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1SAMUEL 12: 1 Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you."

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Samuel, grown old, testifies his integrity before the people, which they confirm, 1Sam 12:1-5. He reproves them for their ingratitude and disobedience; and gives a summary of the history of their fathers, 1Sam 12:6-12. He exhorts them to future obedience, and calls for a sign from heaven to confirm his authority, and to show them their disobedience: God sends an extraordinary thunder and rain, 1Sam 12:13-19. He warns them against idolatry, and exhorts to obedience, and promises to intercede for them, 1Sam 12:20-23. Sums up their duty, and concludes with a solemn warning, 1Sam 12:24, 1Sam 12:25.

#### Verse 1

And Samuel said - It is very likely that it was at this public meeting Samuel delivered the following address; no other time seems to be given for it, and this is the most proper that could be chosen.

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1SAMUEL 12: 2 Now, behold, the king walks before you; and I am old and gray-headed; and behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth to this day.

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#### Verse 2

My sons are with you - It is generally agreed that these words intimate that Samuel had deprived them of their public employ, and reduced them to a level with the common people.

Have walked before you from my childhood - He had been a long, steady, and immaculate servant of the public.

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1SAMUEL 12: 3 Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind my eyes therewith? I will restore it to you."

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#### Verse 3

Witness against me - Did ever a minister of state, in any part of the world, resign his office with so much self-consciousness of integrity, backed with the universal approbation of the public? No man was oppressed under his government, no man defrauded! He had accumulated no riches for himself; he had procured none for his friends; nor had one needy dependant been provided for out of the public purse. He might have pardoned his own sons, who had acted improperly, before he quitted the government; but though he was the most tender of parents, he would not, but abandoned them to national justice, with only a tacit solicitation of mercy: Behold, my sons are with you! They have acted improperly; I deprived them of their authority; they are amenable to you for their past conduct; I have walked uprightly and disinterestedly among you; they have not followed my steps: but can you forgive them for their father's sake? As a minister of justice, he abandons them to their

fate; as a tender father, he indirectly and modestly pleads for them on the ground of his own services. Had he not acted thus in both these relations, he would have been unworthy of that character which he so deservedly bears.

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1SAMUEL 12: 4 They said, "You have not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken anything of any man's hand."

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Verse 4

They said, Thou hast not defrauded - Of what minister or governor can any nation under heaven say such things?

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1SAMUEL 12: 5 He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand."

They said, "He is witness."

1SAMUEL 12: 6 Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

1SAMUEL 12: 7 Now therefore stand still, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

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Verse 7

Now therefore stand still - I have arraigned myself before God and you; I now arraign you before God.

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1SAMUEL 12: 8 "When Jacob had come into Egypt, and your fathers cried to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt, and made them to dwell in this place.

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Verse 8

The Lord sent Moses and Aaron - He shows them that through all their history God had ever raised them up deliverers, when their necessities required such interference.

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1SAMUEL 12: 9 "But they forgot the LORD their God; and he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them.

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Verse 9

The hand of Sisera - See these transactions in the book of Judges, Jdg 4:2 (note).

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1SAMUEL 12: 10 They cried to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve you.'

1SAMUEL 12: 11 The LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you lived in safety.

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#### Verse 11

Jerubbaal - That is, Gideon. And Bedan: instead of Bedan, whose name occurs nowhere else as a judge or deliverer of Israel, the Septuagint have Barak; the same reading is found in the Syriac and Arabic. The Targum has Samson. Many commentators are of this opinion; but Calmet thinks that Jair is intended, who judged Israel twenty-two years, Jdg 10:3. Instead of Samuel the Syriac and Arabic have Samson; and it is most natural to suppose that Samuel does not mention himself in this place. St. Paul's authority confirms these alterations: The time would fail me, says he, to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, etc.

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1SAMUEL 12: 12 "When you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us;' when the LORD your God was your king.

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#### Verse 12

When ye saw that Nahash - This was not the first time they had demanded a king; see before, 1Sam 8:5. But at the crisis mentioned here they became more importunate; and it was in consequence of this that the kingdom was a second time confirmed to Saul. Saul was elected at Mizpeh, he was confirmed at Gilgal.

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1SAMUEL 12: 13 Now therefore see the king whom you have chosen, and whom you have asked for: and behold, the LORD has set a king over you.

1SAMUEL 12: 14 If you will fear the LORD, and serve him, and listen to his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you are followers of the LORD your God.

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#### Verse 14

If ye will fear the Lord, etc. - On condition that ye rebel no more, God will take you and your king under his merciful protection, and he and his kingdom shall be confirmed and continued.

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1SAMUEL 12: 15 But if you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then will the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

1SAMUEL 12: 16 "Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

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Verse 16

This great thing - This unusual occurrence.

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1SAMUEL 12: 17 Isn't it wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for a king."

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Verse 17

Is it not wheat harvest to-day? - That is, This is the time of wheat harvest. According to St. Jerome, who spent several years in the promised land, this harvest commenced about the end of June or beginning of July, in which he says he never saw rain in Judea: *Nunquam enim in fine mensis Junii, sive in mense Julio, in his provinciis, maximeque in Judea, pluvias vidimus.* - Hier. in Amo 4:7; where he refers to this very history. What occurred now hardly ever occurs there but in the winter months.

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1SAMUEL 12: 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.

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Verse 18

The Lord sent thunder and rain that day - This was totally unusual; and, as it came at the call of Samuel, was a most evident miracle.

Greatly feared the Lord - They dreaded His terrible majesty; and they feared Samuel, perceiving that he had so much power with God.

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1SAMUEL 12: 19 All the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we not die; for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

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Verse 19

Pray for thy servants - that we die not - As they knew they had rebelled against God, they saw that they had every thing to fear from his justice and power.

We have added unto all our sins this evil - It is no sin to have a king; a good king is one of the greatest blessings of God's providence; but it is a sin to put a man in the place of God. Is it not strange that they did not now attempt to repair their fault? They might have done it, but they did not; they acknowledged their sin, but did not put it away. This is the general way of mankind. "God help us, we are all sinners!" is the general language of all people: but though to be a sinner is to be in the most solemn and awful circumstances, yet they are contented to bear the character, heedless of the consequences!

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1SAMUEL 12: 20 Samuel said to the people, "Don't be afraid. You have indeed done all this evil; yet don't turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart."

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#### Verse 20

Ye have done all this wickedness - That is, although ye have done all this wickedness: what was past God would pass by, provided they would be obedient in future.

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1SAMUEL 12: 21 Don't turn aside to go after vain things which can't profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

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#### Verse 21

After vain things - That is, idols; which he calls here הַתּוֹהוּ *hattohu*, the same expression found Gen 1:2. The earth was תוֹהוּ *tohu*; it was waste, empty, and formless: so idols; they are confusion, and things of naught, for an idol is nothing in the world, it is not the representative of any intelligent being.

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1SAMUEL 12: 22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people to himself.

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#### Verse 22

The Lord will not forsake his people - He will not as yet cast you off, though you have deserved it. His purpose in preserving them in their land and religion was not yet accomplished. It was not however for their sake that he would not cast them off, but for his own great name's sake. He drew his reasons from himself.

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1SAMUEL 12: 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 instruct you in the good and the right way.

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#### Verse 23

God forbid that I should sin - They had earnestly begged him, 1Sam 12:19, to pray to God for them, that they might not die; and he tells them that he should consider himself a sinner, should he cease to be their intercessor.

But I will teach you the good and the right way - I will show you, as long as I am with you, what true religion is; it is the way to happiness and heaven. It is right - there is no crookedness in it; it is good - there is no evil in it.

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1SAMUEL 12: 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he has done for you.

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Verse 24

Only fear the Lord - Know, respect, and reverence him.

Serve him - Consider him your Lord and Master; consider yourselves his servants.

In truth - Be ever honest, ever sincere; with all your heart - have every affection engaged in the work of obedience; act not merely from a principle of duty, but also from a pious, affectionate sense of obligation. Act towards your God as an affectionate child should act towards a tender and loving parent.

Consider how great things - Review the history of your fathers, review your own life; see what interpositions of power, mercy, goodness, and truth, God has displayed in your behalf! Has he not daily loaded you with his benefits?

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1SAMUEL 12: 25 But if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king."

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Verse 25

Ye shall be consumed - If ye do wickedly you shall be destroyed, your kingdom destroyed, and your king destroyed. Here they had set before them life and good, death and evil. Never was a people more fully warned, and never did a people profit less by the warning; and they continue to this day monuments of God's justice and forbearance. Reader, What art thou? Perhaps a similar monument. Consider therefore what great things God has done for thee.