

A CHARACTER STUDY IN

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

I Samuel 3:1 - 21

Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
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THE CALL OF SAMUEL

In our study of the life of Samuel we have considered his father Elkanah and his mother, Hannah. Their godly example was a powerful force in the life of this young boy. Hannah promised God that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to serve God for the rest of his life. If Samuel's life is considered in full, it is obvious that God prepared this man to be his instrument for just that time. He was born in a time of spiritual decline. Elkanah was a faithful man but it seems that there were few others. Shiloh was the spiritual center of Israel at this time. "Shiloh continued to be the religious center of the nation until after the loss of the Ark of the Covenant in the disastrous battle of Ebenezer." (Wycliffe. P. 274.) The writer of I Samuel tells us in chapter one that *"And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there."* (I Sam. 1:3) He is preparing his readers for the reason for why God sent Samuel. Samuel would be used of God to restore the people's hearts to God. We know from scripture that life at Shiloh

was unspeakably wicked at that time. The priests, Hophni and Phinehas, stole from the worshippers and threatened them with violence. They committed immorality with the women that came to worship. (I Sam. 2:22) The high priest was weak and turned a blind eye to these terrible things. God was very displeased with what was happening there. *“Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.”* (2:17) In fact later Jeremiah, in his prophecy, reminds us of what God did to Shiloh. *“But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.”* (Jer. 2:12-17)

When Hannah asked God for a man child, she did not realize the plan that God had for Him. When He gave her the child, she dedicated herself to raising him as a man who would be separated unto the Lord all his life. In chapter one verse eleven she says, if you *“Wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall*

no razor come upon his head.” (1:11) This speaks of raising him as a Nazarite, a person completely dedicated to the Lord. When she comes to the temple at Shiloh with her boy to offer him for service to the Lord, she used the word “lent” to describe her sacrifice. To the English mind this would seem a strange word to use of that which would be given permanently. To a mother’s heart however, it suggested that, though she was giving him to the Lord, he would always be her son. Shiloh was about 12 miles from their home on Mt Ephraim. The Bible does not say specifically that she left Samuel at the temple the day that she presented him to Eli. She could have returned home with him to finish his upbringing without violating her vow. Knowing how vile the priests were, she would have been very hesitant to leave a five year old boy in such a wicked environment. Surely, after she presented him to Eli, she was allowed to return with the boy to complete his upbringing. She and her husband shaped Samuel to be the man of God needed in that wicked day. How else can we account for the impeccable

character the grown man, Samuel, possessed?

Scripture tells us that she visited him once a year with a coat that she made for him. He was her son and would always be her responsibility. The Scripture does not mention that she came at other times throughout the year but surely while he was living there, she must have traveled the twelve miles to see her boy from time to time.

By the time we come to chapter three, time has passed. We see Samuel living in Shiloh and serving in the temple. When he first was presented at Shiloh with his mother, he would have been too young to execute the responsibilities we find him performing here in chapter three. By now however, "according to Josephus, Samuel had just completed his 12th year when the Lord spoke to him." (Wycliffe. P.277) He would be considered a man and was old enough to begin his training as a priest. His first duties would have been the care of the temple and the high priest. Because of the wickedness of the priests God had stopped

speaking to the people. He now calls his prepared servant in to service. Scripture says, *“the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.”* (vs. 3:1) So when God spoke to Samuel, he did not understand it was God speaking to him. He thought that it must be his master Eli calling him from his bed. He immediately ran to the man to meet his need. It is remarkable that Hannah and Elkanah had raised him to be attentive to the words of the man of God. Showing respect to the office of the pastor in our church will help our children be responsive to God’s man’s leadership. This call occurred three times. When Samuel came to the old man’s room the third time Eli realized that God must be speaking to the boy. He sends him back to his room with the instruction, *“Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.”* (vs.9) Samuel returned to his bed and God gave him his first prophecy. Eli his sons and the people would be punished because of their sinfulness.

Samuel is now in the place where God would use him in the affairs of the people of Israel. *“And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD. (vs. 19-21)* Several significant things in the life of Samuel are mentioned here. First, Samuel grew. This suggests that he was still a young man. Next, the Lord made sure that the things he preached came to pass. Because of this his fame spread to the extreme ends of Israel. Everyone knew that God was speaking to them again and He was speaking through the young prophet, Samuel. God revealed Himself “by the word of the Lord.” God used Samuel to reveal His will through the ancient holy writings that Samuel had first learned at the knee of his mother, Hannah. Finally, God revealed Himself to Samuel personally through the Word of God. The Lord still reveals Himself to any who will take the time to read and

study the Bible. That is why we study the Scriptures. We want to learn more and more about our Heavenly Father. The result of this knowledge was a revival of the worship of Jehovah among his people. The revival moved the people to rededicate their lives to God and live in a pure way.

Notes
