

Samuel 7 - Asking and Receiving

In preparing for the presentation of Christ to the world, His identity was sown in a rich context of prophecies, types, and culture. He came fulfilling roles from the Old Testament as Prophet, Priest, and King. The role of the prophet was first established as Moses declared He would be a prophet that the people would heed. The role of prophet became more firmly established from the time of Samuel. The role of the priest was firmly established in Aaron. Christ's role as priest was more specifically founded on Melchizedek who appeared to Abraham. The role of the king is about to appear in 1 Samuel. Christ's role as a king will be modeled after David and his righteous reign. There are a few other roles that might be considered, but Prophet, Priest, and King are considered to be primary.

1. Ready for a king -

Israel had not been quite ready to receive a king. After the Conquest under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites drifted off into compromise with the inhabitants of the land. They entered the period of the Judges as a time of trial which delayed having a king.

Judg 2:20-23 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not.

23Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

Judg 3:1-4 Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even as many of Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

3*Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

There were several ways in which a judge was different than a king. A judge was not necessarily appointed for a lifetime. There were some who were raised up for only a particular challenge. Often he served only a part of Israel. There were some judges who might have served in one place as another judge served in another part of Israel. These judges also differed from the judges who served as magistrates who judged matters between Israelites. They sat in judgment against Israel's oppressors and either led in battles or even fought by themselves.

It was clear that Israel was supposed to get a king at some time. About 900 years before, God had promised that a king would come through the line of Judah.

Gen 49:8-10 Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

10The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Judah's line was preserved until the immediate fulfillment of that prophecy in David. While there were kings, there was no break in David's lineage on the throne of Israel. That line persisted through the captivity and was ultimately fulfilled in *Shiloh*, the *Prince of Peace*, Jesus Christ. From the time of Christ, that lineage has not needed to be nor has been preserved.

At this point in the narrative of 1 Samuel, Israel had become impatient and wanted to have a king.

1Sam 8:1-5 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

2Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.

3And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

4Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

5And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Unfortunately for Samuel, because there is no guarantee that our children will continue in the way they are raised, his sons corrupted themselves. It wasn't the same way the children of Eli, Samuel's predecessor, had abused the priesthood. Eli's sons corrupted the sacrifices as they were defined. Samuel's children were guilty of bribes. The Israelites responded to this with a request for a king. It could have seemed like they were referring to what God had told Moses.

Deut 17:14-15 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me;

15Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

They didn't leave themselves open to be ruled by whatever power was active in the world at that time. They charged Samuel to select a king from among them. This might have been all well and good, but we know from what God says about them that their hearts were not pure in the matter. This presents for us a great lesson about asking and receiving.

2. Asking -

We know that we are supposed to God in prayer and faith with the expectation that God will answer.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

Matt 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

The common problem we have with understanding this passage is failing to consider it in the context of the rest of the Bible. People get disappointed when they ask for their ancient grandparent to be stuck on earth, or to strike it rich through one of their thousands of lottery tickets, or for Santa Claus to come through for them. The Israelites could have presented an argument for why it was okay to ask. The problem is not so much that they asked but with what else was going on in their heart. They asked for the wrong reason as God indicates in 1Sam 8:7.

1Sam 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

I have read an oversimplification of prayer that it is merely asking and receiving. This doesn't take into account other aspects such as worship, repentance, and reconciliation as Jesus also taught in the Lord's model prayer. In the Israelites request, it might be interpreted that they just wanted the same governmental structure of a national ruler that other countries had. The fact that they were rejecting God could also reveal that they wanted a ruler who had the same kind of character as the foreign rulers. They were rejecting the righteousness of God and so having a king who was ungodly like the kings of other nations was not a problem to them. In fact, it might have been a *plus* to them.

Having a king at all is not detrimental in and of itself. If God is your *true* King, then the only purpose a government serves is to *protect* your life, liberty, and *pursuit* of happiness. Both before and after getting a national king, God was the King of Israel. Man's moral responsibility is to God. The issue for the Israelites was who they wanted as king: God, or government? Similarly, the question for man today is who, or what, are is he willing to serve? For Israel the immediate answer was government, but it is broader than that. Government is merely *one* tool that people use to serve their greater master. The broader answer is that we largely fail in our prayers when we *do* ask because we are asking, like the Israelites, according to our lusts.

Jas 4:1-4 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

2Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3**Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.**

4Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Jas 1:14-15 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.
15Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Who is your king? Is it God, or is it your sinful desire?

Rom 6:16-18 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?
17But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
18Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

3. Receiving -

Before we receive what God has for us, there are some prerequisites. The first is that we need to be keeping His commandments.

1John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

This is not a matter of score keeping. It's not as if some commandments give you more points than other commandments. It's not transactional as if you save up enough points you can bargain with God. It's not as though you lose all your points if you mess up. The principle is that you have to ask why would God bless your prayer if you are not serving Him? Are you are going to use your blessing to reinforce your bad behavior?

There is another problem with score keeping. What if you have all kinds of points saved up, you ask something of God, and He doesn't do your bidding? Do you have to work harder and score more points? To receive the answers of your prayers requires another thing. We have to be willing to take the answer He gives us.

1John 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
15And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

We need to ask according to His will...which we might not thoroughly understand! There is a story told about the Chinese philosopher, Zhuangzi .

One day, his neighbor found one of Zhuangzi's prized horses missing. Upon hearing the news, the neighbor expressed sympathy, saying, "That's bad luck." However, Zhuangzi replied, "Maybe."

A few days later, Zhuangzi's missing horse returned, accompanied by a beautiful wild horse. Upon seeing this, the neighbor exclaimed, "That's great luck!" But Zhuangzi simply responded, "Maybe."

Some time later, Zhuangzi's son attempted to tame the wild horse but was thrown off and broke his leg. Once again, the neighbor sympathized, saying, "That's terrible luck." Zhuangzi, however, repeated, "Maybe."

Soon after, a war broke out, and all able-bodied young men were conscripted to fight, resulting in many casualties. Since Zhuangzi's son had a broken leg, he was exempted from the draft. Again, the neighbor expressed admiration for Zhuangzi's good fortune, to which Zhuangzi calmly replied, "Maybe."

Whatever answer we receive from God, its goodness doesn't depend on its perceived benefit to us. Whether it seems good or bad from a worldly standard doesn't matter. Its goodness depends on God; we just have to be willing to accept it from Him.

Jas 1:16-17 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

2Cor 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

17For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

18While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Samuel proceeded to inform them of what it meant to have a king. People aren't always ready to receive what God really wants for them. God was ready to give them what *they* wanted, if they were not going to follow Him, but it would not be without warning. He was going to give them a king that matched their true request. Even though they didn't like what they heard, they wanted that king anyway.

1Sam 8:7-20 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

11And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

12And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.
14And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even* the best of *them*, and give *them* to his servants.
15And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.
16And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.
17He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.
18And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.
19Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;
20That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

This brings us to the principle of *cognitive dissonance*, a term that has become popular in our time. We need to be realistic about what we are getting into. Cognitive dissonance is a psychological concept that describes the discomfort people feel when they are confronted with conflicting beliefs. This inconsistency creates a state of tension, prompting individuals to either change their beliefs to reduce the dissonance or rationalize their opinions to maintain consistency. To be rational is good, to rationalize is bad. To be rational means you use reason. To rationalize means you make excuses that don't really have anything to do with what you believe. When the Israelites were confronted with what having a king would entail, instead of repenting, they insisted that it didn't matter. They rationalized that having someone fight their battles was their real motive. Again, we know it was *not* because God identified that they were really just rebelling against Him. It might *look* like they are being rational, just like the Israelites *looked* like all they wanted was something that God was going to give them some day. The reality is that people *use* God to justify their lusts. It is incredible how much rationalization takes place in life. This includes religion.

You can show someone something in the Bible and they are faced with either accepting it or rationalizing their wrong belief. People bring baggage of preconceived notions and pop theology errors from other teaching. When you show someone truth from God's Word, they are faced with the dissonance, the tension between seeing the truth but wanting to keep their false doctrine. This is not the same problem with the dissonance you experience when someone shows you a false teaching that looks good.

The proper way to receive from God is to be willing to accept whatever He provides. They should have waited for the right king at the right time. To understand the things that are hard to receive does *not* mean to merely resign ourselves to some fate. This is where our Christian training comes in.

Lam 3:37-41 Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the Lord commandeth *it* not?

[Be careful what you attribute to the Lord.]

38Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?

39Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

40Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

41Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

Ps 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
24And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

1Thess 5:20-21 Despise not prophesyings.

21Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. [**Make sure you don't just reject the things you don't want to hear, but be careful to have tested them out to weed out anything false.**]

This is especially true when it comes to salvation.

Salvation is not by works. Eph 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9Not of works, lest any man should boast.

God keeps our commitment for us. 2Tim 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

You cannot lose your salvation. John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

All you have to do is ask God to save you. Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

After all that, people will still hold on to trusting in their ability to be good enough to get in to Heaven. Or, they still focus on not being good enough. Or, they still don't want to have to change their ways. Even after God has given us His Word to understand the truth, they will take the Bible, not being able to read it like a newspaper, and cast it aside.

The challenge today is to ask yourself, are you ready to repent and turn to God?

For those of us who are saved, does our life reflect our obedience and readiness to receive whatever God has for us? Are we committed and faithful in our service? Are we obedient in our tithes and offerings for His work or do we have plenty of "excuses" why we can't? When it comes to our *normal* Christian practice, do we have plenty of "reasons" why we can't read, witness, or be faithful in fellowship? Are you ready to recognize how God's goodness is directing you?

1. Ready for a king - Judg 2:20-23, 3:1-4, Gen 49:8-10, 1Sam 8:1-5, Deut 17:14-15
2. Asking - Mark 11:24, Matt 21:22, 1Sam 8:7, Jas 4:1-4, 1:14-15, Rom 6:16-18
3. Receiving - 1John 3:22, 5:14-15, Jas 1:16-17, 2Cor 4:16-18, 1Sam 8:7-20, Lam 3:37-41, Ps 139:23-24, 1Thess 5:20-21, Eph 2:8-9, 2Tim 1:12, John 10:27-28, Rom 10:13