

SUNDAY SCHOOL

A. P. 04-08-2018 HIGHLIGHT: 1 Samuel 3

H

The boy Samuel served the Lord in Eli's presence. In those days the word of the Lord was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.

²One day Eli, whose eyesight was failing, was lying in his room. ³Before the lamp of God had gone out, Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle of the Lord, where the ark of God was located.

⁴Then the Lord called Samuel, and he answered, "Here I am." ⁵He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "I didn't call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶Once again the Lord called, "Samuel!" Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"I didn't call, my son," he replied. "Go back and lie down."

⁷Now Samuel had not yet experienced the Lord, because the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸Once again, for the third time, the Lord called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹He told Samuel, "Go and lie down. If He calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰The Lord came, stood there, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel responded, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

¹¹The Lord said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that everyone who hears about it will shudder. ¹²On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I said about his family, from beginning to end. ¹³I told him that I am going to judge his family forever because of the iniquity he knows about: his sons are defiling the sanctuary, and he has not stopped them.

¹⁴Therefore, I have sworn to Eli's family: The iniquity of Eli's family will never be wiped out by either sacrifice or offering."

¹⁵Samuel lay down until the morning; then he opened the doors of the Lord's house. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

"Here I am," answered Samuel.

¹⁷"What was the message He gave you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide it from me. May God punish you and do so severely if you hide anything from me that He told you."¹⁸So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything from him. Eli responded, "He is the Lord. He will do what He thinks is good."

¹⁹Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and He fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied. ²⁰All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the Lord. ²¹The Lord continued to appear in Shiloh, because there He revealed Himself to Samuel by His word.



EXPLAIN

With the death of Samson came a period of moral demise and ruin in the nation of Israel. Particularly in the tribes of Benjamin and Dan, the Israelites were turning to foreign gods and away from the God of Abraham. The Priesthood, too, had become wicked and corrupt. Going in to the time of Samuel, the author of Judges explains to us, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever he wanted.” Under the tutelage of Eli, Samuel now comes on the scene as the one who will again bring the Word of God to His people.

- v.2: Eyesight is used here, as it has before, in both a physical and spiritual sense. Eli has not been disobedient like his sons, but he failed to put an end to their corrupt Temple practices. Samuel, in contrast, saw clearly (v. 15) and would effectively communicate God’s Word.
- v.4: The Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament from as early as the 3rd century BC, rendered this verse, “The Lord called, ‘Samuel, Samuel,’” like we see in verse 10. The repetition of Samuel’s name indicates urgency, which we also see with men like Abraham (Gen. 22:11), Jacob (46:2), Moses (Ex. 4:13), and Saul (Ac. 9:4). We see this urgency because of the immediacy with which Samuel responded (to what he thought was Eli’s voice) in the middle of the night. He demonstrates the immediacy with which we should respond to God’s voice.
- v.17-18: The structure of Eli’s oath and Samuel’s response demonstrates both severity and complete obedience. This is done through the structure of both Eli’s oath and Samuel’s report. This structure is called “chiastic,” where two ideas echo one another.
- Eli’s oath:
- A “The message He gave you”
 - B “Don’t hide it from me”
 - C “May god punish you” if
 - B’ “You hide anything”
 - A’ “That He told you.”

Samuel’s response was to tell every part of the message and not hide anything.

The same chiastic structure echoes the arc of the chapter as a whole, which makes the Word of the Lord and Samuel’s obedience the focal point of the entire section.

- A No divine oracles (3:1)
- B Eli’s fading power (3:2)
- C Three divine calls to Samuel (3:3-9)
- D A divine oracle to Samuel (3:10-15)
- C’ Eli’s request for Samuel’s report (3:16-18)
- B’ Samuel’s growing stature (3:19a)
- A’ Return of divine oracles (3:19b-4:1a)



A**APPLY**

1. What were your initial impressions from reading God's Word? What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard or read?
2. Why didn't Samuel know that it was the Lord calling to him at first? How can we identify the Lord's voice?
3. What was special about the way that Samuel responded to the Lord? How can we adopt the same attitude today?
4. Has there ever been a time in your life when it felt like God was speaking to you constantly? Has there ever been a period that felt like spiritual famine (like at the beginning of 1 Samuel 3)? What was that time like? What was going on in your life during those periods?
5. What do you need to change in your life in order to better hear the Lord speak to you?

R**RESPOND**

- What steps are you taking to listen for God's voice in your life?

Encourage one another through email, text messages, or coffee dates throughout the week to build up and encourage each other.

