

The Life of Samuel

Father, we come to You this morning. We do not come to the Bible, but we come to You, the living God, to speak to our hearts. We open Your Word that it may speak to our hearts of Your glorious Son. We give ourselves to You this morning. Speak to our hearts, show us Your Son, and we know that in Him we have life. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

II Samuel 5:1-3: "Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past when Saul was king over us, it was You who let us out and brought in Israel: and the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of My people Israel. You shall be prince over Israel. 'So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel."

Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.'"

We find in II Samuel, the place I want to get to eventually, that David is being enthroned upon all of Israel and not just part of it. But it is only a type, it is only a picture of David taking that throne. It is also a picture of the Lord Jesus, not only taking His throne on this earth in the kingdom of God and the millennial age, but as it says in Revelation that He shall reign forever and ever. That is the true story we want to see in the life of David. But as I thought about this message and considered it, before I get to David there are some things that the Lord put on my heart. We need to lay a ground work for what the nation looked like at that time when David first came on the scene, and then for seven years was in training to then take up the throne over all of Israel.

What we will look at this morning is the life of Samuel. What we will find as we look at his life is God's purpose being fulfilled in this man, and in the land God's purpose will be conveyed in a particular method. The thing that we will see is that God's purpose is always the same, and that is that His Son will be enthroned over all creation, over all heaven and over all the new earth. And that He will have His people, who usher it in, reign with Him also and be reigned over. But in the midst of God fulfilling that purpose in the age in which we live we find that God's methods are always changing. And that is what we are going to find in the life of Samuel: how God's method of dealing with Israel changed radically during his lifetime.

One other point that I would like to make is that (Alfred Eidershiem mentioned this, and it really struck home to me) when we read the historical books of the Old Testament, they are not biographies of individuals, Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon, and so forth. But it is God's historical account, His historical book of the establishment of the kingdom of God. So let us always keep that before our hearts and our minds as we look at the life of Samuel. It is not a biography of Samuel; it is God's history of the establishment of the kingdom of God.

As I was considering the overall scope of the establishment of the kingdom under David, I find that there were four timelines that ran through that period of time. Samuel lived, to some say, ninety-nine years old, so we are looking at a period of perhaps ninety-nine years. And there are four timelines that are continuous through this period of time. The first timeline is that of the

civil government of Israel. What did it look like? What was it meant to be? The second, for lack of a better phrase, is religious life. What did their life look like during this period? Third, there was an establishment of the prophetic line through this period of time. Fourth and finally is David himself during that seven-year period of time in which he was being trained by God in order to establish him as King over all of Israel.

Civil Government

So first let us look at the civil government and what it looked like at that period of time. I do not want to be laborious about it, and I am not going to get into all the judges and machinations of what was happening except to say that at the very end of the time of the judges, there were basically two judges that were in the land. There was a third one who reigned for a very short period of time, but we find Samson and Samuel. I never realized until I was looking at this that they were actually contemporaries. Now one scholar will say that they were born two years apart from one another. Another scholar says that towards the end of Samson's life, Samuel was born. So it was only an overlap of a couple of years. None of us know what it was except to say that Samson and Samuel's lives overlapped.

I am going to read a lot of different Scriptures just to establish what I am saying, that it is not just me saying it.

First, we have Samson, the judge, who had a very peculiar beginning as you are probably aware.

Judges 13:5: The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife, who was Samson's mother, and the angel of the Lord said, "For lo, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from birth, and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines."

It is very interesting to note that he was separated by the call of God through the angel, that he would be a Nazarite which means "separated one"; one who was separated to the purposes of God. Usually they were for a short period of time by the choice of men, but in this particular case it was a lifetime commitment, a lifetime call of God for this man to be separated for God's purpose.

Then two years later we find Hannah, Samuel's mother, and we know the story of her being childless and feeling forsaken in her marriage and in her life because of being barren, so she cries out to the Lord in Shiloh.

In I Samuel 1:11 we find part of Hannah's prayer to the Lord. She vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and will give to Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

So Samuel was also a Nazarite at the same time as Samson. The two men were contemporaries, but they were also two very different lights. When I say light, I mean the light of the Lord, the light of God's purpose for the land at that time. If you remember your Bible lessons, Samson lived an outward life given to God's purpose, but also given to much licentiousness in his

life also. It was one of those great mysteries of the Lord that works in lives in strange ways, and Samson was one of them. He delivered Israel from the Philistines, but his life was no example of who the Lord was, yet the Lord used him.

In comparison to that was Samuel's life whose calling of a Nazarite was that which was inward, and the light of the Lord shown in his life. His life conveyed the life of the Lord whereas Samson's life never did convey that. He was just a deliverer for Israel. They were two very different lights that existed at the same time in the land of Israel. Samson was a judge in the Southern part of Israel, and it is interesting to note that this division between the north and the south in Israel and Judah existed all the way back to the days of the Judges. It did not come about when the kingdom was divided, when the kings divided Israel up between Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and there was always this division. There were judges in the north and there were judges in the south. So we find Samson being a judge in the south of Israel. Then Samuel comes on the scene, and is declared to be a judge.

I Samuel 7:15-17: "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." (This was from the battle of Mizpah, and then onward he became the judge. This is right after Samson had been killed.) "He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would come back to Ramah for his home was there, and there also he administered justice to Israel there."

So Samson leaves the scene, and Samuel was declared to be the judge of all Israel. We find God's purpose being accomplished here in that with Samuel it ceases to be north and south. Through Samuel the Lord unifies the country under this one judge which leads then to King Saul, and then finally to the man after God's own heart, King David, in whom we see so much of the glory of the Lord being conveyed to us. So there was a purpose in Samuel becoming the judge because it was the start of God's establishing His nation under a king who was blessed by the Lord.

But there is something interesting when you look at King Saul's life. Truly he was the king of Israel, but there was very little in which he recognized the Lord at all in his life. However, we find with Samuel that on a couple of different occasions he conveyed to Israel the real state of the nation.

He says in I Samuel 8:7: "The Lord said to Samuel, harken to the voice of the people and all they say to you for they have not rejected you but they have rejected Me from being king over them."

I Samuel 12:12: "When you saw Nahash the king of the Ammonites come against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord Your God was Your King."

Samuel was a judge and was duly appointed by the Lord to be the judge of Israel, but you find that in the character of Samuel he did not take it upon himself that he was the authority in the land. He had recognized that God was the King, and he was merely His servant to serve the nation as a judge in the civil government of Israel.

So I think there is a lesson for us here in that we have been blessed with so much from the Lord and have been heavenly wise to the place of being exalted in some terms. However, we must always keep in our minds and hearts that the Lord is the King. Sometimes we get these spiritual highs, and we feel like perhaps we are the king because the Lord has so blessed us. Let it not be that we forget who the real King is and that we are merely His servants doing His will upon this earth. Our purpose is not that we are blessed, which we are, or that so much has been given to us, or that we see so much that the Lord has revealed to our hearts, but remember that the Lord is King. He is going to come onto His throne, and we are servants to that end on a daily basis. I do not know how the Lord works it all out in the machinations of all of our separate lives and doing so many separate things, but the Lord and all that we experience is bringing His Son to the throne through what we go through day by day; always remember that.

So we see something of the character of Samuel's administration that was so different from the other judges who came before him. And we find in I Samuel 12:3-4: "Here I am", Samuel says to the people. 'Testify against me before the Lord and before His anointed. Whose ox have I taken or whose ass have I taken, or whom have I defrauded, whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you.' They said, 'You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand.'"

So we find the character of his administration was that of honesty and integrity, and in that, Samuel as a Nazarite, was one who was inwardly a Nazarite. The Lord had done a sovereign work in his heart so that he had no place to enrich himself to think about himself and his own life and his self-life, but all was laid out for God's purpose, for God's people that in his administration the people would see God as their King. He displayed that in all that he did. Samuel embodied God's purpose in his life. As Christians we also should do so in our lives. We should embody God's purpose, not that we should just be a Nazarite on the outside like Samson, doing great deeds or delivering this or that. We would be a Nazarite on the inside with God's light in us, and embody God's life so that when people run across our lives on so many different occasions there would be a quality of something there that is for the world indescribable. "I do not understand this person, I do not get the same vibes from this person that you do from other people in this world who are doing so much to extend their own lives and their own self-life, but one who is living for someone else or for something else." So that is what Samuel conveys to us as a type, and that is what God's heart is for us that we embody His life within.

I just want to say one other thing about the civil government. At times the Lord used the civil government as His light upon the nation. We find it in Moses, Joshua, Samuel, although the people did not see it or appreciate it in Samuel. We find it in King David, we find it in various kings of Judah. We can forget the kings of Israel, the northern tribes, for there was no good example. Then we find it in Nehemiah as examples that the Lord was using the civil government of the nation to accomplish His purpose and His method was through the civil leadership.

The Religious Life

Now we look to the religious life of Israel at this period of time. In that we will look at very briefly the ark, the tent of the testimony and the priesthood.

Where was the ark during this period of time? This is just to establish what the ark was meant to be for Israel as all of you are very aware of. In Exodus 40:33b-34, 35, we find that this is where all the work had been done on the ark, and all the different extraordinary vessels that were in the tent of testimony had all been made, and Moses sets them up for the first time in the midst of Israel.

It says, "So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

That was the center of Israel's life. It was God's presence among His people, and they only had to look to it and see that cloud over the tent to know that God had presenced Himself among His people, and that is what God meant it to be from that day forward. And we find that it was lost to Israel along the course of time. Then we find it restored again to its former glory.

In I Kings 8:10, this is when Solomon had built God's house, the house of God, and had established the new Holy of Holies, and the new instruments that were now found in the temple.

And it says when he had finished, "And when the priests came out of the Holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord."

Then Solomon said, "The Lord has set the sun in the heavens, and has said that He would dwell in thick darkness. I have built Thee an exalted house, a place for Thee to dwell in forever."

Again, the glory of the Lord appeared to Israel, and the presence of God was there among them when Solomon finished the temple. But during Samuel's lifetime we find that there was a lost testimony, something had happened in Israel, and we are never told specifically what it was that transpired. But we know that Eli was the high priest at the beginning of Samuel's life. He was in the city of Shiloh and was established where the tent of the testimony and the ark of the covenant of the Lord, who is enthroned on the cherubim, were dwelling.

I Samuel 4:4: "So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were with the ark of the covenant of the Lord."

So we find that the ark is taken out of the tabernacle that dwelt in Shiloh and was brought to the battle of Ebenezer with the Philistines. Israel is defeated in the battle, and the Philistines are allowed to capture the ark of the testimony which they hold for seven months. I do not want to go into all that took place, the curse that came upon the Philistine lords, but after seven months they had to return it to Israel; it could not dwell in their land any longer. First, it is returned to Beth Shemesh, but there is a problem. Some men looked into the ark, and they were slain for what they had done. Finally, the men of Beth Shemesh said that they could no longer have the ark there, so they sent it off to Kiriath Jearim, and the ark stayed there.

It says in I Samuel 7:1-2: "And the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill, and they consecrated his son Eleazar to have

charge of the ark of the Lord from the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath Jearim. A long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.”

All of the house of Israel lamented after the Lord for the ark had lost its glory which had been conveyed to Israel; and Israel lamented. The twenty years that it was in Kiriath Jearim was about ten years into Saul’s reign when the ark is removed from there. It is very interesting to note in I Chronicles 13:3 when David addressed the nations as he is bringing the ark in, “Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us for we neglected it in the days of Saul.” The ark was neglected; it was cast aside. The people did not want the glory of the Lord in their midst for whatever reason. It is a strange thing what the people of God want and do sometimes. They did not want the glory of God to dwell among them in the ark.

The only other mention that we have of the ark is in I Samuel 14:18 at the battle of Mishmash. “Saul said to Ahijah,” who was the high priest at the time: “‘Bring hither the ark of God.’” They are in battle again, and they want to do just as they did before with Ebenezer, “‘so that we may rally the people.’” And it says, “For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel.” We do not know if that meant in the many battles with the Philistines and the other nations, that they brought the ark with them or it was just the overall sense that the ark was with the people, going from town to town. We are not given any specifics except to say that God’s glory had left. Imagine that! Here you have the chance to have God’s glory in your midst, in your presence, and the people reject it and say, “We do not want it. We cannot take it.” So the glorious presence of the Lord was lost through the sins of Israel.

As we look at the tabernacle, we find there is very little said about it. We know that it was in Shiloh because it talks about Samuel sleeping in the temple of the Lord. Then there is an inference in I Samuel 21:6 which says that when David was fleeing from Saul on one of the times he had to escape from the presence of Saul, he went to the city of Nob. Abimelech, the high priest was there, and David ate of the bread of the presence of the Lord. So it makes an inference that there was the tabernacle of the Lord at that particular time. Somehow it had gone from Shiloh to Nob, and then it was gone from the presence of Israel. All of the glorious vessels of the Lord—the golden table, the golden lampstand, the golden altar, the brazen altar were all gone from the presence of Israel. Finally, it was restored when David took back the throne and Jerusalem. It was brought back to its place, and that glory which was lost came back to Israel in the ark.

Then we have the priesthood, but what good is a priesthood without a functioning ark and the glorious presence of the Lord? That which was supposed to be a vital function in bringing Israel before the Lord, and bringing the offerings before the Lord on the Sabbath, the holy days, the feasts and the festivals had all been lost. There was an empty priesthood in Israel during those days. They were office holders and not functioning priests. There was Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, and we know the sins of Hophni and Phinehas. They blasphemed the Lord, there was sexual immorality, and greediness was being displayed. Very interestingly, in I Samuel 2 we find there one of those mysterious people in the Scriptures. A man of God appears to Eli in Shiloh, and he brings a prophecy to Eli.

The man of God said in I Samuel 2:30-33, “Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares ‘I promise to your house and your father’s house and the house of your father should go in and out

before me forever. 'But now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me for those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house, and you will see distress in my dwelling. You will look with envious eyes at all the prosperity which will be restored upon Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever.'"

So there comes this curse upon the high priesthood and Eli's descendants. It was a line of very short-lived generations. The priesthood was handed down through Phinehas to Ahitub, to Ahijah, Ahimelech, to Abiathar, so in that course of some seventy-five years, there were three or four generations. And you can see that this word was literally fulfilled in I Samuel 22 when Saul's wrath comes against Ahimelech and the priests. They could not stand the fact that they helped David, Saul's mortal enemy, and it says in I Samuel 22:18: "Then the king said to Doeg, 'You turn and fall upon the priests.' And Doeg, the Edomite, turned and fell upon the priests and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod (the linen ephod is a designation for the priesthood) and Nob the city of the priests he put to the sword both men and women, children and sucklings, oxen and asses, and sheep." So we find the literal fulfillment of the word of this man of God upon the priesthood.

We find that that which was to be God's glory in Israel through the ark and through the priesthood had now faded also. The civil government did not establish God's purpose among Israel. The priesthood had lost its place, the ark had lost its place which was supposed to be something that was very special to Israel.

The Prophets

So how was it that the Lord was always to have His testimony on the earth? What was it that was established that brought in His life? And we find this in the prophetic office, which was established in Israel for the first time.

I Samuel 9:9: "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.'"

Before Samuel there were seers in Israel, and as I understand this verse, it means that people could go to the seer for their individual needs, and they would go and give an offering. Then the seer would give them whatever he might inquire of the Lord and find the heart of the Lord for a matter.

But with Samuel we find the establishment not of a seer any longer, but a prophet, a prophet to the nation that God could again establish Himself in the land which we find in I Samuel 3:1: "The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there were not many visions."

Later on in 3:19: "Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord Himself revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord."

So in those days of Samuel, the Lord's testimony and the Lord's glory were now found through His prophet, and the Word of God was spoken to His people. It was a profound change that had taken place in Israel, and we find many different things about Samuel as this prophet. One of the things we find is that he was a man to be feared. There were times when Samuel did something that caused the people to fear the Lord and Samuel. It was not a light thing to hear the word of the prophet or have the prophet come into your town. It was a fearful thing when he brought the words of warning or the words of judgment. But he also brought the words of peace to Israel. So the prophet spoke not just judgment, but blessing also.

We find this conveyed especially in chapter I Samuel 7:3-4: "Then Samuel said to the house of Israel, 'If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and Ashtoreths from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.'"

Israel not only had forsaken the ark and the priesthood, but they had also taken up and worshipped the Ashtoreths, the gods of the Canaanites, the male god and the female god of the Canaanites. So Samuel warns them about this and then he goes on, and we see a different aspect of Samuel's ministry as a prophet.

V. 5: "Then Samuel said, 'Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.'"

I Samuel 12:23: "I will be remiss moreover as for me far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you."

We see the ministry of the prophet of the Lord, the ministry of the true priesthood of Samuel praying for the people, interceding for the people. And how much that ministry is needed for the church today for the saints to be praying for the nation, not necessarily the United States, but for the church especially. It has lost its ability, it has lost testimony to this world in so many different ways, but it is given to the prophet, to the true priesthood to make these prayers.

I Samuel 7:9: "So Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him."

He was a mediator between God and the nation. But of course we know who our Mediator is. We have only One; that is the Lord Jesus. If our hearts are sensitive to Him, we will know Him as our Mediator.

V. 12: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah and called it Ebenezer. For he said, 'Hitherto, the Lord has helped us.'"

Samuel had such a standing, such a place with the Lord that he was able to give God a new name, a name that Israel had never known before, that God is our helper. So we find that God is not without His testimony in whatever age that we find ourselves in. He is accomplishing His purpose. A generation is never wrong to think that the Lord is returning in their generation. That is something the Lord puts on the heart of every generation. It is the longing that the Lord shall return during our lifetime, and that is a burden on my own heart and many other hearts in this room.

We are in the last days and the Lord shall come and accomplish His purpose, but in order to accomplish that He would have a people who are ushering in His return.

The Ushering in of King David

So we find in Samuel one of these people who is ushering in the coming of King David upon the throne. Of course for us it is the Lord Himself coming to His throne on this earth. But He needs His people. In so many different ways we find in the church today that it has lost its testimony. There is no longer the ark of God in much of the church, not only in this country but I think around the world the ark has lost its glory. Where is the glory of the Lord to be found today in the church? And the Word of the Lord and the government of the church is for us to find where that glory lies. It is there; God's glory is on this earth, but do we see it? Are our hearts attached to it? Do we hold on to it? This will accomplish God's purpose. May it be that our hearts are exercised to really find the heart of the Lord in these days because we are really going to need to know the heart of the Lord in these last days.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Father, I commit this word to You. We stand before You both speaker and hearer as though we were stripped before You. You know our hearts. You know the message that I was trying to convey and the message You want to convey to Your dear people. I thank You for the brothers and sisters and their hearts to seek You out, to serve You in these last days. I just marvel at the wonderful work in the hearts of Your people, and we just commit our lives to You. We know that if we do seek You out, You will speak to us and show us where Your glory lies this day on this earth. We know it is in Your Son, but what method are You using today to speak to Your church, to Your people? So Lord, we just give You to that end not for our sake, but for the sake of Your purpose and You coming to Your throne on this earth, and the accomplishment of Your will. We commit all of this to You now in Jesus name. Amen.