

## The Death of a Prophet

First Samuel / 1 Samuel 25:1

# Introduction

One of the most misunderstood areas of biblical teaching is in the area of “biblical prophecy”.

Depending on your church background, you probably have some lingering misconceptions on what “prophecy” is or what a “prophet” is.

If you grew up in a dispensational church, “biblical prophecy” vaguely has something to do with the nation of Israel being formed in 1948 and Jesus’ second coming.

If you grew up in a pentecostal or charismatic church, “prophecy” is vaguely understood as some sort of spiritual gift.

People will say they have the “gift of prophecy” and that they “have a word from the Lord for you.”

Most of the time, they will simply tell you something encouraging that is hopefully somewhat biblical.

While I don’t want to simply stand up here and critique these approaches.

I do want to acknowledge that “prophets” and “prophecy” are an area of confusion for many Christians.

This morning’s sermon text is (obviously) very short.

But despite it’s brevity, it announces something of great significance:

The death of Samuel the prophet.

Samuel has loomed over the narrative of 1 Samuel like a great father.

A father to both David and Samuel, who has now passed away.

While I want to acknowledge the significance of Samuel in 1 Samuel, Samuel’s death also draws us outside of 1 Samuel.

The death of Samuel calls us to consider the office of the prophet in general, and the death of a prophet in particular.

I have therefore broken my sermon into three parts.

1. The work of a prophet
2. The death of a prophet
3. The resurrection of the prophet

## The Work of A Prophet

When many Christians think about a prophet, they primarily think of someone predicting the future.

Prophesying about future events is one thing a prophet does.

However, this is not the main thing that the Bible emphasizes about the prophets.

## A Representative of God

One of the easiest ways to understand the work of a prophet is to see that prophets represent God to the people.

### Moses

The paradigm of a prophet representing God to the people in the Bible is Moses.

Moses is the prophet who brought God's Word to the people.

This was done most clearly when Moses brought the 10 Commandments down from Mt. Sinai.

But it is also the case throughout Moses' ministry.

In the Pentateuch, Moses regularly goes to God to receive the "Word of the Lord" and deliver it to God's people.

Moses shows what a prophet is, he represents God to the people.

In this sense, you can understand the office of the prophet in juxtaposition to that of the priest.

The priest is someone who represents the people to God.

Both priests and prophets mediate between God and man, but they do so in different directions.

The prophet mediates God to the people, and the priest mediates the people to God.

### Samuel

Samuel represents the first major prophet since the time of Moses.

Like Moses, Samuel has consistently represented God to the people.

In chapter 8 Samuel gave God's warning to the people about asking for a king like the nations.

In chapter 10 Samuel anointed Saul as God's chosen king for the nation.

In chapters 11-15 Samuel announced God's condemnation of Saul's sins and told Saul of God's rejection of him as king.

In chapter 16, Samuel anointed David as the new chosen king of God.

In all these actions Samuel acts as a prophet, representing God to the people.

The fact that there hadn't been a prophet like this since the time of Moses is of great significance.

It also means that Samuel's death is of great significance!

### Elijah & the Other Prophets

However, if you were to ask many Christians to name a biblical prophet they probably wouldn't first mention Moses or Samuel.

Names like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, or Jeremiah likely come to mind.

But the idea that prophets represent God to the people helps make sense of these prophets too.

When you hear the prophecies of the Old Testament, you hear prophets bringing God's Word to God's people.

In fact, in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, you find these prophets representing God in a type of covenant lawsuit.

These prophets come as representatives of God, to prosecute a lawsuit against the people of God.

They come with evidence of the people's wicked actions in violation of God's law and call the people to repentance, lest God strike out against them in his justice.

But the message of these prophets and all prophets isn't always negative.

In fact, they are ultimately messengers of grace.

Even when prophets come with a message of judgement, they present an opportunity to repent.

## Jesus as Prophet

If you put all these things together it is clear how all of these prophets ultimately point to Jesus.

Prophets don't simply point to Jesus by prophesying that the messiah would come.

It is the prophets themselves that help paint a picture of who the messiah is.

Jesus is the true prophet.

Like Abraham, Jesus left the comfort of His own heavenly glory and came to dwell among us.

Like Moses, Jesus brought God's Word to the people from on top of a mountain, fed God's people with bread from heaven, and led God's people in the great Exodus from death to life.

Like Samuel, Jesus God's judgement against the wicked king and ruler and anointed His own people with oil of gladness.

Like Elijah, Jesus performed great miracles displaying God's power before ascending into heavenly glory.

As the true prophet, Jesus represents God to His people perfectly.

As [Hebrews 1:3](#) states, Jesus is "the exact imprint of [God's] nature"

As the true prophet, Jesus brings the final revelation of God's Word.

Again [Hebrews 1](#) "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son"

And, as the true prophet, Jesus reveals the Father to us:

**John 1:17–18** **ESV**

<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

# The Death of A Prophet

A prophet represents God and reveals God.

But why is a prophet's death so significant in the Bible?

The Bible makes much of the death of the prophets.

When Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and leaders in Jerusalem he said,

“Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.” ([Lk 11:47](#)).

## Priest, King, and Prophet

To understand this best, it is helpful to consider the office of the prophet in relation to the offices of the priest and the king.

In the Bible, these three offices (priest, king, and prophet) carry a lot of weight.

In fact, it is these three offices that the synoptic gospels use to present Jesus:

Matthew presents Jesus as priest, Mark presents Jesus as King, and Luke presents Jesus as Prophet.

Further, the Bible presents each of these offices in something of a sequence.

The priest is first, the king is second, and the prophet is third.

You can see this in the way your Old Testament is laid out.

The first books of your Bible are largely about the establishment of the Tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood that services at the Tabernacle.

Then, when the Tabernacle is destroyed you begin to move into the next phase of Israel's history, the time of kings.

But, as the time of the kings starts coming to an end in the Old Testament, prophets begin to show up left, right, and center, bringing God's word.

Your Old Testament moves from a focus on the priest, to the king, to the prophet.

## Maturation

This process isn't just a coincidence; the Bible is trying to teach us something from it.

This progression from priest, to king, to prophet is a process of maturation.

Consider the job of the priest:

Everything a priest has to do is laid out for them in black and white.

For the most part, all a priest had to do was know the books of Exodus and Leviticus really well.

In fact, the job of a priest wasn't too different from the job of a car mechanic or a computer software engineer.

You find out what's wrong and you fix it and you follow the rules to fix it.

For a priest, everything is about hearing and obeying.

But now consider the job of a king:

Kings don't only have to hear and obey God's rules, kings have to rule over others.

Kings have to take responsibility for a kingdom, and running a kingdom requires more than a list of rules.

Ruling a kingdom requires wisdom.

Notice who writes almost all the wisdom literature in the Bible.

When the two women came to King Solomon, both claiming the baby boy to be theirs, Solomon couldn't simply turn to Leviticus or Exodus for an answer.

He had to exercise wisdom.

There is a maturation from priest to king.

Now Consider the job of a prophet:

Prophets are the ones who give the kings wisdom and counsel.

Indeed, prophets go beyond the bounds of the kingdom.

A king rules his own kingdom, but prophets bring God's word to the nations (consider Jonah or Daniel).

Even more impressively, prophets ascend into the heavenly council of God in order to bring God's word to bear on the world.

In fact, in the Bible, prophets are the ones who break down old kingdoms and set up new kingdoms by their words, which are the words of God.

## **Prophets and Transition**

This is part of the reason why you often see prophets showing up at times of transition in the Bible.

God sends his prophets to bring an old world to an end and to set into motion the creation of a new world.

This is certainly the case with Samuel.

Through his prophetic ministry, Samuel oversaw the downfall of the old world.

The world of the Tabernacle and the world where there was no king.

In other words, Samuel is a prophet who moves God's people from the time of the Mosaic Covenant to the Davidic Covenant.

You could think of Moses in a similar way:

Moses was the prophet who transitioned Israel from the Abrahamic Covenant to the Mosaic Covenant.

With the prophetic ministry of Moses, an old world was torn down and a new world was built up.

## Death and Transition

But what you also see with the prophets in the Old Testament, is that their deaths precede the fulfillment of the New World that they are moving God's people toward.

Abraham is the first person the Bible calls a prophet.

God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars of heaven and would bring blessings to the nations.

But Abraham died before this took place.

Likewise Moses was the prophet through whom God established His people in the Promised Land.

But Moses dies before the people enter into the land.

And yes, here with Samuel we see the same thing.

Samuel has anointed two kings, but the glories of the Davidic kingdom and God's covenant with David don't happen until after Samuel's death.

## The Resurrection of The Prophet

This of course brings us to the final point, "The Resurrection of The Prophet".

Jesus too died before the promises of His prophetic ministry would be fulfilled.

But with Jesus, it was only by His death and resurrection that the promises of His ministry could be fulfilled.

The fact that the ministries of all the prophets came to an end before they saw the fulfillment of their ministry points to Christ.

But it also points to something else.

The ministry of the prophets of old was a ministry where a man, as a man, brought the word of God to the people.

Consider for a moment what happened at Mount Sinai.

When the Hebrews gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai they could not bear the glory of God and they asked Moses to go up for them.

There is something very important about the fact that Moses was a man who brought God's Word to the people.

Because he was a man, he was able to relate to those he ministered to.

But this came with an obvious drawback.

Even though Moses possessed the glory of a prophet, he was still a man.

And as a man, Moses was still beset by sin and subject to death.

## The Power of an Indestructible Life

But in Christ, we see something truly divine.

In the incarnation, God came to us as a man.

In Christ we truly have a human prophet bringing us God's Word.

As [Hebrews 2](#) states, Jesus was "made like [us] in every respect."

But because Jesus is God, He, unlike Moses, has the power of an indestructible life;

Death was not able to hold Jesus.

As Peter states in [Acts 2](#) "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."

What we find in the gospels is that Jesus, like the prophet of old, died before the promises of His ministry could come to pass.

But unlike those prophets Jesus arose victorious over death.

As He Himself says in [Revelation 1](#), "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

And because Jesus defeated death, we become partakers in power of His resurrection.

And in that power we too become prophets.

We become those who bring the Word of God to one another and the world around us.

And, as prophets, we are brought into God's council in the heavenlies.

We are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

And this morning, you will experience this as your heavenly king calls you to his heavenly banquet table.

Where you will be seated as friends of the king who will serve you his heavenly bread and wine.

So come to the feast of the priest who died for you, the king who rules you, and the prophet who has brought you into the New Creation!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! AMEN!