

1st Samuel

Lesson 18

(2) The History of the LORD's Integrity (12:6-11)

Samuel then proceeded to address the history of the LORD's integrity. Verse 6.

"Then Samuel said to the people, 'It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.⁷ So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers.⁸ When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.⁹ But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.¹⁰ 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 from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.'¹¹ Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security." (12:6-11)

Basically, Samuel has just presented a summary of the book of Judges and why Israel struggled in six cycles of sin. Even amid Israel's sin, the LORD's integrity was always in place, ready to help the people of Israel when they called. Here, Samuel mentions three of the judges sent by the LORD recorded in the book of Judges. You may not readily recognize the name Jerubbaal, but that was the second name of Gideon. You may not recognize the name Bedan because it was not used in the book of Judges, but in the Hebrew, it would have read Ben-dan. *Ben* is the Hebrew word for *son of*. Attached to the word *Ben* we find the word, *Dan*. *Dan* was one of the tribes of Israel. Together Bedan would read as the *son of Dan*. Who was the *son of Dan* whom the LORD called to be a judge? It was Samson. Samson was a Danite, a *son of Dan*. Samuel also mentions Jephthah. He was the son of Gilead by a concubine. Then, of course, there was Samuel, the last judge in the system, not mentioned in the book of Judges. In all, the LORD's integrity was fully intact. When the people cried out, the LORD delivered a judge to deliver His people.

(3) The Challenge of the People's Integrity

(a) What They Wanted (12:12)

Samuel then made the challenge of the people's integrity. He will speak to the people personally. He begins with *What they wanted*, then *what they got*. He will move on to *what they must do, what they should not do, and what the LORD will do*. Verse 12. *"When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God was your king."* (12:12)

The story develops why the people wanted a king, and Samuel revealed it here. In chapter 8, the elders went to Samuel and presented their complaint as if they were concerned that Samuel's worthless sons would take over and judge the nation when Samuel died. With that excuse, they asked for a king like all the surrounding nations. That was the story the writer recorded in the first pass, and no doubt it was exactly as the people presented it to him. The LORD calmed Samuel's spirit and told Samuel that the people had not rejected Samuel but had rejected Him as their LORD and King. He then told Samuel to select a king. But the LORD did not let Samuel choose the King. The LORD appointed Saul and told Samuel about it. Samuel told us about the selection of Saul in the second pass through the story. In the third pass through the story, Samuel revealed the process of presenting Saul as king to the people where the people would be well informed that the LORD had selected Saul as king. In the fourth pass through the story, Samuel told of the problem with

Nahash the Ammonite and how the Spirit of God moved upon Saul to gather the forces and defeat Nahash.

In Samuel's style, in this fifth pass through the story, Samuel reveals that he knew the true reason why the people asked for a king. It was not because of Samuel's two worthless priestly sons; it was because Nahash was making a move to take over the area of Gilead, a large area that reached into the tribal areas of Gad and half the tribe of Manassah. Nahash was the reason. This passage also indicated the instigators of the conversation in Ramah with Samuel concerning the desire for a king. No doubt, it was the elders of Gad and Manassah that began the whole process. The other tribal elders just followed along. Samuel basically said to the people at Gilgal - a king was what you wanted.

(b) What They Got (12:13)

From Samuel telling the Israelites what they wanted, he told them what they got. Verse 13.

"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you." (12:13)

At Gilgal, Samuel pointed at Saul and said to the people; you wanted a king; you got a king. There he is - right there.

(c) What They Must Do (12:14)

After that, Samuel told the people what they must do. Verse 14.

"If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God." (12:14)

We might think that this is a new command for the people of Israel, but the only thing new about this command is the addition of Saul as the king. He, too, had to adhere to the command of the LORD as king, just as he had to do when he was a regular Benjamite in the Promised Land. There was no difference between royalty and commoners with the LORD. The command was for all of Israel. Dare we mention that these were the same words told to the Israelites by Moses on the Plain of Moab before he died? Dare we mention that these were the same words told to the Israelites by Joshua as he sent them to inhabit their inheritance? Dare we mention that Joshua used these words in his last address to the people before he died? Dare we mention the other instances when these words were used in the history of Israel? Israel had heard them before. In fact, they heard them every seven years, in the sabbatical year, when the Law was read to them by priests. It was the Law for them to hear them read. How could they forget these words? Not to get ahead of the story, I still might say here, they forgot these words, both the people and King Saul. Dare we make the conjecture that Israel was now in this mess with a king because they forgot these words of the LORD after the death of Joshua? Probably so!

(d) What the LORD Will Do (12:15)

If the nation forgets the warning of the LORD again, the people would need to know what the LORD would do. Notice that since the time of Moses, the LORD has changed nothing in how He responds when His people forget these words. Verse 15.

"If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers." (12:15)

The fathers of those standing there with Samuel had rebelled against the command of the LORD in the six cycles of sin presented in the book of Judges. In each case, the LORD's hand was against them until they remembered and respected His words – then He came to help them. But, while the people are in rebellion, He will not help, just like he did not help their fathers.

(e) Watch What the LORD Will Do (12:16-18)

To prove to the people that the LORD had told Samuel what he had just said, a miracle was needed of catastrophic proportions. Samuel told the people to watch what the LORD would do as Samuel asked the LORD for a storm right at the beginning of the yearly harvest. Verse 16.

“Even now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes.¹⁷ Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.”¹⁸ So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.” (12:16-18)

Samuel was clear. Asking for a human king was an act of great wickedness among the people of the Nation of Israel. Punishment was needed for that sin. In this case, the punishment would be destroying the wheat harvest that year. The storm and the loss of the crops brought great fear upon the people of Israel, at least for that year.

(4) The Admission of the People’s Lack of Integrity

(a) Those Who Should Not Have Asked for a King (12:19)

After challenging the integrity of the people of Israel, we come to the admission of the people’s lack of integrity. We hear the admission of those who should not have asked for a king. Verse 19.

“Then all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king.’ (12:19)

The sinners who asked for a king have now asked Samuel to pray that the LORD will not punish them with death. More than likely, in the writer’s style of writing, the storm had not started to destroy the crops yet, but it would come after this conversation was over at Gilgal. When the storm destroyed their wheat crop throughout the entire Promised Land and life was going to be more challenging that year. Standing there with Samuel at Gilgal, the people knew the hardness of life if the crops were destroyed and could foresee starvation on its way without the wheat supply. The thought of it shook them to the core and brought the reality home that they had sinned a great sin by wanting a human king instead of following the LORD and allowing him to be their only King.

(b) Those Who Should Change Their Ways (12:20-21)

To the people’s admission, Samuel had a reply, and it was to those who should change their ways. Verse 20.

“Samuel said to the people, ‘Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.²¹ You must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile.’ (12:20-21)

These two verses bring home an important principle. We all sin against the LORD. The people who asked for a king had sinned greatly against the LORD. Yet, there is life after sin. In that life after sin, a person needs to choose one of two paths. The person can continue in that path of sin and sin against the LORD again, or the person can choose a different path to be faithful to the LORD and follow His instruction. Continuing in sin only leads to continued sin that leads nowhere but to futile efforts and consequences. Choosing to follow the LORD leads to great benefits and great rewards. Samuel made this principle very clear.