

## SAMUEL

Samuel was the last of the judges (1 Samuel 7:6, 15-17) and the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24; 13:20). His name means ‘name of God’ (his name is El). As we shall see he (reluctantly) introduced the era of kingly rule into Israel, anointing first Saul and then David as king.

But let’s go back to the beginning. Samuel was a child born as an answer to his mother’s prayers and she accordingly agreed to dedicate this child to God as a Nazirite:

“There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."” (1Sa 1:1-11 NIV)

This reminds us of Samson (although Samuel, unlike Samson, will keep his Nazirite vows) and also of Abraham who was called to give up his son that he’d waited for (although Hannah actually has to follow through on this). The Lord heard Hannah’s prayer and granted her request:

“So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."” (1Sa 1:20 NIV)

and she had no other children until after Samuel’s dedication to God, nor did she return to the sanctuary until she was ready to dedicate Samuel after he was weaned. His dedication was to consist of serving in the sanctuary:

“After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he shall be given over to the LORD." And he worshipped the LORD there.” (1Sa 1:24-28 NIV)

Three ingredients—a feeling of worth, a knowledge of his parents’ love (cf. 2:19), and a sense of purpose—laid the foundation of his personality and his future accomplishments. Further proof of Samuel’s valuable early training is evidenced in 1 Samuel 2:12–17:

“Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD. Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give the priest some meat to roast; he won’t accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.” If the man said to him, “Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want,” the servant would then answer, “No, hand it over now; if you don’t, I’ll take it by force.” This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD’s sight, for they were treating the LORD’s offering with contempt.” (1Sa 2:12-17 NIV)

Eli’s sons had followed the licentious practices of the pagan religions about them. Eli was old, indulgent, and powerless to restrain them. Samuel neither developed irreverence for Eli nor followed his sons in the path of evil.

God then called Samuel into his service and told him that he was rejecting Eli and his household because of the evil things his sons had done:

“The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down. Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realised that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family for ever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’” (1Sa 3:1-14 NIV)

Samuel responded to God’s call with reverence and respect:

“The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognised that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.” (1Sa 3:19-21 NIV)

Samuel treated each new revelation from God in an appropriate way.

As we’ve seen the Israelites were falling into evil ways, so God did what he usually did in those days and allowed one of the surrounding nations to punish them. In this case the Philistines invaded and defeated the Israelites:

“And Samuel’s word came to all Israel. Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines

deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield.” (1Sa 4:1-2 NIV)

The ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines and Eli’s two sons died:

“The ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.” (1Sa 4:11 NIV)  
mere possession of the ark of the covenant was no good when the peoples hearts weren’t right with God and they weren’t worshipping him sincerely. In the same was it’s no good for us to just go to church unless we’re sincere in our faith and worship.

going back to our story, Eli died when he heard the news :

“The man who brought the news replied, "Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backwards off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel for forty years.” (1Sa 4:17-18 NIV)

but the possession of the ark brought disaster on the Philistines and they voluntarily returned it to Israel. After a long time – some twenty years – the Israelites started to turn back to God:

“It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD.” (1Sa 7:2 NIV)

and Samuel led them in this:

“And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.” (1Sa 7:3-4 NIV)

During that twenty year period we just read about, I’m sure that Samuel was active in ministry and he probably founded schools of prophets. Such schools had been established at Bethel (1 Sm 10:5; 2 Kgs 2:3), Gilgal (2 Kgs 4:38), Ramah (1 Sm 19:20), and elsewhere (2 Kgs 2:5), perhaps as a natural outgrowth of Samuel’s ministry.

Samuel assembled the Israelites at Mizpah:

“Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the LORD for you." When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah.” (1Sa 7:5-6 NIV)

and this led to the defeat of the Philistines:

“While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.” (1Sa 7:10 NIV)

Samuel offered a sacrifice and the Lord sent a thunderstorm causing the invaders to flee in panic. The Israelites pursued them and won a significant victory at Ebenezer, bringing the Philistine invasions to an end:

“The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us." So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again. Throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.” (1Sa 7:11-13 NIV)

When Samuel reached his declining years he wanted to appoint his sons to succeed him, but his sons were not Godly people like Samuel and the people rightly didn't have confidence in them and asked Samuel to appoint a king over them:

"When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."" (1Sa 8:1-5 NIV)

Of course, this had theological as well as political implications, because God was, or certainly should have been, their king. This was a rejection of the Lord as their king: "And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king." (1Sa 8:7 NIV)

and God told Samuel to warn the people that the appointment of a king would have adverse consequences:

"He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."" (1 Samuel 8:11-18 NIV)

But the people insisted they wanted a king:

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we shall be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."" (1Sa 8:19-20 NIV)

and God eventually told Samuel to give them what they were asking for and told him to anoint Saul as King:

"Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me." When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people."" (1Sa 9:15-17 NIV)

and so Samuel duly anointed Saul:

"Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance?" (1 Samuel 10:1 NIV)

This was the beginning of the monarchy in Israel, but it was destined to quite quickly become both a spiritual and political disaster. Of course the phrase 'Israel's monarchy' is somewhat ambiguous, since apart from a relatively short time in the early phases of the monarchy during which the Israelite people were more or less united in a single kingdom (the reign of Saul, part of the reign of David, the reign of Solomon and the commencement of Rehoboam's reign) there were two Israelite kingdoms, the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah.

The exact chronology of the period of the Israelite monarchy is a matter of some doubt and contention as the dates which can be deduced from scriptural statements are somewhat in conflict, both internally and in comparison with external evidence. It's a bit of a complex issue, but the usual view is that the monarchy began in 1020 BC with the accession of Saul, the end of the united kingdom with the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam in around 922 BC, the end of the monarchy in the kingdom of Israel with the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the end of the monarchy in the kingdom of Judah with the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BC. Thus, Israel's Monarchy spanned a period of some 433 years.

Going back to Saul, the anointing of Saul we just spoke of, was formally announced to the people by Samuel at Mizpah:

"Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, 'No, set a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.'" When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they enquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage." They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no-one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!" Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own home." (1Sa 10:17-25 NIV)

and later ceremonially reaffirmed to the Israelite people at Gilgal:

"Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there reaffirm the kingship." So all the people went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration. Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and grey, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right." "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand." (1Sa 11:14-12:4 NIV)

Here Samuel again warned the people that if they allowed this appointment of a human king to cause them to forget God and his laws they would suffer:

“Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers. "Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realise what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king." Then Samuel called upon the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel. The people all said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king." "Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.” (1Sa 12:13-20 NIV)

Of course, the Israelites did turn away from God, and God’s hand did indeed turn against the Israelites as was prophesied.

I don’t see a great difference in attitude towards the monarchy in different sections of the book of Samuel, rather I consider that these should be read as a consistent account of Samuel acquiescing in God’s instruction to appoint a human king over the Israelites, even though he knew (and God had confirmed) that it was not the right thing for the Israelites. I believe that this is a good example to illustrate the difference between the perfect will of God and God’s permissive will towards mankind.

Saul ruled over Israel for 42 years, although he seems to have been more of a military leader and tribal chief than a true king. For example, there is little evidence that he played a significant administrative or judicial role. More importantly, he was not obedient to God’s commands. His disobedience commenced a short time after his appointment:

“He waited for seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favour.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.” (1Sa 13:8-12 NIV)

and he was told that his kingdom would not endure:

“"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.” (1 Samuel 13:13-14 NIV)

after a period of military success Saul’s disobedience continued:

“Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: “I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honour and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.” When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD’s instructions.” But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?” Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.” “Stop!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied. Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.’ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?” “But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.” But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.” (1Sa 15:10-22 NIV)

and although Saul acknowledged his sin:

“Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.” (1 Samuel 15:24 NIV) so that he was rejected by the Lord:

“Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.” But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!” As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours—to one better than you.” (1Sa 15:25-28 NIV)

Throughout the rest of his life, Samuel never met with Saul again :

“Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.” (1Sa 15:35 NIV)

Samuel grieves over the failure of Saul, but was then instructed to anoint one of the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem king over Israel. Samuel wanted to choose one of the older sons of Jesse but God told him that He did not consider the things that man paid regard to, but rather looked at the heart. Eventually God told Samuel to choose David the youngest son of Jesse and Samuel duly anointed David as king, even though Saul was still alive:

“The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” But Samuel said, “How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.” Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?” Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and

invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Jesse then made Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah." (1Sa 16:1-13 NIV)

it's interesting that this anointing with the Holy Spirit gave David the power to defeat the Philistine champion Goliath in one of the Bible's best known stories. After this, Saul's decline continued, as he became depressed and insanely jealous of David and tried to kill him. Saul pursued David and again tried to kill him on several occasions, but David refused to raise his hand against Saul, although he had opportunity to do so: "He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way." (1 Samuel 24:6-7 NIV)

Indeed David had other opportunities to kill Saul but would not do so. Saul eventually committed suicide when wounded in battle:

"Saul said to his armour-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But the armour-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it." (1 Samuel 31:4 NIV)

The anointing of David as king was Samuel's last great act and after that he largely disappears from scripture. We read briefly of his death:

"Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon." (1Sa 25:1 NIV)

and the only other mention we have of him in scripture is when Saul in desperation calls up his spirit:

"The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He enquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go and enquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name." But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?" Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this." Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" "Bring up Samuel," he said. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!" The king said to her, "Don't be

afraid. What do you see?" The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground." "What does he look like?" he asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" "I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do." Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbours—to David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines." (1Sa 28:4-19 NIV)

## **Conclusion**

Samuel overcame many problems through piety, perseverance, dedication to the service of the Lord, and patriotism. His overriding concern was for the good of his people. Wise and courageous, he boldly rebuked king, elders, and people when necessary, always from the sure ground of the revealed will of God.

Samuel was priest, prophet, judge and military leader - preeminently a prophet. Through his ministry the spiritual life of the Israelites improved. He inaugurated the monarchy, which whilst it was not God's preferred course, it did at least lead to temporary national unity. He appointed gatekeepers to the tent of meeting (1 Chr 9:17-26), organized observance of the Passover so memorably that it was still spoken about in Josiah's day (2 Chr 35:18), committed the "manner of the kingdom" to writing (1 Sm 10:25), and penned "the Chronicles of Samuel the seer" (1 Chr 29:29). A man of prayer (1 Sm 15:11; Ps 99:6), he well deserves a place among the great men of faith (Heb 11:32).