

STUDY 3: GOD WILL HAVE HIS KING (1 SAMUEL 7:2-8:22)

If ever there were a time when God's people needed God's word on the topic of leadership, it is today. And it is precisely this topic that God addresses in 1 Samuel chapters 7-8.

The story so far ... Twenty years have passed since the episode with the ark (chs. 4-6), but at last the Israelites have returned to the Lord (ch. 7). But now Samuel has become old and his sons are corrupt. The elders of Israel come to ask Samuel for a new leader. What follows is one of the key turning points in Israel's history.

Read 1 Samuel 8.

1. What do the elders of Israel ask Samuel for? What reasons do they give for their request?

2. How do Samuel and God feel about the people's request? Why?

3. How do the people respond to the warnings they receive? What does their response say about their attitude to God and his word?

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

4. God knows the Israelites will ask for a king once they have entered the land. How does he seem to feel about it?

5. What kind of king does God want to choose for Israel?

6. Looking back over 1 Samuel 8:10-18, how does this compare to the kind of kingship God tells Israel to expect if they choose a king "like all the nations"?

Read Mark 10:35-45.

7. On whom are the disciples modelling their view of leadership? How is their mistake similar to Israel's?

8. How does Jesus correct them? How is this model of kingship radically different from that of the nations? (See also John 18:33-36.)

Implications

- In what ways can leaders in churches be tempted to model their leadership on the world's leaders, rather than on Jesus? How does Jesus' style of leadership shape our understanding of leadership?
- The king of Israel was meant to rule under the authority of the law of God (Deut 17:18-20). How might Christian leaders apply this concept today?
- How are you tempted to 'fit in' with the world in ways that contradict the gospel and fail to acknowledge the kingship of Jesus? How can the gospel help you stand firm against this temptation?

Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks for your leaders at church, and pray that they would be people who model their leadership on Jesus, not on the world.
- Pray that all those in positions of authority—pastors, mums and dads, youth group leaders, or whatever—would remember that their authority comes only from the Bible, seeking to read it and lead under its rule.
- Pray that God would give us courage not to feel the need to 'fit in' with the world but instead to stand apart for Jesus.