

LESSON NINE

SAMUEL

A. ASKED OF GOD:

One of the outstanding men of the Old Testament was Samuel. Samuel was called a judge but he also was a prophet and a priest. Samuel was the son of a Levite, Elkanah, and Samuel's mother was Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah.

Prior to Samuel's birth, Hannah had been barren. She prayed for a son, while at the house of God in Shiloh. The priest saw her and thought she was drunk because of her intense burden. God heard her prayer and Samuel was born.

This should teach us that children are the heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3) and that young women, when they marry, should desire to bear children according to the plan of God. It also teaches us that every child has a divine right to be wanted. The name Samuel means "asked of God."

B. GIVEN TO GOD:

After Samuel was weaned, he was brought to the tabernacle and given to the Lord for service there. Since God had given Samuel to her, she gave Samuel back to the Lord. This example of Hannah's is a great inspiration to all Godly parents, even today.

C. CALLED OF GOD:

God called Samuel while he was still just a boy, ministering in the tabernacle. Conditions at the tabernacle were not good and they were getting worse. The call of God came to Samuel ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord (I Samuel 3:3). It is also stated about this time that the word of the Lord was precious in those days. It simply meant that seldom did God speak to people.

On this occasion God called Samuel three times. The first two times he thought it was Eli and then Eli instructed him how to answer on the third time. Samuel answered the Lord: "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." He not only received his call from God but God confided in him the judgment that was to befall Eli and the nation because of the sins of Eli's sons. Although Samuel was still just a boy, it was his responsibility to carry this message to the aged priest.

D. FAITHFUL TO GOD:

When Eli died, Samuel was thrust into the position of Israel's leader. He was at the time about 25 years of age. Samuel had already achieved a reputation as a prophet of God among the people (I Samuel 3:20).

Prospects for the country were extremely dismal and the task of bringing order out of near chaos was clearly his. Samuel knew well the corrupt atmosphere of the tabernacle and the dire religious need of the people. He also knew the low moral that existed everywhere. However, Samuel had been given a courageous heart, full of faith in God and Samuel moved into his work

with ability and strength. The priests, and Levites, in their widely distributed cities had to be encouraged. The images of Baal and Ashteroth had to be destroyed and the people had to return to the worship of the true God.

E. THE VICTORIOUS BATTLE OF MIZPEH: (I Samuel 7:5-14).

Under the leadership of Samuel a revival took place at Mizpeh in Benjamin. The Philistines hearing of the assembly of Mizpeh went to battle in answer to Samuel's earnest intercession; God sent a thunderstorm, making the Philistines easy prey to the Israelites. Samuel's weapon was prayer.

F. THEOCRACY REJECTED BY THE PEOPLE: (I Samuel 7:15 - 8:22).

God had blessed the work of Samuel and following the Mizpeh victory, the priests and Levites were now doing their work with reasonable effectiveness. To help in the south near Beersheba, Samuel installed his two sons, Joel and Abiah, as judges. These two sons did not follow the godly example of their father, but took bribes in perversion of justice.

Their poor conduct stirred the people to make a request of Samuel, which disappointed him greatly. They asked that they be given a king. However, it was not only due to the failure of his sons but the people wanted a king with an army like all the other nations. Samuel took the request as a personal affront. He had worked hard for Israel and now believed that the country was in a relatively strong condition. This request from the people seemed an indication of a lack of confidence in him. God, however, told him that this was not so but that really the affront was against Himself. It was God that they were rejecting. God had given them a theocratic form of government, but this they were rejecting and desired a king. God told him to comply with the people's request.

Samuel was true to God. He willingly obeyed and then gave Saul, whom he anointed king, counsel from God. Self-interests were forgotten. Samuel knew his place and his responsibility and he endeavored to lift Saul to the same level of spirituality that he himself had reached. Never once did he shirk his duty because God had allowed the people to have a king.

G. A PROPHET-PRIEST:

As prophet Samuel represented God to the people; as priest he represented the people to God. Not only did he deliver the word of the Lord to them; he interceded to God for them. Israel needed this prophet-priest for soon the young king lifted himself up with arrogant pride and began to defy the Word of God. We should note that all true ministers should have this priestly and prophetic aspect to their ministry.

Samuel pronounced the rejection of Saul and foretold God's choice of David to be king (I Samuel 13:14). Saul was unexcused for intruding into the priest's office. His excuse was his fear of the Philistines; his reason was his pride and impatience. Through all the tension that developed in the kingdom, with the failure of Saul, Samuel proved faithful to the people and endeavored to establish their faith in God.

We remember Samuel for his fearlessness, his prayerfulness, his compassion and his devoted love for God and his service to his people. Undoubtedly, much of this was due to the prayers and dedication of his saintly mother.

