

**LIVING GODS WILL**

**Prophet of God**

**SAMUEL**



**Hannah Giving Her Son Samuel to the Priest by Jan Victors**

# Prophet of God **SAMUEL**

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**Born:** 1100 BC, Ramathaim, Ephraim

**Died:** 1011 BC, Ramah, Benjamin

**Samuel** was a prophet of **God**.

**Samuel** was given to **Eli** the Priest as an infant by his mother **Hannah**.

**Samuel** chose and anointed **Saul** and **David** as King of Israel.

**Samuel** was a wise **judge** and **leader** of Israel.

**Samuel**, whose name means "heard of **God**," was dedicated to **God** by his mother, Hannah, as part of a vow she made before he was born (**1 Samuel 1:11**).

Hannah had been barren and prayed so fervently for a child that Eli the priest thought she was drunk (**1 Samuel 1**). **God** granted Hannah's request, and, true to her promise, Hannah dedicated **Samuel** to the **Lord**.

After **Samuel** was weaned, likely around the age of four, he was brought to the tabernacle to serve under Eli the priest (**1 Samuel 1:22-25**).

Even as a child, **Samuel** was given his own tunic, a garment normally reserved for a priest as he ministered before the **Lord** in the tent of meeting at Shiloh, where the ark of the covenant was kept (**1 Samuel 2:18; 3:3**).

Traditionally, the sons of the priest would succeed their father's ministry; however, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked in that they were immoral and showed contempt for the **Lord's** offering (**1 Samuel 2:17, 22**). Meanwhile, **Samuel** continued to grow in stature and in favor with the **Lord** and with men (**1 Samuel 2:26**).

At a time when prophecies and visions were rare, **Samuel** heard what he first believed to be Eli calling him during the night. Though the young **Samuel** was ministering in the tabernacle, he still didn't know the **Lord**, and the word of the **Lord** had not yet been revealed to him (**1 Samuel 3:7**).

The first three times the **Lord** called **Samuel**, the boy responded to Eli. Eli then understood what was happening and instructed **Samuel** to respond to the **Lord** if he called again.

Then, "**The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!'**" Then **Samuel** said, '**Speak, for your servant is listening**'" (**1 Samuel 3:10**).

**God** gave him a message of judgment to relay to Eli.

The following day, **Samuel** took his first leap of faith, telling Eli everything, even though the message was bad news for Eli and his family (**1 Samuel 3:11–18**).

Eli responded with acceptance. **Samuel's** credibility as a prophet spread throughout Israel, and **God** continued to reveal His Word to His people through **Samuel** (**1 Samuel 3:20–21**).

The Philistines, perennial enemies of Israel, attacked **God's** people. Eli's sons were killed in the battle, and the ark of the covenant was captured and taken to Philistia. Upon hearing the news of his sons' deaths, Eli also died.

After several months, the Philistines returned the ark to Israel, where it remained at Kiriath Jearim for over twenty years. As the Israelites cried out to **God** for help against the Philistine oppressors, **Samuel** instructed them to be rid of the false gods they had been worshipping.

With **Samuel's** leadership, and by **God's** power, the Philistines were overcome, and there was a time of peace between them (**1 Samuel 7:9–13**). **Samuel** was recognized as the judge of all Israel.

Like Eli's sons, **Samuel's** two sons, Joel and Abijah, sinned before **God** by seeking dishonest gain and perverting justice.

**Samuel** had appointed his sons as judges, but the elders of Israel told **Samuel** that because he was too old and his sons did not walk in his ways, they wanted **Samuel** to appoint a king to rule like other nations had (**1 Samuel 8:1–5**).

**Samuel's** initial reaction to their demand was one of great displeasure, and he prayed to **God** about the matter. **God** told **Samuel** that they had not rejected him, but had rejected **God** as their king. **God** gave **Samuel** leave to permit their request but warned the people what they could expect from a king (**1 Samuel 8:6–21**).

In time, Saul, a Benjamite, was anointed by **Samuel** as Israel's first king (**1 Samuel 10:1**). Even so, **Samuel** called on **God** for a sign to show the Israelites the evil of choosing to replace their true king—**God**—with an earthly king (**1 Samuel 12:16–18**).

After a time, **Samuel** learned that Saul had been rejected by **God** to lead His people because of Saul's disobedience (**1 Samuel 13:11–13**). **Samuel** immediately warned Saul that **God** had already sought out a replacement for him (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

After Saul continued to disobey, **Samuel** denounced him as king (**1 Samuel 15:26**). **Samuel** returned home, never to be at King Saul's side again, but he mourned for him (**1 Samuel 15:35**).

**God** instructed **Samuel** to choose another king from the family of Jesse (**1 Samuel 16:1**), and **Samuel** anointed Jesse's youngest son, David (**1 Samuel 16:13**).

**Samuel** died before David was made king, though, and "**all Israel assembled and mourned for him**" (**1 Samuel 25:1**).

The life of **Samuel** was pivotal in Israel's history. He was a prophet, he anointed the first two kings of Israel, and he was the last in the line of Israel's judges, considered by many as the greatest judge (**Acts 13:20**).

**Samuel** is cited alongside Moses and Aaron as men who called on **God** and were answered (**Psalms 99:6**).

Later in Israel's history, when the Israelites were living in disobedience to **God**, the **Lord** declared they were beyond even the defense of Moses and **Samuel**, two of Israel's greatest intercessors (**Jeremiah 15:1**). This is a clear indication of the power of **Samuel's** prayers—and the depth of Israel's sin in Jeremiah's day.

There is much to learn from the life of **Samuel**. In particular, we see the sovereignty of **God** in Israel, no matter whom the people chose to reign over them. We may allow other things or people to occupy the throne of our hearts, but **God** will always remain sovereign and will never accept usurpers to His authority in the lives of His subjects.

We can imagine how daunting it must have been for the young **Samuel** to give an honest account of his first vision to Eli. However, it appears that, even from a young age, **Samuel's** absolute allegiance was to **God** first.

There may be times when we feel intimidated by those in authority, but, as **Samuel** proved more than once, it is **God** who must remain our priority.

The world may look on us cynically when we remain steadfast in our faith. However, we can be confident that **God** will vindicate those who have remained faithful to His Word (**Psalms 135:14**).

Though **Samuel** had deep reservations about letting the people have a king, he was quick to consult **God** about the matter and abided by His decision (**1 Samuel 8:6–7**).

Many of us may consult **God** about important decisions in our lives, but how many of us are ready to accept His counsel and abide by it, especially when it appears to go against our own desires?

Leaders in particular can learn from **Samuel's** example of the power he derived from his close relationship with **God**, generated by a healthy prayer life. **Samuel** was a great man of prayer, and his people respected him for it (**1 Samuel 12:19, 23**).

Even though **Samuel** was aware of the evil in Saul's life, he never stopped praying and mourning for him. Indeed, **Samuel** described it as a sin not to pray for the people under his care.

Perhaps too quickly we may deem a brother beyond restoration when we see him fall into sin. Certainly, **God's** plans for each individual will come to pass, but it should never stop us from continuing to pray and care for those who are weaker in their faith (**Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14**).

The main theme throughout **Samuel's** life is that **God** alone should receive the glory and honor. After making his sons judges, it must have been a very sad thing for **Samuel** to learn that they were unfit to lead.

When he consulted **God** about the people's request for a king, nothing was said in defense of his sons. Samuel was obedient to **God's** instructions to give the people what they wanted.

A key verse in the life of Samuel relates his words to King Saul:

**"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'" (1 Samuel 15:22).**

**Obedience to God's Word must always be our top priority.**

## Samuel and his Mother Hannah

The account of **Hannah** and **Samuel** is found in **1st Samuel 1 and 2**. **Hannah** was one of two wives of a Jewish man named Elkanah. The other wife, Peninnah, had children, but **Hannah** was unable to have children.

The Bible's account of **Hannah** starts before **Samuel** was born. One year, **Hannah** traveled to Shiloh where the tabernacle was. At the entrance of the tabernacle, she prayed for a child.

She made a vow, saying, "**Lord Almighty, if you will only look on 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" (1 Samuel 1:11).**

The priest Eli saw **Hannah** praying intensely but silently and, thinking she was drunk, rebuked her. Once **Hannah** explained that she was praying, the priest blessed her and asked **God** to grant her request.

She returned home and was able to conceive. **Hannah** bore a son and named him "**Samuel,**" which means "**I have asked for him from the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:20).**

Once **Samuel** was weaned (traditionally between the ages of 2 and 5), **Hannah** and **Samuel** travel to Shiloh, taking a sacrifice with them.

After the sacrifice was offered, **Hannah** presents the young **Samuel** to Eli and says,

**"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 will be given over to the Lord"** (1 Samuel 1:27–28).

The chapter concludes with **Samuel** worshipping the Lord at the tabernacle.

In 1 Samuel 2, **Hannah** offers a prayer of thanksgiving to **God** and returns home. It is then revealed that Eli's sons were wicked men who did evil in the tabernacle. In contrast,

**"Samuel was ministering before the Lord—a boy wearing a linen ephod"** (1 Samuel 2:18).

**Hannah** got to see **Samuel** at least once a year; when she and her husband went up to offer the annual sacrifice, **Hannah** would always take along a little robe for **Samuel**.

And **"Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, 'May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord.' Then they would go home"** (1 Samuel 2:20).

**Hannah's** story ends with an answer to Eli's prayer.

**First Samuel 2:21** says, **"The Lord was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord."**

**Hannah's** oldest son, **Samuel**, would go on to become the spiritual leader of Israel. As the prophet and judge of the nation, **Samuel** would anoint the nation's first two kings, Saul and David.

The story of **Hannah** and **Samuel** offers many important lessons for today.

First, **Hannah** turned to **God** in prayer during her time of need.

Second, she praised and thanked **God** when He did answer her prayer.

Third, she kept her commitment to the **Lord**, even though it must have been difficult.

Fourth, **God** blessed **Hannah** beyond what she had asked.

In the end, **Hannah** was not only the mother of **Samuel** but of three other sons and two daughters.

The story of **Hannah** and **Samuel** has often been an inspiration and encouragement to women struggling with infertility or who for some reason are unable to have children.

Though God does not always answer in the same way, **Hannah's** attitude of prayer and dependence on the Lord is a good example for us today

### **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE**

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:20** So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord."

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:24** Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young.

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:18** But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 3:20** And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:3** Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 12:18** So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:26** But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel."

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:35** And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.



**Eli and Samuel by John Singleton Copley**