

After officially crowning Saul as king of Israel, Samuel addresses the people and puts things into perspective. Israel's desire for a king was an act of rebellion against the LORD but the LORD had granted their request and given them the king that they wanted. He then warns them to obey the LORD so that He will bless them; otherwise the LORD will oppose and punish them.

1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

“And Samuel said unto all Israel” – Samuel begins addressing Israel and summarizing the current state of affairs in Israel. This address seems to be a continuation of the festivities at Gilgal where they officially declared Saul to be king and were celebrating the military victory that their new king had won over the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:14-15).

“Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you” – Samuel reminds the people that he has done as they asked and given them a king.

“And now, behold, the king walketh before you” – The phrase “walketh before you” is an expression meaning that Saul was already serving in the capacity of a king, evidenced by the victory that they were currently celebrating. Samuel has given them a king that is doing what they wanted their king to do (“fight our battles” - 1 Sam. 8:20).

“and I am old and grayheaded” – Samuel knows that his days are numbered and he is no longer be able to serve the people as he once had.

“and, behold, my sons are with you” – Many commentators agree that since Samuel said “my sons are with you” instead of “my sons are over you,” it would seem to imply that Samuel had removed his sons from being judges after the elders had informed him of their dishonest dealings (1 Sam. 8:1-5). This would leave Samuel blameless since he had corrected the situation with his sons instead of ignoring the situation like Eli had done with his sons (1 Sam. 2:29).

“and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day” – Samuel's whole life has been spent in service to the people of Israel as a prophet and later also as a judge.

Verses 3-5: With the LORD and the newly anointed king looking on as witnesses, Samuel challenges the people before to provide an example of him being dishonest or doing wrong to anyone. The people acknowledge that Samuel has been blameless for his entire life.

6 And Samuel said unto the people, *It is* the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

Samuel reminds the people of Israel that it was the LORD that “advanced” (raised up) Moses and Aaron as the leaders whom the LORD used to bring them out of Egypt. Notice that Samuel is pointing out that it was the LORD Who both raised up Moses and Aaron also brought Israel out of Egypt. He wants them to remember what the LORD has done for Israel.

7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

Samuel wants the people to patiently listen as he takes them on a trip down memory lane to remember all the good things that the LORD has done for Israel. The Hebrew word translated “reason” means “to enter into judgment.” The idea is that Samuel will present the evidence of how good the LORD has been to Israel so that they will see that they have not responded as they should have.

Verses 8-11: Beginning with Israel's bondage in Egypt, Samuel recites a brief history of Israel entering the land of Canaan and how that the LORD would allow their enemies to oppress them each time Israel strayed from the LORD. When they repented and returned to the LORD, He would respond by raising up a judge to deliver them from their enemies.

12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God *was* your king.

Samuel brings this brief history up to their current day, reminding them of their recent confrontation with Ammon and their demand for a king. Samuel makes it clear that their demand for a king was a rejection of the LORD as their king, stating in no uncertain terms that their demand for a king was an act of rebellion against the leadership of the LORD.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

Samuel refers to Saul, the man they just crowned as king. LORD had given them the king that they wanted despite it being an act of rebellion. However, the qualities that they looked for in a king were not necessarily the qualities that made a good king. The LORD gave them the king that they wanted to show them the folly of their desire to have a man rule over them.

14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

Samuel puts the king and the people he rules over in the same position as being subject to the LORD's commands. If they will “fear” (reverence) the LORD and serve Him, obeying what He says without rebelling against His commandments, then both they and their king will be able to continue as followers of the LORD. The idea is that obedience to the LORD will bring His blessing.

15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

On the other hand, if Israel and their king rebel against the LORD and choose not to obey Him, then He will do as He had done to Israel in the past and be against them. He will ensure that they do not prosper but will cause their enemies to oppress them.

Verses 16-19: Rain during the wheat harvest was unusual, so Samuel calls on the LORD to send rain and thunder to demonstrate His displeasure with Israel for asking for a king. When the rain and thunder came later that day the people feared the LORD and Samuel. They confessed that they had indeed done wickedly by asking for a king and beg Samuel to pray that the LORD would forgive them.

20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

“And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness” – Samuel does not excuse the people’s sin. He states that they have indeed done wicked deeds, but they should not fear.

“yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart” – The LORD is willing to forgive their sin as long as they follow Him from this point on. Samuel encourages them to serve the LORD with all their heart.

21 And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.

If they turn aside from following the LORD, it will be because they are going after “vain things” (empty; futile). These things include false gods, their own desires, etc. Samuel states that these “vain things” that they would seek after instead of the LORD are things that cannot benefit them or deliver them from their problems and enemies. They would be forsaking the God that can bless and help them and instead going after such useless things as false gods (lifeless images of wood or stone) that cannot help them. The LORD later states through Jeremiah the sinfulness of such an action: **Jer. 2:13** *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”*

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

“For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake” – Samuel doesn’t say that the LORD’s loyalty to His people is because they deserve it. He has attached His name to Israel as their God and thus it is for the honor and glory of His own name that He remains faithful to Israel.

“because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people” – It was the LORD’s sovereign will to choose Israel as His people, not because of anything they did or any inherent value in them. The LORD chose Israel and declared Himself to be their God, and even though He might at times punish them at times to the extent that they are carried away into captivity, He will bring them back because He will not utterly forsake them. Those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ cannot claim that we deserve His grace or love. He saved us and made us His own because He chose to love us and redeem us. This fact should humble us and make us want to thank God every day for our salvation.

Verses 23-25: Samuel affirms his commitment to pray for the people and to teach them to do good and right. He urges the people to fear the LORD and serve Him with all their heart, remembering all the things the LORD has done for them. If they don’t, then the LORD will destroy them and their king.