**The Life of Samuel**

Introduction:

1. Everyone’s life consists of a story. And such is the case with Samuel the prophet and judge, in Israel.

2. He was the last judge before the appointment of the kings. He served during a time when the Philistines were harassing Israel. Israel was serving foreign gods, Baal and the Ashtaroth.

Samuel may have been the most prominent individual in Israel at the time. The “schools of the prophets” (aka “sons of the prophets,” cf. Amos 7:14) are first mentioned during Samuel’s time (1 Sam. 10:5-6; 19:19-24). He was probably the one who instituted them and was the head of the group at Ramah.

3. He is mentioned three times in the N.T. (Acts 3:24; 13:20; Heb. 11:32). Acts 3:24 says, “all the prophets from Samuel onward announced the days of the coming of the great prophet, Jesus.

4. His story is told in the Book of 1 Samuel. Two books carry his name but only the first contains the history of his life.

Discussion:

I. His early life.

 A. His life begins with his mother, Hannah, and father, Elkanah, going up yearly to Shiloh to

 offer sacrifices to the Lord.

 1. Elkanah had two wives Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah

 had none.

 2. This is when the temple of the Lord was located at Shiloh (before Jerusalem became

 the capital and center of worship).

 3. Eli was the priest. Hannah prayed for a son and promised that if the Lord granted

 her request she would dedicate him to the Lord. He did and she did. After Samuel

 was weaned she took him to the temple and dropped him off to be under the

 tutelage of Eli, the priest. As he was ministering before the Lord he wore a linen

 ephod (the garment of a priestly servant). She visited once a year bringing him a little

 robe that she had made.

 4. Note:

 a. It is reasonable and appropriate to ask the Lord for children.

 b. He knows about sexual relations (1:19).

 c. It is appropriate to dedicate children to the Lord. This recognized that the child

 was a gift of God. We recognize this as we teach them the way of the Lord.

 d. It is appropriate that children serve before the Lord.

 B. Samuel grew in statue and in favor both with the Lord and with men.

 1. Cf. Lk. 2:52.

 2. Samuel grew physically, spiritually and socially.

 3. Parents/teachers should give special attention to these three areas of development.

 4. Apparently Eli did not do so well training his own children (2:22-25).

 C. Samuel seems to stand in contrast to them.

 1. God spoke through him in his youth to condemn Eli and his sons (3:1-18).

 2. Samuel was confirmed as a prophet (3:19-4:1).

II. His work as prophet and judge.

 A. As Samuel worked to impress Israel with the word of God the Philistines battled against

 them.

 1. Israel was defeated. About 4,000 of Israel died on the battlefield.

 2. They decided to take the ark of the covenant into battle with them, along with the

 priests, Hophni and Phinehas, Eli’s sons.

 3. The Philistines were afraid. They remembered how God had brought Israel out of

 Egypt.

 4. This time 30,000 in Israel fell and the ark was taken by the Philistines and the sons

 of Eli were killed. When Eli received the message he fell off his seat and broke his

 neck. His daughter-in-law gave birth and as she died she said, “The glory has

 departed from Israel.”

 B. Samuel’s prophesying was not having enough effect.

 1. He called Israel to repentance (7:3ff).

 2. The Philistines mustered their forces and Samuel prayed and offered sacrifice to

 God.

 3. “The Lord thundered with great thunder against the Philistines and they were routed

 before Israel.”

 4. Samuel set up a memorial stone and named it “Ebenezar, saying, ‘Thus far the Lord

 has helped us” (7:12).

 5. Peace ensued after this.

 C. Samuel spent his life judging Israel.

 1. He was a kind of circuit judge (7:15ff).

 2. But was primarily in Ramah where he lived and built an altar.

 D. Be reminding that judging involved using the instruction of God as the law to govern

 the cases of the people (cf. Ex. 18:19-23).

 E. Samuel experienced failure with his sons (8:1-3).

 1. They were like Eli’s sons.

 2. The elders of Israel found themselves in a spot. Samuel’s sons were unjust judges

 and so they asked for a king.

 3. You can see why Samuel thought they were rejecting him. They were rejecting the

 system he had tried to perpetuate. Much like the cycle of the Book of Judges.

 4. Samuel prayed and God told him they were not rejecting Samuel, but they were

 rejecting God’s own kingship over them.

 5. Samuel told them what they could expect from a king (8:10ff).

 6. They wanted one anyway. Saul was appointed.

III. Samuel’s older years (Chapter 12ff).

 A. He feels rejected.

 B. Openly defends himself (12:1ff).

 C. He reminded them of their history and their continual rejection of the Lord.

 D. He called on them to fear the Lord, to listen to His voice (12:14ff).

 E. Samuel prayed for them and reminded them of the Lord’s loyalty (12:19-25).

 F. Samuel experienced rebellion against God in Saul and witnessed David’s rise to

 power.

 G. Samuel died (25:1) and all Israel mourned for him and buried him in Ramah.

 H. His last prophetic utterance was to condemn Saul once again (28:15-19).

Conclusion:

1. Samuel spent the energy of his life communicating the word of God.

2. Lost his sons to the enemy.

3. He witnessed Saul lost to the enemy.

4. He witnessed Israel under the control of the Philistines.

5. Samuel died an old man, his word the word of God, neglected.

6. Samuel began his life with great promise. He must have died in sorrow. That’s what happens to prophets when people refuse to hear the word of the Lord.