

was needed. The people must be weaned some time from the daily sustenance of miracle which had lasted through the heaven-surrounded infancy of their race. They must be taught that God's providence in the natural is more wonderful than in what we call the supernatural. Moreover, the first kings were prophets with a divine mission, though their inspiration was but fitful. None the less there "passed away a glory from the earth" when Israel renounced his childhood and asked a king. The seeds of future evil were introduced by the hereditary principle, occasional under the judges, but under the kings the only alternative to revolution. No government can be sound which brings to power men like Abimelech, Hophni, and Abijah, Rehoboam, Manasseh, and Jehoaah, merely as their fathers' sons, however good these fathers be. VER. 4. *Elders*. Representing the people (see chap. 4. 3 and note). VER. 5. *Old*. His age may have been about seventy, allowing ten years for the development of his sons' misrule. *Sons*. The complaints evidently centered on the administration of justice. Samuel's infirmities were assumed to prevent his attending to all his work in the northern tribes, and in the southern province Joel and Abijah outraged the law they were appointed to guard (ver. 3; Deut. 16. 19). *To judge*. Here lay the sting to the feelings of the grand old judge. *Like*. Ichabod! the glory of their willkiness is flung away! VER. 6. *Displeased*. We see from Jehovah's answer that Samuel's sensitive nature felt keenly the ingratitude of this slight upon his life-long service. For the moment personal soreness overcame other thoughts; Samuel was human, and it is just such fine natures as his that suffer most acutely in secret from the stabs of ungrateful indifference. But prayer was an instinct with him, and he found in casting his burden on Jehovah that the burden was not his at all. VER. 7. The request might have been innocent, but this lays bare the motive. There is now no way of teaching this willful people but by granting their petition and giving them a king after their own heart, whose failure should make way for a king after the divine model. VER. 8. (Comp. John 15. 20; Matt. 10. 25.) The constant ingratitude of the people to Jehovah is the burden of Psa. 106 and of Stephen's speech (Acts 7). VER. 9. They were about to change a liberty checked only by the law of God for the gilded slavery of an Oriental despotism, and Jehovah still bears with them so as to show them what it means. *Proted*. Literally, "witness." *Manner*, or "right," privileges claimed. VER. 10. *People*. Through the elders (ver. 4). VER. 11. This vivid picture of absolute monarchy shows what a price they paid for Solomon's splendor (comp. 1 Kings 5. 13-18; 12. 4). *Horsemen*. The mention of horses suggests a hated foreign intrusion. The Israelites were naturally mountaineers, and never used cavalry; horses were associated with either aping foreign customs or seeking foreign (especially Egyptian) aid. *Run before*. So Absalom and Adonijah (1 Kings 1. 5) did, as a mark of regal state. Compare also Elijah's action (1 Kings 18. 46). VER. 12. (Comp. chap. 14. 52.) This decimal division of the army appears very frequently (comp. Num. 31. 14; chap. 17. 18, 18. 13, etc.). VER. 13. *Perfumers* (margin), so read. The word in the text used to mean the same. *Beliers*. Work done by men in Egypt (Gen. 40. 1; comp. also 19. 3). VER. 14. (Comp. 2 Sam. 16. 4; 1 Kings 21. 7; Ezek. 45. 8; 46. 18.) VER. 15. Taxation (taken in kind as usual) was to be on a truly oriental scale and wasted on worthless objects. *Officers*. "Chamberlains," like Potiphar (Gen. 39. 1). VER. 16. *Herds* (margin). This, the reading of the LXX., is indisputably correct. Comp. Exod. 30. 17 for the natural couples thus given. VER. 17. The previous verse de-

scribes forced loans, this the most oppressive form of taxation. *And ye*, summing up all. The subjects of such a king would be slaves (comp. Matt. 18. 23). VER. 18. *Because of*, or "from," like an appeal from a lower court to a higher, from a king to the King of kings. *Answer*. That is, will not grant your prayer for political deliverance; they must abide by their choice and learn from experience. So the ten tribes cried out from Rehoboam's tyranny, but could obtain no relief but by setting up a worse monarchy than that they rebelled against. In a higher sense Jehovah did answer them, as when they pined for deliverance from the Romans and he came to "deliver his people from their sins," a deadlier foe. VER. 19. The hoary judge, the hero of Eben-ezer, has once more to hear the unthankful people clamor for another to do badly the work he had done so well. It might have been thought that the two battles at Aphek would have taught Israel the vanity of human prowess. Chap. 12. 12 tells us that the Ammonites were threatening invasion. VER. 20. *Go out*. The regular phrase for taking the lead in war. Note Samuel's second appeal to Jehovah, in his intense aversion to the change.

The Lesson Council.

Question 4. Why did God seem to be unwilling to give to Israel a king?

Because of the dangers and evils of hereditary kingship. In a monarchy strong forces would gravitate toward that point. If gained, the most unworthy persons would sometimes succeed to the throne, the fittest be excluded, and despotism introduced. Apart from this the spirit of the request predicted ill in any form of government. It implied unjust reflection on Samuel. It indicated waning of their trust in the God of battles, and preference for military organization and human prowess.—*Rev. W. A. Dickson*.

The real reason in the mind of God for not wishing to give Israel a king was one that Israel could not appreciate, had it been given them. Such a change of government would doubtless frustrate God's plan concerning Israel, at least for the time. Even though the kingly idea was itself a divine idea, yet Israel was not ready for the change. God did not, however, waste argument or offer points in casuistry to convince the people, but told them what the practical results would be, seeing that if that appeal failed no higher motive existed in Israel to which an appeal might be made.—*Rev. H. M. Simpson*.

1. Because their request was unreasonable. It involved the rejection of God as their King. 2. Because their supreme desire was to be like the heathen nations, by which they were surrounded, when God's purpose was that they should not be like them. His purpose, then as now, was that his people should be a peculiar people. They were not to be conformed to the world, but transformed, by the renewing of their minds, to the perfect will of God.—*Rev. A. E. P. Albert, D.D.*

Lesson Word-Pictures.

The elders of the people come to Samuel, one day, and confront him with an astonishing petition. There he sits, the white-haired Samuel, the simple-hearted, strong, grand old man. And these elders of the people, how inferior they must have seemed and felt! What wonder if their petition stick in their throat, for they tell Samuel they want—a—a—king!

It is out at last. The old prophetic looks grieved. The interview may not have been a long one, and Samuel is