

“POLITICS OF THE HEART”

I. Introduction: Once Upon A Time

1. Once in human history, there was a theocratic nation, a nation ruled by God.
2. God Himself chose this people, out of all the nations of the earth, and gave them His law.
3. There was not only no separation of church and state, there was a total *integration* of church and state...the spiritual laws and the civil laws were one law.
4. God Himself ruled His people through the ministrations of various priests, prophets and judges.
5. God delivered them from Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the Jordan River, and fought their battles for them.
6. The nation was Israel. But all of that ended, never to return, in a political election described in 1st Samuel 8.
7. The chapter breaks down into four parts:
 - a. The Election (vv 1-5)
 - b. The Truth (vv 6-9)
 - c. The Warning (10-18)
 - d. The Lessons We Must Learn (19-22)

II. Message: Politics of the Heart

A. The Election

Finally, all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. "Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have."

1 Samuel 8:4-5 NLT

Theme of Message

“The kingdoms of this world always compete with the Kingdom of God for first place in our hearts.”

1. The Kingdom of God is “not of this world”. (John 18:36)
2. The “election” here involves who will rule the people, who will be in charge.
3. The issue, even today is, “does my heart desire to live and think like other people” or to be ruled by God?

“...there is no operation more widely mischievous, more intensely active to harm than this—a desire to be like others. Many a time has a young man left the house of God full of conviction, and ready to resolve that whatever others did, he would serve the Lord. But he turned to take another look at the world, and the thought came along with the look, that much of his worldly interest depended upon the friendship of those around him, and that if he expected them to be his friends, his opinions and his habits must not be opposed to theirs. He gave in to the principle of being like

them; and having resembled them in time, his lot now throughout eternity resembles theirs as well. Alas, the wreck of souls which this principle involves!
J.A. Miller, quoted in "The Biblical Illustrator", Vol. 4

4. In tough times, the world looks to government, or political leaders to save them...even God's people are subject to fall into the trap.

"Conformity to the world, united to a profession of faith, has been the stumbling-block to many an awakened soul."
R. Steel, in the Biblical Illustrator, Volume 4

5. The issue is really about "who will we trust to save us?"

B. The Truth

Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. "Do everything they say to you," the Lord replied, "for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer. Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them."
1 Samuel 8:6-9 NLT

1. Most people don't distinguish between "fact" and "truth".

- a. You can tell the facts, and still not tell the truth.
- b. In court, we swear to tell the truth, not the facts.
- c. The facts are what happened, and as such are truthful. But the truth underlies the facts.
- d. Truth is a deeper, a matter of the *heart*.

2. Samuel went to God with the "facts"-But God saw the truth.

"Many people do not distinguish between fact and truth. Fact is the thing done, the thing visible...Truth underlies it. We must get at the truth before we can understand the fact itself."
J. Parker, D.D.

3. "Give us a king" was nothing else but a rejection of God's rule for something more substantial and visible.

- A higher bank balance or obedience to give because of God's clear word?
- Keeping a job or maintaining your integrity?
- For ministers, currying favor or preaching the truth?

I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.
The Apostle Paul in Acts 20:26-27 NLT

4. God saw the truth behind the fact.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and

desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.
Hebrews 4:12-14 NLT

5. The "election" had already taken place! God was voted "out".
6. Human nature prefers a "king" you can see to a "King" you can't see.

**"(Their) demand showed ingratitude, distrusts and disloyalty toward God. They wanted to better their government instead of reforming their character."
Quote from "Monday Club Sermons", Biblical Illustrator, Volume 4**

C. The Warning

**So Samuel passed on the Lord's warning to the people who were asking him for a king. "This is how a king will reign over you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers, making them run before his chariots. Some will be generals and captains in his army, some will be forced to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, and some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him. He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials. He will take a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. He will take your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his slaves. When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord will not help you."
1 Samuel 8:10-18 NLT.**

1. This warning from Samuel could be repeated throughout the centuries.

**"Power tends to corrupt. And absolute power corrupts absolutely."
Lord Acton**

**"...what characterizes the history of man is the corrupted leaders blinded by their power and might. Throughout history, monarchs, religious and ideological leaders, as well as elected presidents go crazy. The French king Louis' XIV claim "L'Etat, c'est moi" (I am the State) is typical to the leaders then and now."
Per Byland, Quote from Blog**

2. Historical facts confirm how centralized government inevitably brings with it an abuse of power and privilege, and ultimately enslaves the very people who brought it to power.
3. Only the Kingdom of God provides mankind with an incorruptible Leader Who dispenses justice and mercy with infinite wisdom.
4. All this Israel traded for what turned out to be centuries of wicked kings with only few exceptions.
5. But how did they respond to Samuel's warning?

**But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said. "We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle."
So Samuel repeated to the Lord what the people had said, and the Lord replied, "Do as they say, and give them a king." Then Samuel agreed and sent the people home.
1 Samuel 8:19-22 NLT**

D. The Lessons We Must Learn

1. The kingdoms of this world always compete with the Kingdom of God for first place in our hearts.

- a. Israel's trust and faith had turned from God to politics. They traded a heavenly King for an earthly one.
- b. The "election" had already taken place in their hearts. God simply interpreted the facts with the truth.
- c. Lesson for us: Who are we really looking for to save us?

2. God always sends us warnings.

- a. God is "longsuffering" with our sins and stubbornness.
- b. The only way we can really go wrong is to run through His "stop signs".

"God sent me 1,000 hints that He didn't want me to keep doing what I was doing. I didn't listen, so He set off a nuclear bomb."

Disgraced political lobbyist Jack Abramoff after a 2006 scandal

- c. Lesson for us: Am I doing anything I know God is warning me about? Am I ignoring His stop signs?

3. There's a difference between truth and fact.

- a. What people say and do are observable facts, only as deep as soul and body...but the truth is at the heart-level, it's the "why" of what we do and say.

4. If we press God too far, He'll answer our prayers...so our hearts must be right!

**And the Lord said, my spirit shall not always strive with man,
Gen 6:3 KJV**

- a. Israel wearied of the manna in the wilderness and demanded quail. God showered them with what they wanted, then sent a plague while they were eating it. (Numbers 11)

5. Evasion of personal responsibility is at the heart of all political idolatry.

**(Give us a king)... "that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."
1 Samuel 18:20 KJV**

- a. There is a biblical role for civil government.
- b. "Statism" is the deification of the state to god-like power, authority and control.
- c. Israel's request was rooted in a desire to escape the personal responsibilities clearly set forth in the Kingdom of God:

- A king to “judge us”, versus the individual development of “self-government” and judgment, the true measure of God-pleasing maturity
- A king to “go out before us”, a visible figurehead to inspire us, instead of drawing our inspiration from the true King
- A king to “fight our battles”-and here’s the real issue-the desire for others to do for us what God has ordained that we do for ourselves!

Invitation and Prayer

**Father, help us seek the Kingdom of God above all else.
Keep our hearts centered on you, and not look to earthly deliverances.
Give us godly leaders whose hearts are set to serve you.
Let us look beyond the facts and follow the truth....In Jesus name, Amen!**