

exercises a beneficent ministry as prophet and ruler.

### I. A King Demanded, 1-6.

V. 1. *Samuel*. The name means "heard of God." (See ch. 1:20.) *Was old*; sixty years of age. He had ruled Israel as judge for about twenty years, since the great victory over the Philistines at Mizpeh, ch. 7:10-12. *Made his sons judges over Israel*; to aid him in the duties which, owing to advancing years, had become too heavy for him. The judges were men whom God raised up from time to time, after the days of Joshua, to deliver His people from foreign oppressors and to rule over them in times of peace. God Himself was the only King of Israel.

V. 2. *Jed*; "Jehovah is God." *Abiah*; "Jah is my Father." These are good names, speaking of faith in Jehovah and recognition of His fatherhood. They suggest the father's prayers, and place in a stronger light the failure of his sons to walk after his noble example. *Beer-sheba*; "well of the oath," which Abraham and Abimelech made there (Gen. 21:31), or possibly "well of seven" in allusion to the seven ewe lambs with which the covenant was ratified, Gen. 21:29, 30. It was the most convenient centre for the southern district, which Samuel assigned to his sons, while he retained under his own care the northern, in which Ramah, the place of his residence, was situated.

Vs. 3, 4. *Walked not in his ways*. There is no suggestion here, as in the case of Eli (ch. 3:13), of fault on the father's side. *Lucre*; (from Latin *lucrum*, gain) used in the Bible only in the sense of ill-gotten gain. *Took bribes*, and *perverted judgment*. The sin of Samuel's sons is one often condemned in the Bible, Ex. 23:2, 6; Deut. 16:9; Isa. 1:23. This acceptance of bribes is found to-day, under various forms of government, and is as harmful and as wicked as ever. *The elders of Israel*. After the settlement of Israel in Canaan, we find the title "elders" applied to high officials generally. There were: (1) Elders of cities, who acted as magistrates, Josh. 20:4; Judges 8:16; Ruth 4:2; (2) Elders of tribes, or districts, Judges 11:5;

1 Sam. 30:26; 2 Sam. 19:11; (3) Elders of Israel, a united body of the elders of the tribes, which acted for the nation on such occasions as at present. In New Testament times the elders formed part of the Sanhedrim or great Jewish council. With us the title is given to those who hold a certain office in the church.

V. 5. *Behold, thou art old*; the first reason for asking a king. Samuel was by this time seventy years old and his sons had been judges for ten years. That Samuel had grown old and weary in the service of God and the country was reason, not for a change, but for greater gratitude and more kindly courtesy. *Thy sons walk not in thy ways*; a second reason. Sad and true, and for this no one felt a keener disappointment than the father himself. *Make us a king*. But the people foolishly trusted more in a change of government than in the power of God to cure the evils complained of. *Like all the nations*; a third reason. If they had looked carefully, they might have seen that they were already too much like other nations, in their forgetfulness of God. A fourth reason was a desire for a leader in war, v. 20.

V. 6. *But the thing displeased Samuel*. No doubt he was disappointed at the apparent want of appreciation of his services. But deeper than this, he felt that it was a rejection of God's guidance. *Samuel prayed unto the Lord*. He would not act on the prompting of his own personal feelings, but endeavored to learn what was the will of God in the matter.

### II. The Lord Rejected, 7, 8.

Vs. 7, 8. *Hearken unto the voice of the people*. Samuel is told of God that the people must be allowed to choose for themselves and learn wisdom from their mistakes. *According to all the works which they have done*. The history of Israel had been full of rebellion against God, which showed the basest ingratitude for all His goodness, and especially for the great deliverance of the nation from the bondage of Egypt. (Compare Isa. 1:2, 3.) *So do they also unto thee*. Samuel should not complain of the same treatment which God Himself received from His people.