

Adult Bible Class

The Book of First Samuel

Lesson 5 - May 15, 2022

In the book of 1 Samuel, the nation of Israel moves from rule by God with human judges (theocracy) to rule by a human king (monarchy). In chapter 8, the people demanded a human king like all the other nations had. God granted them their request, though this was not His will for them.

Although they were out of the will of God, God gave the people of Israel the desire of their hearts so that they might learn something from it. The people of Israel did not ask God to give them a king as *He chooses*, but they asked for a king like *they wanted* - to help them defeat the Philistines. The Lord gave them Saul - a young man who fit the description of what Israel asked for.

The Lord knew what Saul would do in the future, but he allowed all this to take place to teach Israel some painful lessons. He authorized Samuel to anoint Saul king. Then Saul returned home.

1 Samuel Chapter 11

1 Samuel 11:1 (NKJV) Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you."

2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, "On this *condition* I will make a covenant with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel."

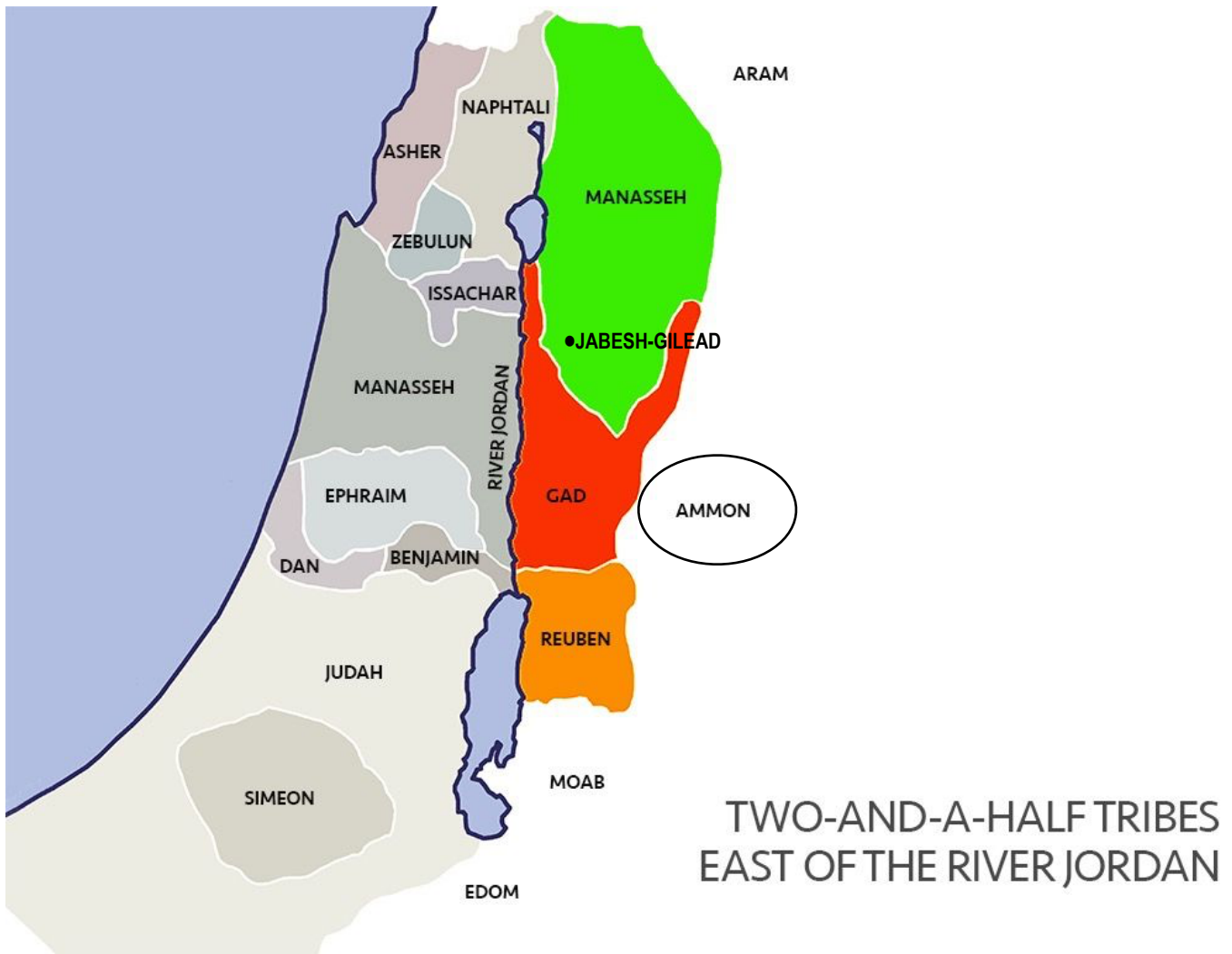
The Ammonites and the Moabites were descended from Lot (remember that Lot's daughters had an incestuous encounter with their father after they fled from Sodom, and from that Ammon and Moab were born, from which came these two peoples - Genesis 19:30-38). Though the Ammonites and the Moabites were descended from Lot who was Abraham's nephew, they were often counted as enemies of Israel even though there was a close relationship.

During the time of Moses, the Ammonites (and the Moabites) occupied the fertile plains east of the Jordan River. When Israel left Egypt, the Ammonites refused to help them in any way, and for this God punished them.

Deuteronomy 23:3 (NLT) "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants for ten generations may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. **4** These nations did not welcome you with food and water when you came out of Egypt. Instead, they hired Balaam son of Beor . . . to curse you. **5** But the Lord your God refused to listen to Balaam. He turned the intended curse into a blessing because the Lord your God loves you. **6** As long as you live, you must never promote the welfare and prosperity of the Ammonites or Moabites.

The two and a half tribes that requested to live on the east side of the Jordan River displaced the Amorites. Then, their neighbors became the Ammonites.

The Ammonites worshiped the god Molech (and the Moabites worshiped Chemosh - see 1 Kings 11:33). God commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with them, because intermarriage would lead them to worship false gods. Like their pagan gods, the Ammonites were cruel.



Jabesh-Gilead was a city in the half tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan River (see the map above). In Judges 11, we read where the king of Ammon challenged the Israelites, saying that they stole their territory. The Lord raised up Jephthah to go to war against them.

Judges 11:12 (NLT) Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of Ammon, asking, "Why have you come out to fight against my land?"

13 The king of Ammon answered Jephthah's messengers, "When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they stole my land . . . Now then, give back the land peaceably."

14 Jephthah sent this message back to the Ammonite king:

15 "This is what Jephthah says: Israel did not steal any land from Moab or Ammon . . .

23 ". . . it was the Lord, the God of Israel, who took away the land from the Amorites and gave it to Israel. Why, then, should we give it back to you? . . .

26 "Israel has been living here for 300 years . . . Why have you made no effort to recover it before now? **27** . . . Let the Lord, who is judge, decide today which of us is right—Israel or Ammon."

28 But the king of Ammon paid no attention to Jephthah's message.

The Ammonites were soundly defeated by Jephthah and the Israelite army. Now, about a century later, they once again assert their claim over the territory.

The people of Jabesh-Gilead go against the command of Deuteronomy 23:6 and seek peace with them. The cruel Ammonites demand the right to put out their right eyes.

What arrogance! By demanding to do this, the men of Jabesh-Gilead would lose their ability to fight battles. The two eyes work together for depth perception. Besides this, the shield is usually held with the left hand and often covers the left eye, leaving only the right eye exposed. Nahash knew that taking the right eye from each of the Israelites would render them weak in battle, not to mention the fact that this would bring shame and humiliation upon them.

Nahash was living up to his name. The name *Nahash* means “serpent” or “snake.” In Scripture, the devil (or Satan) is referred to as a serpent. In the New Testament, Christians are commanded, “. . . *resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” It is Satan’s habit to lie and bully. It is his pattern to try to steal our strength. It is his pattern to make promises that he will not keep (Nahash said that he would make a covenant with the people of Jabesh-Gilead if they would let him put out their right eyes).

The people of Jabesh-Gilead were in a tight spot! Let’s continue in 1 Samuel:

1 Samuel 11:3 (NKJV) Then the elders of Jabesh said to him, “Hold off for seven days, that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then, if *there is* no one to save us, we will come out to you.”

They needed help. They were too weak to fight the Ammonites alone. Their only recourse was to cry out to their Israelite brethren to help them. Apparently, Nahash did not think that this seven day period of waiting would amount to anything.

Israel, when obedient to the Lord, had nothing to fear of her enemies. It was when Israel sinned and strayed that her enemies rose up to challenge her. Likewise, sin causes many difficulties today. People often cry out for help when they face a situation that is more than they can handle. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the “cure of all ills” in society. Though evil brings society down, the gospel of Jesus Christ lifts it up. It is the only remedy for people’s sin troubles.

4 So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept. **5** Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, “What *troubles* the people, that they weep?” And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. **6** Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused.

All the people were weeping. They were weeping for their brethren who had been so cruelly threatened, and they were also weeping because they knew that what was happening to Jabesh-Gilead could in time happen to them if nothing was done to stop the spread of evil.

Saul had been anointed king by Samuel. We read in our last lesson that Saul had the backing of some of the people, but others opposed him:

1 Samuel 10:26 (NLT) When Saul returned to his home at Gibeah, a group of men whose hearts God had touched went with him. **27** But there were some scoundrels who complained, “How can this man save us?” And they scorned him and refused to bring him gifts. But Saul ignored them.

It is important to notice that Saul ignored the Israelites that scorned him. However, later when the enemies of God's people threatened them, the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he developed some "righteous indignation." Now, Saul was going to rise up and prove himself to be a leader in Israel - in fact, Israel's first anointed king. The people wept when they heard the news, but Saul rose up in the power of the Spirit!

1 Samuel 11:7 So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen."
And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

Saul didn't say, "That's Jabesh-Gilead's problem, not mine." Instead, he felt the need to help his brethren. Not only that, but Saul rallied the people together, putting the fear of God in them (he sent pieces of his oxen to them which let them know that their oxen could be taken by the enemy). The moving of God's Spirit resulted in action.

8 When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. **9** And they said to the messengers who came, "Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow, by *the time* the sun is hot, you shall have help.'" Then the messengers came and reported *it* to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. **10** Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you."

Now Saul was beginning to do what he was anointed as king to do - command the forces and armies of Israel against their enemies. He organized the Israelite army on the west side of the Jordan where Nahash could not see them. Then he also sent a message of comfort to the people of Jabesh - help was on its way!

So the people of Jabesh gave an answer to Nahash that skirted the issue of the right eyes and made them think that they were going ahead with the proposal.

11 So it was, on the next day, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and killed Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it happened that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Through Saul's leadership, the Ammonites were so routed that two of them could not be found together. It was total victory. From morning until the sun was hot in the afternoon, the armies of Israel battled. Israel now knew that Saul was their anointed king. He had proven himself in battle.

12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who *is* he who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death."

13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has accomplished salvation in Israel."

Saul is showing great wisdom and leadership ability. In chapter 10 we read that he ignored his detractors. In chapter eleven we read where the Spirit of the Lord rose up in him to fight Israel's enemies. Now, after the battle, the people were trying to bring up the fact that detractors had spoken against Saul, this mighty leader and king! They even went so far as to say that Saul's detractors should be

killed. But Saul ignores this as well. All minds should be on the victory, not on certain people's past opinions and remarks. This is not a time for more bloodshed. It is a time for giving God glory.

1 Samuel 11:14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." **15** So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Saul had won over his critics with his noble actions. Samuel moves the people from the scene of battle to Gilgal, one of the cities that was on Samuel's circuit of judgeship (see 1 Samuel 7:15-17). This city was a proper place to offer sacrifices and "*renew the kingdom.*" Though Saul is officially made king before all the people, yet the focus is on the Lord.

1 Samuel Chapter 12

Chapter 12 is Samuel's address to the people of Israel when Saul is officially presented to them as their king - the one they asked for of God. However, the emphasis will not be on Saul, but on the people.

Now that a new power is introduced - namely, Saul as the first anointed king of Israel - Samuel's position would gradually decrease. He has been judge and prophet in Israel (and even priest, for he offered up the sacrifices while the tabernacle was not in order), but from this time forward Samuel will act mainly as a prophet. In the future, he will come forward as judge once more to set things right (chapter 15).

We are given the example of someone who has finished well (Samuel). This will be in contrast to Saul, who has done well up to this point but will not finish well.

In this Christian race, how we finish is more important than how we start.

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV) . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith . . .

Paul said:

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The race that we run is not a sprint, but it is a race of endurance - a marathon. Many start this race, but who will finish it? Let's read about Samuel, who finished his race well.

1 Samuel 12:1 (NKJV) Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you.

In chapter 8 we read where the people of Israel asked God (and Samuel) for a king. They wanted a king to lead them like all the other nations had. The people demanded a king who would be a soldier to lead them into battle against all of their

oppressors. The people were tired of paying tribute and having their crops and herds stolen. They wanted to be free from the yoke of the Philistines and the Ammonites and other “-ites” that oppressed them.

The real problem with their request is that it was totally out of God’s will (God’s will for them was that God be their King, and His Law be in their hearts to obey). The people rejected God as King and asked for a human king to be a general to them.

The trouble with some prayer requests is that God answers them! This out-of-God’s-will prayer request was answered by God. In 1 Samuel 8, Samuel warned them of what a king would require of them, but they refused to obey Samuel and said, “*No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles*” (verses 19-20). God let them have what they wanted. The Lord told Samuel, “*Heed their voice, and make them a king*” (verse 22).

1 Samuel 12:2 And now here is the king, walking before you;

The phrase, “*walking before you*,” is a metaphor describing the shepherd who goes before his flock to lead and guide them. Today, a pastor is a “shepherd” who leads and guides the “flock” in a local church congregation. Pastors are God called, God appointed men who fill a roll specifically mentioned in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:11).

. . .and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons *are* with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. **3** Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received *any* bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore *it* to you.”

4 And they said, “You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man’s hand.”

5 Then he said to them, “The Lord *is* witness against you, and His anointed [Saul] *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.”

And they answered, “*He is* witness.”

Samuel was Israel’s last judge. His position as judge often required that he hear cases and settle disputes. But here, Samuel puts himself on trial. He is old, and he is coming to the latter years of his life as well as to the end of his duties as judge. He is getting ready to make a point to Israel, but he needs to lay the groundwork - that he has run an honorable race before them. He was old now, and he had the proof of a life well lived. There are some things to which only age can testify. Someone who has just started a race cannot give the same testimony of someone who is about to cross the finish line.

Samuel was making the point that he was essentially blameless as Israel’s judge, yet they demanded a king to take his place - and God’s place! How inconsiderate and ungrateful! He should have been honored, not only for his old age but because his life was one of service and dedication to the people of Israel - and they could not bring one accusation against him.

Leviticus 19:32 `You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.

Proverbs 16:31 The silver-haired head *is* a crown of glory,
If it is found in the way of righteousness.

1 Samuel 12:6 Then Samuel said to the people, "*It is* the Lord who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. **7** Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers: **8** When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

The Lord (who they were now rejecting in favor of a human king) brought them out of Egypt and gave them Moses and Aaron. God heard them in Egypt when they cried out to Him for deliverance from their taskmasters. This deliverance is always regarded as the foundation of their history. It is what they always look back to as their beginning. (It is a type and shadow of New Testament salvation: the Israelites were delivered from Egypt and led by Moses through the Red Sea and by the cloud. Christians are delivered from sin and led by Jesus Christ through water baptism and the Spirit of God). This great God took them as his own people and gave them their own land and their own special laws.

9 And when they forgot the Lord their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. **10** Then they cried out to the Lord, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.' **11** And the Lord sent Jerubbaal [Gideon], Bedan [Barak], Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety.

During the time of the judges, the people of Israel went up and down, serving God for awhile, then forsaking Him to serve the idol gods, Baal and Ashtoreth and others. When they forgot the Lord, God turned them over to their oppressors to get their attention. Then they would cry out to God for deliverance and God would send a judge to deliver them from their enemies. The Israelites would live in peace and safety for awhile - but they always seemed to go back to idol worship, and the cycle would begin again.

12 And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God *was* your king.

Samuel laid out their history - a story of the majesty and greatness of God who delivered them time and again, many times in a miraculous manner. And now he reminds them of their demand. As soon as they saw the threat of Nahash, they forgot the lessons of the past, lost their confidence in God, trusted in the "arm of flesh", and demanded a king, rejecting God as Israel's king.

13 "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.

Yep! God answered their prayer! The lesson to us is, be careful what you pray for - God might answer! The Lord did not allow the people to choose their own king. God chose for them. He chose someone who fit the description of what they

asked for - a leader for battle. God was going to use this leader to teach the people of Israel some valuable lessons. Later, God would give Israel a king who was “*a man after God’s own heart.*”

1 Samuel 12:14 If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.

God is amazingly merciful. Even though Israel prayed amiss, God was still going to work with them. He promises them a good life ahead if they will obey the Lord and do His commandments. Though out of God’s will, they still have a future if they will only fear the Lord and serve Him! The future of Israel would depend on both the people and their king obeying the Lord, not on the fact that they now had a king. In reality, nothing has changed.

15 However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

Not only should Israel look back to the great deliverances of God in the past, but they should look back to the failures of the past. God will be against them if they do not obey His voice, just like God was against their ancestors in times of disobedience.

16 “Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes: **17** *Is today not the wheat harvest?* I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king for yourselves.”

18 So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

Samuel had said many things to the people, but they seemed to have little effect. Therefore, he underscored his words with a miraculous sign. The time of wheat harvest was in the summer when the spring rains were past and the weather was dry so the wheat could ripen. During this time the sun shone brightly in a clear blue sky. Rain was not a part of the normal weather patterns during this time of year, nor would it be welcome during the wheat harvest, for it would knock the wheat over and make it difficult or even impossible to reap. This was a bad thing - this thunder and rain. Not only was it recognized as a miraculous sign, but it was a judgment upon the people, because it could ruin their crops.

In Egypt, God sent thunder and hail upon the land of Egypt (Exodus 9:23). Just recently (1 Samuel 7:10), God thundered upon the Philistines who were getting ready to attack Israel. By Himself, God caused the Philistines to flee and Israel was delivered. This same God who used the elements to win the victory was rejected in favor of a human king.

The thunder was sent so that Israel “*may perceive and see that your wickedness is great.*” It did exactly that.

19 And all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves.”

In every age, God's desire for mankind is to bring them to repentance and to make them holy. Samuel brought the people to repentance. It took thunder from heaven, but they finally repented. They confess that asking for a king was a sinful act.

They asked Samuel to pray for them that they would not die because of their sins. Yes, God is a consuming fire, but He is also merciful. He can accomplish much when men repent and turn to God, forsaking their sins and relying on Him. These people have turned from being ungrateful and disrespectful to being fearful of the consequences of their sins.

1 Samuel 12:20 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. **21** And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. **22** For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people.

These great words, "*fear not,*" and "*the Lord will not forsake His people,*" are a great comfort to Israel this day. The Lord is still pleased to call the people of Israel "*His people.*"

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

Samuel could have given up on Israel, but he didn't. They were still his people and the people of his calling as judge and prophet. Ever since he was a child, he had a ministry of prayer. In fact, Samuel is known as a man of prayer more than any other characteristic. In Samuel's view, it would have been a sin to stop praying for the people of Israel, though they had been sinful, ungrateful, and inconsiderate.

Not only does Samuel place great emphasis on praying for the people, but he also promises to teach them "*the good and the right way.*" As a prophet of God, he will continue to instruct the people in the way that they should walk before the Lord. Samuel also begins the school of the prophets, providing teachers and preachers in the future. Therefore, Samuel utilized two great spiritual weapons - prayer and teaching (preaching). Prayer is directed to God, and preaching is directed to men.

The greatest men of the Bible were the prophets - men like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. They were greater than the kings of Israel (except for David and Solomon who had qualities of a prophet). Prayer and preaching were the activities of these prophets. In the New Testament, the disciples said, "*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*" (Acts 6:4).

24 Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. **25** But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

Once again, the people are admonished to fear the Lord and walk in His ways. They need to remember what He has done in the past. They need to understand that wickedness will result in separation from God. Read Psalm 92:12-15, 71:17-18.