THE BOOK OF I SAMUEL

"From Judges To Kings"
1 Samuel 8:1-22

Introduction

1. Both Samson and Samuel were used of God during the days the Philistines lorded over Israel. While Samson publicly was used of God in beginning to break the Philistine yoke (Judges 13:5), Samuel worked quietly but earnestly toward the same goal. The climax was reached when the great revival came at Mizpeh (7:1-17). The back of the Philistines was broken at that time.

2. With the breakdown of the Philistine energy, the leadership of Samuel was evident as a judge (7:15). It is stated he had done this work throughout his life. The cities in which he worked at this time are listed (7:16, 17). Each one has a significant name: Bethel: house of God where judgment begins; Gilgal: place of rolling away reproach; Mizpeh: watch tower where alertness is required; Ramah: the height or place to which God would have us move. These limited cities may have been due to the training offered others so that Samuel now focused on these cities near or in Benjamin.

3. With this situation obtaining, the Bible now declares a change was in the offering. The events which led to this centers around three:

1. SAMUEL
   a. His age—increased v. 1. Although it is indicated he is old, he may not have been more than 50. He had served well, but when it came time to find fault, his age was against him! He did not fit into the plans of Israel any longer!

   b. His feelings—displeased v. 6. The Hebrew text affirms that the intention of the people made him sense "evil in his sight." Apparently there was righteous indignation within Samuel. He had led Israel to the great heights of Mizpeh, but now was being brought to the valley of despair!

   c. His prayers—addressed v. 6. The verb shows that Samuel interceded or supplicated to God for the matter in hand. He interposed as an umpire to God. To whom else could Samuel turn! In times of distress, prayer is still valid!

2. SONS
a. Assigned—ministry v. 2. Their names are given. Abiah means "Jehovah is God." Abijah means "Jehovah is father." It is stated they were judges in Beersheba. This was in the northern Negev area and apparently needed a responsible ministry.

b. Failed—God vv. 3, 5. Tragically, the Bible records that the sons of Samuel were much like those of Eli (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12-17). They were guilty on three accounts: 1) turned after money; 2) took bribes; and 3) perverted judgment. One wonders if Samuel was too busy for his family needs! The elders were of this opinion, for they charged the sons did not "walk in thy ways" (v. 5).

3. PEOPLE

The people were represented by the "elders." The "elder" was usually an elder person and the first born of a family. Hence, it is the leadership of the people here which calls upon Samuel for change.

a. They requested—a king vv. 4, 5. The basic desire was for a king to judge "like all the nations." This was a total denial of their former status with God (Deut. 7:6). It parallels present day believers who are to be distinct from those around by virtue of salvation (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4).

b. They rejected—God v. 7. It is God Who comforts Samuel for the people's request is a rejection of the theocracy. The verb "reject" is a root meaning to "melt away" and affirms the people as despising the true King, God.

c. They received—approval vv. 8-10. God's argument with Samuel is simple. All the way since the days of Moses' death, the people had forsaken Him. Now their request is to be granted. It sounds like the words of David (Psa. 106:15). How much better had they followed other counsel (Psa. 81:1-16).

NOTE: The remainder of the chapter describes the king they would get. It is noted how he would take over in military ways (vv. 11, 12), agriculture (vv. 12, 14), domestically (vv. 13; 16), and economically (vv. 15, 17).

Conclusion: God predicted Israel would rule the day they made this decision (v. 18), but the people were determined (vv. 19, 20). While Samuel heard all that the people had said, he told the Lord about it (v. 21). The Lord indicated he should give the people a king (v. 22). He must step down and allow another to take his place. For us today, the lesson is patent: better to have the Lord reign over you than a thousand others. The price is too great to pay for earthly kings