

# ***PROMISED LAND 1: Lesson Nine, Monarchy: Saul and Samuel***

## ***1 Samuel 8 - 12***

**Subject:** Israel asks for a king, Saul transitions into the role, and Samuel confronts Israel.

**Main Idea:** When God is King over us, we experience true security.

**Principles:**

1. *We should exercise caution in what we ask of the Lord, because He may give us exactly what we request.*
2. *God's prescription for leadership requires humble dependence on Him.*
3. *Sin breeds insecurity, but repentance and meditation on the Lord's mighty works assure us that in Him, we are secure.*

### **Introduction**

Recently, we have put our house on the market to sell. While I love our home, I've never thought of it as important to my personal security. Yet, I've been surprised by my apprehension over anything that potentially threatens the sale. Even if the house itself isn't essential to my happiness, I have apparently linked our investment in it to my sense of future wellbeing. It has been providing me with a (false) sense of security, even though I was unaware. Security is something everyone seeks. An abundance of books and seminars suggest ways to overcome personal insecurity. On a larger scale, every country on the planet has national security issues of some kind: terrorism, famine and disease, foreign ideologies, and other real or perceived threats.

We have been studying the history of Israel during the period of the Judges, the several hundred years following their conquest of Canaan. When we come to 1 Samuel 8, we learn that as the godly judge, Samuel, aged and as the Israelites considered the shortage of good leaders in their recent history, they felt threatened by what they perceived to be a leadership crisis. The Lord had established a system of leadership by His appointment of local judges, but all too frequently, these judges turned out to be as corrupt as their fellow Israelites.

In truth, the Lord was their King. *Their only real crisis was their sin.* No sooner had they entered the Promised Land than they adopted the practices of the neighboring nations, especially idolatry. Their sin was the reason they had produced poor leaders, the reason the Lord had not delivered them from all their enemies, and the ultimate reason for their insecurity. Only by recognizing the Lord as their true King and trusting and obeying Him could their crisis be resolved. Yet, instead of turning to Him in repentance (as they had on a few occasions in the past), they looked to the nations around them for a solution. These nations had kings to rule them, human kings. The Israelites concluded that establishing a monarchy was the solution to their problems. Although chapter 7 tells us that under Samuel's leadership, they had experienced revival and recommitted themselves to the Lord, chapter 8 shows how deeply their habits of thinking and acting like their pagan neighbors were ingrained.

## I. Israel's Request for a King – 1 Samuel 8

### A. Unworthiness of Samuel's Sons to Succeed Him – 8:1-3

- i. Samuel's Age: The first seven chapters of 1 Samuel conclude the history of the period of the Judges. In those chapters, we see Israel at its lowest point, symbolized by the exile of the Ark, the “glory” of Israel (4:21-22). The peace that ensued after the revival in Samuel's day may have lasted for quite some time, for we arrive at chapter 8 and the first verse tells us that Samuel had grown old. Throughout this long period, Samuel had faithfully administered justice (7:15-17). His leadership had extended over all Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south (3:20, 4:1, 7:3). He had proven himself a more than competent leader. However, since he was getting old, the elders of Israel approached him about the issue of long-term leadership.
- ii. Samuel's Sons
  1. *An Unfit Succession*: In addition to the elders' concern about Samuel's age, they noted that Samuel's sons were not qualified to succeed him. Samuel's sons perverted justice by taking bribes. They are an example of the fact that current system of judgeship had failed to provide a succession of qualified leaders. The sons of Gideon and Eli had also proved to be unfit. The judges' inability to provide a fit succession of leadership was one several reasons the Israelites wanted a monarchy. The error of their reasoning should have been apparent. If their judges had not raised sons who were suitable leaders, why would they expect a king to do better?
  2. *Local Leadership*: According to the Mosaic Law, the Israelites were to appoint judges and officials for each tribe *in every town*. Unlike Samuel, there is no indication that the judges named in the book of Judges were anything other than regional leaders, as Deuteronomy 16:18 commanded. According to God's ideal, the Levites and judges (who were scattered throughout the land) should have given Israel sound, godly leadership, but as the book of Judges and 1 Samuel have indicated, these leaders were often as morally misguided as their fellow Israelites. Thus, the Israelites desired national, rather than regional, government. This seems to be the second of five reasons Israel wanted a king.<sup>i</sup> Their common worship of the Lord was intended to unite them, but the moral failure of the leaders and people alike had instead led to political disunity. God's prescription for local leadership may be the reason (at least in part) why Samuel sent his sons to a different location – Beersheba, in the far south – but the fact that Samuel himself was more than a regional judge is also an indication that some sort of political transition was already occurring.

## B. A King to Lead Them – 8:4-22

- i. A Rejection of Samuel and the Lord: The leaders' request for a king displeased Samuel. Indeed, it was a rejection of Samuel, since he was not yet dead. The Lord told Samuel that the Israelites were not so much rejecting Samuel as they were rejecting Him. He was Israel's king (Deuteronomy 33:5, Numbers 23:21), but they had already forsaken Him to worship other gods (Judges 2:12-13, 17, 19). Of all the reasons Israel wanted a king, their rejection of the Lord was the most fundamental.
- ii. Desire to Be Like Other Nations: A fourth reason they wanted a king is stated twice in chapter 8: they wanted to be "like the other nations" (8:5, 20). Moses predicted this in Deuteronomy 17:14. Their desire reflected a complete rejection of their covenant with the Lord, whom they were to represent. They were to be a unique and holy people, *unlike* the nations around them. Their desire to be like other nations was certain to lead to disaster. Strangely enough, the Lord told Samuel to listen to them! However, Samuel was also to warn them of the consequences of their request, consequences that, according to Ugaritic documents from the time, other people groups with kings already suffered.<sup>ii</sup> With monarchy would come taxation, property and personal servitude, and a military draft.
- iii. Leadership in Battle: Samuel communicated this warning to the Israelites, but they refused to heed it. This time they demanded a king: "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles" (8:19-20). Here we find the fifth reason given in chapter 8 for the people's request for a king: they believed they needed human military leadership in fighting their enemies.

**Summary Statement:** Since the Israelites rejected the Lord in asking for a king, the outcome would undoubtedly be disastrous. Yet, the Lord told Samuel to give them what they wanted.

**Principle:** *We should exercise caution in what we ask of the Lord, because He may give us exactly what we request.*

**Illustration:** An eight-year-old insisted that her father buy her a faster kind of roller skates than those she already had. Her father resisted, but when she continued to beg and plead, he gave in and bought them for her. No sooner did she receive them than she put them on and sped down the street on which she lived and around a corner. The father heard a cry and a sickening clatter. He rushed around the corner and found his daughter unconscious. She had slipped on the faster skates and hit her head. The girl died without ever regaining consciousness.<sup>iii</sup>

**Application:** When the Lord repeatedly says “no,” we sometimes think He is withholding something good. If we keep begging, God may give us the thing for which we asked, but great disappointment and heartache are likely to follow.

Does this mean we shouldn't repeatedly petition the Lord with a request? Doesn't the New Testament tell us to keep on asking (Matthew 7:7, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)? Yes! In fact, Jesus affirmed ongoing intercession through a parable about a widow's persistent pleas for justice (Luke 18:1-8). True prayer involves listening to God and then making our petitions according to His leading. It is impossible for us to determine whether or not God wants to give us something if we have our hearts set on having it. We must begin by honestly evaluating our desires and confessing them to the Lord. What is the reason we want something? Are we feeling insecure?

Too often, people rush into marriages, new jobs, and other life-altering decisions because they are convinced that they will find greater security. We should ask the Lord to make us equally willing to have the thing and willing to live without it. Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” When we delight ourselves in Him, our hearts are in a state of contentment. Only then, can He create desires within us that line up with His will. And only then will we experience freedom from anxiety and the security we seek.

**Transition:** The Israelites' hearts were rebellious. They wanted a king, whether or not it was God's ideal. Once the Lord told Samuel to give the Israelites what they wanted, Samuel dismissed them back to their homes and waited for the Lord to reveal the person for the job.

## II. Saul's Transition to Kingship – 1 Samuel 9 – 11

### A. Saul's Anointing by Samuel – 9:1 – 10:16

- i. A Benjamite – 9:1-2: Chapter 9 begins with the words, “There was a Benjamite.” According to Judges 19-21, the Benjamites refused to discipline the exceedingly wicked men of one of their cities who sought to gang rape a male visitor and instead, raped and killed his concubine. The Benjamites' moral failure had led to a civil war in which the tribe had been almost entirely wiped out. Furthermore, we later learn that Kish, the Benjamite of 1 Samuel 9, lived in Gibeah (10:26), the very same town in which the evil had been perpetrated. Although Kish was a man of standing, who (probably among other things) owned servants and donkeys, his background was not one through whom a king was likely to be chosen. Nevertheless, Kish had a son named Saul who was very handsome and a head taller than his fellow Israelites.

- ii. The Lost Donkeys – 9:3-10: Kish sent Saul, along with a servant, to find and retrieve some lost donkeys. After three days of searching (9:20), their supplies were used and Saul decided the two should return home, lest his prolonged absence cause his father anxiety. The servant suggested that they first consult a seer (prophet) who lived in the region, a man about whom Saul apparently was unaware. Ramah (Samuel’s hometown) was only a short distance from Saul’s hometown of Gibeah. Both were in the district of Zuph (1:1, 7:17). Considering the scope of Samuel’s leadership, we wonder how a future king of Israel could be so entirely ignorant concerning Samuel! The first impression we’re give of Saul is that he was indeed very much like the kings of other nations: physically impressive but spiritually aloof.
- iii. Samuel’s Feast – 9:11-24
1. *Sacrifices at Ramah*: When Saul and his servant reached the town in which they expected to find the seer they were told that he had just arrived for a festival. If the town in which they had found Samuel was Ramah, as one would assume, the high place where Samuel was to offer the sacrifice was probably the location at which he had earlier constructed an altar (7:17b). Altars were often constructed in the open air on hilltops (or manmade mounds). This practice was used by the pagan nations of the ancient Near East and God’s people alike. Samuel’s building of an altar and offering of sacrifices at Ramah is almost certainly evidence that, although the Ark remained at Kiriath Jearim until the time of David (2 Samuel 6), Ramah became Israel’s worship center, following Shiloh’s destruction.
  2. *Samuel’s Surprising Words*: The Lord had revealed to Samuel that He would send the man He had chosen to rule His people, a Benjamite, on that particular day. When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord affirmed he was the man Samuel was to anoint. Saul approached Samuel innocently and inquired about where he might find the seer. Samuel surprised him by indicating that he had been expecting him, that his father’s lost donkeys had been found, and that he was to eat with Samuel. Then, Samuel really shocked Saul with the rhetorical question, “To whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?”
  3. *Saul’s Response*: Saul responded in a manner that appears very humble. He wondered how a Benjamite like he could be highly esteemed, and especially someone from a little-known clan and family like his. If nothing else, we can conclude from Saul’s response that he certainly had no previous thought of becoming king. He seemed to have no idea what Samuel was talking about.

4. *Saul's Seat of Honor*: Having prepared in advance for Saul's arrival, Samuel directed Saul to the hall where a banquet was to take place, gave him the seat of honor, and brought him a choice portion of the meat from the sacrifice.

iv. Saul's Anointing

1. *Old Testament Anointing*: After the meal, Samuel took Saul home with him and the two men talked on the roof of Samuel's house (in ancient Israel, the roofs of homes were always flat and used as additional living spaces). The next morning, Samuel accompanied Saul and his servant to the edge of town. Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead and then he privately anointed Saul with a flask of olive oil. To be anointed was to be consecrated (set apart) for a unique service to the Lord. When Saul and (later) David were anointed, the Holy Spirit came upon them. In both cases, the anointing was a symbol of God's choosing them as leaders of His people. "Messiah" means "Anointed One." Since the time of Christ, the Holy Spirit anoints believers for the purposes of enabling them to understand their faith and live godly lives (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:20, 27).
2. *Important Words*: Samuel said, "Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over His inheritance?" What Saul was to understand from these carefully chosen words was not only that he was God's chosen leader, but also that the people he would rule would never belong to *him*. The people he would rule were the *Lord's* inheritance. The great significance of the statement becomes even clearer in chapter 12.

v. Three Meaningful Signs: Samuel told Saul that three signs would confirm to Saul that he was God's choice.

1. *Provision*: The first was that he would encounter two men who would tell him that his father's lost donkeys had been found. This sign should have increased Saul's confidence for at least two reasons: It was a sign that Saul could safely leave his past behind<sup>iv</sup> and it was also a reminder to trust God to solve his problems in the future.
2. *Recognition*: The second sign was that he would meet three men on their way to worship at Bethel (apparently another place of worship [Judges 20:18, 21:2; 1 Samuel 10:3]) and that they would give Saul a portion of their offering, something no one would normally do, except for a person of great importance. This sign would have given Saul confidence that the Israelites would recognize him as their leader.<sup>v</sup> It also should have reminded Saul that God could provide for all his needs.

3. *Spiritual Empowerment*: The third sign was that, when he approached his hometown, Saul would encounter a band of prophets who would be playing music and prophesying. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul, he would prophesy along with them, and be changed into a different person. This sign would have encouraged Saul that God would empower and equip him with the gifts he needed to be a leader. In the context of the third sign, Samuel mentioned the presence of a Philistine outpost in Gibeah. After the Israelites' revival, in 1 Samuel 7, the Philistines stopped invading Israelite territory. The presence of the Philistine outpost outside Gibeah indicates that the Philistine threat had, once again, increased.
- vi. Fulfillment of the Signs: When Saul left Samuel to go home, God changed Saul's heart (10:9) and all the signs were fulfilled.
1. *Saul's Transformation*: As Saul's later actions will indicate, the change in Saul's heart did not amount to a spiritual conversion. Rather, the reference to Saul's transformation immediately precedes the description of his prophesying and is probably meant to indicate that God gave him the ability to prophesy. We must guard against interpreting Old Testament language by New Testament standards.
  2. *Impact of the Signs' Fulfillment*: Samuel had said his message for Saul was *from the Lord*. The fulfillment of the signs should have left Saul in awe of the Lord's word. They were meant to teach Saul that his authority as king was *secondary to the authority of the Lord*, and that *the Lord's instructions would come through His prophet*. Samuel's position would, therefore, remain functionally superior to Saul's. He had already begun giving Saul specific instructions. Future kings would also be subject to this standard.
- vii. A Warning – God had told Samuel that He had chosen Saul to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines (9:16). Once the signs were fulfilled, Samuel instructed Saul to do whatever his hand found (10:7), a reference to military action. Samuel's obscure instruction to Saul to go ahead of him to Gilgal and wait seven days for Samuel's arrival and sacrifice (10:8) must be seen in the context of future military ventures. It may have even been part of a longer conversation regarding military action. Later, in chapter 13, Saul and his army are at Gilgal, awaiting Samuel's arrival to offer a sacrifice before they battled the Philistines.
- viii. Saul's Silence: When Saul returned home and his uncle learned that he had encountered Samuel, his uncle asked what Samuel said to him. Strangely, Saul said nothing about being anointed and only mentioned the information about the donkeys.

**B. Saul's Confirmation by Lots** – 1 Samuel 10:17-27 Essentially, there were three stages in Saul's transition to kingship. First, he was privately anointed by Samuel. Second, he was chosen by lottery in a very public gathering.

- i. Samuel's Summons: Samuel summoned all Israel to Mizpah (yet another indication that his authority extended beyond the region in which he lived). With the people gathered, Samuel spoke the word of the Lord, reminding them of His powerful deliverance from Egypt and from subsequent enemies. Since He had already proven Himself more than adequate to meet their needs, their request for a king was a personal rejection of His leadership.
- ii. Saul's Selection and Insecurity: No mention is made of the method of selection. Presumably, it was by lottery of some kind. Saul's tribe was chosen, then his clan, then his family, and finally his person. However, Saul was hiding in the baggage throughout the process. The Lord revealed his location. When we recall that Saul was unwilling to tell his uncle that Samuel had anointed him king, it may be tempting to conclude that Saul was a genuinely humble young man. But considering his disinterest in spiritual matters (as reflected by his ignorance about Samuel's existence), it seems more likely that his silence and his hiding were symptoms of the deep, underlying insecurity that was later unmasked by power.
- iii. The Divine Prescription for Kingship
  1. *Samuel's Explanation*: After Samuel presented Saul to the people, he explained the rights and duties of kingship to all of them and wrote them down on a scroll. No doubt, these instructions included God's prescription for kingship given by Moses in Deuteronomy 17:14-17. A king in Israel was not to amass military equipment (such as horses), personal wealth, or a harem of wives. The king was to be chosen by the Lord and he was to become a serious student of God's word, so that he remained humble, obedient, and dependent on the Lord's instruction. The implication was clear enough: Israel's people and kings alike were to submit to God's authority.
  2. *A Puzzling Question*: God had told Abraham and Jacob that kings would descend from them (Genesis 17:6, 35:11). Additionally, He had given Moses these instructions about future kingship. In light of this, we might wonder how it could it have been against God's will for the Israelites to have a king. The answer is that it was not against God's will. He intended for Israel to have a king, but not for the reasons Israel wanted one. They wanted a king like the other nations. *Saul* would indeed be *that* kind of king but, as it turns out, *David* was the kind of king God had intended to give Israel, *a king who lived under His supreme authority*.

- iv. Support for Saul: Following the ceremony, Saul returned home. Some valiant men accompanied and supported him while a few others despised and dishonored him. Despite their insults, Saul kept silent.

**C. Saul's Military Leadership** – 1 Samuel 11:1-15: First, Saul was privately anointed. Then, he was publicly chosen as king. The third step in Saul's transition to leadership involved a demonstration of his ability to lead the Israelites into battle.

i. The Ammonite Threat

1. *Nahash's Challenge*: The book of Judges indicated that the Philistines and Ammonites were enemies the Israelites faced at the same time (Judges 10:7). Samson had battled against the Philistines west of the Jordan and Jephthah had battled the Ammonites in the Transjordan. The Philistine threat was one Samuel had also faced. Apparently, the Ammonites were once again causing trouble in the Transjordan. Nahash the Ammonite besieged the Transjordanian town of Jabesh Gilead. The residents stated their willingness to enter a treaty for the sake of peace. Eager to disgrace them, Nahash agreed, on the condition that he would gouge out the right eye of every man in the town.
2. *The Israelites' Plea for Assistance*: The elders of Jabesh asked for a grace period of seven days, during which they would seek assistance from their fellow Israelites. Knowing the disunity that had existed between Israel's tribes and the fact that Israel had no regular army, Nahash apparently felt no threat in allowing the grace period. If the Israelites agreed at the end of that time, it might prevent him from having to endure a long, drawn out siege. The fact that one Israelite town had the authority to make agreements with Israel's enemies of their own accord is evidence of the disunity of the period. In addition, the fact that their message was sent throughout Israel and not directly to Saul indicates that his leadership was still not widely accepted.

ii. Saul's Response to the Threat – 11:4-15

1. *Jabesh Gilead and Saul's Roots*: It is possible that Saul had family roots that tied him to Jabesh Gilead. According to Judges 21:6-12, Jabesh Gilead was the town from which some of the Benjamite men who survived Israel's civil war against them had received wives.

2. *Saul's Call to Battle:* When the news reached him, the Spirit of the Lord came on him powerfully and he burned with anger. Saul cut the oxen he was plowing with into pieces and sent them out to the tribes of Israel with the threat of doing the same to their oxen if they did not join him in battle. Ultimately, it was not Saul's actions but "the terror of the Lord" that moved the Israelites to unite. Again, the Lord proved that His leadership was what the Israelites really needed most.
3. *Widespread Support for Saul:* After Saul routed the Ammonites, Samuel gathered the people in Gilgal to reaffirm the kingship. Since some of the Israelites had previously doubted Saul's ability, his decisive defeat of the Ammonites on this occasion gave them the confidence in him they previously lacked. Now, all the Israelites were willing to rally behind him.

**Summary Statement:** Saul was recognized as Israel's first king following his anointing, his selection by lottery, and his display of military leadership.

Despite the Israelites' premature and ill-motivated request for a king, if they would listen to and obey the Lord both they and their king could yet succeed. With Samuel, the Lord's mouthpiece, still commanding control, chapter 11 leaves us hopeful that Saul and the Israelites might learn to live under the divine prescription for kingship.

**Principle:** *God's prescription for leadership requires humble dependence on Him.*

God expects leaders to recognize *Him* as their authority. No amount of natural ability or spiritual giftedness can substitute for moment-by-moment, humble dependence on Him. Furthermore, by their words and example, God's leaders are to teach those they lead to continually look to Him. God's leaders include parents, pastors, administrators, counselors, older siblings, and anyone to whom others look for an example or for guidance. Of course, this does not mean we never give others sound counsel, but it does mean that we continually point them to the Lord as their ultimate source of security.

**Application:** Do those who look up to you think you have all the answers or do they know that you depend on the Lord for guidance in all matters? Have you instilled confidence in those you lead in your home, school, church, or workplace that they are secure, *with or without your leadership*, because the Lord is the One in charge?

Insecure leaders tend to breed insecurity in those they lead with subtle suggestions that, if they were no longer in charge, all would be lost. Leaders who are humbly dependent on the Lord find their own security in Him and give others confidence that, with or without their leadership, the Lord will not fail them.

Samuel was trying to teach the Israelites to put their hope and confidence in the Lord above any human leader. True security could only be found in Him. Psalm 33:16-18 may have been written at least a generation later than the time of Samuel’s assembly, but the words summarize Samuel’s message, in part: “No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love.”

What did Saul think when he heard Samuel explain the manner in which Israel’s kings were meant to reign? In these chapters, we are not told. However, Saul’s response was later revealed by his actions. In our flesh, dependence on the Lord feels like a great risk. When we are walking in the Spirit, dependence feels right and leads to security and inner peace.

**Transition:** Even with Saul’s monarchy established, Samuel remained in the functionally superior position as God’s prophet. No indication is given about whether Samuel’s speech that is recorded in 1 Samuel 12 was delivered on the occasion of the re-affirmation of Saul’s kingship or at a later date. Regardless, in chapter 12 we find the Israelites gathered and Samuel addressing them.

### III. Samuel’s Confrontation over Kingship – 1 Samuel 11:14 – 12:25

#### A. Samuel’s Reliability and Challenge – 1 Samuel 12:1-15

- i. Samuel’s Integrity: Samuel began his speech with a series of questions intended to establish his right to speak some tough words. He briefly mentioned his sons as being “with” the people. Samuel may have dismissed them from their responsibilities and, therefore, viewed them as “with” the people, rather than “over” them. Once the Israelites’ affirmed him, Samuel said that as prophet and judge, he was going to confront the Israelites before the Lord with evidence.
- ii. Israel Confronted
  1. *Failure to Repent*: Samuel reminded the Israelites of the Lord’s deliverance and faithful leadership in taking them out of Egypt and settling them in Canaan. However, once they were in Canaan and forgot the Lord, He sold them into the hands of their enemies. Each time they cried out to Him and confessed their idolatry, the Lord had sent a judge to deliver them. On the recent occasion when the Israelites felt threatened by Nahash king of the Ammonites, *they had not repented* as they had in the past, *but further rebelled* against the Lord by demanding a king. In other words, they wanted the privileges of being in a right relationship with the Lord without having to surrender to His authority.

2. *Preference to Live Like the Pagan Nations*: The Israelites had demanded a king, even though the Lord had more than proven to be their ideal King, deliverer and provider. Samuel confronted them with the evil of this rejection. In their view, the monarchy promised the security of a new leader with each generation. They would no longer have to wait on the Lord. They were tired of depending on Him for each new human leader. Although God had been their King, they thought that a king they could see with their own eyes would provide them greater security. To continue in complete reliance on the Lord would have been the harder but far better thing. God had called them to live by faith, but they preferred to live by sight. It was an act of spiritual rebellion.
3. Israel Challenged: Nevertheless, Samuel told the Israelites that they could still experience the Lord's blessing by following His prescription for kingship. Whether or not they and their kings experienced God's blessing was entirely dependent on whether or not they and their kings listened to and obeyed the Lord. If they did, all would go well. If they did not, the Lord's hand would be against them. If this had not been spelled out earlier (10:25), the means by which they and their king could successfully move forward was now clearly set before them.

**B. Samuel Called on the Lord for Affirmation** – 1 Samuel 12:16-18: The gathering occurred during the wheat harvest (12:17), in the early summer. Samuel called on the Lord to confirm all he had said and the Lord sent rain and thunder, neither of which would normally occur in Israel at that time of year. This left the people in awe of Samuel. They asked him to pray for them so that they would not die for adding the sin of asking for a king to all of their other evil deeds.

**C. Samuel Exhorts and Consoles the Israelites** – 1 Samuel 12:19-25

- i. A Call to Repentance: The Israelites' request that Samuel intercede for them must have resulted from sincere repentance, for Samuel told the people not to be afraid. Yet, he also warned them not to continue as they had or return to their idolatry, but to serve the Lord with all their hearts. He appealed to their sense of reason, saying that their idols could do nothing for them and were useless. If the Israelites persisted in their sin, both they and their king would perish.

- ii. Words of Encouragement: Following Samuel's confrontation and the Lord's unforgettable confirmation of all he said, Samuel greatly encouraged the people. For the sake of God's great name, the Lord would not reject His people. If the Lord was remaining faithful to Israel, so would Samuel. He would follow the Lord's lead. Samuel committed to continue praying for and instructing the Israelites. Finally, he encouraged the people to ponder all the great things the Lord had done for them: "Consider what great things He has done for you" (12:24).

**D. Samuel, the Prophet:** In every sense of the word, Samuel is revealed to be a true prophet in this chapter. "He analysed (sic) 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*." <sup>vi</sup>

**Summary Statement:** On the two general assemblies described in these chapters, one in which Saul was chosen by lots and the second after Saul's kingship was established, Samuel challenged the Israelites to repent of their sin and to consider what the Lord had done on their behalf (10:18, 12:8-11, 24). This would give them the confidence and security they had lacked.

**Principle:** *Sin breeds insecurity, but repentance and meditation on the Lord's mighty works assure us that in Him we are secure.*

**Application:** The only way to experience security is to repent of our unbelief and start observing and meditating on God's mighty deeds. What has the Lord done in your recent history that you need to acknowledge and keep in the forefront of your mind? Our confidence in Him grows as we cultivate the habit of observing Him at work in and around us.

Before we were saved, we had a well-established habit of ignoring the spiritual. When we were saved, we were given eyes of faith that enable us to witness God's mighty, ongoing deeds. Our habit of ignoring the spiritual must now be replaced with the new habit of using our spiritual vision. He is constantly at work, yet we need to train our spiritual eyes to see this. In the words of A.W. Tozer, "We must avoid the common fault of pushing the 'other world' into the future. It is not future, but present. It parallels our familiar physical world and the doors between the two worlds are open... The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ they are now alive and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing. As we begin to focus upon God, the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes."<sup>vii</sup>

Once we learn to see God at work, we can take up Samuel’s challenge and develop the habit of meditating on what God has done. The Bible often commends the rehearsing of God’s deeds. Meditating on His works and activity around us and in us breeds confidence in Him – true security. What better time than the present to begin these new habits? Maintaining a journal or some kind of list of the ways we see God at work is extremely helpful in keep His faithful provisions and interventions at the forefront of our thinking.

## Conclusion

When we grow weary of the battles, the adversity, the trials and affliction that God allows to drive us to Him, we are often tempted to seek consolation and security in the wrong places: in governments, in money, in human relationships, in prestige, and in personal comforts. What threatens you today, beloved? “Perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.”<sup>viii</sup> Only the Lord can give us the security we seek.

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<sup>i</sup> Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 112). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> Mendelson, I., “Samuel’s Denunciation of Kingship in Light of Akkadian Documents from Ugarit,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 143 (1956): (p. 17), as found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (p. 203). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.

<sup>iii</sup> Stedman, Ray C. (2012 by Elaine Stedman). *Adventuring Though the Bible* (p. 165). Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House.

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