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SAUL CHOSEN KING.

– *NOV. 10. – 1 SAM. 10:17-27.* –

**Golden Text – "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."
– Psa. 97:1.**

WHEN Samuel was well advanced in years he appointed his two sons as assistant judges in Beersheba; but their elevation to office proved detrimental to them in placing before them opportunities for dishonest gain. Instead of resisting this temptation, they yielded to it and "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." – Chap. 8:3.

Under these conditions, with Samuel growing old and his sons reckless, and with powerful and threatening enemies on their frontier, the outlook for the national safety and prosperity of Israel was not hopeful from a human standpoint of view. And from the human standpoint it was only prudent forethought, in view of existing circumstances, to make provision for future necessities according [R1887 : page 253] to their own best judgment. The men of Israel, the leading men of the nation, thus reasoned; and accordingly, with respect and deference, they came to Samuel, the divinely appointed judge, and laid their case before him, with the request that the form of national government be changed, and that a king be appointed over them like the other nations. Thus they seemed to think that in the eyes of the other nations they would seem more formidable and more like a well organized nation; and the appearance of a well organized and powerful central government would reflect creditably, they thought, upon them as a people, and would give them a standing among the nations of the earth.

All this would have been very commendable human prudence, and might be considered sound judgment in any other nation than the nation of Israel; but in their case it was not. They were forgetting, or rather ignoring, the fact that the Lord was their king, and that all their affairs

present and future were in his hands; that so long as they were faithful to their covenant with him they should have peace and prosperity, and that no evil should befall them and no enemy could overcome them unless God permitted it as a punishment for national sins, as the Lord himself declared, saying, "Shall there be evil in a city, and I have not done it?" "I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." (Amos 3:6; Isa. 45:7.) This was not true of any other nation. Consequently Israel would have suffered no lack of prosperity or safety had they closely adhered to the Lord's leading. They had a powerful, though invisible, king, before whom none of their enemies could stand, and their only right course was to be loyal and obedient subjects. And if they were apprehensive of trouble in the future it was their privilege to draw near God; and in putting away sin and closely following him and committing themselves to his care, they would have been safe in every condition.

Their course in requesting a king gave evidence **(1)** of a lack of faith in the power and love and faithfulness of God, notwithstanding the marvels of divine providence toward them in the past; **(2)** of weariness in well-doing – of only a slack hold upon those principles of righteousness in conformity to which alone could they enjoy the favor and blessings of God; and **(3)** of a desire to appear great themselves in the eyes of the other nations.

In this they incurred the divine displeasure; nevertheless the Lord granted their request, but at the same time foretold the evils that would accompany their choice (8:11-22), which evils were realized in varying measure until God removed the diadem from the head of Zedekiah, their last king.

The conduct of Samuel in this instance was most noble and unselfish. There was not a trace of selfishness or resentment in it. Grieved in spirit he took the matter to the Lord, evidently with that singleness of purpose which desired only to know and do his will. Then, with that dignity and grace which marked a high and noble

nature, he humbly resigned his office in favor of the new king, and, like a tender father, kindly counselled and encouraged them to be faithful to God, closing his address with these touching words, "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. Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." – Chap. 12.

The choice of Saul was the Lord's choice of a king for Israel, the choice being indicated by lot. (10:19-22.) He was a God-fearing man of humble mind, of good ability and of noble bearing; and all Israel was well pleased with the choice. And Samuel, forgetful of himself and rejoicing to honor another, even one who was thenceforth to be his rival in the affections of the people, said to all the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted and said, God save the king." – Verse 24.

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom – laying down the principles and limitations of the kingly power (Deut. 17:14-20), thus instituting a limited monarchy.

After his anointing and acceptance by the people as king, Saul returned to his home in Gibeah accompanied by a band of godly men as his supporters and aids; and there, in retirement, he had time to make ready for the subsequent duties of his office. When he was despised and spoken against by some who neither feared God nor regarded man, Saul showed his good sense by simply maintaining a dignified silence and reserve, which was a severer rebuke than contention or threat.

The golden text for this lesson, while it has no reference to the Lord's reign over Israel, but to the establishment of God's Kingdom in the earth in the dawn of the Millennial day, and hence calls upon the whole earth to rejoice, has nevertheless a fitness as applied to Israel. The Lord did graciously and righteously reign over that people; and, to

the extent that they were able to appreciate his righteousness and justice and his love and care, it was a cause of rejoicing to them.
