

1 Samuel 3

How old was Samuel at this time (v. 1)? We don't know for certain; the ancient Jewish historian Josephus says he was 12 years old at this time.

What was Samuel's role in the tabernacle (v. 1)? For the second time, it is emphasized that Samuel ministered to the Lord (cf. 1 Samuel 2:11). He was not merely Eli's gopher. The Living Bible translates it well: "*And the child became the Lord's helper.*"

What was unique about "those days"? In those days the Word of the Lord, i.e., special communications from God, was rare. The Lord was quiet....relatively speaking.

Up until this point in history, what forms had the Word of the Lord taken? Audible voice, visions, dreams, messengers, written Word, etc.

Is the Word of the Lord rare today? There don't seem to be audible voices, visions, men of God (2:27), etc.

What form does the Word of the Lord primarily take today? Hebrews 1:1 "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son.*"

How do we hear the word of "His Son"? Romans 10:17 "*So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". We are blessed that the Word of God is not rare in our day. God speaks to us primarily through the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 4:12) while the indwelling Holy Spirit helps us to understand and apply the written Word of God to our lives.

While Samuel was lying down to sleep, the Lord called him three times (vv. 4-8). Why didn't Samuel recognize the voice of the Lord (v. 7)? "*Samuel did not yet know the Lord.*" This does not necessarily mean that Samuel did not know the Lord at all. Rather it means that he had never heard the voice of God speaking directly to him. He had never previously received a direct, personal revelation from Him.

How was the 4th calling of Samuel unique (v. 10)? The Lord came and stood there and called. This was a unique appearing of the Lord to Samuel. At last, the time had come for the LORD to fulfill His promise to remove Eli's priesthood and establish another, so the divine silence was broken.¹

Application: **We see the Lord calling Samuel to his job as judge and prophet. Have you discovered your calling?** Our calling is unique just as Samuel's was. Ultimately, I am a missionary, cleverly disguised as.....a military man, an auto worker, a doctor, a hair dresser (fill in the blank.)

2 Corinthians 5:18, 20 "*God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors.*" **What is the role of an ambassador?** A representative appointed by one country to represent it in another different country; a messenger with a special mission. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). We are called to represent God in a different world.

Both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle (v. 11). What does that mean? Sit up and listen carefully! God is going to give young Samuel spectacular news. In other places in the Old Testament, *tingling ears* are a sign of an especially severe judgment. And, if both ears are tingling, it must be really shocking news!

What specifically did the Lord hold against Eli (v. 13)? The Lord's message confirmed the judgment spoken earlier against Eli and his house (2:30-36). The father was as much to blame as his sons, because he did not restrain them or turn them from their sins. They should have been put to death for their sacrilege instead of just being scolded.²

What is the significance of v. 14 – “*The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.*” What a terrible judgment! God is saying – “It’s too late. It’s past the point of no return. Now, the opportunity for repentance is past. The judgment is sealed.”

How would you characterize Eli’s query as he demanded to know what the Lord had said to Samuel (v. 17)? Eli had to have some idea of what the message of God to the boy Samuel was. So he took the initiative and asked Samuel for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.....knowing it would be difficult for the young man to tell him.

How did Samuel respond to Eli’s demand (v. 18)? Samuel faithfully reported to Eli all that God had revealed to him. He was a faithful prophet from the start; he relayed God's message to Eli completely and correctly. Ironically, Samuel's first message as a prophet was an announcement of his mentor's doom. This was the second time Eli had received a prophecy of his family's future (cf. 2:27-36). Thus he knew that the prediction would surely come to pass (cf. Genesis 41:32).³

How did Eli take the bad news (v. 18)? To his credit, Eli accepted God's will submissively. He was willing to be taught from an unexpected source (12 year old), he wanted to hear the bad news of his condition, he didn’t stick his head in the sand, he wanted to hear all of God’s message. He accepted the judgment without whining. He acknowledged that God is good. Eli demonstrated an attitude of reverence and submission.

The Lord was with Samuel (v. 19). Is there anything better than this? To have, and to know you have, the Lord with you? For the Christian, how can we know we have the omnipresent God with us? The many promises of scripture, e.g. “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8).

What does, “He let none of his words fall to the ground” mean (v. 19)? This means all of Samuel’s prophecies came to pass, and were known to be true words from God. Therefore, all Israel from Dan to Beersheba (a distance of about 150 miles) recognized that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord. A new era was under way. Revelation through priest and ephod was passing away, and revelation through prophets was beginning.⁴

As the Lord appeared again and again, how did He reveal Himself (v. 21)? He revealed Himself through His (spoken) word. The word of the Lord had been rare in those days (v. 1); now, however, it would be common, for God had found a man to whom He could entrust it.

Though the message of judgment was given right then to Eli through Samuel, Eli himself lived for a short time thereafter, and indeed the priesthood continued in his family for three more generations. The prophecy to Samuel came to pass fully when Abiathar was apparently replaced by King David with Zadok (1 Kings 1:7-8; 2:27, 35) a descendant of Aaron’s son Eleazar, and it remained with his offspring throughout Israel’s subsequent history.⁵ Thus, the time between prophecy and fulfillment was more than 130 years.

Note that Samuel does not do anything to prompt God’s appearance or to reveal His Word in prophecy. Samuel is simply going about his daily duties. There is nothing particularly romantic or “spiritual” about dusting and cleaning tabernacle furnishings, about sweeping the floors, or about serving a nearly blind, nearly dead old man (Eli). But in the course of faithfully going about his mundane assigned tasks, God finds Samuel and reveals Himself to Him.

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, “1 Samuel,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 435.

² William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 299.

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Samuel, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 38.

⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, “1 Samuel,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 435.

⁵ Ibid.