

A CHARACTER STUDY IN

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

WHEN SAMUEL WAS OLD

I Samuel 8:1-22

Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
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“And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.” (I Samuel 7:15) The majority of Samuel’s ministry takes place between chapters three and seven of I Samuel. After the terrible sin that was found in the temple in Shiloh he was chosen by God to be a preacher of righteousness to his people. For twenty years after Shiloh’s destruction, he ministered, calling the people to faithfulness to God. Finally, in chapter seven we read of the repentance and return of the people of God to His word and worship. The subsequent ministry of Samuel is stated in 7:15-17. *“And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.”* As we come to chapter eight we find years have passed. Samuel has been the Judge, priest; and

prophet of God to all the land and now has grown old. “We are not able with any precision to fix the dates of Samuel’s life. When the great disaster at Shiloh happened resulting in the capture of the Ark of God and Eli’s death, the young prophet was barely thirty years old. For the next twenty years we have seen how unweariedly he laboured to awaken in the people a sense of their deep degradation and of the real causes of their fallen state. ... Samuel the judge was probably nearly fifty years of age. Another considerable apse of time must be assumed between the day of the uprising of the people and the throwing off the Philistine yoke and the events related at such length in the present chapter. ... A famous Hebrew commentator suggests seventy years of age as the most likely time of life. This supposition is, likely enough, a correct one.” (Ellicott's Commentary. Biblehub.com) Samuel is now well along in years. He has traveled and ministered all over the country. At some point, no doubt, to help with the responsibilities of his leadership of the people, Samuel engaged his sons to help with his responsibilities.

Unfortunately, they did not share his morality. Our text says, *“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.”* (8:3) “The names of these sons are especially significant of the holy atmosphere their father lived in. Joel signifies Jehovah is God; and Abiah, Jehovah a Father. But the glorious traditions of Samuel were quickly forgotten by these unworthy men who called him father.” (IBID.) This is reminiscent of the problem that arose when Eli allowed his sons to become corrupt. They brought great sin to Israel and great destruction was the result. The people recognized this. No doubt in an effort to stave off a second episode of corruption they came to Samuel and asked that the theocratic type of rule be changed to a monarchy. They desired that a king be placed over them. The rest of the chapter deals with Samuel’s argument with the people but ends with God telling him to obey the voice of the people. As we compare this instance of corrupt leadership of the people it is interesting to note that while Joel and Abiah, sons of Samuel, did

commit grievous sin they were not as destructive as Eli's sons. It is also interesting to note that Samuel took them from leadership. They no longer had their positions of responsibility after Samuel anointed and crowned Saul as King. There is evidence that they repented of the sin and lived good lives and produced honorable children. In I Chronicles 6:33 it speaks of the high position occupied at the court of David by the distinguished descendants of the noble prophet Samuel. *"And these are they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel."* [Samuel] This speaks of forgiveness and restoration that comes with godly leadership in the home. Though we may stray from the Lord there can be forgiveness and restoration.

Because of the sins of Samuel's sons the people began to realize that a new form of leadership was called for. In fact, they had the perfect leadership. The Man of God was leading them as he was led by God. They saw the weakness in the human leaders and did not see that it was God who was leading

them. Because of that they tried to use human reasoning to solve the problem. If they could just have a king to lead them, “like all the nations” (vs.5) all would be better. They reasoned, *“we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.”* (vs. 19-20) Samuel is very unhappy about this. Many commentators feel his discomfort was because he felt they were rejecting him as their leader. There may be an element of truth in this but Samuel was a principled man. He was upset with them because he knew that they were making a grave mistake. God points out to Samuel, *“Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”* (vs. 7) Samuel spends several verses pointing out what a king would cost them yet they would not be moved. God decided to give them what they wanted. *“And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.”* (vs.22) Samuel obeyed the will of the Lord but he was upset because

they were making a grave error. He knew how much they would suffer. *“And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”* (vs. 18)

Samuel loved the people and he was broken because they were turning away from the Lords leadership. He loved the Lord enough to remain faithful to Him in spite of the pressure the people placed on him. The thought of having a king as their leader made sense in human reasoning. In fact, the Lord planned to give them a king in the person of David when they were ready. They were running ahead of the Lord. In chapter 9 we will study about how their king was chosen.

Notes
