

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

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We have all probably heard the warning about being careful what you ask for because you might get it. Many times God will protect us from ourselves and deny us things that we desire because it is not for the right reason (Jas 4:3). At other times, we may ask for something for the right reason, but it still may be best for us for God not to give it anyway (2 Cor 12:7-10). In other cases, God may let people have their way and then allow them to reap the consequences of ignoring His warnings (see Psa 78:26-31; 81:11-12; Rom 1:28-32). This is what happened when God gave Israel the king she demanded.

God knew what Israel would ask for

The heart is the source of what people think, say, and do. Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Because God “knowest the hearts of all the children of men” (1 Kgs 8:39), He knows what their hearts will bring forth. For example, God was able to say about Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen 18:19). God also knew the hearts of the children of Israel, and knew that they would demand to have a king to rule over them like all the nations around them. Over 400 years before Saul was anointed as the first king over Israel, the Lord predicted that the people would say, “*I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me*” (Deut 17:14). After Gideon led Israel to victory over the Midianites, the people said to Gideon, “Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you” (Judg 8:22-23). After Gideon died, the people of Shechem made his son Abimelech king over them (Judg 9:6), but he died long before his reign was established over the entire nation (Judg 9:50-57). When Israel’s prophet and judge Samuel became an old man, the elders of Israel fulfilled what God prophesied through Moses, saying to Samuel, “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now *make us a king to judge us like all the nations*” (1 Sam 8:5). As Gideon had understood long before, God said to Samuel of Israel’s demand for a king, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam

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(continued)

8:7).

God knew what Israel's consequences would be

Deuteronomy chapter 28 contains the blessings and cursings that God promised to Israel depending upon whether or not they kept His commandments. Again, He knew their hearts, and knew they would rebel, which may explain why there are 14 verses of blessings and 54 verses of curses in the chapter! Among the curses, Deuteronomy 28:36 foretold Israel's future downfall and captivity under their king: "*The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known.*"

True to this prediction, when Israel rejected God's rule over them, they embarked upon a 464-year downward spiral that resulted in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria in 722 B.C. and the Southern Kingdom by Babylon in 586 B.C. That also ended God's toleration of this spiritually destructive system of government for the nation of Israel. Summarizing Israel's spiritual decline under the kings, and foretelling the end of this period through Isaiah the prophet (about 150 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), God said, "How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loves gifts, and follows after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them.

Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies" (Isa 1:21-24). God then promised to restore the system of righteous leadership that Israel had under the judges: "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: *and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city*" (Isa 1:25-26). God fulfilled this when Israel returned from captivity. God then chose righteous leaders like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah to rule the people, as in the days of the judges. Seeking God and having a will to do His will and not our own is *always* the right answer. Otherwise, we may get what we ask for and then have an eternity to regret it (Gal 6:7).