



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Leader Series: Samuel

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This study highlights the life and impact of Samuel: priest, judge and prophet. The historical events in our focus took place between 1100 B.C. and 1000B.C. at the end of the period when the LORD ruled Israel through His judges. The records of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad were used by an unknown editor to compile the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. The purpose of these books was to demonstrate the sovereignty of Jehovah God and the personal and national effects of sin.

INTRODUCTION

Hannah was in despair! She was the wife of Elkanah, a devout Levite living in the hill country, just north of Jerusalem. Hanna was barren “because the LORD had closed her womb” (1Samuel 1:6). Elkanah took a second wife named Peninnah. This was culturally acceptable in that period because of the importance of carrying on the family name and to work the fields. However, God teaches monogamy (Genesis 2:18-24, Deuteronomy 21:15-17, 1Timothy 3:2). Peninnah had sons and daughters; touting this she provoked Hannah bitterly to irritate her rival. Elkanah took his wives to the temple for the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the three required annual feasts. Hannah was praying silently, pouring her anguish out before the LORD of Hosts. She vowed that if the LORD gave her a son, she would dedicate him to God's service. Eli, the priest, observed her behavior and accused Hannah of being drunk. Hannah explained her affliction and Eli said, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition” (1 Samuel 1:17). Today, we struggle with the anguish of divorce and the challenges of blended families when we might have trusted the Lord for relief.

SAMUEL IS BORN

1 Samuel 1:20 So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”¹

Hannah nursed her son until the proper time and then gave him to the LORD in a temple ceremony. Eli prayed for her, she bore five other sons and daughters.

THE WICKED SONS OF ELI

1 Samuel 1:12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.²

Hophni and Phinehas served as temple priests, working under their father. They would take, for their own use, the best portions of meat being sacrificed by Israelites, threatening force if necessary. These young priests also took advantage of the women who served in the Temple courts. Such religious prostitution was common among their Canaanite neighbors.³ Many people complained to Eli. He rebuked his sons, pointing out that God will mediate for one who sins against another. But a man who sins against God invites judgment. A visiting prophet pronounced judgment on Eli and his two sons, stating that his lineage will be cut off and the sons would die on the same day. Yet Eli did not dismiss his evil sons from serving. Even today, corrupt administrators are permitted to serve in churches and government service. The entire nation soon becomes corrupt.

GOD SPEAKS, THE BOY SAMUEL LISTENS

1 Samuel 2:26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.⁴

Samuel had a deeply spiritual mother who deferred the boy's love to God. He served in the temple and learned about God. “Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD been revealed to him” (1 Samuel 3:7). Like many today, Samuel knew about God, but he did not know the LORD in a personal way. He did not yet know the Word of the LORD nor had he communed with the LORD in praise and prayer. One night, Samuel heard his name while asleep in the temple quarters. Three times he awoke and went to ask Eli what he was calling for. Eli finally realized that the LORD was calling Samuel. He told the boy to say, “Speak LORD, for Your servant is listening” (1Samuel 3:10). The message was that He would soon judge Eli, his family, and the nation. Samuel hesitated to report the vision to his mentor, but Eli insisted that nothing be withheld. Eli responded that the LORD will do what seems right in His eyes.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADERSHIP STUDY WEDNESDAYS: 7 TO 7:50AM, CAPITOL ROOM 142 SOUTH

STAFF/GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS: 12:05 TO 12:55 PM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – CAPITOL 264WEST

Kansas

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NATIONS, LEADERS, & PEOPLE JUDGED

1 Samuel 4:21b "The glory has departed from Israel."

Samuel was faithful, and exhibited self-denial, integrity, and courage in his years of service in the temple. His first great test was to deliver a strong message to his superior! Note that Samuel lived in the same environment as Eli's wicked sons. We are called to be set apart and remain faithful regardless of the sin in the culture. The religious and civil leaders of Israel were immoral, irresponsible, and did not revere God. In contrast, the young Samuel, probably in his late teens or early twenties, possessed a spiritual power and authority that was recognized throughout Israel.⁵ National judgment began when Israel was attacked by the army of the Philistines, a neighboring people from the coastal regions of Canaan. Israel's army was defeated. They recognized that God had "smitten" them. Rather than repent and turn toward the LORD, they soon went back into battle. However, they took with them the "Ark of the Covenant" accompanied by Eli's sons, the wicked priests. In effect, they were using the ark as a mascot to secure victory. The LORD looks for obedience and repentance, not an outward symbol. God was using the Philistines to judge His people. Israel was defeated at great loss of life, the ark was captured, Eli's sons were killed, the temple was burned, and Eli died from shock.

GOD JUDGES PHILISTINES' IDOLATRY

*1 Samuel 5:2 Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon.*⁶

The Philistines believed that their victory was due to the superiority of Dagon, their fish god. The next morning they found their idol lying prostrate before the ark. It was re-set only to fall again, this time broken in pieces. The ark was relocated several times. The people at each location were afflicted with disease and tumors. In great fear, the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel.

SAMUEL LEADS A NATION IN REVIVAL

*1 Samuel 7:5 Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the LORD for you."*⁷

All Israel learned to fear (reverence) God through the various judgments. They took down their false gods and destroyed their idols. The people fasted and prayed at the Mizpah gathering. Here the Philistines mounted another attack, but the LORD routed them with loud thunder claps. The Philistines did not again cross the border of Israel during the days Samuel served as judge.

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

*1 Samuel 8:4-6 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.*⁸

The LORD told Samuel that he was not being rejected; they were rejecting God. He would give them a king like them, one that they deserved. Saul was anointed King.

CONCLUSION

The nobility of Samuel's character is evident in his loyal service to God and His people. Samuel found his successor, befriended him, trained him for service, helped initiate a new regime, and continued to pray for Saul and the people. Our service reveals our Character!

¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version. (International Bible Society). 1984.

² The Holy Bible, New King James Version. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 1982.

³ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005 p374.

⁴ The Holy Bible, New King James Version. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 1982.

⁵ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005 p376.

⁶ The Holy Bible, New International Version. (International Bible Society). 1984.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ The Holy Bible, New American Standard Version. (Lockman Foundation). 1995.