



SAMUEL

Lesson 10

I Samuel 1-3

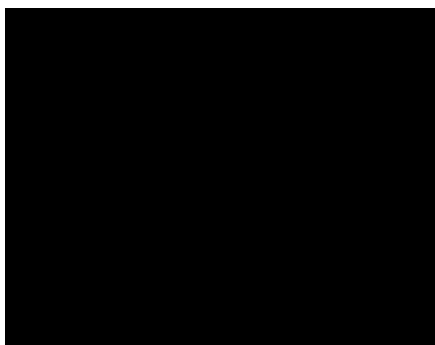


What happened before?

The period of Judges was nearing an end. Samson, the great strong man of Israel died as he brought down a Philistine temple, killing thousands of Philistines. After Samson, wickedness continued to increase in Israel.

In the midst of this turbulent time, the story of Ruth is found. It is a pleasant and beautiful story of how a Moabite woman came to be in the lineage of Christ.

BIBLE STORY:



In the hill country of Ephraim there lived a man name Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Elkanah loved Hannah and was very good to her, but Hannah was unhappy because she had no children.

Elkanah took his family to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices to God. Peninnah was cruel to Hannah and provoked her severely, making her miserable because she had no children. Hannah got so upset at the feast that she left in tears and went to the tabernacle to pray.

She prayed earnestly to God and asked him to give her a son. She promised God that if He would give her a son, she would dedicate that son to the service of God all the days of his life. While she was praying, the priest, Eli noticed her lips moving, but could not hear her saying anything and thought she was drunk. Eli scolded her—but he was wrong! Hannah told him she was not drunk, but that she was praying and had poured out her heart to the Lord. When Eli heard that, he told her to go in peace and asked God to give her what she had been praying for.

Hannah went back home with Elkanah. Several months later a son was born to Hannah! God had heard her prayers. She was so glad to have a son that she gave him the name Samuel, which means “asked of God.” Her son was an answer to her prayers.

When Samuel was old enough, (possibly as much as 3-4 years old) Hannah took him to the tabernacle. She also took sacrifices to offer to

the Lord. Hannah said, “As long as he lives he shall be lent unto the Lord.” She left Samuel with the priest, Eli.

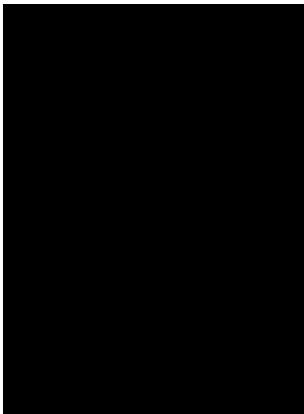
Eli was both priest and judge at this time. He had two wicked sons, Hophni and Phineas. Their work was to help their father with the sacrifices that the people brought to the tabernacle. The priests were allowed to take part of the animal for food after it had been killed and sacrificed to God. However, Hophni and Phineas demanded part of the meat as soon as it was killed without waiting for it to be sacrificed. If the people refused to give it to them, they would take it by force. The people lost respect for the tabernacle worship because they were so corrupt.

As Eli grew very old, he heard about all the wicked things his sons did. Eli warned his sons about their sinful ways; he told them that God would judge them if they did not repent. Hophni and Phineas did not listen to the voice of their father.

A man of God came to Eli and rebuked him for the awful way his sons lived. The prophet further told Eli, that because of his sons’ corruption, both of them would die on the same day! He also told Eli that God would raise up better men to serve as priests. The man of God told Eli that he had honored his sons more than he honored the Lord! Eli could have prevented many of the wicked things they did. He could have removed his sons from being priests. It seems that all Eli ever did was to tell his sons that they were wrong; he never did anything about their wrong; he let it go on when he could have put a stop to it!

Meanwhile, Samuel ministered unto the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod, just as the priests did. His mother came each year, at the annual sacrifice, and brought him a new garment to wear. The Lord continued to bless Hannah and gave her five more children.

Samuel lived with Eli in a compartment that was attached to the tabernacle and helped him in many ways as Eli was now very old. It had been a long time since God had spoken to Israel on a regular basis. “The word of the Lord was rare in those days.” God had never spoken to Samuel, but He was about to. One night after Eli and Samuel had laid down to sleep, Samuel heard a voice calling his name. He thought it was Eli, so he ran to him. Eli sent Samuel back to bed, but Samuel heard the voice again. Once more, he arose and went to Eli and then it happened a third time. This time, Eli concluded that it was God calling Samuel! He instructed him to go and lie down again, and if he heard the voice, he was to answer, “Speak Lord, for Your servant hears.”



The voice came to Samuel again and this time Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." The Lord told Samuel that because Eli's sons were so wicked and because Eli had not stopped them from their evil ways that He was going to remove Eli's family from its place in leadership. God was going to judge Eli's house because of the disgrace his sons had brought upon the tabernacle of God. This would not only be a judgment upon the sons, but upon Eli himself. Eli could have stopped his sons from doing evil things, but he did not. He was, in part, responsible for what his sons did.

After hearing the prophecy, Samuel lay in bed until the morning. How would he tell Eli what he had heard? He was afraid. After all, Samuel was just a young boy and Eli was an old priest and judge. Would Eli be angry with him?

Even though he was afraid, Samuel had to tell. In fact, Eli demanded that he tell. Samuel told him everything. Eli was not angry, because he had already heard the same thing from the man of God.

Samuel was truly a servant of God and was everything that Eli's sons were not. He continued to grow both physically and spiritually. He was a good man and was looked upon with favor both by the Lord and by men. It was apparent to all Israel that he was indeed a prophet of the Lord. Whatever Samuel spoke came to pass. God was with him and gave him the words he was to speak.

The time of the judges was quickly coming to a close. Samuel was among the last of the judges. Evidently, there were but two more judges, Joel and Abijah, both sons of Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1).

