

God's solutions are not found in being like all the nations (1 Samuel 8)

Once again under the threat of attack from a neighboring nation, Israel wanted a king “like all the nations” around them. They were rejecting the just, loving rule of God in their lives. It was a pattern not only of Israel, but also a temptation for Christians even today. The world’s “wisdom” can be alluring. But it is always better to seek God’s wisdom in His Word and to demonstrate our love for Him by following His instructions. To strive to be like the world is dangerous because of the consequences and what it reveals about our hearts.

I. A dangerous situation (8:1–10)

There was the challenge to accept God's word as true, His wisdom as best.

1. *A real problem: a leadership crisis*
 - a. Aging leadership: Samuel was getting old and other leadership was needed.
 - b. Corrupt leadership: Samuel’s sons, whom he had appointed as judges, were corrupt.
2. *A counterfeit solution: a king like all the nations*
 - a. A king like all the nations meant an hereditary monarchy, a king acting as judge, and a king as a military leader.
 - b. But a king like all the nations would not bring escape from injustice nor aging leadership.
3. *A wayward heart*
 - a. Wanting a king “like all the nations” rejected God’s purpose to be a distinct nation (Lev 20:26; Num 23:9).
 - b. Wanting a king “like all the nations” rejected Jehovah God as ruler, judge, and protector.
 - c. Wanting a king “like all the nations” followed Israel’s pattern of behavior (v.8).
 - d. Wanting a king “like all the nations” revealed a purposeful blindness.

Turning from God’s wisdom to the supposed wisdom of the world is a rejection of the Lord as king in your life. His Word is always true. He established the moral principles which govern the universe. Those principles derive from His very character. Reject them and you are rejecting God. To reject God by rejecting His wisdom has consequences, as Samuel at God’s command warned Israel.

II. A dire warning (8:11–18)

There were the consequences when God's word was not accepted as true, when His wisdom was rejected.

1. *Human tyranny* would include a military draft, conscription of the best men and animals, taxation, an administrative state, and the people becoming vassals to the king.
2. *Divine disregard* would be the end result when they turned to God because of royal oppression.

Israel was warned and we are warned. God raises up and puts down leaders (Daniel 2:21; cf. Psalm 75:6–7) and can give a people leaders they want and let them suffer the consequences. Seek God’s wisdom in His Word. Obey His Word to show your love for God (cf. John 14:15).

III. A tragic obstinacy (8:19–22)

The condition of their hearts was affirmed; they were rejecters of the truth.

1. *The people expressed their obstinacy:* they refused to obey the voice of Samuel.
2. *Samuel reported their obstinacy.*
3. *The LORD judged their obstinacy by giving them what they wanted:* Samuel was to do as they asked, as God had foretold (Deut. 17:14–15).

Rejecting God’s truth can lead to tragic consequences which God allows. God wants us to trust Him and rely upon Him, rather than turn to the world to be like those around us. The most tragic error is to attempt in your own strength, by your own doing, to be right with God. Jesus Christ alone is Savior and Lord.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- What problems or challenges do you currently face? What solutions might the world suggest that are in contradiction to God’s Word?
- Upon what basis can you be certain of the long-term consequences of your choices? What is the most certain basis? Why?
- How would you counsel a friend who is basing a decision upon worldly wisdom rather than on God’s truth?