

## Israel Asking for a King

men fail in gratitude, as was the case with the elders who waited on Samuel. They ignored what he had most recently done for them, ch. 7: 7-13. (c) The demand arose from the desire to be "like all the nations," v. 5. This was foolish in the extreme. Did they not know that the rulers of these nations were often weak, tyrannical and cruel? What more could a people enjoy or wish for in the form of good government who had God as their King?

2. *The demand for a king dealt with by Samuel.* (a) It was presented to him in a manner fitted to give offence, to wound his feelings deeply. He was bluntly told that he was old, implying that he was infirm, and unfit for the right discharge of the duties of his sacred office, and therefore the whole nation was suffering grievous injury. Further, he was most unwise in having elevated his unprincipled sons to the position of judges. They had undeniably proved utterly unworthy of the high trust committed to them. (b) Samuel showed wisdom by the course he followed. He appealed to the King of the nation, whose rule was really called in question. He laid the whole matter before the Lord, v. 6. The situation was embarrassing beyond measure; there was a universal revolt against constituted authority and order; there were confessedly just causes for complaint and unrest; the conduct of the young men intrusted with the administration of justice was indefensible and ruinous to the interests of public morals. They trampled righteousness under their feet and furnished a most pernicious and debauching example to the youth of the nation. In these circumstances their father did wisely in turning to God for help. What a blessed privilege to be allowed to cry to Him in our distress! Do we sufficiently avail ourselves of the promise that God giveth wisdom to them that ask Him, Jas. 1: 5? Do we constantly cast all our cares upon Him, 1 Pet. 5: 7? Do we betake ourselves to the throne of grace? Heb. 4: 16?

3. *The demand for a king dealt with by God.*

(a) He treated it as their deliberate rejection of Him as their King. Samuel was only His servant, v. 7. And, seeing they had voluntarily rejected Him, God would not coerce

them or destroy their free agency. It was their part to choose whom they would serve. (Read Josh. 24: 15; Deut. 30: 19; John 5: 40.) This power of choice involves awful responsibility. (b) God directed Samuel to yield to the people's decision, but to warn them solemnly at the same time, of the consequences of their disloyalty, v. 9.

## For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

By The Editor

This is not a lesson on the best sort of government, but upon the spirit that must possess the people in order that any government may be good. Let the teacher have this fact well in his mind, that God's controversy with His people was not that they wanted a king, but that they wanted their own way, not God's way; that they trusted in themselves, not in the Lord.

It was a great crisis. The weal or woe of nation for all its future history turned on it. Even quite young children will see this, if put to them in a few plain sentences, and will be thereby led to find keen interest in the lesson. These three divisions may guide:

1. *What the people wanted—a king.* The scholars will pick out the three reasons given in v. 5. (See Exposition). They look like strong reasons—Samuel, their ruler, an old man: he will soon be gone; his sons worthless and wicked; a king will make us like the other nations. But test the reasons—Samuel is old, and his sons are unworthy; but has God no more good men? The history of how God raised up one judge after another, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, just when they were needed, should have settled this question. Then—the other nations have kings; so should we. Yes, if God thinks best; but not otherwise. They were God's people, and He had shown in a thousand wonderful ways, from Abraham's day onward, how He could and did care for His people. The people's error was their distrust of God.

2. *How Samuel acted.* He was sad and displeased. How could he help it? (Let the teacher bring this out plainly.) But he was wise; he took his case to God. This is the road that always ends well. If we take our perplexities to God, no matter how they