

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-13 The Call of Samuel

God still speaks to people today. Has he spoken to you or allowed you to see his works? God used a variety of ways to communicate in the Old Testament. Sometimes an angel appeared, sometimes a burning bush, a pillar of fire, or pillar of cloud. Sometimes an earthquake. Abraham heard a voice; Jacob saw a ladder up to heaven. Pharaoh and Joseph dreamed dreams. In this story Samuel heard a voice.

We learned in the last lesson that Hannah and her husband had dedicated Samuel to the service of the Lord. He lived in Shiloh and was being trained by Eli the priest. While he was growing up, “the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions” (1Sam 3:1). This means that worship was continuing in the tabernacle and in villages and towns throughout Israel, but God had not told them anything new.

Eli was old by now, and nearly blind. One night he was sleeping in his usual place in the tabernacle, and Samuel was sleeping nearby. Suddenly Yahweh called, “Samuel!”

Samuel woke up, ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am; you called?”

But Eli said, “I didn’t call you; go back and lie down.” So Samuel went and lay down.

Again the LORD called his name. Samuel got up, went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call you; go back and lie down.”

At this time in Samuel’s young life, he had not yet received a word from Yahweh. So he didn’t recognize God’s voice. A third time Yahweh called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli, thinking he had called.

Finally Eli realized that Yahweh was speaking to Samuel. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Yahweh, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Yahweh came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel, Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Then Yahweh said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.” He went on to tell Samuel that he had promised to bring judgment on the family of Eli. He had warned Eli through a prophet some time before. Eli’s sons were wicked. Eli knew it, but did not restrain them. So Yahweh was about to punish Eli’s family. This was the message that Yahweh gave to Samuel.

Samuel lay down until morning. He got up and did his usual morning duties. He was afraid to tell Eli what God had told him, but Eli called him. “Here I am,” said Samuel.

“What did the LORD say to you?” asked Eli. “Do not hide it from me.” So Samuel told him everything. Then Eli said, “He is Yahweh; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

Years went by, and Samuel became a great prophet and judge. Eli continued to serve as high priest, but Samuel’s fame as a spiritual leader spread throughout Israel. All Israel, from far north (Dan) to far south (Beersheba), recognized that Yahweh was speaking through his prophet Samuel.

The five main Philistine cities near the coast continued to threaten Israel. Philistine warriors attacked Israel and defeated the army, killing 4,000 men. Soldiers who survived decided to take the ark of the covenant into battle. They thought this would bring them good luck, because God’s presence hovered over the ark of the covenant. And God had given Israel victory in the past. Eli’s two sons went with the ark and the soldiers. The Philistines attacked again and won the battle. They captured the ark and killed Eli’s sons and 30,000 other Israelites.

When news of the defeat reached Eli at Shiloh, he fell down and died with a broken neck. He was 98 years old and had led Israel 40 years. So God’s judgment fell on Israel and the house of Eli, just as God had promised Samuel.

This story is **important** because we learn more about how God shaped Samuel into a godly and wise leader in Israel.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the momentous birth of Samuel, in answer to his mother’s prayer, is echoed by a momentous call to divine service. When God calls, Samuel answers. He is an Ephraimite, and not from the priestly tribe. But he becomes an important priest, judge, and prophet in Israel.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. Why did Samuel not recognize the voice of God at first? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “God had not spoken this way to Samuel before, and visions from God were rare at that time,” you are correct.
2. Why did Samuel not want to tell Eli what God had told him in a vision? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “God told Samuel that he was going to punish Eli and his sons for their sins, and Eli was Samuel’s teacher and friend,” you answered correctly.
3. How was God’s judgment carried out against Eli’s family? [Pause]
A. If you said, “His sons died in battle, and Eli fell over and broke his neck when he heard the news,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. See the events in your own mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

The Bible shows us many examples of God raising up leaders. These leaders may be men or women. The important thing is to answer when God calls, and to say, “Here I am; send me.” Invite two or three youths to meet with you. Tell them the story of Samuel’s call as a youth. Share your own testimony about how God has led you in the past. Then pray together, sincerely asking God to reveal his will to each of you in his own way. Tell God you are willing to do whatever he asks.