

*The
Hebrew
Prophets*



———— JUBILEE SERIES ————

ADULT STUDENT HANDBOOK
WINTER 2016–17

Adult Student Handbook

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Manufactured in USA, December 2016, 1921721.

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SAMUEL: STABILIZER OF THE KINGDOM

WEEK 1
12.04.16

FOCUS VERSE

Hebrews 12:28

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

LESSON TEXT

I Samuel 7:3–15

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.



FOCUS THOUGHT

God has chosen to utilize human voices to stabilize, direct, exhort, and comfort His people.



CULTURE CONNECTION

Happy Ever After

All things living, growing, moving, multiplying, or dividing depend upon stabilizers to function properly and survive. Cars have stabilizer bars to keep them from rolling in turns. Electric supply lines have transformers; rockets have gyroscopes; hospitals have emergency rooms; and children have parents, grandparents, and friends. Churches have pastors and teachers. Christians have the Lord Jesus. To enact radical change with no stabilizer is unwise, even an invitation to failure and disaster.

One of the greatest transitions of life is that of marriage. When two people come together, they often come from different family backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. They may differ in the amount of wealth they have

and the level of education attained. Their dreams and desires may be different. The process of marriage from singles to unions, to family, to multifamily is a path with many transitions. Stabilizers are necessary in the union for it to be a happy and successful marriage.

Fawn Weaver, in her book *Happy Wives Club*, interviewed ten thousand couples in 110 countries to identify practices happy couples had in common. Number four in her list of six is spirituality. "While the couples may not have all agreed on who or what they believe God to be, all believed in a higher power. They had a healthy fear of disappointing that higher power in relationship to their spouses," wrote Weaver.

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

Five hundred years had passed since the tribes of Israel crossed over Jordan into the Promised Land. After Joshua's death and the death of the generation of Israelites at that time, the people of Israel fell into a cycle of (1) forsaking God and turning to the gods of the Canaanites, which provoked God to anger; (2) being delivered into the hands of their enemies as God's punishment; (3) crying out to the Lord for deliverance.

In response, God would raise up a judge to deliver the people from their oppression. Generally the people served God and enjoyed peace as long as the judge lived; then they began the cycle again by forsaking God and turning to idolatry. Stability was subject to the influence and longevity of the individual judges.

Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets for the united kingdom. He was to be the principle stabilizer for the new nation. When the people of Israel cried for a king to rule over them, Samuel orchestrated the transition. Samuel set the pace for future Hebrew prophets to prophesy and to establish relationships of influence with Israel's kings and people.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. THE NEED FOR STABILITY

Stabilizing roots in past experiences are essential in order to grow into the next stage of maturity or achievement. The Hebrew prophets were the stabilizers for the emerging nation of Israel and her kings.

A. A New Nation

God's covenant with Abraham was for both his descendants and for the land of Canaan. Following the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the land under Joshua, the sons of Jacob multiplied and had become a powerful people. It was time for them to become a nation and step into the fullness of God's plan for Israel.

The people desired a king, God granted their request, and a young nation was born. It was to be a nation of promise, of blessing, and of purpose. Israel was to be in the world but not of the world. It was a new nation strategically placed at the crossroads of the world as a beacon of light for God's message of love and holiness.

B. Entrenched Enemies

God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldeans. Everywhere his foot stepped was to be his. Hundreds of years later his descendants had possessed the land, but they had failed to drive out some of its inhabitants, who became entrenched enemies of Israel.

Samuel was a young man in Shiloh ministering in the Lord's house. As Samuel grew, his word was revered; all of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew he was established to be a prophet of the Lord. (See I Samuel 3:11–21.)

The new nation of Israel was destined to be born in the midst of trouble from her enemies without and from the lack of spiritual leadership within. But the Lord was preparing Samuel to become the prophet and judge during the transition.

C. Israel in Transition

Transition is a continuing process of life. A thousand years after Abraham, Samuel guided Israel through a difficult transition of becoming a nation. And a thousand years after Samuel, John the Baptist introduced another great change with the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. Another transition awaits believers. New Jerusalem is the city of God where Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. We must continue to look for it until our final change comes.



What transitions are you experiencing in your life? Are there positive and negative ones?

II. THE NEED FOR GOD'S VOICE

To maintain fellowship with God, we must hear the voice of the Lord whether it is by the Spirit, the printed Word, visions and dreams, or preaching and teaching. (See Revelation 3:20–22.)

A. The Prophet's Voice

When Samuel was yet a child, his mother presented him to the Lord in an act of worship. (See I Samuel 1:28.) He grew up in the house of the Lord where he ministered to the Lord and to Eli. (See I Samuel 2:11, 18; 3:1.)

When the Lord called Samuel for the first time, Samuel thought the voice was Eli's voice. The Lord favored Samuel but had not yet spoken to him (I Samuel 3:7). Two important things emerge with this experience. First, Samuel equated the voice of the Lord to that of Eli. God most often speaks to us through familiar channels. Second, when Samuel told Eli about the vision, he was speaking what the Lord



What methods does God use to speak to you during transition (e.g., a person, music, verse of Scripture, prayer time)?

spoke to him. The voice of the prophet speaks what the Lord would say unto us. In essence, Samuel's voice became the voice of the Lord. Therein is the prophet's authority.

Because of the vision, Samuel's voice was established in all Israel as that of an emerging prophet, for all his words were reliable. Eli confirmed and accepted Samuel's vision as being from the Lord (I Samuel 3:18–19).

B. Ever-Present Enemies

Samuel lived during troublesome times. Corruption was prevalent. The Word of God was precious (rare) and there was no vision. The people had gone after strange gods, including Ashtaroth, the Canaanite goddess of love and fertility. And the Philistines reigned and ruled.

After twenty years, Israel began to lament before the Lord and He heard their cry. Samuel's voice was heard once again as he called the Israelites to repent and turn back to God, which they did and put away their gods of Baalim and Ashtaroth to serve the Lord only (I Samuel 7:4).

When the Philistines heard that Israel was gathered together and fasting in Mizpeh, they came down against them for battle. But the Lord had seen the repentance of Israel, accepted Samuel's sacrifice, and honored his prayer by sending a great thunder to cause panic among the Philistines. The Philistines were defeated. When we hear the voice of the Lord and turn from our wicked ways, we will experience victory over our enemies. For "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

C. Abiding Peace

Samuel is a symbol of peace in a troubled world. Everything around him seemed to be in turmoil and struggle. Yet he possessed a steady, calm, stabilizing walk with the Lord. From his birth to his death, difficulties were present, but his actions expressed a confidence in God that depicted internal peace. After the "men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them," Samuel placed a stone between Mizpeh and Shen and named it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (I Samuel 7:11–12). When we hear the voice of the Lord and obey His commands, He can help us and give us peace even in the midst of turmoil.

III. PRESERVING GOD'S VOICE

It is vital that we diligently seek to preserve the ability to hear the voice of the Lord. For through His voice life first came into the world and is continually sustained. Outside of Christ there is neither abundant life nor life eternal. His name is the only saving name, and His voice alone calls to salvation. His voice is also the one of final judgment before whom all will stand, both small and great. To live acceptably before Christ, we must hear His voice and walk in His ways (Hebrews 12:28). Only then can we expect to hear Him say, "Well done."

A. Samuel Facilitated Peace

After Samuel set up the Ebenezer stone declaring God's help in the battle of Mizpeh, he continued to judge Israel for the rest of his



Can you remember a time the Lord spoke to you during a time of transition and gave you peace? Did He use one of the methods you listed previously?

life (1 Samuel 7:12–15). The Philistines were subdued and came no more into the coast of Israel. As long as Samuel lived, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines. The peace in Israel and the freedom the people enjoyed from their archenemy was clearly connected to Samuel's presence.

B. Preservation Is Vital

Many factions would seek to destroy the voice of the Lord in the believer's life. If the voice of the Lord is removed from the Christian experience, then stability is removed also. Stability is the foundation of all Christian growth, development, and service. It is the confidence factor for both the believer and those seeking Christ through the believer's testimony.

Jesus' voice was temporarily silenced because men love darkness rather than light, and He was the light of the world. But death is not the only way a voice can be silenced. Gossip can destroy a reputation, and a lie can make void one's influence. If the voice of the preacher, the testimony of the righteous, or the walk of the faithful be discredited, from where will salvation come? How can one be saved without a preacher? (See Romans 10:14.) Carefulness is prudence.

IV. GOD'S VOICE TODAY

The coming of Jesus brought great change. No longer was the focus to be exclusively on Israel, or the expression of God through a limited number of voices, but many were to proclaim the message. Whosoever would hear and respond could drink of the waters of life freely. (See Revelation 22:17.) Jesus' preaching brought into being the principles and power of the kingdom of God, while Peter's preaching opened the doors to grace and the birth of the New Testament church.

A. Peter's Reference

The Holy Ghost fell on the Day of Pentecost to the delight of Jesus' faithful followers and to the bewilderment of the devout Jews gathered in Jerusalem from every nation. The Jews heard the believers speak with tongues, declaring the wonderful works of God, and wondered with amazement and doubt what it meant. (See Acts 2:1–14.) Then Peter stood and preached his first sermon to explain the phenomenon of the outpouring of the Spirit and to proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Amidst mockery, doubt, and confusion, Peter used two Old Testament prophets to authenticate his message. First was Joel, who prophesied of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. Joel's words, as the prophetic voice of God, gave credence to the experience of Pentecost and settled the crowd. Then Peter used David, the beloved king of Israel, to establish Jesus as both their Lord and Christ. The doubt was erased, the mocking ceased, the confusion was satisfied, and conviction came upon the hearers.

B. Today's Preacher

The difference between the Hebrew prophets and today's preachers is the scope of the gospel. The prophets for the most part were



Reflect on the disciplines you practice in your daily life that make you available to hear God's voice. List things that would hinder these disciplines and some ways to protect them.

focused on Israel, while the preachers are to carry the whole gospel to the whole world. Building on the prophets' foundation, preachers today have a great reservoir of history, Scripture, and the manifest presence of God at their disposal. The preachers' field is larger and more diversified than that of the Hebrew prophets, and the abundance of Scripture and Christian examples, including the life and ministry of Jesus, are more plentiful and accessible.

As the Hebrew prophets were stabilizers for Israel and her kings, so preachers, be they apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers, are stabilizers for the church. They are God's gifts to the church. In Ephesians 4:11–16, the marks of maturity in achieving this ministry are three-fold: (1) to come into the unity of the faith, (2) to come into the knowledge of the Son of God, and (3) to measure up to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

When converts are capably disciplined for ministry, the body of Christ is properly edified. From Peter's first sermon in Jerusalem, to the thousands of pulpits around the world today, the voice of the preacher remains the principle source for the voice of the Lord.

C. The Sure Anchor

When Jesus began His ministry, it was after the priesthood of His brethren (Hebrews 2:17). He felt the infirmities and passions of their humanity. Yet His words were the words of life, spoken as they were given to Him of the Father (John 14:10). The Incarnation brought forth an unprecedented outpouring of God's voice through human flesh. His words were captured and written by those inspired of God to write Scripture. They were joined with the other writers of the Old and New Testaments to provide the biblical text we have today. The Scriptures are the voice of God written by "holy men . . . as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).

The primary way in which God speaks today is through His Word and the voice of preachers and teachers.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

As Paul traveled through the cities of Asia Minor visiting the young churches, he ministered to them the gospel and shared with them the ordinances from the apostles in Jerusalem. His purpose was to establish them in the faith. (See Acts 16:4–5.) The Lord used Paul's voice to impart the Word to them.

The Word has the power to transform and to keep, to stabilize and to strengthen, to inspire and to comfort. As we internalize the Word, we lay hold on the knowledge and strength we need to walk before the Lord acceptably and give Him glory. And as we testify of Jesus, we manifest the spirit of prophecy. (See Revelation 19:10.)

We are building a spiritual house upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. The winds of adversity will blow and the storms will come, but the breath of the Spirit within us is greater than the winds of adversity against us. We must build on the solid rock of the Word that is forever settled in Heaven. The Word of God is our stabilizer and strength, our hope and anchor. In His Word we put our trust and rest in peace. ■



How can you help others develop and grow in Christ? What gifts has God given you that can be used to edify the church?



The power of God's Word in our lives is irreplaceable! Commit time to read and memorize verses or passages of Scripture, and let His Word reside in your heart and mind. Let His voice strengthen and guide your life.