

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## The Man of God: Samuel

Derek's father was the director in charge of a successful business. As soon as Derek was ready for work, he joined the same company in a junior position. As he progressed, there were additional tasks that his father gave him. He became responsible for policy affecting customers and for carrying out the directors instructions. We will find that men of God and prophets follow this same pattern but with an infinitely greater power behind them, that of God Himself.

During the next four weeks we shall be speaking on the subject of 'The Man of God'. This is demonstrated in the lives of several characters in the Bible. We will find that the title is generally used in the Old Testament. Today it concerns Samuel.

Several things mark out those who were men of God. We see that:

- a. God had specifically chosen and empowered them to speak and act on His behalf.
- b. Men, generally, were convinced of this calling, (compare 1 Samuel 3:20). What they had to say gave every ground for confidence that this was God's word. Their whole demeanour was that of 'God's man'.
- c. Although there are many references to the way these men acted, and often their actions were with power, yet at times these men of God came with a specific message from God.
- d. These men of God were generally seen as prophets. A prophet is one who comes with a specific God-given message for the moment. It may be a message relating to the present or the future. God was making known His purposes through the prophet.

Today we live in different times. We find that since the Bible was completed with all the New Testament books, there is no more need of specific messages from God concerning the events of our time or the future. The full revelation of God is given in the Bible as we have it. So why should we be considering today Men of God in the Old Testament? There are valuable lessons to grasp from these studies which apply to all generations. Apart from Timothy, to whom Paul accorded the title of 'Man of God' in speaking of his general life, Paul also writes to Timothy about every believer in the LORD Jesus Christ. Since the death and resurrection of our Saviour, the Holy Spirit has been given as a permanent presence within every believer. With His presence we should all become men and women of God. So Paul writes: 'Every Scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that THE man of God (that is, each one individually and both men and women are included) may be complete, fully fitted to every good work', 2 Timothy 3:16-17, JN Darby translation. The study of Men of God in the Old Testament is very helpful in providing lessons for our guidance too.

Our consideration today is Samuel. There are some remarkable points to note concerning his life. We find the record in the first 25 chapters of 1 Samuel from which all references are quoted unless otherwise stated.

### Samuel - his birth.

Elkanah was a godly man from Ephraim who appears, from 1 Chronicles 6:28, to be a Levite. The customs at that time allowed more than one wife and Elkanah had two, Peninnah and Hannah; the first had children and Hannah had none. Hannah was distraught because Peninnah continually taunted her barrenness which was seen by every Israelite woman as a distinct lack of God's blessing. We get the history in chapter 1. On the yearly visit to the temple, in great 'bitterness of soul', she vowed, 'O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me...but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life...' 1:11. Listen to what James writes in his letter: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraided not: and it shall be given him', 1:5. Again, 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much', 5:17.

Eli, the priest, had first thought she was drunk but Hannah told him that she was pleading with God out of a deeply sorrowful spirit. So Eli replied, 'Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him', 1:17. Here were great words for Hannah to trust. So, in due time, Samuel was born. He was given the name, Samuel - 'asked of the LORD'. Throughout his life Samuel would remember how he came to be born.

As soon as Samuel was old enough he was taken to the temple and Hannah told Eli, 'I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD', 1:28.

Christian parents today, did you ask for your children? Is your desire to bring them up for the LORD? Would you long that they should be under His control throughout life? The deeply concerned parents of Moses were directed, under the edict of Pharaoh, to let their son die but, in trusting God, they found that Pharaoh's daughter took him as her son but gave him to the mother to bring up. God cares! Proverbs 22:6 tells us, 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it'. This was so true of both Samuel and Moses.

Of new believers in Thessalonica Paul says: 'We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers...ye became followers of us, and of the Lord...for from you sounded out the Word of the Lord...also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing', 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 6 and 8. What faithfulness these new believers showed in their testimony both to God and their spiritual father!

### **Samuel - his call.**

What a change took place and at such an early age for Samuel! When Hannah judged the time to be right she brought Samuel to the temple and Eli. From that time on, Hannah said, 'I have lent him to the LORD, as long as he liveth...' 1 Samuel 1:28. There was no time for Samuel to consider his position. When Elkanah and Hannah returned home, Samuel stayed and immediately began working. We read, 'the boy ministered to Jehovah in the presence of Eli the priest', 2:11 (JN Darby translation). At that time his ministry appears to be very practical, carried out carefully. He ministered, we read, when the sons of Eli were making mockery of the offerings of Israel because, we are told specifically, they knew not the LORD, 2:12-14, 'Samuel ministered before the LORD', verse 18. The difference was marked and God recognised the difference.

Parents, there is no age barrier to serving the Lord. The attitude may be more important than the act. When Annie Smith became ill, her neighbour Jean sent her daughter Ruth to her with a cooked meal. 'But why did you come?' said Annie? 'I came to help Jesus', Ruth replied. The illustration encourages 'training up a child in the way he should go'. There are many ways of serving the Lord and He notices each mark of faithfulness. Encourage your child as much as you can to have a right attitude and do all things for the LORD! Samuel acted in 'favour both with the LORD, and also with men'. 2:26.

As with Samuel there is, sometimes, a specific call by the LORD. Chapter 3:4 tells us, 'The LORD called Samuel'. It is vital that, however young or old we may be, we know the Lord has called us. Samuel knew, in the quiet of the evening, away from the hurry and bustle of life, that someone was calling. Was it Eli? After three failed attempts responding to Eli, the old man told Samuel on the next time to say, 'Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth', 3:9. On that fourth occasion Samuel could only go as far as saying 'Speak; for thy servant heareth', (3:10) because 'Samuel did not yet know the LORD', 3:7. That gracious LORD called four times. How often has He had to call me or you? When will we hear His call? Today He seeks individuals, firstly to come to know Him as Saviour. His death on the Cross was the means of saving us from the full penalty of eternal death our sin brought on us. But the Saviour calls because He has paid that penalty and desires to save us from that penalty for all future blessings in Christ.

For all who already know the Saviour, there is much more. He also calls to service. There is a work that every believer can do for Him. In the quiet of any moments we set aside, the LORD can speak to us and we need to be ready to hear His voice. Are we ready to say, 'Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth'? The hymn writer, Elsie Yale, included the lines: 'There's a work for Jesus, none but you can do'. The range is wide; the duties are for the Master and He delights to encourage. How can I know His mind for me? Often it may be doing the next thing that comes to hand. But then, the occasion arises sometimes when a specific responsibility comes along and seems to fit just what I can do. We know then the Lord is calling.

We next see with Samuel that the LORD reveals His mind. Samuel was to become a prophet so he needed the Lord's word. For such a young man, he was given a very solemn message. This would be passed on to Eli in due course. The Lord does not always give difficult tasks. We do not look today for a message which is quite unknown for we now have the complete Scriptures which reveal all God's mind, but we can look for ways to testify for our wonderful Lord. The Holy Spirit may bring some passage of the Word of God to mind which is clearly one for the moment. In the book of the Acts we find people who were driven out of Jerusalem due to persecution of believers there. Wherever they went they 'preached' of the Lord Jesus. But we find in chapter 11 four different words used for this. The word in verse 19 really means 'they gossiped the Gospel'; in verse 20 they evangelised, they made known the Gospel to bring others to the Lord Jesus; in verse 23 they 'exhorted them', they encouraged continuance; in verse 26 they 'taught' the truths of Christianity to many. How great is the scope of the message today!

We also find Samuel was faithful in his testimony. When Eli pressed Samuel concerning what took place, there was no hiding part of the information or covering another part. This was God's word and 'Samuel told him every whit, and

hid nothing from him', 3:18. We need to be fair with the Word of God. We need to know it for ourselves and when we use it, let us use it fully and faithfully. So we find that 'Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground'. 3:19.

### Samuel - his functions.

During his life we find several different functions this man filled.

1. **He was a prophet.** All who came in contact with Samuel knew he was 'to be a prophet of the LORD', 3:20. They realised that when he spoke it was the LORD's mind to them. Samuel lived in days when the Word of God was described as 'precious', 3:1, that is, that there was no general understanding of the purposes of God. Israel depended on a prophet for that understanding. When Samuel spoke, they knew that they were hearing the LORD's message. It is a happy thing that, when we listen to the Lord's Word, we know what is true and right. The minister of the Word always needs to have that understanding of the Word of God today to help others.

We also see Samuel receiving the Word of God when, in communion with him, God told him to follow the people's wish to anoint a king. A prophet needs to be in communion with the Lord for every occasion.

2. **He was an intercessor.** There is a good example of this in chapter 7. It was the occasion when the Philistines had taken the ark. After much punishment from God the Philistines released the Ark on a cart drawn by two cows. It returned to Israel and eventually to Kirjath-jearim. Samuel pleaded with Israel, that they return to follow the LORD, and he says, 'I will pray for you', 7:5. The Philistines heard of their gathering together at this time and this again brought fear to Israel. They say to Samuel, 'Cease not to cry unto the LORD your God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines', 7:8. So Samuel offered a burnt offering and prayed. How wonderful to note that 'the LORD heard him', 7:9. How vital are the intercessors today, those who will pray for others! Even housebound people can pray for others. The Lord hears and answers those who pray. Is there someone for whom you can intercede today?
3. **Samuel was a priest.** Although only a Levite and, therefore, not of the priestly tribe, another unnamed prophet had come to Eli with the words of the LORD. God had said that, in place of Eli and his evil sons, 'I will raise Me up a faithful priest', 2:35. But Samuel acted as a priest. He offered sacrifices (1 Samuel 7:9-10), he anointed both king Saul and king David. In the goodness of God, all believers are now members of a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. It is our privilege to bring our sacrifice, our worship, to the Lord and also to honour the Lord before others for the salvation He has brought to us. Let us make sure we are true priests today!
4. Lastly we note that **Samuel was a judge.** Much time was spent moving about the country judging the causes of the people. 'And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life', 1 Samuel 7:15. So Samuel filled another valuable task. In our days, Christian should not go to law against Christian, 1 Corinthians 6:1, but such matters should be dealt with by the Christian community. Samuel was God's man in Israel during his life, so if there are matters which may need judgement, a Christian should be prepared to come to his or her church for help. But what is the purpose of judgement? Surely it is to bring peace and maintain peace among the Lord's people. Whether formally or not, this opportunity of bringing peace is a great work for all believers today.

We find, in Hebrews 11:32, **Samuel is** included in the list as a **man of faith**. Perhaps this is one of the most important aspects of Samuel's life. May we, in our days be like Samuel of old, desire to be available to the Lord for all His purposes and be ready to listen for His direction and hear His will. May we be a faithful testimony for Him in a dark world; may we be useful intercessors and priests and, if the opportunity occurs, may we bring peace in the circumstances where we are. Above all, may we always have a faith in the Lord that endures.

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