

midtown

M E S S E N G E R

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The Worst Choice Ever Made

By: Obed Pineda

Around the year 1050 B.C. the children of Israel made the most tragic and unwise decision in their history, by placing themselves on the “*broad...way that leads to destruction*” (**Matthew 5:13b**). The prophet Samuel (and Israel’s last righteous judge) had grown old and he had passed on his duties to his sons, Joel and Abijah (cf. **1st Samuel 8:1-2**). Holy Writ declares that these two men were corrupt because they “*did not walk in his [Samuel’s] ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice*” (**1st Samuel 8:3**, addition mine). Joel and Abijah’s perversity opened the door that the Israelites had undoubtedly been wanting to open for some time but were unsure of how to do so; until now. Israel’s leadership approached Samuel and spoke, “*Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations*” (**1st Samuel 8:4-5**). Two pieces of information are vital to establish so we can better comprehend why this request had been slowly simmering in their hearts for a period of time. First, let us recall that all the men who were placed as judges over Israel were not elected nor appointed by them, but “*the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them*” (**Judges 3:9**). Furthermore, these same judges who were appointed by Jehovah God did not gain this leadership position by means of war, social status, nor riches. The plethora of variety that is easily spotted upon putting all the judges side by side proves this truth and reinforces that “*God shows personal favoritism to no man*” (**Galatians 2:6b**). Second, we must pay close attention to the fact that the judges God placed over Israel were **not RULERS!** This crucial distinction means that none of the appointed judges (from Moses to Samuel) were monarchs. Ergo, until then Israel’s

system of government was neither a democracy (ruled by officials elected by the people) nor a monarchy (ruled by a king or queen); it was a Theocracy (ruled by God Himself). Our first piece of information already validates that Israel was verily under a Theocracy since it was God ***who appointed*** the judges. Furthermore, these judges were upholding the Law of God, which would later be recognized (erroneously) by them as the Law of Moses. God never allowed any of the judges of Israel to add to or subtract from His commandments; they were solely responsible to uphold and guide the people with His laws and ordinances. Therefore, the nation of Israel was being ruled by the God of heaven and earth, the most righteous and wisest King they would ever have. Hence one of the reasons “*the thing displeased Samuel*” (**1st Samuel 8:6a**). It is incorrect to assume that Samuel’s disagreement with their request for a human king was a product of nepotism. Keep in mind that Samuel was not biologically related to the judge whom he replaced, and fully understood that it was by God’s sovereignty that he was placed in this office (cf. **1st Samuel 3**). What did contribute to his displeasure of Israel’s petition is that he felt slighted by them since God explains to His prophet, “*they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*” (**1st Samuel 8:7**). Israel had resisted God as her sovereign ruler ever since she had been freed from Egyptian bondage by Him (cf. **1st Samuel 8:8, Exodus 32:1ff**). It is indeed unfathomable why Israel would reject an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, and eternal God as her ruler, only to replace Him with a mere man who could (and would) be easily corrupted by covetousness. Yet, the Bible reveals that the train of thought which drove this ungrateful and cataclysmic choice was Israel’s

profound desire to be like all of their neighboring nations (cf. **1st Samuel 8:5, 19-20**). In other words, Israel wanted to fit in with the rest of the world and stop standing out amongst them. Curiously, Israel's logic at this point in time echoes the logic of a teenager who wants to belong to the popular group, so they begin to slowly erase their own identity by imitating the crowd they want to follow. This comparison unveils the immaturity that Israel had woefully remained in, since they were unable to recognize the blessings they had enjoyed with God's hand on the helm unlike the rest of the nations they were hypnotized by. Rightfully so does the inspired Psalmist lament, "They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert" (**Psalm 106:13-14**). In spite of Israel's cruel desire, sacred Scripture once more demonstrates the Almighty's magnanimous nature in His instructions to Samuel. The Bible reads, "Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them" (**1st Samuel 8:9**). It is indisputable that the omnipotent God could have held on to His throne unchallenged. Yet, He did not impose His will on His beloved Israel by forcing her to accept Him as her King. Instead, our precious Creator chose not to contend with the fool "*for he will despise the wisdom*

of your words" and graciously stepped aside and gave His final words of caution with the hope that they would repent of this foolish decision (**Proverbs 23:9**, cf. **Proverbs 26:4-5**). Samuel obeyed God's command and thoroughly forewarned Israel of the dire consequences that would assuredly take place the moment the throne was filled by a human man (cf. **1st Samuel 8:10-18**). Israel's response to Samuel's warning of their treacherous choice confirms what was briefly mentioned at the beginning of this treatise. Although Samuel revealed to them that a man on their throne would return them to a state of captivity, "*Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No, but we will have a king over us, 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'*" (**1st Samuel 8:19-20**). This portion of Scripture makes evident that their proposal for a king was never because of Samuel's sons being unrighteous judges, but rather the perfect excuse they needed to push their selfish agenda forward. The true desire of Israel's heart was uncovered when they refused to heed Samuel's inspired counsel. Regrettably, Samuel's words came to fruition exactly as he had forewarned. The next four hundred and sixty-four years of Israel's history would sadly become its darkest and most turbulent period.

A Sympathizing Savior (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Selected Article

As the old hymn begins, "The Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus." There's no doubt when William Hunter penned the lyrics to "The Great Physician", that he had the following passage in mind. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16) It has been said that sympathy is one of the most important emotions because from it comes understanding, help, and support to those in need. Sympathy is certainly easier to extend when we ourselves have firsthand knowledge of the situation. Hebrews 4:15 explains that Jesus Christ, our High Priest, can

sympathize with us when we are faced with temptation. Not only does He have knowledge of those challenges, but has empathy, having experienced all temptation Himself. With such an inclusive statement, we have to conclude that Jesus faced temptation from all aspects of the world. Yes, that means Jesus was tempted to be dishonest, immoral, and to neglect His service to God. As a young boy, He resisted the temptation to disobey His parents, as a teenager He turned down opportunities to run with the crowd into mischief. As He grew into adulthood, He was tempted to be lazy, break His promises and follow popular culture. He faced it all yet without sin. Jesus was the human that the Lord God created us all to be, but because sin entered the world long ago, we're unable to live up to that faultless design and that is why we need a sympathizing Savior.

Upcoming Events

TONIGHT!—Monthly youth devo after evening worship here at the building. Boys bring drinks, girls bring desserts.

Sun. Feb. 26— Chili Cook-off fellowship meal after evening service. There is a sign up sheet in the hallway.

Area Events (More info on the bulletin board in the hallway):

March 2-5, 2023: Arise and Overcome at Southwest church of Christ.

Prayer List

Prayer Requests:

Virginia Escojido who is recovering from surgery.

Members

Jeff Cannady, Les Daltry, Kin and Sandra Marie, Ann Pantel, Veronica Serenil, Clark Withers, Dee Gilpatrick.

Service Roster

Week of February 12, 2023

Sunday Morning

Scripture Reading.....Mike Atkinson

Song Leader Kevin Sheeran

Opening Prayer..... Bill York

Closing Prayer.....Rick Bass

Lord’s Supper & Offering

Bread..... Ken Dorries

Cup..... Lupe Escojido

Offering..... Dan Fielder

Assist..... Willie Fossati

Assist..... Bryant Siegel

Assist.....Jack Jobs

Sunday Evening

Song Leader Ken Dorries

Opening Prayer..... Jeff Cannady

Closing Prayer..... Ron White

Lord’s Supper & Offering..... .. Ken Dorries/
Lupe Escojido

Wednesday Evening

Adult Class Brandon Starling

Song Leader Kirk FitzSimmons

DevotionalJames Cammock

Other

Prepare Communion Bass Family

Congregational News

Birthdays

Kevin Sheeran.....Feb. 18

If you would like to send a card of encouragement to June Aguilar: 1040 87 South Apt. 1022, Orange, TX 77630

Food Helpers for the month of Feb. - Team B.

If you have any prayer requests or upcoming events to be announced, please contact our secretary, Nina Siegel, at (361) 573-0030 or email office.midtownchurch@gmail.com

Sign up sheets for hosting Youth Devos, preparing communion, and opening & closing the building for 2023 are on the bulletin board in the hallway.

This past Sunday at the monthly fellowship luncheon, we expressed our appreciation to our elders: Mark FitzSimmons and Ron White. “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”
1 Timothy 5:17

We rejoice that Joe and Linda Luna were baptized last Sunday. May their walk with Christ bear much fruit.

Our Elders

Mark FitzSimmons
Ron White

Our Deacons

James Cammock—Evangelism
Lupe Escojido— Benevolence
Bryant Siegel—Education and Finance

Our Preacher

Brandon Starling

Weekly Reading

“Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.”

Romans 14:15

Service Times

Sunday Morning Bible Class.....9:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship.....5:00 P.M.
Wednesday Bible Class.....7:00 P.M.

Attendance Records

Week of February 5, 2023

A.M. Bible Class.....80
A.M. Worship.....113
P.M. Worship.....75
Wednesday Bible Class.....62

Financial information is located on the bulletin board in the hallway.

Supported Works

John & Carla Moore *Bible Land Passages*

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CHURCH OF CHRIST

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