

1 Samuel 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Analysis

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Israel's demand for a king represents fundamental rejection of God's direct rule over His people. The desire to be 'like all the nations' reveals spiritual apostasy—seeking conformity to surrounding culture rather than maintaining distinctive covenant identity. While God permits the monarchy, He clearly warns about its costs: oppression, taxation, military conscription. This passage teaches the difference between God's permissive will and His perfect plan, showing how He works even through flawed human institutions to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

Historical Context

The establishment of monarchy around 1050-1010 BCE represented a dramatic political and theological shift for Israel. Unlike surrounding nations where kings were considered divine or semi-divine, Israel's kings were supposed to function under God's ultimate authority as laid out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The Benjamite tribe occupied strategic territory between Ephraim and Judah, making Saul's selection a politically astute choice to balance tribal rivalries. Archaeological remains from this period show increased fortification and centralization of settlements, confirming the transition to state-level organization. Ancient Near Eastern monarchies (Egypt, Mesopotamian city-states, Hittites)

provided the cultural context for Israel's understanding of kingship. However, Israel's covenant with Yahweh created unique tensions between human and divine authority. The transition from tribal confederation to centralized monarchy occurred throughout the ancient world during this period, often in response to external military threats.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen our understanding of God's character, purposes, and ways of working in human history?
2. What specific heart attitudes, thought patterns, or life practices does this passage call you to examine or change?
3. How does this passage connect to the larger biblical narrative of redemption and point toward Christ and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא יָלַכְתִּי בְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּעָד אֶחָר

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walked And his sons not in his ways and perverted after lucre

H1121

H1870

H5186

H310

H1215

שְׁמַד יְהִי קְרָבוֹן מִשְׁפָט:

and took bribes and perverted judgment

H3947

H7810

H5186

H4941

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Judgment): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Psalms 15:5 (Parallel theme): He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

1 Timothy 6:10 (Parallel theme): For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Exodus 23:8 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Exodus 18:21 (Parallel theme): Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

Isaiah 33:15 (Parallel theme): He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

1 Timothy 3:3 (Parallel theme): Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

2 Samuel 15:4 (Judgment): Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

Ecclesiastes 2:19 (Parallel theme): And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.