

Speak Lord

1 Samuel 3:1-21

October 25, 2009

Intro

We come now to the first book of Samuel chapter 3. This book began by telling us about how Samuel came to be born. His mother, Hannah, had been barren for many years and unfortunately, her rival, Peninnah, the other wife of her husband, had been deliberately provoking her to irritate her because of her barrenness. So Hannah would go up to the temple of the Lord year after year praying for a son.

We then read how God had delayed in answering her prayers, but finally she came to the point where she made a vow to the Lord that if God would hear her prayers and give her a son, that she would give that boy back to the Lord to serve him all the days of his life.

God heard her prayers and she gave birth to a son whom she called, Samuel, which means, "Heard of God." When the boy Samuel was weaned, she brought him to Shiloh and gave him over to the priest, Eli, and Samuel served in the temple of Lord. Anna visited him there every year.

Our story in chapter 3 finds the boy Samuel ministering to the Lord before the priest Eli. It's here that we see Samuel begin his own personal relationship to the Lord. We know that his mother, Hannah, was a godly woman and it was by her faith that Samuel was dedicated to the Lord. But Hannah's faith was not Samuel's faith yet. Here in this chapter, Samuel began a personal relationship to the Lord and it is also here that God spoke not only to Samuel, but also through Samuel.

I. Listening is Rare in These Days

- 1 Verse one begins with Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli.
- 2 It also says that any word from the Lord was rare in those days and visions were infrequent.
- 3 Why was a word from the Lord rare in those days? Because no one was listening. No one cared about what God has to say.
- 4 Remember that these events were happening during the time of the judges which was one of the darkest periods, spiritually, of Israel's history. Each man did what was right in his own eyes; therefore, they didn't care what was right in God's eyes. If each man was doing what was right in his own eyes, why would he need the word of the Lord?
- 5 That's commonly what you see even today. When someone comes to the point where they want to do whatever they want to do, without regard for God's desires, they'll stop coming to church, they'll stop reading the word, and they'll stop

honoring God at all in any way in their lives.

A. God still speaks today

- 6 In verse one, we read that a word of the Lord was rare in those days, but the Word of the Lord is most certainly not rare in these days.
- 7 We must be absolutely certain of the fact that God speaks to us today.

Hebrews 1:1-2, God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Illus - I remember hearing Rave Zacharias give a great response to those who were trying to suggest that there are many ways to define God, that there are many pathways that lead to God. They used the illustration that man is like a group of blind people trying to define what an elephant is. One, holding his leg, says that an elephant is like the trunk of a tree, etc. The great flaw in that illustration is that God is not a dumb elephant; God speaks and He defines who he is.

- 8 In the book of Revelation, Jesus said to the church of Laodicea...

Revelation 3:17-18, ...you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me... eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

- 9 The scripture tells us that God has sufficiently revealed himself to every person so that no one has an excuse.

Romans 1:19-20, ... because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

- 10 So the problem is not that the word of God is rare in these days, the problem is that those who desire to hear our rare today.

B. God speaks to those who listen

- 1 Verses 2 through 8 give an interesting account of the Lord speaking to the boy Samuel.
- 2 After three times of having Samuel come to him during the night, Eli finally discerns that the Lord is wanting to speak to Samuel and so he instructs him to respond, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

- 3 No one was listening in Israel, so God was not speaking, but now Samuel becomes an example for everyone of us. The word of God is not rare today, listening is rare.
- 4 Many people want to call themselves Christians, but Jesus gave us great insight into what that actually means...

John 10:26-28, "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me."

- 5 In other words, those who belong to Christ long to listen to his voice. To the church in Ephesus...

Revelation 2:7, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

- 6 Jesus gave a powerful parable about those who would not listen to the Word of God.

Luke 16:19-31 Lazarus and the bosom of Abraham

- 7 In other words, the problem is not having the Word; the problem is in not listening to the Word.

Amos 8:11, Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord God, "When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord."

C. To whom is your heart turned?

- 8 At first, Samuel came to Eli. That was where his heart was turned, and verse seven tells us why. *"Now Samuel did not know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him."*
- 9 So Eli told him to turn his heart and mind to listen to the Lord. From verse seven we can understand that we need both to have the word of God revealed to us, which we have in the Bible, but we also must personally know him. As Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice."

Illus - There are many different kinds of voices and sounds and information going through

this room at this very moment. There are news programs, football games, and movies of all kinds. They are all coming through radio or television signals, but we don't hear them because we are not tuned to them.

Illus - There are also many different choices we can make as to what we listen to. In fact, as time goes on, there are more and more choices. Today there are miniature MP3 players where you can load thousands of songs. You can listen to your phone with music on it, or your computer. Before that, there were just cassettes, and eight tracks. Today, we're completely saturated. But the choice is still yours.

10 When the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables, Jesus replied...

Matthew 13:13, "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

II. "Your Servant is Listening"

- 1 What Eli told Samuel to say to the Lord is powerful and instructive for all of us. He told him to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

Illus - in Russia there is a common phone greeting amongst those who are close. They say, "I'm listening." That's a great way to speak to someone you care about.

- 2 When many people pray, it is often in the form of what they want God to do for them.
- 3 God does want us to tell him what is on our heart, but he also wants us to listen.

A. To listen is to be changed

- 1 To listen to God is to have a humble and teachable heart. It is to recognize that God's Word is like a mirror that shows us where we need to change.

James 1:22-25 How to be a hearer of the Word

- 2 What if God told us that we needed to be a better husband, or a better wife, or a better father, or a better mother, or businessmen, or employee, or neighbor, or friend? Would we listen?
- 3 The word that God spoke to Samuel would be earthshaking for him and for Eli.
- 4 The background of this word from the Lord to Samuel is important to understand. God had already spoken to Eli through a man of God that came to Eli with the warning about the wickedness of his two sons.
- 5 But here is the key for us to understand; Eli did not listen to God's word. He should have taken strong action and removed his sons from the priesthood. So the

word that is now spoken through the boy Samuel is a confirmation of what had already been spoken.

- 6 This is the key for us as well. That is why Jesus said to a large crowd of people who came to hear his words...

Luke 6:46-49 How to build a strong foundation by hearing God's word

B. God will confirm the word that He speaks

- 7 We saw that God spoke to Eli in chapter 2 and then confirmed that word by what he said to the boy Samuel in chapter 3.
- 8 That demonstrates a principal that God confirms his word.
- 9 The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the confirmation that all He said is truth.
- 10 Then he also gives the Holy Spirit to witness in our hearts.

Romans 8:16, The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

- 11 There is an interesting story in the book of Jeremiah that helps us understand this exact point. He had been held under guard by King Zedekiah and the word of the Lord came to him telling him that his uncle Hanamel would come to him asking him to purchase his land which was up for redemption.
- 12 Sure enough, his uncle did come and asked that of him, but what's interesting is that Jeremiah then said...

Jeremiah 32:8, "Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord."

- 1 In other words, God confirmed his word.

Illus - I distinctly remember sitting in church when I was a young man. The service had ended and I was sitting there reading God's word when I happened upon Psalm 27, and it touched my heart very deeply. It was then I was convinced that I should become a pastor, and then, God gave several confirmations.

- 2 Notice in verse 21 that the Lord revealed himself to Samuel by the word of the Lord.
- 3 God will never contradict himself. Test everything by God's word.