

# Old Testament Characters: Samuel – The Rejected Hero

Goldstone Church – 24-Jul-16 10:30am

1 Samuel 12:1-25

## Introduction

This is the second of three weeks looking at the life of Samuel, one of the most significant priests and prophets in the Old Testament.

Why is 1 Samuel 12 headed 'Samuel's Farewell Speech', when Samuel doesn't die until many years later, in 1 Samuel 25? The answer comes from the big picture of the Bible story in the Old Testament.

First 5 books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) called the Pentateuch, tell the Creation story, the call of Abraham, Jacob and his family moving to Egypt, Moses leading the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites wandering through the desert, right up to the edge of the Promised Land.

The Bible book of Joshua, tells how Joshua (Moses' successor) led the Israelites into the new land, to take possession of their inheritance.

When Joshua died, there was no obvious leader to take over. So God raised up various men and women to bring the Israelites back from various sinful ways. These men and women that God appointed were called 'Judges', but could equally be called Governors, or Leaders. The Bible book of Judges is the account of how 13 of the 15 Judges led the Israelites.

(The book of Ruth is a short account of a specific family during the period covered in the book of Judges.)

The book of 1 Samuel gives the account of the remaining 2 Judges. Eli the priest was Judge No.14, and Samuel was Judge No.15. Samuel was the last person to serve as Judge to the Israelites. After Samuel came *King* Saul.

1 Samuel 12 is Samuel's Farewell Speech as a Judge. The leadership of the Israelites changes from a Judge to a King.

Note: the people wanted a king like "all the other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5), i.e. God chose the Judges; the people asked for a king.

### 1. Samuel **REVIEWS** (v.1-5)

In the first part of Samuel's speech, he asks the Israelites to Review his life and conduct. "*Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed.*" (1 Samuel 12:3)

Two things are happening. On the surface, Samuel asks the people to evaluate his *personal* conduct. Clearly Samuel (not his adult sons) had been honourable and just in everything he had done.

At the same time, Samuel also asks the people to review how God had acted towards them. God had appointed Samuel as His agent / spokesman. Through Samuel, God was asking the Israelites, "*have I let you down in any way?*" The answer is the same: "*you have not oppressed [or crushed] us*" (v.4). You have comforted and helped us.

The Israelites could not find fault in Samuels actions as their Judge; nor could they find fault in the way God had treated and looked after His people. What a testimony!

The challenge to us today is to be people of God that are similarly described as honourable, helpful, comforting and faithful.

## 2. Samuel **RECOUNTS** (v.6-15)

In these verses, Samuel Recounts and describes what God has done. This is an account of God's Faithfulness on the one hand, but pairing it to Israel's Failures.

First pairing: v.8 (good), v.9 (bad).

8. *'After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to the Lord for help, and **the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place.***
9. *'But **they forgot the Lord their God**; so he sold them into the hands of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them.*

God's Faithfulness: "*The Lord sent... and settled them*"

Israel's Failure (disobedience): "*The [people] forgot the Lord their God*"

Second pairing: v.11 (good), v12 (bad).

11. *Then **the Lord sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you, so that you lived in safety.***
12. *'But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, "**No, we want a king to rule over us**" – even though the Lord your God was your king.*

God's Faithfulness: "*The Lord sent... and He delivered*"

Israel's Failure (rebellion): "*No, we want...*"

Third pairing: v.14 (good), v15 (bad); both include an important "If" clause.

14. ***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!*
15. *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 ancestors.*

Note: God places loving obedience and Faithfulness on an equal standing: "***If you serve and obey the Lord***". The opposite also applies: "***If you do not obey the Lord***", i.e. God lovingly sets out the warning.

Samuel knew and declared that, as the Israelites transitioned into being led by a king, God would remain faithful. But this was conditional, i.e. providing they followed what God said.

God's word to us is the same today: "*If you follow the Lord your God – good!*" (v.14b) It doesn't matter what is going on in the world, if we follow God in loving obedience, God will be faithful to us.

### 3. Samuel **REASSURES** (v.16-22)

Samuel finishes off his speech by allowing God to have the last word.

The thunder and rain is so amazing and miraculous, because it was the “wheat harvest” season (v.17). This would have been sometime in May and June; a time when rain ‘seldom if ever fell’. The majority of the Israelites would have been out in their fields gathering the essential wheat harvest. So, when then rain and thunder came (v.18b), they all saw it and were in awe. The literal meaning of the word: the people had a ‘holy reverence’ and a ‘sacred respect’ for God.

Having seen God in action, the Israelites call on Samuel – the *outgoing* Judge (not Saul, their new king). They ask Samuel to pray for their salvation. More importantly, the Israelites suddenly grasped the full implications of what it meant for them to ask for a king – and they wanted to reverse their decision (v.19).

But as we know – Brexit means Brexit!

Samuel shows yet another act of compassion and helpfulness. Despite having been snubbed and replaced by a king, Samuel responds by reassuring the people that God is still in control. *“Do not be afraid... Serve the Lord with all your heart”* (v.20). *“The Lord will not reject His people... The Lord was pleased to make you his own”* (v.22).

Samuel reassures the people that God has not forgotten them. The thunderstorm and rain were a physical evidence that God has the power to directly impact their daily lives. God can do the same today.

Interestingly, thunder is the sound caused by lightning. The heat from the lightning causes the air to expand and creates the sonic boom of thunder. It is the light that causes the thunder. This is a great visual aid: Jesus says, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12)

After the resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, *“Do not be afraid”*, and taught them to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*

Today, God is reassuring us that He is in complete control. Our challenge is to copy Samuel by telling others that God is in complete control.

## CONCLUSION

Even in his old age, Samuel can ...

- **Review** his life and say, God is faithful. God never lets His people down.
- **Recount** his life and say, following God wholeheartedly is a good thing. God never lets His people down.
- **Reassure** everyone he meets by declaring that God directly impacts daily lives. God never lets His people down.

As God’s people, let us follow Samuel’s example this week, and share with those that we meet, of our absolute assurance that we have in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. He loves us and is actively involved in our daily lives.

**AMEN**