

holds, of the households into men (Joshua 7:14), there was an artificial division introduced by Moses, of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, Ex. 18:25.

II. An Important Choice. 20-25.

Vs. 20, 21. *Was taken.* It is probable that the choice was made by casting lots, though we cannot settle the precise method adopted. The king was to be God's gift, but he must be a popular leader. The casting of the lot was a solemn appeal to Jehovah, Prov. 16:33. *The tribe of Benjamin*; the weakest of the tribes, descended from the youngest son of Jacob, Gen. 35:18. *The family of Matri*; not mentioned elsewhere. *Saul, the son of Kish*. Kish was a farmer, described in ch. 9 as a mighty man of power. *Could not be found*; having hidden himself out of modesty. Perhaps, too, he had been startled by Samuel's declaration, that the people in choosing a king were rejecting God.

Vs. 22, 23. *They enquired of the Lord further*; by means of the URIM and THUMMIM which the high priest wore on the breastplate of his ephod (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21), as a sign of his authority to ask counsel of the Lord. *The stuff*; the baggage of the people who had come from a distance to Mizpeh. *Higher than any of the people.* For some further detail see ch. 9:2. The sculptures of ancient Egypt, Assyria and Persia show how much store was set by ancient nations upon bulk and stature in their rulers. "Before the introduction of firearms, strength was essential in a leader,

as, indeed, it is still among the Arabs." *And all the people shouted*; for joy because their wish had been granted. *God save the king*; literally, "let the king live," the usual greeting to a ruler.

V. 25. *The manner of the kingdom*; the principles which were to govern the king in his relations to God and the people. (Compare Dent. 17:14-20.) *In a book*; literally, "in the book." Perhaps this document was added to the "book of the law" kept by the side of the ark "before the Lord," Dent. 31:26.

III. A Twofold Reception, 26, 27.

V. 26. *Gibeah*; a town of Benjamin near Ramah (Judges 19:13, 14), the home of Saul and capital of his kingdom. *The men of valour, whose hearts God had touched* (Rev. Ver. margin). This divine touch fired the hearts of these men with love and loyalty to the king.

V. 27. *The children of Belial*; "children of worthlessness," that is, worthless (lawless, ungodly, wicked) persons. *How shall this man save us?* a true saying, but uttered in a base spirit, and with these men it is the baseness, not the truth, that is uppermost. *Brought him no presents.* The refusal to offer these usual tokens of homage amounted to a rejection of the king's authority. (See 1 Kings 10:25; 2 Chron. 17:11.) *But he held his peace*; literally, "he was as one deaf." This wise self-control was a better proof of Saul's fitness for the kingship than his strength and beauty.

APPLICATION

Mizpeh, v. 17. Each should build for himself a "watch tower," to which he can go daily, and especially on the Lord's day, to look out over the past and survey the loving-kindnesses from the good and gracious Father with which it has been so full. It is such a view that will send us to new duties and trials with fresh hope and courage, and a great resolve to prove ourselves less unworthy than we have been, of all our blessings and privileges.

I brought up Israel out of Egypt, v. 18. At Sinai the Lord prefaced the Ten Commandments with the gracious words, "I am

the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2), as if to kindle the love of His people into a fresh and fervent glow, before He laid His laws upon them. On the same ground Jesus claimed the obedience of His disciples, when He said to them: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," John. 14:15. If we are tempted to grow slack in our obedience, the remedy lies in thinking of God's love to us as revealed in Christ. This will stimulate our flagging zeal and intensify our languishing devotion.