

"Like all the nations"

1 Samuel 8: 5

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Nov/Dec 1970

What a sad day had dawned in Israel when they came to the prophet Samuel with this request. Externally they complained of the misrule of the sons of Samuel, but when the prophet mournfully told God of this request, He told Samuel where the real trouble was lying — it was in their hearts. They were feeling the rule of God to be irksome as he said to Samuel, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them," v. 7. Had they but asked for a king like Moses ("and he was king in Jeshurun") no doubt God would have been pleased with this but no — "like all the nations" was what they desired. Long afterwards we read "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath," Hosea 13: 11.

When Samuel, as instructed by God, rehearsed to them the features of the king they desired, he solemnly portrayed the character of the man who would rule over them. *Self* would be his most obvious characteristic. "He will take" is six times repeated in verses 11 to 17 — and what he took was for *himself*. Truly he would be like the kings of the nations, more inclined to *rob* them of the blessings which God had bestowed upon them than *add* to them. We have not to read far into the history of Saul ere we learn that he was guilty both of disobedience and of wilfulness. What else would sinful man do if disobedient to the voice of God than act according to his own will?

Is there not in all this a warning voice for us today when there seems to be an increasing desire to be like "all the nations," be it politically, religiously, or otherwise? Just as Israel had forgotten that they had been set apart from the other nations as the people of God, so may we be inclined to forget in our day the unique place God has brought us into under the Lordship and Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ? That which distinguished Israel was the light and knowledge they had of the one true God; so have we been even more greatly blessed today! Why then should we have any desire to be like those who have no true knowledge of God? Neither have they any appreciation of the assembly as the vessel controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. Rather let us be thankful that we have been delivered from many elements which have no authority in the Word of God. Even phraseology is used at times which is far removed from "words . . . which the Holy Spirit teacheth," 1 Corinthians 2: 13. Indeed, a careful study of this chapter would free us from attempting to imitate the supposed wise men of this world. Those who attempt to introduce such things into divine teaching only betray the fact that they are better acquainted with human theories than with the Word of God. Doubts in regard to the original creation are at times expressed in the very teeth of Holy Scripture. Are we going to give up the clear revelation of Scripture for the theories of sinful men who neither know nor desire to know the one true God or His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ? All the hypothetical guess- work regarding the creation, etc., will be at once rejected by those who believe the record which God Himself has given us. One verse of Scripture from among many demolishes these baseless theories for anyone subject to the Word of God. "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth," Exodus 20: 11.

Whether from the religious world or from the "so-called" scientific world, wisdom would warn us to avoid speculations which have sprung from the minds of those who, like Saul, are marked by disobedience, on the one hand, and wilfulness on the other. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Revelation 3: 11.

