

1st Samuel 3

Verses 1 - 9

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. ² It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim *and* he could not see *well*), ³ and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, ⁴ that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. ⁶ The Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him. ⁸ So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.

The fact that visions were rare could be good or bad. It could mean things were going well and God had no need to bring a message of "Thus says the Lord". Or it could mean that God had already warned Israel and all that was left to do was judge them. In this case the second scenario applies because Israel is about to be severely punished by God in chapter 4.

² It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim *and* he could not see *well*), ³ and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was

The seven lamps of the lampstand were to be lit continually even during the night when no priest would be performing any duties in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle.

See Leviticus 24:1 - 4

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the sons of Israel that they bring to you clear oil from beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. ³ Outside the veil of the testimony in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD continually; *it shall be a permanent statute throughout your generations.* ⁴ He shall keep the lamps in order on the pure *gold* lampstand before the LORD continually.

Apparently this command was not being followed closely and the 7 lamps would run out of oil in the early morning.

See pic 305



So this event took place early in the morning just before the lamps went out.

The lamps needed to burn continually because the only light inside the Tabernacle was this one lampstand with the 7 lamps. The tabernacle had no windows and was covered by 4 layers of cloth and other materials that did not allow for any outside light.

See pic 310



Letting the lamps run out of oil would make it very difficult to refuel the lamps with oil unless another priest held the front curtain of the Tabernacle open so the other priest would have enough light to see what he was doing.

Another issue here is that they had Samuel sleeping in the Holy of Holies.

One commentator said that Samuel was not sleeping in the Holy of Holies because only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. He was right about the law. Only the High Priest was supposed to enter the Holy of Holies and only once a year but his assumption that the priesthood was actually following the law concerning this matter is questionable at best.

⁴ that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down.

Some versions have the Lord repeating the boy's name twice, Samuel, Samuel. The Septuagint has it this way.

There are only three other times in the Old Testament when a person's name was repeated in this way.

1. Genesis 22:11

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

2. Genesis 46:2

² And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.”

3. Exodus 3:4

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him.

Samuel is still young here, just coming to the age when he could know the lord.

⁸ So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ And Eli said to Samuel, “Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Eli finally realized what was happening and instructed Samuel on what to do.

Verses 10 -14

¹⁰ Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for Your servant is listening.” ¹¹ The Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. ¹² In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. ¹⁴ Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

¹¹ The Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

This expression occurs two other times in scripture.

1. 2 Kings 21:12

¹² therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: ‘Behold, I am bringing such a disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that whoever hears about it, both of his ears will ring.

2. Jeremiah 19:3

³ and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: “Behold I am going to bring a disaster upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.

In 2 Kings and Jeremiah it referred to the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Here in Samuel it refers to the destruction of Shiloh and the Tabernacle.

¹² In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. ¹⁴ Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

One has to feel sorry for Samuel. This young boy is receiving a message from God about the judgment that is about to fall on Eli and his sons. There is no doubt that Eli and his sons deserved this punishment but this would be a very difficult message for a young boy to convey to the High Priest of Israel.

The following is a list of their sins.

1. They were treating the Lord’s offering with contempt
2. They slept with women who served at the tent of meeting
3. Eli had rebuked them, but it was not to the degree that God expected considering the seriousness of the sin.

See Lev 10:1-3

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on the fire and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the Lord spoke, saying,

‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.’”
So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

At the time of Aaron and his sons God took care of the punishment but that was not the case in this situation. If Eli had any doubt about what he should do concerning his sons he should have consulted God. After all, he was the High priest of Israel.

Putting his sons to death would have been very painful but it would not have been as severe as the judgment that came from God.

Verses 15 - 18

So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ Then Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹⁷ He said, “What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

The original Tabernacle had curtains that covered the front entrance to the Tabernacle. However, during the 300 years that the Tabernacle remained at Shiloh it is possible that a porch with solid doors was added to the front of the Tabernacle structure itself. When Solomon built the temple it included a porch area with wooden doors.

¹⁶ Then Eli called Samuel and said, “What is the word that He spoke to you?”

Eli knew it was not good news but he wanted to know exactly what the Lord had said.

¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Eli acknowledges that whatever the Lord has decided is His decision, and yet his reply doesn't seem to reflect the level of concern that he should have had for his posterity. Yes, he had lived to a good old age but his descendants would perish in the prime of life.

Verses 19 - 21

¹⁹ Thus Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail.

²⁰ All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. ²¹ And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

¹⁹ Thus Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail.

The proof of God's inspiration is revealed when his words come to pass.

²⁰ All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord.

Dan & Beersheba were the northern and southern extremities of Israel.

This means all of Israel knew that he was a prophet.