

Samuel, when, convinced that it was the will of God, he set himself to do what no other man could do: to forsake all his past, to abandon all the lines of action on which he had worked through the best years of his life, and to put into other men's hands fresh possibilities. I call that conduct magnificent." (Elmslie). Since the people would not have the best, God allowed them to have the next best, and made the most possible for them out of that choice. So God is doing continually with his children. They so often refuse their highest privileges, and take the second best, or the third best, instead of the best. And then all that God can do for them is to enable them to make the very most out of what they choose. (Peloubet). **Unto the Lord**—It was a solemn religious gathering. Possibly the High Priest was there with the Urin and Thummim. It was not so much the people choosing a king, as God designating the future viceroy to represent Himself. The national assembly or "congregation of Israel" was composed of all Israelites, of twenty years old and upwards (Num. 1: 3), who had not forfeited their privileges, together with foreigners admitted upon certain conditions. (Kirkpatrick). **To Mizpeh**—Should be spelled "Mizpah." The usual place of assembly at this period.

**18. And said unto the children of Israel**—Samuel first points out in his address to the assembled people, that Jehovah had always done for them the very thing for which they desired a king. But their deliverance by Jehovah had been made dependent upon their own conduct; they were required to repent them of their sins, and purge the land from idolatry, before victory could be theirs. What they wanted was national independence freed from this condition, and secured by an organization of their military resources. (R. Payne Smith). **Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians**—The pronoun is emphatic. "It was I who brought up Israel," in contrast to "and ye," verse 19. (Kirkpatrick). **And out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you.** (K. V.)—The reference to the kingdoms from which God had delivered Israel is noteworthy, because, after the pattern of these very kingdoms, the Israelites wished to have a king and an outward kingdom. There is in this a factual irony. (Erdmann). See the whole story of the Judges.

**19. And ye have this day rejected your God who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, nay, but set a king over us**—Because what you want is a divorce of your national well-being from religion. (R. Payne Smith). The following are some of the reasons which may have induced the people to demand a king: (1) Samuel was growing old. Wise and vigorous as his rule had been, with advancing years there was less energy. He could no longer go out with them to battle as formerly.

(2) His sons were not worthy to fill his place. They took bribes and did not walk in the ways of their father. (3) Their nation was breaking up. Sectional interests were considered more important than national. Intertribal war might break out if the strong influence of Samuel were removed by death. (4) Their enemies were mustering in force. The Ammonites and Philistines—one on the east and the other on the west—were preparing to attack them. These were not undisciplined hordes of desert wanderers, but powerful, organized monarchies, their armies equipped with the most "modern" style of weapons. (5) All other nations had kings. To the oriental a nation without a royal head is scarcely a nation at all. The sovereign seemed to them a centre of unity and strength. (6) It is true that God had always raised up a leader for them when he wished to deliver them, but they were tired of that hand-to-mouth system. It made their freedom depend so much upon their good behaviour. They would like to feel that there was some one to look to when danger threatened. They had lost sight of the moral glory of the theocracy. As the "peculiar" people of Jehovah, his own amongst the nations of men, they occupied a unique position. What earthly monarch so august as the One whose throne was between the cherubim. However natural their request may have been, and justifiable on the grounds of worldly prudence, it marked a moral decline and loss of faith in the presence and power of their God. **Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord**—In order to receive the king which he has chosen for you. The decision was doubtless made by lot. This is not regarded in Scripture as giving a chance decision, but as a legitimate mode of ascertaining the divine will (Prov. 16: 33). Its use was accompanied with acts of worship as if in God's immediate presence. **By your tribes and by your thousands**—The natural sub-division of the nation into tribes; of the tribes into families or clans; of the families into houses; of the houses into men (Josh. 7: 14); was supplemented by Moses with an artificial organization of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Ex. 18: 25). The thousand corresponded to the family, and the terms appear to be used here as synonymous. Compare ch. 23: 23; Judg. 6: 15; Josh. 22: 14. (Kirkpatrick). Also Num. 1: 16; 10: 4.

**II. A DIVINE CHOICE. 20. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.** Had not God already pointed out Saul to Samuel? Why then did he not simply present him to the people as the anointed of the Lord? "The secret meeting of the seer with Saul was not sufficient to secure a complete and satisfactory recognition of him as king; it was also necessary that the Spirit of Jehovah should single him out publicly in a solemn assembly of the nation, and point him out as the man of Jehovah." (Ewald). Compare the public recognition of Christ at his baptism, and of Paul when