

Did History Repeat Itself?

When in the Promised Land for the first 400 years, Israel's national government was different than other nations. Interestingly enough, the leader who brought them in (Joshua) never was replaced. Israel, now guided by elders, went directly to their King in heaven for protection, provision, power and prudence. Israel's king and military general were unseen. Jehovah in His boundless wisdom was also Israel's Treasurer and Growth Manager. He entirely met their need while revealing His ways and heart.

But all that changed one day when the judges, Samuel's sons, took bribes and so justice was corrupted. Failure was evident. And nothing seemed to be done about it! Enter the elders of Israel who sincerely wanted a solution. However, in their attempt to fix the problem they changed the pattern of God's government. Desiring a human king to rule over them, they wanted to be like the other nations. They were tired of being different with weak results and wanted a structured authority. The irony was that they embraced the root of their complaint – failing sons. In wanting kingship, men with succeeding sons would be permanently leading them. How tragic to switch from God to man.

But the greatest tragedy was the Lord knew they were rejecting Him. Oh, not rejecting His existence or the blood sacrifices but rather His leadership. Since the Lord will not force Himself on His people's heart, He told Samuel to give them a king. First, Samuel described a human style of government so that the nation could make an informed choice. Kingship would require staff to be supported with their money. And they would experience the consequences of failing man endowed with God's authority (power). Samuel called replacing God's role with man "*wickedness*." Yet Israel still insisted on a man that he might "*fight our battles*". And God Himself gave them what they desired.

Yet God did not forsake His people over governmental issues. Samuel also would not leave them, but continued to pray and teach them "*the good and the right way*." Sadly, they would experience the consequences of a lack of faith. Over time man's government had both good and bad results, but eventually Israel declined into national failure. And as they were losing their land the Lord said: "*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself...I will be thy king...I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath*".

Scriptures reveal the NT church also has a simple and unique form of government. With unlimited wisdom her unseen Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is exalted in heaven. Each autonomous local assembly is comprised of a plurality of gifted saints, served by a plurality of deacons, and guided by a plurality of elders. A church with its elders is accountable to no other authority on earth. Elders were directly linked to the Lord Himself and "*the word of His grace, which is able to build*" them up.

But things have gone from simple to complex again. Man has taken the Lord's roles and titles. The following "offices" are not mentioned once in the New Testament: the one pastor role (reverend, etc.), "worship leader," growth and marketing consultants, religious presidents, mission directors, and financial executives. Previously, the Lord through His Spirit accomplished all these "offices." And it was in the way that He chose. The question here is not whose salvation you're trusting but whose leadership you desire?

{Some Scriptures for the truth of the above teaching. Israel's government after Joshua died; Judges 1 & 2. Israel's government once in the land: Judges 1 & 2. The wickedness of Israel's kingship: 1Sam 8 / 12:17. The Lord's reaction to it: 1Sam. 8:7, 9 / 12:22-25 / Hosea 13:9-11. The NT church's government: Acts 14:23 / 20:17-38 / Philp. 1:1 / 1Cor. 14:26, 31 and Christ as sole Head and Lord – Eph. 5:23 / Rev. 2&3. The work of the Lord and His Spirit to the church: Philp. 4:19 / Acts 13:1-3 / 16:6-10 / 1Cor. 12: 7-11 / 14:26-31. Titles prohibited: Psa. 111:9 / Matt. 23: 7-11.}