

A CHARACTER STUDY IN

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

SAMUEL'S MINISTRY TO THE NATION
BEGINS

I Samuel 3:20– 7:17

Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
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SAMUEL'S MINISTRY TO THE NATION BEGINS

Chapter three of I Samuel relates the story of a pivotal time in the history of the nation of Israel as well as in the life of Samuel. Samuel was presented to the Lord at Shiloh when he was about five years old. He did not begin ministering in the temple until he was older, perhaps around the age of 13. Scripture tells us that *“Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.”* (vs.3:7) No doubt his mother, Hannah, as part of his training, taught him the Bible but he did not yet understand how this would impact his life. He knew the stories and he knew of the God of the fathers but as yet he did not know him personally. The seed planted by Hannah would soon sprout and bloom but as yet he did what was asked of him without understanding why. This underscores the importance of teaching our young children the Scriptures. The Lord will bring this knowledge back to their minds when they need it most. God called to Samuel in chapter three in an audible voice.

Samuel did not understand that it was the voice of the LORD. He had been taught to be sensitive to the voice of the man of God so he, thinking that this voice was his master, Eli, ran immediately to Eli to see what was needed. Do we support the man that God has placed as our spiritual head? Do our children respond to him with respect or disregard his presence in their lives? Our attitude toward him will make the difference. God called to Samuel two more times and Eli realizes that God is speaking to the boy. He then instructs Samuel to return to his bed and wait. If he hears the voice again he is to say, "*Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.*" (vs. 9) Samuel returns to his bed and the Bible says that "*And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.*" (vs.10) The Lord came to Samuel and spoke again. The Lord comes to us today in the person of His servants. The Lord stood waiting till he had Samuel's attention. He stands patiently waiting for us to see if we will respond. Then he called to Samuel as he had several times already.

God will call to us if our attitude is like that of Samuel's, *"Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."* (vs. 10) Thus, Samuel's prophetic ministry began. God revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by means of His Word. As he grew Samuel, no doubt, spent many hours in study of the scriptures as part of his training for the priestly, prophetic office he was to assume. He learned who God was as he read the Word of God. Today also, God reveals Himself in a special way to those who will give attention to the reading and study of the Scriptures. How badly do we desire Him? That is how fervently we will make the Scriptures ours.

God used Samuel to call all of Israel to repentance. (vs. 4:1) For more than twenty years the Ark of God was kept safe after its return from the Philistines at a place called Kirjath-jearim. During this time Samuel preached to all of Israel. God sent conviction to the hearts of His people. The result of the preaching was, *"and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."* (vs.7:2b) Here we have Samuel's first

recorded sermon to the people. They came to him sick of their idolatrous, sinful living and he told them what they should do. His words can speak to us today. He tells them, first, to put away their sinful living. They were to turn away from their idolatry. If we today would follow God we must repent of our sin and then turn from our sinful practices. They were to then “‘prepare’ their hearts unto the Lord.” That means that they were to get their lives ready to serve God only. They were to direct their thinking and lives toward God. If we would repent we should confess and turn from our sin and then serve God only. Samuel’s promise from God to the people was, *“And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. (vs. 3)* God has given those same thoughts to us in our New Testament day in I John 1:9. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all*

unrighteousness.” As we confess our sin to God we are saying that we agree with God. We agree that these things are sinful and we turn from them. It has been said that to “repent” of or sins is to turn from them. The true sense of the word in Latin, however, involves something a bit different. A Marine drill sergeant explained it this way. We are to not simply about face from our sins; we are to “to the rear march.” We turn from them and purposefully move away. When we do that, God does His part by forgiving us. He then restores the fellowship that has been broken by the sin. We can count on his promise to do that and He is fully righteous in doing so.

Notes
