

Why We Serve: Greatness!

June 3, 2018 - 1 Samuel 12:1-24

Samuel's Farewell Speech

12 And Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have obeyed your voice in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you. **2** And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day. **3** Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me[a] and I will restore it to you." **4** They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand." **5** And he said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they said, "He is witness."

6 And Samuel said to the people, "The Lord is witness,[b] who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. **7** Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous deeds of the Lord that he performed for you and for your fathers. **8** When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them,[c] then your fathers cried out to the Lord and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. **9** But they forgot the Lord their God. And he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor,[d] and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. **10** And they cried out to the Lord and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve you.' **11** And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Barak[e] and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. **12** And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God was your king. **13** And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. **14** If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. **15** But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king.[f] **16** Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the Lord will do before your eyes. **17** Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know

and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.” 18 So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

19 And all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.” 20 And Samuel said to the people, “Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. 21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. 22 For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. 23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 24 **Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.** 25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”

12:1–15 Samuel’s speech. It is not certain whether this speech belongs to the same context as the end of ch. 11, namely the assembly at Gilgal, or to a later national assembly towards the end of Samuel’s life. In some ways the speech reads like a farewell, but the brief introduction to it in v 1 gives us no clue. In any case, the speech comes appropriately at this point. The biblical writer places it here to provide the reader with an opportunity for reflection before beginning the story of the monarchy. Ch. 11 had ended on a note of joy and excitement, as the Israelites celebrated one victory and looked forward confidently to future victories over the Philistines. They now had a king, and one who had already proved himself a capable soldier. So they had a strong sense of well-being. However, Samuel’s speech analysed the present situation and explored the past, in order to provide guidance for the future. The speech makes it clear that the future did not depend on the existence of a king, nor on his abilities, but on the will of God. God’s will in turn would depend on their loyalty to him.

First, Samuel asked for an accounting of his own administration, now that he had relinquished political leadership (1–5). His hearers could only agree that he had given them good and just leadership in every respect over many years. (Nothing is said of their earlier complaint about his two sons in 8:1–5; but the reference to his *sons* here in v 2 may imply that he had dismissed them from their posts in Beersheba and brought them back home.) There is emphasis on the fact that Samuel had *taken* nothing unjustly from anyone. This description of Samuel makes a strong contrast with his own description of kings in 8:11–18, which shows them taking one thing after another from their subjects. There is a broader perspective intended by the biblical author. The speech is contrasting the judges of the past with the kings of the present and future. The leaders of the past had been

individuals chosen by God, and so had given good government; but now the Israelites were beginning to choose their own leaders, and that was a very dangerous step to take. It was true that God had chosen Saul, and would later choose David too, but in the Northern Kingdom after Solomon's death, many kings would be chosen by one section or another of the populace.

Vs 8–11 remind the Israelites of several important facts from their past history. First, God had constantly looked after their needs, rescuing them from many enemies. Secondly, God had chosen and provided the human leaders who had led them to victory. Thirdly, their defeats had been due to their own sinfulness, since they had repeatedly turned from Yahweh to idolatry. V 11 lists some of the able leaders God had provided for them. It is not impossible that Samuel included his own name, as the last of the judges, or perhaps the biblical author added it; but possibly we should read Samson's name instead (see the niv mg.)

V 12 renews the accusation of 8:7–8 that by demanding a human king the Israelites were rejecting Yahweh's kingship over them. This verse, which implies that *Nahash* must have been harassing Israelites in Transjordan long before his attack on Jabesh Gilead, shows how readily Israel made the wrong response to the situations that arose. When Nahash harassed them, they ought to have realized that only their own disloyalty to God could have caused such a situation; but instead of repentance (as in the past) they took matters into their own hands, rejected Yahweh's rule, and demanded a king. However, at least they had asked Yahweh to choose the actual man to be king, and perhaps because of that, Yahweh was now prepared to give them another chance before any punishment. It all depended on their, and their king's, obedience to Yahweh.

12:16–25 Encouragement and warning. Samuel's listeners might have questioned whether his interpretation of Israel's history was correct. Any such doubts were removed by a miraculous sign from heaven. In early summer, the time of the *wheat harvest*, neither *thunder* nor *rain* would normally occur in the land of Israel, so Samuel's prediction and its prompt fulfilment proved that God was speaking through him. This whole passage shows Samuel to be a prophet in every sense of the word. He analysed the past and present, he predicted the future, he reminded Israel of God's goodness, he recalled them from idolatry, and he promised to intercede for them in prayer and teach them what was *good and right*.

V 22 reminds hearers and readers that Yahweh had entered into a covenant with his people: God had made Israel *his own* people, and was bound by his own oath not to *reject* them. So the lesson—both for Samuel's listeners and for later generations—was their duty to keep their side of the covenant. If they failed to do so, particularly by turning from true worship to *idols*, then God would undoubtedly punish them. The last verse indicates in a few words how God would punish them: by exile and by the fall of the monarchy, both of which occurred in the sixth century bc. Thus, as soon as the monarchy began, its end was envisaged. There is, however, a note of hope here for those who lived in the exilic period.

Samuel's speech showed that the eventual fall of the monarchy would be part of God's actions and planning, and that even then *the Lord will not reject his people*. So even in the distress of the exile, Yahweh's people must not turn to other gods. In case any readers were tempted to do so, v 21 draws attention to the *useless* nature of idols.¹

12:1–5. As **Samuel** had spoken to them earlier about his age and the imminence of his death, so now again he addressed the assembly of **Israel**, this time after Saul had become **king** and had distinguished himself. As though now to reestablish his credibility among them, Samuel asked whether or not the people had ever detected any moral or spiritual flaw in his life. (By contrast, flaws had certainly been evident in his **sons**, 8:3.) The answer, of course, was no. Samuel's intent was to show that just as he could be trusted in the past so his word for the present and the future could also be accepted with confidence.

12:6–25. A critical point had been reached in Israel's history. **The people** had demanded and had been given **a king**, contrary to the precise purposes and will of **God**. And that king had led them to a glorious victory in his very first campaign! Now the question was, Would Israel see this victory as evidence of God's blessing and give Him the glory, or would they interpret it as a human achievement devoid of divine enablement? Samuel anticipated that question and sought to direct the people to a fresh recognition of the sovereignty of God and to the need to worship and praise Him as the Source of all their blessing. He did this first by reminding them of how God had redeemed them from **Egypt** and brought them into Canaan (vv. 6–8). He then recounted their disobedience under the Judges (vv. 9–11). (**Jerub-Baal**, v. 11, was another name for "Gideon," Jud. 6:32. **Barak** in the niv is lit., in the Heb., "Bedon" [see niv marg.]. Bedon was either another name for Barak or another judge mentioned only here in the OT.) Next Samuel pointed out that the Ammonite menace had prompted them to request a human **king**, a request to which **the Lord** had graciously acceded (1 Sam. 12:12–15). Finally **Samuel** appealed to **the Lord** to **send** a sign from heaven both to authenticate his own warnings of judgment and to cause the people to revere the God who had called them and who desired to bless and use them (vv. 16–18). The Lord reminded them that their insistent demand **for a king**, though He would grant it, was still an evil request because it was premature and wrongly motivated.

When **the people** witnessed the display of **thunder and rain**, a phenomenon unheard of in early summer, the time of **wheat harvest** (v. 17), they turned to **Samuel** in earnest penitence and asked the prophet to **pray** that **God** might forgive their hastiness in seeking **a king** (v. 19). In a marvelous manifestation of the grace of God, **Samuel** related to **the**

¹ Payne, D. F. (1994). 1 and 2 Samuel. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 308–309). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

people that God would bless them in spite of their wrong choice if they would only be steadfast in their obedience from this point on. The past could not be undone but their future was untainted and could be devoted to the Lord (vv.20–22). **And Samuel also, as a true mediator, pledged to keep praying for the people. (Centuries later Jeremiah spoke of Samuel as a great man of prayer, Jer. 15:1.)** Failure to do so, Samuel said, would be **sin against** God! (1 Sam. 12:23) If the people would respond affirmatively, they could expect God's continued blessing on their nation. But if they did not, they could expect the judgment of God on them (vv.24–25).²

A. A Testimony for Samuel (1 Sam 12:1–5)

In the prologue to his speech, Samuel elicited from the people an acknowledgement that the integrity of his leadership had not been compromised. First, he mentioned the fact that he had done what they had asked him to do, *viz.*, he had appointed a king for them. Their king was now *“walking before”* them, *i.e.*, installed in office. Second, he refers to himself as *“old and gray,”* perhaps suggesting that it was time for him to step down from his role of political leader. Third, he made reference to his sons who are *“with you.”* Perhaps this was a father's way of admitting the painful truth that his sons were not in fact worthy of succeeding their father in the office of Judge (cf. 1 Sam 8:3, 5). Fourth, he reminds them of his lengthy service to the nation *“from my youth even to this day.”* Samuel had *“walked before”* them, *i.e.*, he had been a public figure his entire life (12:1–2).

Samuel then challenged the audience to bear witness against him if they knew of any situation in which he had abused his power as Judge by taking bribes or defrauding citizens. The assembly unanimously agreed that Samuel had never abused his office in any way. Then Samuel in effect made the people swear before Yahweh and his anointed Saul that they could find no ill-gotten gain in his hand (12:3–5).

B. A Testimony for the Lord (1 Sam 12:6–12)

Samuel devoted a major part of his address to demonstrating the many *“righteous acts”* which Yahweh had performed for his people. When the Israelites cried out in the midst of Egyptian bondage, Yahweh raised up Moses and Aaron to bring them out of the land of oppression. The Lord settled his people in Canaan. When, however, they proved time and again to be unfaithful to him, Yahweh would deliver them into the hands of oppressing nations. In each of those oppressions the people would cry out to Yahweh, confessing their sins and begging for deliverance. The Lord responded by sending Jerubbaal (Gideon),

² Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 443). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Bedan (Barak?), Jephthah and Samuel to deliver Israel from the hand of their foreign oppressors.

The request for a king had been triggered by the oppression of Nahash the Ammonite. Instead of trusting God to supply deliverance, the people had resolved to find their own solution. They insisted on having a king like all the nations even though the Lord had never failed them in so far as they were faithful to him. Thus history bore testimony that God faithfully had performed the royal office. The request for a king had been premature, unnecessary, and insulting to the Lord (12:6–12).

C. A Testimony Against Israel (1 Sam 12:13–18)

Samuel next addressed the present realities. Israel had now formally chosen as king the man God had ordained. Hence *“Yahweh has set a king over you.”* As always, the requirement of Israel was to fear Yahweh, i.e., to serve and obey him. Following the Lord would lead to national blessing. On the other hand, the path of disobedience would bring the hand of Yahweh against them just as it had been against their fathers in times of their spiritual rebellion (12:13–15).

A miraculous sign would be needed to underscore in the minds of the people the gravity of their sin in requesting a king. Samuel called attention to the time of the year. Wheat harvest was in progress. This was the dry season when rain scarcely ever falls in Palestine. Yet Samuel announced that he would call upon Yahweh to send thunder and rain. One wonders if this announcement was greeted with skepticism by the assembly. Be that as it may, when the old prophet prayed, the thunder and rain came that day. Then the people greatly feared Yahweh and his servant Samuel (12:16–18).

D. A Final Testimony (1 Sam 12:19–25)

The ferocious thunderstorm got the message across. The people feared for their lives. They sensed the enormity of their sin against Yahweh. They immediately pled for Samuel to make intercession for them that they might not die. Samuel calmed their fears. Yet he used the occasion to press for future strict and heartfelt obedience to Yahweh. If they ceased to serve Yahweh, they would inevitably follow after *“futile things,”* i.e., idols. Such *“gods”* were of no benefit to any nation since they could not deliver from danger. Yahweh, on the other hand, had chosen Israel as his own people. His divine name (honor, reputation) was bound up in the fate of this nation. Therefore he would not abandon Israel even though the nation may have committed a grievous sin against him (12:19–22).

Even though he was stepping down as Judge, Samuel did not relinquish his office of prophet. His prophetic responsibilities under the monarchy would be twofold: (1) prayer and (2) instruction. Under no circumstances would Samuel sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for Israel. Intercessory prayer was a fundamental attribute of a prophet (cf. Gen

20:7, 17). In addition to his prayers for Israel, Samuel would continue to instruct them “*in the good and right way*” (12:23).

Samuel’s valedictory concluded with an admonition for Israel to “*fear Yahweh and serve him in truth.*” Heartfelt and cheerful obedience were the only proper responses to all the great things which Yahweh had done for his people. On the other hand, if Israel arrogantly insist upon its own way, both the people and their king would be swept away (12:24–25).³

In answer to the people’s demand, Saul had been selected as their king. The motives and views which underlay their application for a king were manifest. They had been clearly set before the representatives of Israel by Samuel; and they had not gainsaid the correctness of his statement. They wanted not only a king, but royalty like that of the nations around, and for the purpose of outward deliverance; thus forgetting God’s dealings in the past, disclaiming simple trust in Him, and disbelieving the sufficiency of His leadership. In fact, what they really wanted was a king who would reflect and embody their idea of royalty, not the ideal which God had set before them. And no better representative of Israel could have been found than Saul, alike in appearance and in military qualification; nor yet a truer reflex of the people than that which his character and religious bearing offered. He was the typical Israelite of his period, and this neither as regarded the evil-disposed or “sons of Belial,” nor yet of course, the minority of the truly enlightened, but the great body of the well-disposed people. If David was the king “after God’s own heart,” Saul was the king after the people’s own heart. What they had asked, they obtained; and what they obtained, must fail; and what failed would prepare for what God had intended.

But as yet the choice of Saul had been a secret between the messenger of the Lord and the new king. As in every other case, so in this, God would give the person called to most difficult work every opportunity of knowing His will, and every encouragement to do it. For this purpose Samuel had first called up great thoughts in Saul; then “communed” with him long and earnestly; then given him undoubted evidence that the message he bore was God’s; and, finally, embodied in one significant direction alike a warning of his danger and guidance for his safety. All this had passed secretly between the two, that, undisturbed by influences from without, Saul might consider his calling and future course, and this in circumstances most favourable to a happy issue, while the transaction was still, as it were, between God and himself, and before he could be led astray by the intoxicating effect of success or by popular flattery.

³ Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (1 Sa 12:1–25). Joplin, MO: College Press.

And now this brief period of preparation was past, and what had been done in secret must be confirmed in public. Accordingly Samuel summoned the people—no doubt by their representatives—to a solemn assembly “before Jehovah” in Mizpeh. Here the first great victory over the Philistines had been obtained by prayer (7:5), and here there was an “altar unto Jehovah” (ver. 9). As so often before, the lot was solemnly cast to indicate the will of God. But before so doing, Samuel once more presented to the people what the leadership of the Lord had been in the past, and what their choice of another leadership implied. This not with the view of annulling the proposed establishment of royalty, but with that of leading the people to repentance of their sin in connection with it. But the people remained unmoved. And now the lot was drawn. It fell on Saul, the son of Kish. But although he had come to Mizpeh, he could not be found in the assembly. It was a supreme moment in the history of Israel when God had indicated to His people, gathered before Him, their king by name. In circumstances so urgent, inquiry by the *Urim* and *Thummim* seemed appropriate. The answer indicated that Saul had concealed himself among the baggage on the outskirts of the encampment. Even this seems characteristic of Saul. It could have been neither from humility nor modesty—both of which would, to say the least, have been here misplaced. It is indeed true that this was a moment in which the heart of the bravest might fail,⁵ and that thoughts of what was before him might well fill him with anxiety. Saul must have known what would be expected of him as king. Would he succeed in it? He knew the tribal and personal jealousies which his election would call forth. Would he be strong enough to stand against them? Such questions were natural. The only true answer would have been a *spiritual* one. Unable to give it, Saul withdrew from the assembly. Did he wonder whether after all it would come to pass or what would happen, and wait till a decision was forced upon him? The people, at any rate, saw nothing in his conduct that seemed to them strange; and so we may take it that it was just up to the level of their own conceptions, though to us it appears very different from what a hero of God would have done.

And so the newly-found king was brought back to the assembly. And when Samuel pointed to him as he stood there, “from his shoulders upward” overtopping every one around, the people burst into a shout: “Let the king live!” For thus far Saul seemed the very embodiment of their ideal of a king. The transaction was closed by Samuel explaining to the people, this time not “the right of the king” (1 Sam. 8:9, 11), as claimed among other heathen nations whom they wished to imitate, but “the right of the kingdom” (10:25), as it should exist in Israel in accordance with the principles laid down in Deut. 17:14–20. This was put in writing, and the document solemnly deposited in the tabernacle.

For the moment, however, the establishment of the new monarchy seemed to bring no change. Saul returned to his home in Gibeah, attended indeed on his journey, by way of honour, by “a band whom Elohim had touched in their hearts,” and who no doubt “brought him presents” as their king. But he also returned to his former humble avocations. On the other hand, “the sons of Belial” not only withheld such marks of homage, but openly derided the new king as wanting in tribal influence and military means for his office. When

we bear in mind that these represented a party, possibly belonging to the great tribes of Judah and Ephraim, so strong as openly to express their opposition (1 Sam. 11:12), and sufficiently numerous not to be resisted by those who thought otherwise, the movement must have been formidable enough to dictate as a prudential measure the retirement of Saul till the time when events would vindicate his election. And so complete was that privacy, that even the Philistine garrison in Gibeah remained in ignorance of the fact of Saul's new office, and of what it implied; and that in the east, across the Jordan, the Ammonite king who waged war with Israel was apparently wholly unaware of any combined national movement on the part of the people, or of any new centre of union and resistance against a common enemy.

This expedition on the part of Nahash, king of the Ammonites, to which we have just referred, is otherwise also of interest, as showing that the desire of Israel after a king must have sprung from other and deeper motives than merely the age of Samuel, or even the conduct of his sons. From 1 Sam. 12:12 it appears that the invasion by Nahash commenced before Israel's demand for a king, and was, indeed, the cause of it; thus proving that, as Samuel charged them, distrust of their heavenly Leader was the real motive of their movement. The expedition of Nahash had no doubt been undertaken to renew the claims which his predecessor had made, and to avenge the defeat which Jephthah had inflicted upon him (Judg. 11:13, 33). But Nahash had penetrated much farther into Israelitish territory than his predecessor. His hordes had swarmed up the lovely rich valley of the Jabesh, laying bare its barley-fields and olive plantations, and wasting its villages; and they were now besieging the capital of Gilead—Jabesh-gilead—which occupied a commanding position on the top of an isolated hill overhanging the southern crest of the valley. In their despair, the people of Jabesh offered to surrender, but Nahash, in his insolence, insisted that he would thrust out their right eyes, avowedly to "lay it as a shame upon all Israel." Terrible as these conditions were, the "elders" of Jabesh saw no means of resisting, and only begged seven days' respite, to see whether any were left in Israel able and willing to save them. In the foolhardiness of his swagger, Nahash consented, well assured that if Israel were, as he fully believed, incapable of a combined movement for the relief of Jabesh, the whole land would henceforth be at his mercy, and between Philistia in the west and Ammon in the east, Israel—their land and their God—would lie helpless before the heathen powers.

It is, to say the least, a curious coincidence that Jabesh was the only town in Israel which had not taken part in the exterminating warfare against the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 21:9). But it was not on that ground, but because tidings had no doubt reached them of the new royal office in Israel, that their messengers went straight to Gibeah. It was evening when Saul returned home "behind the oxen," with which he had been working,¹⁰ to find Gibeah strangely moved. The tidings which the men of Jabesh had brought had filled the place with impotent lamentation, not roused the people to action. So low had Israel sunk! But now, as he heard it, once more "the Spirit of Elohim seized upon Saul." He hewed in pieces the "yoke

of oxen” with which he had just returned, and sent—probably by the messengers from Jabesh—these pieces throughout the land, bidding those know who had no higher thoughts than self, that thus it would be done to their oxen who followed not after Saul and Samuel in the general war against Ammon.

This, if ever, was the time when the Divine appointment of Saul must be vindicated; and to indicate this he conjoined with himself Samuel, the venerated prophet of God, so long the judge of Israel. It is said that “the terror of Jehovah” fell upon the people. From all parts of the land armed men trooped to the trysting-place at Bezek, within the territory of Issachar, near to Bethshan, and almost in a straight line to Jabesh. Three hundred thousand from Israel, and thirty thousand from Judah (for that territory was in part held by the Philistines), had obeyed the summons of Saul. It was not an army, but a ban—a *landsturm*—an armed rising of the people. From the brow of the hill on which Bethshan lay, in the plain of Jezreel, you might look across Jordan and see Jabesh-gilead on its eminence. A very few hours would bring relief to the beleaguered city, and so they bade them know and expect. A feigned promise of subjection on the morrow made Nahash and his army even more confident than before. And what, indeed, had they to fear when all Israel lay so helplessly prostrate?

It was night when Saul and the armed multitude which followed him broke up from Bezek. Little did he know how well the brave men of Jabesh would requite the service; how, when on that disastrous day on Mount Gilboa he and his sons would fall in battle, and the victorious Philistines fasten their dead bodies to the walls of Bethshan, these brave men of Jabesh would march all night and rescue the fallen heroes from exposure (1 Sam. 31:8–13). Strange that Saul’s first march should have been by night from Bethshan to Jabesh, the same route by which at the last they carried his dead body at night.

But no such thoughts disturbed the host as they crossed the fords of the Jordan, and swarmed up the other bank. A few hours more, and they had reached the valley of the Jabesh. Following the example of Gideon (Judg. 7:16), Saul divided the people “into three companies.” From the rear and from either flank they fell upon the unsuspecting Ammonites when most secure—“in the morning watch,” between three and six o’clock. A general panic ensued; and before the rout was ended not two of the enemy were left together. The revulsion of popular feeling toward Saul was complete. They would even have killed those who had formerly derided the new monarchy. But Saul refused such counsel. Rather did Samuel make different use of the new state of feeling. On his proposal the people followed him and Saul to Gilgal, to which place so many sacred memories clung. Here they offered thank and peace-offerings, and greatly rejoiced as they renewed “the kingdom,” and, in the sense of real and universal acknowledgment, “made Saul king before Jehovah.”

Although all his lifetime Samuel never ceased to judge Israel, yet his official work in that capacity had now come to an end. Accordingly he gave a solemn and public account of his

administration, calling alike the Lord and His anointed to witness of what passed between him and the people. Leaving his sons to bear the responsibility of their own doings, he challenged any charge against himself. But, as a faithful servant of the Lord, and ruler in Israel, he went further. Fain would he bring them to repentance for their great sin in the manner wherein they had demanded a king.¹⁵ One by one he recalled to them the “righteous doings” of Jehovah in the fulfilment of His covenant-promises in the past. In contrast to this never-failing help, he pointed to their unbelief, when, unmindful of what God had done and distrustful of what He would do, they had, on the approach of serious danger, virtually said concerning His leadership, “Nay, but a king shall reign over us.” And God had granted their desire. But upon their and their king’s bearing towards the Lord, not upon the fact that they had now a king, would the future of Israel depend. And this truth, so difficult for them to learn, God would now, as it were, prove before them in a symbol. Did they think it unlikely, nay, well-nigh impossible, to fail in their present circumstances? God would bring the unlikely and seemingly incredible to pass in a manner patent to all. Was it not the time of wheat-harvest, when in the east not a cloud darkens the clear sky? God would send thunder and rain to convince them, by making the unlikely real, of the folly and sin of their thoughts in demanding a king.¹⁸ So manifest a proof of the truth of what Samuel had said, and of the nearness of God and of His personal interposition, struck terror into the hearts of the people, and led to at least outward repentance. In reply to their confession and entreaty for his continued intercession, Samuel assured them that he would not fail in his duty of prayer for them, nor yet God, either in His faithfulness to His covenant and promises, or in His justice and holiness if they did wickedly.

And so the assembly parted—Israel to their tents, Saul to the work of the kingdom which lay to his hands, and Samuel to the far more trying and difficult duty of faithfully representing and executing the will of God as His appointed messenger in the land.⁴

⁴ Edersheim, A. (1975). *Bible History: Old Testament* (Vol. 4, pp. 47–55). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.