



## Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

# Advanced Study AS013: Character Study 6: Samuel

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**Read:** 1 Sam 3:1-19.

**Introduction.** Samuel is an enigmatic figure. 19<sup>th</sup> Century expositor William Fereday called him *God's Emergency Man* since he fulfilled a number of roles in a spiritually bleak time in Israel's early history. He grew up serving the Hebrew priest Eli at Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was then based. Here, although *he did not yet know the Lord* (1 Sam 3:7), the Lord spoke to him and launched him on his prophetic mission. Examine his life and character along the following lines:

**1. A Nazarite.** Before he was born, his mother vowed his head would remain unshaven. This was a sign of consecration to the Lord (see Paul's personal act of consecration in Acts 18:18). As a lifetime commitment it identified one as a Nazarite and would normally be a personal decision. Read up on the subject of the Nazarite vow, in Numbers 6 and a Bible Dictionary and consider if Samuel's subsequent life lived up to the commitment. Would you be able to make such a vow and to keep it?

**2. A Prophet.** His prophetic ministry started with his call of God at Shiloh and delivering God's message to the aged priest Eli. He subsequently became God's voice to the people (1 Sam 7:3), including King Saul whom he had appointed and subsequently had cause to admonish (1 Sam 15:23-26). Read 1 Sam 3:19-20 in conjunction with Deut 18:22 and consider if Samuel can be described as a true prophet. In what spirit do you think he delivered his tough messages to Eli, the people and to the king? What do you feel if you have occasion to speak sternly to someone?

**3. A Judge.** Samuel followed on from a line of judges who led or delivered the Hebrews in various ways. It looks as if he judged in the literal, judicial sense (see 1 Sam 7:6,15 & 7:17). In what ways did he differ from the judges who went before him?

**4. A Priest.** He was not born of priestly parents, since they were Ephraimites and not Levites, yet God raised him up as a priest (1 Sam 2:35) and he fulfilled the normal functions of priests of the time, even offering sacrifices for the people. What functions did he fulfil in 1 Sam 12:23? All believers are called to be priests (1 Pet 2:9, Rev 1:6 & 5:10). In what ways can we emulate Samuel in fulfilling this role?

**5.** Read the following verses in 1 Samuel. What can be learnt of his character or devotion from these passages?

- 2:26 (as was also said of Jesus – Luke 2:52)
- 3:4
- 7:12
- 15:33
- 15:35-16:1

**For Further Thought and Study:** Read W.W. Fereday's book *Samuel: God's Emergency Man*, published by John Richie, Kilmarnock, in 1942. It is available second hand, or as a free download from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com>.