FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 12

*Samuel’s Farewell Speech*

**Samuel said to all Israel, “I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. 2 Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. 3 Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right.” 4 “You have not cheated or oppressed us,” they replied. “You have not taken anything from anyone’s hand.” 5 Samuel said to them, “The Lord is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” “He is witness,” they said. 6 Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your forefathers up out of Egypt. 7 Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the Lord as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord for you and your fathers. 8 “After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to the Lord for help, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your forefathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. 9 “But they forgot the Lord their God; so he sold them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them. 10 They cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We have sinned; we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.’ 11 Then the Lord sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies on every side, so that you lived securely. 12 “But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the Lord your God was your king. 13 Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you. 14 If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good! 15 But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers. 16 “Now then, stand still and see this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes! 17 Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the Lord to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the Lord when you asked for a king.”18 Then Samuel called upon the Lord, and that same day the Lord sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the Lord and of Samuel. 19 The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.” 20 “Do not be afraid,” Samuel replied. “You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. 21 Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. 22 For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own. 23 As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. 24 But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. 25 Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away.”**

**12:3** *Testify against me.* When Samuel presents the newly inaugurated king to the people, he seeks to establish publicly his own past faithfulness to the covenant as leader of the nation. His purpose is to exonerate himself and provide an example for Saul in his new responsibilities. (CSB)

*Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken?* See Ex 20:17; 22:1, 4, 9. Samuel has not used his position for personal gain (see Nu 16:15). (CSB)

*Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed?* See Lev 19:13; Dt 24:14. (CSB)

*From whose hand have I accepted a bribe … .?* See Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19.

**12:6** *Samuel said to the people.* Samuel turns from consideration of his previous leadership to the matter of the people’s request for a king, which he views as a covenant-breaking act and a serious apostasy. *It is the Lord*. Samuel emphasizes that in the past the Lord had provided the necessary leadership for the nation. (CSB)

**12:7** *confront you with evidence.* The terminology is that of a legal proceeding, as in vv. 2–5, but now the relationship of the parties is reversed. This time Samuel is the accuser, the people are the defendants, and the Lord is the Judge. (CSB)

*righteous acts performed by the Lord*. These righteous acts (see vv. 8–11) demonstrate the constancy of the Lord’s covenant faithfulness toward his people in the past and, by way of contrast, serve as an indictment of their present apostasy. (CSB)

**12:11** *he delivered you.* The Lord repeatedly delivered Israel from her enemies right up to Samuel’s own lifetime (see 7:3, 8, 10, 12), demonstrating again the people’s apostasy in desiring a king. (CSB)

**12:12** *when you saw that Nahash … was moving against you.* In the face of the combined threat from the Philistines in the west (9:16) and the Ammonites in the east (11:1–13), the Israelites sought to find security in the person of a human king. (CSB)

*the Lord your God was your king.* The Israelite desire for and trust in a human leader constituted a rejection of the kingship of the Lord and betrayed a loss of confidence in his care, in spite of his faithfulness during the time of the exodus, conquest and judges (see note on 8:7). (CSB)

**12:13** *the Lord has set a king over you.* In spite of the sinfulness of the people’s request, the Lord had chosen to incorporate kingship into the structure of the theocracy (his kingdom). Kingship was given by the Lord to his people and was to function as an instrument of his rule over them (see Introduction: Contents and Theme). (CSB)

**12:14** *If you fear the Lord*. Samuel relates the old covenant condition (see Ex 19:5–6; Dt 8:19; 11:13–15, 22–28; 28; 30:17–18; Jos 24:20) to the new era Israel is entering with the establishment of the monarchy. (CSB)

*if both you and the king … follow the Lord your God—good!* Israel and her king are to demonstrate that although human kingship has been established, they will continue to recognize the Lord as their true King. In this new era where potential for divided loyalty between the Lord and the human king arises, Israel’s loyalty to the Lord must remain inviolate. For similar use of the expression “to follow” see 2Sa 2:10; 15:13; 1Ki 12:20; 16:21. (CSB)

**12:15** *But if you do not obey.* Samuel confronts Israel with the same alternatives Moses had expressed centuries earlier (see Dt 28; 30:15–20). The introduction of kingship into Israel’s socio-political structure has not changed the fundamental nature of Israel’s relationship to the Lord. (CSB)

**12:16** *see this great thing.* Samuel calls the people to observe as the Lord himself demonstrates his existence and power and authenticates the truthfulness and seriousness of Samuel’s words. (CSB)

**12:17** *wheat harvest.* See note on 6:13. (CSB)

**12:19** *Pray to the Lord your God.* Samuel’s indictment (vv. 6–15) combined with the awesome sign of thunder and rain in the dry season (vv. 16–18) prompted the people to confess their sin and request Samuel’s intercession for them. (CSB)

**12:20** *yet do not turn away from the Lord*. Samuel again brings into focus the central issue in the controversy surrounding the establishment of kingship in Israel. (CSB)

**12:21** *useless idols.* No rivals to the Lord can deliver or guarantee security. (CSB)

**12:23** *I will teach you the way that is good and right.* Samuel is not retiring from his prophetic role when he presents the people with their king. He will continue to intercede for the people (see v. 19; 7:8–9) and will instruct them in their covenant obligations (see Dt 6:18; 12:28). Saul and all future kings are to be subject to instruction and correction by the Lord’s prophets. (CSB)

**12:24** *fear the Lord*. Samuel summarizes Israel’s obligation of loyalty to the Lord as an expression of gratitude for the great things he has done for them. (CSB)

**12:25** *you and your king will be swept away.* Should the nation persist in covenant-breaking conduct, it will bring upon itself its own destruction. (CSB)