

1 Samuel Chapter 12

Verses 1-3: It is unclear when this speech took place; but the sentence structure at the end of the previous chapter suggests it was not given at the same time as the events of chapter 11. Samuel reasserted his authority, perhaps partly as a way of providing an example for Saul. His work on behalf of the people was not for personal gain.

1 Samuel 12:1 "And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you."

"I have hearkened unto your voice": Samuel had obeyed the will of the Lord and the people and set the king of God's choice over them, though he had personal reservations concerning the monarchy.

Samuel's "farewell address" did not end his public ministry (verse 23 with 15:1-3, 13-35; 16:10-13). He continued to minister in priestly and prophetic functions. (For the death of Samuel, see 25:1). After his introductory remarks (verses 1-5), the theme of Samuel's message becomes a sermon warning: obedience brings God's blessings but disobedience merits only His reproof.

Samuel did not want them to have an earthly king, because he felt it offended God. God told Samuel to bow to the wishes of the people and give them a king. One thing this did do; was to take all authority away from Samuel's evil sons. In answer to their request, they now have a king. His name is Saul. Saul would be their military leader and their civil leader. Samuel was still the leader of the spiritual side of their life. Samuel continues in his office as judge and prophet. The difference is, now for the first time, Israel has an earthly king.

1 Samuel 12:2 "And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons [are] with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day."

"I am old and gray-headed": And therefore, unable to bear the burden of government, and feel myself greatly at ease to see it cast upon other shoulders. And therefore, do not speak what I am about to say from envy of Saul's advancement, or from discontent at the diminution of my own power.

"My sons are with you": Or among you, in the same stake and place, private persons, as you are; if they have injured any of you in their government, as you once complained, the law is now open against them. Any of you may accuse them, your king can punish them; I do not intercede for them. I have neither power nor will to keep them from receiving the just fruits of their misdemeanors.

"I have walked before you": Been your guide and governor, partly as a prophet, and partly as a judge.

We still do not know just how old he is speaking of. I believe he is saying he is too old to lead them militarily. Some of the weight of the people has been removed from him. Samuel will still be involved in the morality of the nation, but will not lead them in their battles against the Philistines and other enemies. His sons have been removed from their positions. They are part of the people now and they will be shown no special favors. Samuel reminds them, that he has been in the service of the LORD since his childhood (probably from the age of 3 years old). His entire life has been spent in the service of the LORD. His mother dedicated him before his birth.

1 Samuel 12:3 "Behold, here I [am]: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received [any] bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you."

“Here I am”: These familiar words for Samuel throughout his entire life (3:4-6, 8, 16), emphasized his availability to God and the people.

“Witness”: Samuel requested the people to “bear witness against” any covenant stipulations that he had violated.

Samuel was above reproach. He had done none of these evil things. It was his sons who had taken bribes. Samuel had never received anything from anyone to sway his favor in judgment. There has never even been a charge made against Samuel. Everyone knew of his honesty and integrity.

1 Samuel 12:4 "And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand."

One in the name of the rest or they all cried out as one man.

"Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us": Had done them no wrong, neither privately or publicly, by fraud or by force.

"Neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand": As a gift, present, or bribe, to find for his cause. Some would infer hence that he took nothing of them for his support and maintenance, and that he lived upon his own substance; but that is not likely or reasonable; it was but just that they should support him and his family suitably to his character as a judge, whose whole life was spent in their service.

This is a vote of confidence that the people gave Samuel. They knew that Samuel had been an upright judge in all he judged. There was no mark against him.

Verses 5-15: Samuel uses courtroom terminology to remind Israel of God’s past faithfulness. (In verses 1-5), Samuel was on trial; he becomes the accuser here, charging the Israelites with

apostasy before God the Judge. God's "righteous acts" toward Israel proved His covenant faithfulness, while Israel's pleas for an earthly king proved their faithlessness.

1 Samuel 12:5 "And he said unto them, The LORD [is] witness against you, and his anointed [is] witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, [He is] witness."

Then Samuel again, with increased solemnity, called the Eternal in the heavens above and His anointed king then standing by his side to witness what the people had just acknowledged concerning his scrupulously just rule.

"And they answered, He is witness": And the assembly of Israel, again with one voice, shouted, Yes, He is witness.

This was the same thing as taking an oath that he had never taken from any of them. When God is witness, it serves as an oath.

1 Samuel 12:6 "And Samuel said unto the people, [It is] the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt."

Having cleared and established his own character, he proceeds to lay before the people some of the great things God had done for them formerly, and quite down to the present time, the more to aggravate their ingratitude in rejecting God as their King.

"It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron": Raised them from a low estate, the one in a foreign country in Midian, the other in bondage in Egypt, to be deliverers, guides, and governors of his people Israel. Kimchi thinks this refers to what goes before, and that the sense is, that God, that raised Moses and Aaron to great honor and dignity, was a witness between him and the people; in which he is followed by some Christian interpreters. Ben Gersom makes mention of the same, but rather approves of the connection of the words with what follows, as does Abarbinel, and is doubtless most correct; the Targum is, "who hath done mighty things by the hands of Moses and Aaron:"

"And that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt": When they were in bondage there and that by the means of Moses and Aaron, by whose hands he wrought signs and wonders and inflicted plagues on the Egyptians, which made them willing at last to let Israel go.

Moses and Aaron were from poor Hebrew families serving as slaves in Egypt. It was the LORD who chose them out of this situation, and made them the leaders of Israel. It was the LORD, working through Moses that caused the Pharaoh to let the people go. God was their King, and his servants (Moses and Aaron), brought the children out of Egypt; after the ten plagues fell on Egypt.

1 Samuel 12:7 "Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers."

“May reason with you before the Lord”: Despite the nation being unified under the new king, Samuel still wanted to rebuke the nation for ignoring and rejecting what God had done without a king.

Samuel is explaining to them, that they had a King who was greater than any earthly king. Samuel wants them to recognize where their help has come from all this time. The LORD of all the earth had been their King.

1 Samuel 12:8 "When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place."

Now, in order, Samuel rehearses the deeds of loving-kindness done for Israel by this Eternal King. And first he mentions the wonders of the Exodus, and how, under that Divine guidance, they were guided through so many dangers safe into the land of Canaan, this place.

The families had not continued in the praise of the LORD for bringing them out of Egypt and putting them in this Promised Land, they now have. They had forgotten that the LORD opened the Red Sea for them to cross and get away from Pharaoh. They had forgotten that the LORD furnished them water to drink from the Rock. They had forgotten that the Lord miraculously fed them Manna from heaven 40 years in the wilderness. They had forgotten that it was the LORD who entrusted them with His law. They had forgotten the opening of the Jordan River, so they might pass over to their Promised Land. They forgot all the times He had fought their enemies for them.

1 Samuel 12:9 "And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them."

The worship of the Lord their God, as the Targum; that is, they fell into idolatry, which is a plain instance and proof of forgetfulness of God. For such that neglect his worship, and served idols, may be truly said to forget him.

"He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor": "Who was general of the army of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor (Judges 4:2), where they are said to be sold into the hands of Jabin, here into the hands of Sisera. Because it is highly probable he was sent against them by Jabin, and subdued them, as he afterwards was sent by him, when they rebelled against him, and were delivered out of his hand.

"And into the hand of the Philistines": As they were in and before the times of Samson (Judges 13:1).

"And into the hand of the king of Moab": As in the times of Ehud (Judges 3:14). The exact order of these things is not observed.

"And they fought against them": The king of Moab, Sisera, and the Philistines, and overcame them, and so they fell into their hands.

Their problems came, when they were unfaithful to the LORD and sought false gods to worship. Even their troubles had come to drive them back to the LORD. He loved them and cared for them as a husband does a wife. They were unfaithful, and rebelled against Him at every chance.

1 Samuel 12:10 "And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee."

As soon as they were convinced of their sin and rebellion, and accused themselves, and returned to their old allegiance, their invisible King, ever full of pity and tender compassion, forgave them, and sent them quick deliverance.

"And have served Baalim and Ashtaroth": Baal and Ashtaroth were the well-known leading Phoenician deities; the worship, with most of its details, was imported probably from Carthage, the great Phoenician center. The temple of Baal-shemesh, the Sun god, at Carthage, was renowned in that luxurious and splendid city. The plural form refers to the various personifications and different titles of the god and goddess.

See the note (on Judges 2:11-15).

Every time they repented, and cried out to the LORD for help, and turned from the false gods Ashteroth and Baalim, God helped them.

1 Samuel 12:11 "And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe."

"The Lord sent ... and delivered you": It was the Lord who delivered them through the hands of the judges, not themselves.

The identity of a judge named "Bedan" is not further known. The ancient Greek and Syria versions and the Arabic version read Barak. Since it is unlikely that "Samuel" would cite an otherwise unknown judge, who was too insignificant to be mentioned at all in the Book of Judges alongside men like Gideon, "Jephthah," and Samuel himself, and since Gideon and Barak are known to be linked together in praise elsewhere (Heb. 11:32), probably Barak is the judge intended.

And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, Or Gideon, as the Targum, for Jerubbaal was the name given to Gideon, when he first became a judge (Judges 6:32).

Note: Targum was an ancient Aramaic paraphrase or interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, of a type made from about the 1st century AD when Hebrew was declining as a spoken language.

And “Bedan”; if this was one of the judges, he must have two names, or is one that is not mentioned in the book of Judges; the Targum interprets it of Samson;

"Jephthah" was a very prominent judge as well. During the period, each judge was in power, their enemies had been subdued.

1 Samuel 12:12 "And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God [was] your king."

“When ye saw that Nahash the king of the children ... came against you”: According to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus, Nahash was campaigning over a large area. It was that Ammonite threat that seemingly provoked Israel to demand a human king (8:1-20).

“The Lord your God was your king”: The clearest indictment of Israel for choosing a mere man to fight for her instead of the Lord God (8:20).

He had, probably, been threatening war on these people before they asked for an earthly king. Their heavenly King had delivered them over and over. They should have trusted in Him, but they did not. This is the climax of their unfaithfulness in the LORD as King.

Verses 13-14: Even though Israel had “chosen” an earthly king, they were to trust in God, viewing the king as an instrument of His rule. Nothing had changed in the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

1 Samuel 12:13 "Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, [and] whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you."

“The king whom ye have chosen ... and desired”: The Lord gave them their request (Psalm 106:15).

For the first time since Israel had been a nation, they now have an earthly king like the heathens around them. Saul is king of Israel.

1 Samuel 12:14 "If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:"

“Fear the Lord”: A reminder of (Joshua 24:14). Israel was to stand in awe of the Lord and submit to Him (Deut. 10:12).

“Ye and ... the king ... following the Lord”: Both the people and the king were given the same command. The standard was the same, obedience to God’s commands.

This has been the condition of their blessings from the beginning. If they remain faithful to the LORD and keep His commandments, they shall be blessed tremendously. The king is subject to the laws and commandments of the LORD, as well as the people are. For Israel to do well, they must reverence the LORD and keep His commandments (with or without a king).

1 Samuel 12:15 "But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as [it was] against your fathers."

“Rebel”: “Disobey, not heed, forsake.” Echoing the promises (of Deut. 28), there would be blessings for obeying and curses for disobeying the commands of the Lord.

It is the same throughout the Bible. When they become unfaithful to Him, and begin to follow after false gods, He will chastise them with defeat at the hands of their enemies.

The “wheat harvest” came at the end of the dry season, so rain was very unusual. The people understood the thunderstorm to be a supernatural sign of God’s displeasure at their insistence on a king.

1 Samuel 12:16 "Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes."

“This great thing”: Though rain during the wheat harvest (late May to early June), was unusual, the Lord sent the rain and thunder to authenticate Samuel’s words to the people.

He wants them to be totally aware, that it is the LORD who does this. It is not Samuel or Saul, it is the LORD. He may work through them, but it is the LORD.

Verses 17-18: For thunderstorms as a sign of the divine presence (see the note on 2:10). Coming during the “wheat harvest” of late spring, such an event would be a sure sign of divine condemnation.

1 Samuel 12:17 "[Is it] not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness [is] great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king."

The Canaan wheat harvest is between the middle of May and the middle of June. Rain in that season seldom or never falls, but if it does it is usually severe. This is the testimony of one who spoke as a resident, and his statement is confirmed by the observations of the latest travelers and scholars. The terrible storm of rain accompanied with thunder, at a time of year when these storms of thunder and rain rarely took place, coming, as it did, in direct answer to the seer’s invocation, struck the people naturally with great fear, and for the moment they thoroughly

repented of the past, and entreated Samuel. Who, they felt, stood on strangely familiar terms with that awful yet loving Eternal, to intercede for them.

This would be an unnatural time for rain. Samuel is calling for this rain, to leave no doubt in the minds of the Israelites that the LORD is displeased that they want an earthly king. This is rejection of the LORD. They have been rejecting and rebelling against Him from the beginning. This is a sign to them of their great sin.

1 Samuel 12:18 "So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel."

Such was the power and favor with God that this man of God possessed! By this thunder and rain, God showed them their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God or Samuel, expecting more from an arm of flesh than from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their king thunder with a voice like God? Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers? Likewise he intimates that how serene whatever their condition was now, (like the weather in wheat-harvest), yet if God pleased he could soon change the face of the heavens, and persecute them with his storms.

At the very minute this is happening they recognize it as punishment for their sins. They greatly fear the LORD who can send rain at any given time. They fear Samuel, because he can pray and have an immediate answer. The problem with the fear they have now, is this is in the form of terror, rather than in reverence.

Verses 19-25: It is a believer's responsibility to "pray for" others even if he or she is displeased with them, as Samuel was with the Israelites. Amid his warnings to the people, Samuel offered a helpful model for intercessory prayer: pray that others will "fear" the Lord, "serve" Him wholeheartedly and in truth, and "consider" God's great deeds on their behalf (Matt. 5:44).

1 Samuel 12:19 "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins [this] evil, to ask us a king."

"Pray for thy servants": The Peoples response to the power of God was their recognition of their sinful motives in asking for a king. They needed Samuel's prayers to intercede for them.

They fear that the LORD will be so angry with this latest sin, that He will kill them. They feel that Samuel has an access to the LORD that they do not have. This is why they ask him to pray.

1 Samuel 12:20 "And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;"

“Serve the Lord with all your heart”: An often-expressed covenant requirement (Deut. 10:12-13; 11:13-14).

There is no question, they have sinned. The LORD will forgive them, as He has so many times in the past, if they will turn from their wicked ways, and worship and serve Him. They must worship the LORD in their hearts and have faith and He will save them.

1 Samuel 12:21 "And turn ye not aside: for [then should ye go] after vain [things], which cannot profit nor deliver; for they [are] vain."

“Vain things”: Meaning idols.

Those that go after vain things are those who chase after things of this world. He is saying, do not become worldly people. The things of this earth are the creations of God. They should worship the Creator, not His creation.

1 Samuel 12:22 "For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people."

The name of the “Lord” signifies His revealed character and reputation. Later, “name” came to be a term that could be substituted for God Himself (Dan. 9:8-19; Amos 2:7; 9:12), so that the pronunciation of the Hebrew word for the name (hashem), could be utilized for the unutterable divine Tetragrammaton “YHWH”. The name was thus God Himself in all that He had revealed Himself to be. In the New Testament, the term became applied to Christ (Acts 4:12; 5:41; 3 John 7). For Israel as God’s special “people” (see Exodus 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18).

God had chosen them out of all the people in the world to be His people. They are not only His creation, but His family. Everyone is God's creation. Those who love Him and accept Him as their Savior are His sons.

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:"

Despite Israel’s sin, Samuel loved Israel and Saul (16:1), and pledged his continued help, especially in praying for them and teaching them the Lord’s standards. His love for them, however, would not dim his perspective as to what ways were “right” or wrong in Israel. He would do his divine duty of speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

This is separating the office of the Judge and prophet from the office of the king. Samuel will still be responsible for the moral side of their lives. He will pray for them, and guide them into the truth about the Lord. Samuel will still judge them on moral issues. Samuel's service to the LORD was for his entire life. It would be a sin for Samuel not to continue in the service as Judge and prophet of God.

1 Samuel 12:24 "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great [things] he hath done for you."

Fear him not with a servile fear, which is before advised against, but with a filial fear, a reverential affection for God; and includes the whole of religious worship, internal and external. Explained further; by serving him according to the truth of his word, and in a cordial, sincere, and affectionate manner. And if this was wanting in them, he suggests that his prayers and instructions would be of little avail, and not to be depended on.

"For consider how great things he hath done for you": In bringing them out of Egypt: settling them in the land of Canaan; giving them his laws, statutes, commands, and ordinances; sending prophets unto them, and raising up judges for them. And then bestowing all good things on them, in nature, providence, and grace; though some restrain this to the great thing he had done that day. To convince them of their sin, and by which they were returned to the Lord, namely, the violent storm of thunder; which wonderful instance of the power of God, and token of his displeasure against them. These they were to lay up in their minds, and not forget, that it might be a means of preserving them from sin for the future.

The fact that they now have a king does not alter the fact that they must reverence the LORD with all their hearts. Their first loyalty must be to the LORD. He has made them everything that they are. He has blessed them as long as they are faithful to Him. They must hang on to their faith now.

1 Samuel 12:25 "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Continue to rebel against God, revolt from him, and depart from his worship, and despise his prophets, and serve idols.

"Ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king": Their king would be so far from protecting, that he should perish with them, be killed by the sword, as Saul their first king was, or go into captivity, as others of their kings did.

The king or the people are not exempt from punishment if they turn away from the LORD to other gods. If they turn to wickedness and away from the One True God, they will be totally destroyed.

1 Samuel Chapter 12 Questions

1. Samuel did not want them to have an _____.
2. Why is Samuel giving them a king?
3. Who will be the king of Israel?

4. Who was still their leader in spiritual things?
5. How does Samuel describe himself in verse 2?
6. What has happened to the sons of Samuel?
7. How old was Samuel, when he began to minister?
8. What questions did Samuel ask the people in verse 3?
9. What did the people say to Samuel?
10. Verse 5 was the same as taking an _____.
11. Who advanced Moses and Aaron?
12. _____ was their King.
13. After the _____ _____ fell on Egypt, the Pharaoh let them go.
14. Their help had come from the _____.
15. What were some of the miracles God had done for them, they had forgotten?
16. What happened to them, when they forgot about God?
17. God loved them and cared for them as a _____ does a _____.
18. Who were the two false gods they worshipped?
19. Who was "Jerubbaal"?
20. What was "Jephthah"?
21. What happened to their enemies, every time there was a judge in power?
22. When did they demand an earthly king to lead them?
23. _____ is the king of Israel.
24. What was the condition of their blessings from God, from the beginning?
25. When did God chastise them?
26. Who chose their king?
27. What thing did Samuel pray for God to do, to show them He was displeased with them wanting an earthly king?
28. What effect did it have on the people when it happened?

29. What is wrong with their fear in verse 18?
30. Why are they begging Samuel to pray for them?
31. Those who go after vain things are those who chase after _____ _ _____.
32. The Israelites are not only God's creation, but _____ _____.
33. How would it be possible for Samuel to sin?