

SAMUEL AND THE VOICE OF GOD

1 Sam. 3:1-14

Intro: One of the richest studies in the Scriptures is biographical study. While there are many biographies in the Bible, there is in no instance what might be called the life of any individual. This is true even of our Lord. Four books in the NT are devoted to his life, but even with all four put together there are many details lacking. They do not give us a complete life of Christ.

There are some parallels between the recorded details of Samuel's life and those of the Lord.

- (1) We have the details concerning his miraculous birth.
- (2) In our text this evening we find Samuel in the temple as a young child, possibly twelve years old, ministering as our Lord did, to older men.
- (3) About 20 years later the main recorded part of Samuel's ministry began.

Unlike the Lord, Samuel lived to be "old." The only unhappy thing recorded of him has to do with his sons (cf. 1 Sam. 8:1-5). Cf. also 1 Sam. 12:1-5, his complete integrity.

Samuel is unique in OT history. (1) Some consider him the last of the judges. (2) Peter spoke of "all the prophets from Samuel" in Acts 3:24--designating him the first of the great OT prophets.

He appeared in the history of Israel in the time between the judges and the kings. He anointed Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), and he also anointed David (1 Sam. 16:13).

He undoubtedly takes his place with the greatest of all of Israel's leaders. Cf. Psa. 99:6; Jer. 15:1; 1 Chron. 6:28; 9:22; 11:3; 26:28; 29:29; 2 Chron. 35:18.

Surely all we can learn about Samuel is worth our time.

Let us begin by noting

I. THE TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED.

One of the excuses that we often hear from the people of God is that it is too hard to live for God in such a world as this. We find it difficult to stand up against the sin, the dishonesty, the pleasure-mad materialism of our day.

This is where the Bible can help us.

It has never been easy to be a child of God. If you go back to the time when there was only one family, you will

find that one brother killed another because one wanted to please the Lord and the other did not. I am speaking of Cain and Abel.

A. The last verse of the book of Judges tells us about the days of Samuel. Listen: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

If you want a generalization, NO ONE WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN PLEASING THE LORD; EVERYONE WAS TOO INTERESTED IN PLEASING HIMSELF. And this is said of those who professed to be the people of God! Could it have been any worse in the world? Hardly. The Lord said when He was here on earth, "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

B. The greatness of the wickedness is seen when we suddenly discover in reading 1 Samuel that corruption had taken over in the priesthood. Cf. 1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22.

How solemn are James' words in this connection when he says, "My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment" (Jas. 3:1).

C. The outgrowth of such conditions - 1 Sam. 3:11.
But let us turn from this solemn scene to

D. The lamp of
God going out
(1 S. 3:3; Ex. 27:
20, 21).

II. THE BRIGHT SPOT IN ISRAEL.

It was not in a priest's home, not even in a Levite's home, but in home of Elkanah, an Ephraimite.

But it was not Elkanah in particular as much as it was Hannah, one of his two wives.

Hannah had noⁿ children. Peninah, the other wife, did have children. To Hannah this meant that God was not pleased with her, and it became a burden that was ruining her life. Oh, that God would lift her reproach!

Cf. 1 Sam. 1:9-18.

What a tragedy when the high priest cannot enter into the burdens and trials of the people!

But God understood--and his answer to Hannah AND TO ISRAEL was Samuel, which means, asked of God (1 Sam. 1:20). So anxious was she for the blessing of God that she was willing to give back to God forever her firstborn son.

What devotion! This is a tremendous illustration of Psa. 37:4, "Delight thyself . . ."

No one can read the Scriptures without knowing that behind all human events can be seen the mighty hand of an omnipotent God. And yet there are human aspects to be considered because out of the deep longing of this woman for the blessing of God came the dawning of a new day for Israel. And it came most unexpectedly.

III. THE VOICE OF GOD FROM HEAVEN.

Note 1 Sam. 2:18, 21b, 26; 3:1. Keep in mind the circumstances of the times when this was true of Samuel.

And see how God was blessing at his home (cf. 1 Sam. 2:21a)!

You can see what influence a devoted mother (or father) can have on her children. WITHOUT ANY DIRECT WORD FROM GOD, SAMUEL WAS MINISTERING FAITHFULLY WITH ELI TO THE LORD IN SPITE OF ALL OF THE INFLUENCES THAT WOULD HAVE LED HIM THE OTHER WAY.

This makes me know that you can live for the Lord if you are the only one in the family who desires such a life. You can live for the Lord in that office where no one else is a Christian. You can live for the Lord in the ungodly circumstances of a college campus or in military service.

Every generation has needed its Samuels! What a responsibility rests on our homes!

We need to understand 1 Sam. 3:7 in this connection. He knew the Lord as his God, but he did not know the Lord in special revelation as he was about to know Him. WHEN WE ARE FAITHFUL TO THE LIGHT THAT WE HAVE, GOD OPENS NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIMSELF THROUGH HIS WORD.

The big question is: What would Samuel do with a revelation from God if he were to receive one, especially if the message were not a pleasant one to give?

No one could have learned much about the Lord from Eli or his sons. Did God at last have a mouthpiece?

What a test for a boy, and note how he cringed from the task (1 Sam. 3:15). But see also vv. 17, 18.

Concl: All of this re-opened the lines of communication between heaven and earth. Read 1 Sam. 3:19-21.

A prophet established! Cf. 1 Sam. 9:6.

But, you say, "How can this apply to us? There is no need to-

day for one to give the message of God because the Bible is still the best seller; let them read it for themselves!

Do you know what a paradox is?

It is statement which is true and yet it seems to be contradictory because it does not make sense.

I read a series of paradoxes the other day about the present administration. The writer pointed out these unbelievable facts:

During President Johnson's administration we have had more civil rights legislation than at any time in history and yet the race problem has never been more acute.

He has passed more social legislation than any President since Franklin Roosevelt, and yet he has lost the liberals in doing this.

He has spent more money on education than any other President, but has lost the intellectuals and the students.

He won the last election with the greatest landslide in history, and yet the country has never been more divided ~~than~~ since the days of the Civil War.

These are paradoxes--they are facts, but they do not make sense.

But what is the biggest paradox of our day? It is this: WE HAVE MORE BIBLES, AND THE BIBLE TRANSLATED INTO MORE LANGUAGES THAN EVER BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE, AND YET THERE NEVER HAS BEEN A TIME A GREATER IGNORANCE OF THE BIBLE. Even the ignorance of God's people is nothing short of appalling!

Why do we have these paradoxes? There is only one reason. Our objectives may be right, BUT WE ARE GOING ABOUT THE JOB IN THE WRONG WAY.

Bible distribution can never be a substitute for personal witness. God works through men. God needs lives transformed by the Word and voices unafraid to "preach the Word." THIS IS THE MESSAGE OF SAMUEL FOR OUR DAY. The days are going to get darker. This does not eliminate the possibility of personal witness. This makes it more necessary than ever before.

Dr Voskuyl on present-day students - ign. of Bible.

May God give us men and women and boys and girls (Samuel was about 12) who will live for Him and fearlessly preach His Word in these days when again there is a famine of the Word of God!