

22 Samuel the Prophet

The life of Samuel is found in the book of 1 Samuel.

Who were the Prophets?

God wanted the people of Israel to worship only Him. To do this, He sent His Prophets to Israel. The Prophets were a group of men and women who told the people if they had gone away from obeying God. The Prophets were also teachers, and they could also tell the future, using God's help. Several books of the Bible have the words that God gave to His prophets.

So in ancient Israel there were three levels of power: the priests, the king (or judge) and the prophets.

The priests were to teach the people how to worship, and to offer sacrifices for them. The king (or judge, depending on the time) was the ruler. The prophets told the people what they were doing wrong as far as God was concerned. They would also tell the people what would happen in the future, and they were teachers.

Samuel was the first prophet, and we can read about him in the book of 1 Samuel. Samuel was from the tribe of Levi. Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob (or Israel). The tribe of Levi had the job of teaching the people about God and His Law.

Samuel's mother was called Hannah. Hannah had been married for a long time, and had no children. She prayed to God that He would give her a son. If God answered her and gave her a son, she promised to let him work for God all his life. God answered Hannah's request, and so Samuel was born. You can read about this in 1 Samuel chapter 1.

Samuel is given to God – Chapter 1:24-28

Hannah promised God that she would give Samuel to Him. Hannah kept her promise, and she brought him to the town of Shiloh, and left the boy in the care of the Levites and priests there. The High (chief) Priest was named Eli. We do not know how old Samuel was, but he may have been about 5 years old.

Samuel Receives a Message from God – Chapter 3

Eli had two sons. These men were very wicked. They took things from the worshippers, accepted bribes, and slept with the women who visited Shiloh to worship. God had warned Eli to correct his sons, but Eli had not. One night, Samuel received a message from God to warn Eli that his two sons would be killed on the same day.

Samuel becomes a Judge – Chapter 7:5-11

Eli and his sons died on the same day. There was a new high priest chosen, but it was not Samuel. However, Samuel was such a good man, that he became a "judge" of Israel. Now a judge in modern times has a particular job. That job is deciding who is innocent, and who is guilty. In the time of ancient Israel, a judge was also a leader who led the soldiers into battle. While Samuel was a judge, he was different from earlier judges in that Samuel was not an army leader. He was a man of God, and he let God fight any battles. When he had gathered the people together one day, the thunder of God came down on Israel's enemies (the Philistines). The Philistines were so frightened, that they ran away.



Israel asks for a King – Chapter 8

Perhaps because Samuel was not an army leader, the people came to Samuel one day and asked for a king. Now Israel was not like the other nations around them. The other nations had kings who could lead the army into a battle. The God of the Universe ruled Israel from heaven. Samuel was shocked at the people's request for a king.

Samuel Anoints Saul as King – Chapter 10

God let the people have a king, and He chose a man named Saul. Samuel anointed Saul as King. "Anointing" was a ritual where the priest or prophet poured some holy oil on the head of the person who would be king. The word "Christ" that we use about Jesus actually means "anointing" in Greek. So when we say "Jesus Christ" what we are saying is "Jesus who will be King".

Saul Disobeys God – Chapter 15

While Saul started well as King, he became proud. However, he always worried what the people thought of him. Later, he had times of depression. God rejected him from being a line of kings. God would start a new line of kings from someone else.

What Saul should have done was follow God's commands given through Samuel. Then he would not have had to worry about the people.

Samuel Anoints David – Chapter 16

God sent Samuel to the city of Bethlehem. Samuel went to the home of Jesse – God had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be the new king after Saul died. The one God chose was the youngest son – David.

Samuel's later life and his death – Chapters 15:35, 25:1

While Samuel had anointed David to be the next King, Saul still ruled over Israel until he died. Samuel spent the last years of his life as a sad man – he saw Israel ruined by a king who had lost control; a king who did not call on God for help. Samuel's hope would be that David would be a better king than Saul, and David was.

When Samuel died, all of the people came together for his funeral.