

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

5. What word was used to describe Samuel's service? _____
6. How many teeth were in the fleshhook used by Eli's sons? _____
7. What was the distinctive garment worn by the priests? _____
8. What garment did Hannah make for Samuel each year? _____
9. Who told Eli his house was doomed? _____
10. Who was to be killed as a sign God's prophecy was being fulfilled? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1-10 *Samuel's call.* The call of Samuel to the place of leadership in Israel is comparable to the call of Moses (Exodus 3 and 4) and the call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6). His natural reluctance is typical of those who are given a vision of the tremendous responsibility laid upon God's servants; but his alacrity is also demonstrated in his response: "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (v. 10b).
- Vv. 11-14 *Doom pronounced on Eli's house.* The earlier message of the unnamed prophet is verified in the revelation given to Samuel. Eli is condemned because he knew of the wicked ways of his sons, but he did not rebuke them strongly enough.
- Vv. 15-21 *Samuel established as a prophet.* Samuel's first message was perhaps his most difficult to deliver. After Samuel had faithfully delivered the message of doom against Eli's house, all the people in Israel knew that God had indeed set Samuel aside in the office of the prophet. From time to time thereafter, God revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh.

FIRST SAMUEL

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God's need for workers.* When the family of the high priest proved to be unfaithful, God had a need for someone else to lead His people. Through the ages, God has depended on men to carry His message and to perform His work.
2. *Man's need to respond to God's call.* When God calls, man should answer. Although all may be reluctant to take up the work which God has for them to do, they must accept the challenge or the work will go undone.
3. *Faithfulness leads to increased opportunity.* The master in the parable of the talents commended his servants who had been "faithful over a few things" (Matthew 25:21). He made them to be "ruler over many things" (cf. Matthew 25:23). This is a true principle in every day life. It is also true of those who work in God's vineyard.

Samuel's call. 3:1-10

And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God *was* and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*;

4 That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst

3:1, 2

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.

8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

1. Why was the word of the Lord precious? 3:1

It was not easy for the people in Samuel's day to have a copy of the scriptures. Manuscripts were expensive. Some of them were made on vellum in ancient times. Others were made on papyrus. The copies were hand-made and generally they were kept at the center of worship. The copies were made in later times as kings were commanded to do so in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 17:18). In Samuel's day the Word was precious because not very many people listened to it. Not many prophets were active and as the scripture says, there was "no open vision."

2. What was wrong with Eli's eyes? 3:2

One of the very common afflictions of old age is the dimness of eyes mentioned frequently in the scripture. Jacob's eyes became dim so that he could not see (Genesis 27:1). This dimness came quite a number of years before Isaac died. Eli seems to have been afflicted with this same weakness. Some commentaries suggested that this was the kind of affliction we notice when cataracts form. They

did not have the benefit of eye glasses nor surgery to correct this weakness. Eli's being in this condition must have thrown more responsibility on Samuel.

3. *When did the lamp of God go out?* 3:3

The lamp that was in the tabernacle outside the veil near the Holy of Holies was never to go out (Exodus 27:20). Some of the exterior lamps, however, would be put out as activity around the tabernacle ceased. Reference must be made of some of these lamps and it may have been a part of Samuel's responsibility to tend these lamps. This may be a part of his service "unto the Lord before Eli" (3:1).

4. *What vision did Samuel have?* 3:4, 10-18

Samuel had a vision in which the Lord called to him and revealed to him the coming destruction of the House of Eli. Samuel's reaction was that he was afraid to tell Eli. When we read "Jehovah came and stood," we understand that the revelation then was an objectively real affair and no mere dream of Samuel's. No doubt Samuel had first thought that the aged Eli had called him for assistance. Before the communication was over, however, he was undoubtedly sure of what he had heard and seen. A dream is not being described, for Samuel rose and ran to Eli after each call. The prophet heard a voice physically audible. This voice enunciated in articulate words the message which the prophet was to receive. The experience is not a parallel to Jacob who saw and heard God in a dream.

5. *Why did Samuel "not yet know the Lord"?* 3:7

Samuel had not had a personal revelation of the will of the Lord to him. He knew that God was the maker of the heavens and the earth. He must have known of how his mother had prayed to God for him. His own name meant "heard of the Lord." The last two letters of his name—e, l, were an abbreviation of the Hebrew word for God. Although Samuel knew that there was one true and living God, he had not yet been called of the Lord to His ministry.

6. *How many times did he go to Eli? 3:8*

Samuel went to Eli three times, during the course of the vision. On the third time when Samuel came to him, Eli spoke to him and told him that it was the Lord calling to him out of heaven and that he should answer him and say "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." On the fourth time, he came to him in the morning after he had opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

*Doom pronounced on Eli's house and
Samuel established as a prophet. 3:11-21*

11 And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here *am* I.

17 And he said, What *is* the thing that *the Lord* hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide *it* not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It *is* the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel *was* established *to be* a prophet of the Lord.

21 And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

7. *Did Samuel want to tell Eli what the Lord had told him? 3:15*

Samuel was understandably reluctant to tell Eli the message that God had delivered to him; but when Eli threatened him, he told him all. The formula, "So may God do to thee," is an imprecation originally connected with the ceremony of slaying an animal at the taking of an oath. The parties pray that the fate of the victim may be theirs, if they fail to perform their vows. When Eli heard the message, he quietly resigned himself to the will of the Lord. Although he had been quite indulgent with his sons, we picture Eli as a man personally devoted to the Lord in heart.

8. *What doors did Samuel open? 3:15 b*

The doors of the house of the Lord would be the outer doors through which the people could pass. In later times when the temple was established, there was not only a court for the Jews, but there was a court for the Gentiles. There was also a court for the women. These outer courts could be frequented by many people. Only the priests would go into the tabernacle proper. Samuel must have had the responsibility of opening the gates of the Tabernacle area so that the people coming to worship would have access to the areas which were open to them.

9. *Why did Eli say, "It is the Lord?" 3:18*

Eli knew that what Samuel had told him was the truth. The unnamed man of God had told him these things earlier. He may seem anxious to us as he inquires about the vision given to Samuel. His anxiety would stem from

his realization that these things were to come to pass. No doubt he lived each day in fear and dread of the judgment of God. Eli still had the surrender of will and serenity of spirit to say, "let him do what seemeth him good." His faith in God caused him to realize that God would only be fair and just in His judgments.

10. *What is meant by "let none of his words fall to the ground."?* 3:19, 20

It shows that the people accepted Samuel as the prophet. His words were words of wisdom and truthfulness and they respected his advice and warnings. Jehovah was with him and left none of His words unfulfilled when He spoke through Samuel. By this all Israel from Dan to Beersheba perceived that Samuel was found trustworthy, or approved, as a prophet of Jehovah. These three verses form a transition between the call of Samuel and the account of his prophetic labors in Israel. Many would be the times that men would come to consult Samuel, and many were the times that he rode about throughout Israel to take the word of the Lord to them.

CHAPTER 3 IN REVIEW

1. How many times did God call to Samuel? _____
2. Who did Samuel think was calling him? _____
3. What physical infirmity did Eli suffer? _____
4. How many times did Samuel go to Eli? _____
5. What doors did Samuel open? _____
6. Against whom did God pronounce a penalty when He spoke to Samuel? _____
7. What word was used to describe the word of God in those days? _____
8. Was this God's first revelation to Samuel? _____
9. When did Samuel tell Eli about the revelation? _____
10. What two towns were used to describe the extent of Israel's territory? _____