

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

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Chris Katulka, An Audible Call, Part 3

1 Samuel

We've been looking at the life of Samuel in our series An Audible Call, and over the last two weeks we've looked at how God audibly called Samuel to be a priest and a judge the people of Israel.

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So I said that over the last two weeks we looked at how Samuel was called to be a priest and judge Israel, and this week we're going to look at how God audibly called Samuel to be a prophet to Israel.

Now let me repeat what I've been saying about Samuel over the course of this series. Remember, Samuel served the Lord during a transition in Israel's history. He is often referred to as one of Israel's last judges and one of Israel's first prophets!... Why?, because he stood on the cusp of Israel transitioning from the Lord being King of Israel and the Judges being the ones who monitored Israel's spiritual pulse, to a human King to rule over Israel. And I'll tell you, you can sense from the Scriptures that Samuel the priest, judge, and prophet was not happy about this change.

Samuel is important because he essentially phases out the title “judge” and introduces a new title for himself and his successors, “prophet”. Think about it like this, now with a human king, like Saul, David, and Solomon, now acting as a judge of the things that are right and wrong, a prophet is raised up by God to make sure the Kings and the Israelites are following God.

So the prophet Samuel judged King Saul for his sin, the prophet Nathan judged King David for his sin, and the list goes on.

Prophet’s aren’t just good at peering into the future, they have the God given gift of seeing the past, present, and future in one glance. Samuel shows us this in 1 Samuel 12.

A Prophet of Israel Looks Back

In Samuel’s farewell speech to the nation of Israel one of the first items of business for Samuel was look back over Israel’s history. This was important for Samuel to do because prophets don’t simply see the future, they aren’t just prognosticators of things to come, they understand the future based on what God had said in the past and how the Israelites responded to God’s Word and His Law in the present. See, Samuel wanted both the King of Israel and the Israelites to remember the faithfulness of God toward His people in all of their dealings, that's why he went over there past.

Remember this is Samuel exiting the scene, this is Samuel leaving the people of Israel as he retires from being priest, judge, and prophet.

“Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers: When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, “We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.’ And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, “No, but a king shall reign over us,’ when the LORD your God was your king.”

Samuel wanted the Israelites to remember that through all of their heartache and all of their trouble and all of their pain it was the Lord God who delivered them and it was God who saved them. It wasn't their military know how, or their armies might, it was their Lord.

A Prophet of Israel is Aware of the Present

All prophets of Israel, including Samuel, were aware of what was happening in the world around them. They were engaged in the domestic and foreign politics of the day, they understood the cultural leanings of the Israelites, and were able to see, above all, whether the Lord was a priority or not.

For Samuel the issue of his day was that the Israelites desired to have a human king rule over them. I don't believe it was bad that they wanted a human king to rule, because the Law of God gave room for a human king according to Deuteronomy 17. The issue for Samuel was the reason the Israelites wanted a human king, they wanted to look like the rest of the nations. The Israelites gave up freedom, to let a human king govern them like the nations and this upset Samuel.

Listen to what the Lord said to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:7, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.”

The Prophet Samuel was fully aware of the present circumstances in Israel, the Israelites wanted to look like every other nation.

A Prophet of Israel Sees the Future

A prophet's perspective involves seeing the future. As I said earlier, a prophet can see in the future because he has a firm grasp on the past and is fully aware of the present. Listen to what Samuel says to the Israelites in his farewell speech.

If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Notice Samuel makes a claim that if they follow the Lord in the future all will be well with the Israelites, but if they rebel against the Lord, then His hand would be against them. Samuel validated his prophecy by calling on the rain to come when it wasn't even the season for rain.

As believers in the Lord Jesus I believe can have a prophet's perspective. You might be thinking, well I can't see the future? Yes you can! God's Word gives us glimpses into the future. In fact, God's Word tells us to live lives that are pleasing to God because in the future Jesus could come back at any moment.

So what's the prophet's perspective: seeing the future based on what God had said in the past and how we respond to His Word today, in the present.