we learn about God here is that He will give you what you think you want, only to make you sick of wanting it, in order to lead your heart to want what He wants for you instead. He will give you your desire, which is against His will, to disabuse you of that desire by bitter experience of having what you thought you needed. And then he will re-shape and redirect your desire so that you want what He wants for you. Many of you have lived that experience. Of course that's not the only reason God gives us things. But when he gives you things that are against his moral will—something you idolized—whether it was a job, a status, a freedom, a pleasure, a relationship, a house, a car, an investment, whatever it was, he gave it to you so you'd know it's not worth wanting. He...He is worth wanting.

**Church App.** Paul says in 1Cor 10 that things like these in 1S 8 and elsewhere happened to Israel as examples for us, that we would not sin like they did. That kind of method and leadership always has unforeseen costs and consequences. Since Israel is abandoning the covenant, this is the OT equivalent of a Hebrews warning passage. The church now is a kingdom of priests and a holy nation according to 1Pet 2:5, 9-11; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. We are the ones who are supposed to be different from the world. We're

not supposed to blend in any more than Israel was supposed to be like the other nations. But just as it was in Samuel's day, so now there are voices coming to us from inside the churches that want to press us into the world's mold in order to strengthen our cultural influence and lengthen our institutional life. They are church leaders who want to re-invent the church to look more like the world. In the words of Richard Niebuhr, they would have us preach "a God without wrath who is bringing people without sin into a kingdom without judgment through ministrations of a Christ without a cross." That is not what Jesus means when he says we should be a city on a hill whose light cannot be hidden.

A city on a hill is not supposed to blend into its surroundings. It's meant to be noticeable, distinct, precisely because it sticks out on the otherwise bleak horizon like light in the darkness. It's meant to make people say "What is that? Who are they?" But in order for us to keep on being visible, we have to keep on being distinct, which means preaching and obeying the distinctive gospel of Jesus, that produces a distinctive repentance, holiness, and love. The apostle Paul puts it to his young protégé Timothy like this, "*Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and instruction. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths* (2T 4:2-3).

H. Richard Niebuhr also said "Christendom has often achieved apparent success by ignoring the precepts of its founder." That's exactly what Israel is trying to do here. They want cultural attention, influence, respect, power. There has been, and always will be, pressure for Christians, and for the church, to simply assimilate to the world for the sake of security, acceptance, influence, and power. Israel wanted a chip in the big game. The church wants that same chip—cultural attention, institutional security, vocational respect, cultural capital. Don't get me wrong. God does give some local churches cultural influence. But we cannot seek that at the expense of our own identity as the distinctive, holy, different people of God. We still have to be a city on a hill whose light is unavoidably noticeable by our holiness, truth, love, and joy. And if the culture wants to laugh at us, then let them laugh, and let them do their worst. Jesus is our King. We are His covenant people. Scripture is His covenant with us. And He will make sure that we succeed in His way, in His time.

**Christian App.** Christian, every time you sin, you are choosing a king other than Christ. You are abandoning God's righteous judgments, his law, as the moral guide for living and loving in covenant relationship with him. And you always regret that. assimilate to the culture around us that worships money, sex, and power. Let's not abandon our first love. Let's not idolize pleasure and privacy and prosperity and popularity. Let's not worship appetite and self and everything I think I need and am entitled to have. Let's not abandon faith in Jesus of Nazareth as our Rightful Covenant King. Let's not abandon God's good law as the moral guide for living and loving in covenant relationship with him.

God said to Samuel, they have not rejected you, they have rejected me. Jesus said similar things to us in Matt 5:11-12. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. He said to his own disciples in John 15 "If they persecuted me, the will also persecute you...But all these things they will do to you on account of my name." Christian, if you are suffering for your obedience to Jesus right now, then remember—it's not you, it's Christ in you, and He will make it worth it (*cf.* also Diotrephes in 3J 9).

**Cultural App. Cool Christianity is not a thing.** The cross of Christ makes sure of that. There is no way to make death on a Roman cross cool. We are not trying to be fashionable, on-trend, or stylish in the way

we do church together. We're not trying to create some church persona that we think will be catchy and vogue with people. Winsome Christianity? Definitely. We want to be engaging, even endearing and appealing, convincing, credible, persuasive. We want to be good citizens and good neighbors, good students and teachers, good employees and bosses. We're not aiming to be weird for the sake of being weird. We dress and eat and work normally, like everyone else. What about shrewd, wise, knowing-the-times Christianity? Yes, of course. We should definitely be aware of the times and the spirit of the age we're preaching into. We want to be conversant about the problems of the day. We want to preach to be heard. We want to talk in a way that people immersed in our culture can understand. But fashionable Christianity? Cool-casual Christianity? Fast-fashion Christianity? No such thing. Carl Trueman at Grove City College said this a few years back and it bears repeating:

“...the beautiful young things of the reformed renaissance have a hard choice to make in the next decade. You really do kid only yourselves if you think you can be an orthodox Christian and be at the same time cool enough and hip enough to cut it in the wider world. Frankly, in a couple of years it will not matter how much urban ink you sport, how much fair trade coffee you drink, how many craft brews you can name, how much urban gibberish you spout, how many art house movies you can find that redeemer figure in, and how much money you divert from gospel preaching to social justice: maintaining biblical sexual ethics will be the equivalent in our culture of being a white supremacist.”<sup>19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We are already there. Friends, if we want to be Christians, then sooner or later we're going to stick out like a sore thumb just because we trust and obey a crucified and risen Christ. If you're only concerned about blending in, never willing to stick out, then perhaps 1Sam 8 has more to say to you than you thought.

**Evangelistic App.** Jesus rules your soul better than you or the world ever could. He doesn't come to you exalted on a warhorse. **He comes humbly on the foal of a donkey.** He doesn't arrive in a Limo or a Lambo. He comes to you in a beat up Chevy Chevette, a Ford Pinto. He's gentle and lowly in heart, and he says “Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my harness on you and learn from me.

The church can only mimic the world at its own expense.

The church can only trust in cultural conformity and worldly power at its own expense.

The church can only trust in cultural conformity to worldly power to its own loss.

The church trusts in cultural conformity to worldly power at its own infinite expense.

Christ alone deserves to be King of His Church. No one can rule us better than Jesus.

**A church cannot trust in cultural conformity without rejecting Jesus and His calling for us.**

**A church conforming to the culture is rejecting Christ's authority and forfeiting its own identity.** A church rejecting Christ's authority to trust in cultural conformity is forfeiting its own prosperity and identity.

**A church trusting in technique is rejecting Christ's authority and forfeiting its own identity.**

A church trusting in worldly techniques has rejected its covenant identity and Christ's authority.

**A church trusting in worldly technique has rejected Christ's authority and so forfeited its covenant identity.**

God's kind of king is better for us than ours. The church's power is not in political organization.

God takes the church's imitation of the world as rejection of His rule.

**The church rejects God's rule and forfeits its identity when it imitates the world.**

The church rejects God's rule when it embraces the world's methods, metrics, and priorities.

The church rejects God's rule and regrets its choice when it embraces worldly pragmatism.

We reject God's rule and regret our unbelief when we embrace worldly pragmatism.

Rejecting God is never right, even when your reason is someone else's wrong.

Christ is a better king for us than we could ever choose.

For the church to rely on worldly pragmatism is effectively to reject God in Christ.

**The church cannot mimic the world without rejecting Christ and His plan for our distinctiveness.**

**The church can mimic the world, but not without rejecting Christ and His calling for us.**

**When a church mimics the world, it rejects Christ and forfeits its distinctive calling.**

A church that mimics the world rejects Christ and forfeits its distinct calling as God's people.

Church leaders should rather wait on God than reject Christ and forfeit the church's calling.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/chorusinthechaos/half-church-doesnt-believe-gospel/> accessed 11/20/20 4:59pm.

The cost pragmatism in the church is no less than Christ's covenant and the church's calling. Mimicking the world will cost the church Christ's covenant and the church's distinctive calling. Mimicking the world costs the church its covenant with Christ and its identity as His people. **Only God's reign in Christ can secure the church and preserve its distinctive identity.**

So they receive a king who will function as a judgment on them, before they receive a king who will function to save them and rule in righteousness. Saul will both 'save' and 'restrain' God's people (9:16, 17; cf. 10:1). It's possible this king will do them good, 1S 12:14, but it's more likely he will do them harm, 1S 12:15. The people end up realizing their sin in asking a king, 12:19, and their own desire endangers them, 12:25. God ends up saving Israel both through Saul, and despite Saul. Saul himself ends up personifying Israel's rebellion (15:23). Saul will end up rejecting God and his word (15:26), just as Israel rejected God as king by asking for another king; and so God will reject Saul as king and anoint David in his place (13:13-14).

**NB** Saul is not in Heb 11. "David and Samuel" are paired (H 11:32), but Saul is not mentioned. Here's the NT testimony to Saul in Acts 13:21, "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king." Mordecai is a better Kishide Benjaminite than Saul (Ester 2:5).

Self-denial produces a better contentment than self-indulgence.

