

# **God's Superhero – Samuel**

## **Servant of God**

### **1 Samuel 3:1-19**

## **Introduction**

The days of Moses and Joshua were great days for Israel. During those days God demonstrated His greatness and glory to Israel and pushed back the darkness of idolatry and sinfulness. The God of Israel had become known as a supreme ruler to not only Egypt and Babylonia, but to the lesser powers of Canaan – like the Midianites, Amorites and Philistines. God instructed Israel that as long as she followed his laws and continued to worship Him as the one true God, he would bring his blessing upon all the families of the earth. But if Israel turned away from serving God, He would not bless them and their sinfulness would lead them into distress and disaster.

Israel's history during time of the Judges could certainly be characterized as the dark ages of Israel. The period of the Judges records the failure and disobedience of God's people and the repeating cycle of sinfulness, foreign oppression, calling upon God and God's deliverance. The Law of God is gradually displaced by a rather chaotic state of individualism – to the point where Judges 21:25 records that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

The people quit listening to God and God ceased speaking to the nation - which brings us to our text today in 1 Samuel Chapter 3: (Read)

The corruption and sinful lifestyle that had gripped the nation had had now thoroughly infested itself within the priesthood as well. The people had quit listening to God and following His commands and the scripture says, "The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no open vision." Israel was continually plagued by foreign occupation and the oppression and suffering would become intolerable. But even in her darkest hour, God did not give up on Israel. God would time and again send a deliver. This time God sent a true hearted servant by the name of Samuel. But even Samuel had to learn to hear and follow God's voice. Before your life can change for the better, you must to be able to hear and understand and embrace that change.

## **I. Hearing God's Voice**

Some bible scholars suggest that Samuel was about 12 years old when Hannah brought him to serve Eli in the temple.

Eli was the priest at Shiloh, a village about 18-20 miles north of Jerusalem. Shiloh was centrally located in Palestine, in Mount Ephraim. Its location is

described in the Bible as "a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah" (Judges 21:19). After the conquest of Israel under Joshua, Shiloh became the religious capital and the Assembly-place for the tribes. The Tabernacle of Moses was set up there (Josh 18:1) and Joshua also allotted territories for the tribes at Shiloh (Josh 18: 2-10). In the war against the Philistines at Ebenezer Eli allowed the Ark of the Covenant to be brought from Shiloh to the battlefield and it fell into the hands of the enemy (I Sam 4: 1-5; 5: 1).

Eli was an aging priest and was drawn to Samuel and made him his personal attendant. (Probably becoming like a grandfather to him.) He was impressed that Samuel was such an obedient child. He did what he was told and didn't complain about it; a considerable contrast to Eli's own two sons Hophni and Phinehas. It seems that in those days there were very few people who were devout and serious about serving God: to whom the word of the Lord was precious. There was a high value place on the prophetic word in those days because there was no completed written revelation and because God communicated with the people so infrequently. When revelation is scarce, there is an even greater need to hear God's voice.

Because of his age Eli was almost blind which made having Samuel at his side very helpful. And what we read here is not only a picture of the end of another day but the end one prophet's ministry and the beginning of another's. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, Samuel was laid down to sleep. Eli and Samuel did not sleep in the tabernacle, but in tents around the court of the tabernacle. God sees to it that as the night of one servant's life came the dawn of another faithful servant would break.

God cares about his people. God cares about you and loves you. In fact he loves you so much that even when you get off track, He will guide you to what you need to make you an authentic, faith filled believer. We find our true identity when we find God and hear his voice.

## **II. Misunderstanding God's Voice**

Spiritual darkness can be the result of a lack of godly teaching or because of deliberate closed mindedness to godly teaching. Israel suffered from both of these conditions.

Eli was suffering not only from physical blindness, but from a spiritual blindness as well. He had over-indulged his children and now, even though he protested, they were out of control - stealing from the people and committing adultery, and committing all kinds of evil acts.

The very institution that should have been teaching and guiding the people in the ways of the Lord was being used for lewdness and self-gain. The very priests who were supposed to be teaching ethics and morality were engaged in immoral and unethical behavior themselves. So God sends a messenger to Eli who declares that the end of his house would come in judgment and the priestly office would be given to another. This word of the Lord would be confirmed in the words given to Samuel by the voice of God in the night.

Unfortunately, Samuel – like many of us – initially mistakes God’s voice for the voice of someone else. Since Eli was nearly blind, he probably had called upon Samuel many times in the night hours to help him or get something for him. So naturally, Samuel confuses the voice of God with voice of Eli. The voice of God awakens Samuel out of sleep and because of his godly training he obediently and quickly runs to Eli. Apparently Samuel was used to being called at night by Eli to attend him. Only this time it wasn’t Eli who was calling.

Eli sends him back to bed. But the Lord called yet again! Samuel just gets back to sleep when he hears the voice of God call again. God’s call is always personal and specific. In fact, God calls Samuel by name! Samuel still misunderstands and goes again to Eli. (How many times have you misunderstood God?) By now, Samuel wanting to be a good servant, has obediently responded but because he misunderstands the call he is actually creating a situation of conflict. Have you ever tried to do the right thing only to find out you only made things worse?

However, Eli is a wise old sage. He finally figures it out and tells Samuel. “Go lie down and if you hear the voice again respond, “Speak Lord for your servant hears.” God often uses seasoned veterans to teach and train the rookies. Eli knew the voice of God and he recognized God was calling Samuel so he tells him how to recognize and respond to the voice of God.

### **III. Recognizing God’s Voice**

The failure of Eli and his sons would not ruin the plan and purpose of God. Even if we fail in our mission, God will not fail in his!

God promised that He would rise up and establish a faithful, dependable and trustworthy priest. A priest who would be firm and steady and would be able to stand up to the sinful lifestyles around him.

Samuel not only developed a listening ear and attentiveness to the needs of Eli, but he also developed a perfect ear for the voice God and a perfect heart for obedience to that voice. Samuel became not only a teacher of the law but had an understanding heart in applying the law practically. That is what priests are to do!

(Some are so judgmental and punitive; they have no sense of the positive benefits of the law.)

The call of God does not come to every person in the same way. For Samuel it came in an audible voice which he mistook for the human voice of Eli. For Moses it came in the form of a burning bush. For Elisha it came in the form of a mantel. For Saul it came as a blinding light. God has a purpose and plan for every life. God has a purpose and plan for your life! All believers have been called. The Lord may use different ways to get your attention, but he wants you to hear the call and get involved!

The more you develop sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and a discipline of service and obedience to God's word, the better equipped you become to be God's blessing to others. It's a good thing to find favor with other people – your boss, your spouse, your friends – but it's a greater thing to find favor with God. As you give your talent and service to God – even if that service is to help someone else (like Samuel helped Eli) – God will reward you and bless you even though there may be great oppression and suffering around you. When you recognize the voice of God you will find a great security and peace in whatever circumstance you find yourself.

## **Conclusion**

The call of Samuel in these verses of scripture contains a lot of spiritual lessons. Samuel illustrates the truth that faithful service is rewarded with greater honor and responsibility. He was the young child of an unknown Levite family but because he listened to his godly parents and followed their advice and teachings he became a servant that God would choose to lead the whole nation.

In contrast to Eli who would not stand up to the evil around him even when it began to corrupt his own sons, Samuel stood up to the whole nation, including King Saul. In 1 Samuel 15:22 he reprimanded Saul saying, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." This is a lesson Samuel knew well. He obeyed his parents, he obeyed Eli, and now he obeyed God. He had seen Eli and his sons pay the price for their disobedience and he was resolved to follow the Lord no matter what the cost. It is always better to have God's favor than the favor of other people.

There are many voices calling out to us today. The sound is at times almost deafening. But can you hear the voice of God? Among all of the other voice – do you recognize the voice that matter most? And if you do – will you be obedient to follow that voice?