

1 Samuel 3

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Date: 08 February 2023

[0:00] 1 Samuel chapter 3, really getting into the heart of the story of Samuel, the man, not the book. Because Samuel is one of three people that play a significant role within the book, being Samuel, Saul, and David.

We've looked at it by way of introduction. We've seen his importance as being a bridge person. He is the last judge, and he is the first to hold the office of prophet.

He is the first to be called a prophet since Moses. We will see here his prophetic call this evening. So in 1 Samuel chapter 3, we'll see the call of the prophet.

This is his prophetic call. 1 Samuel chapter 3 says, Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli, and word from the Lord was rare in those days.

Visions were infrequent. 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.

[1:08] 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. That the Lord called Samuel, and he said, Here I am.

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

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. 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. Then the Lord came and stood and called, as at the other times, Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel said, Speak, for your servant is listening.

[2:12] 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. And that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end.

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. 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.

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. Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son. And he said, Here I am.

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 I spoke to you.

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

[3:18] All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh.

Because the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord. First Samuel chapter 3. We see the call of the prophet.

Samuel is a man of great importance in the history of the nation of Israel. But he's also a man of great importance in biblical history and therefore church history as well. Serves as the bridge from the time of the judges to the time of the kings.

He is the one who closes the door of the judges and opens the door of the kings. But also opens the door of the prophetic ministry of the prophets.

Now one thing you need to understand about prophets of the Old Testament. And we have said it before but it bears repeating. Because we see it in particular even as it applies to Samuel here.

[4 : 19] Prophecy is not always foretelling. To foretell an event is to tell something that's going to happen in the future which no one knows about yet.

That is some of prophecy. We see that happening some throughout the Old Testament. Most prophetic word is foretelling.

Foretelling is repeating what God has declared to the prophet in secret and telling it forth in public. It may entail events that are going to happen.

But it is not necessarily based upon just the telling of the future but the telling of the declared word of God. It is foretelling what God has said. Foretelling is much like what we see in the book of Isaiah.

Many of the prophecies which had a two-fold fulfillment. Some a temporal fulfillment and then later on an eternal fulfillment. The easiest of those is behold a virgin shall bear a son and you shall name his name Emmanuel.

[5 : 26] That is told in Isaiah. It is fulfilled in the very next chapter. But Matthew tells us it's greater fulfillment. Well not Matthew. Luke tells us it's greater fulfillment. And Matthew as it pertains to Mary.

So those are foretelling. Foretelling is saying God says this. This is about to happen. You need to repent and I'm trying to get your attention. These are the things that the prophets did.

This is why we need to be careful which we see as prophecy sometimes. Someone comes even in today's time as a modern day prophet and they want to tell the future. Well that is not necessarily fulfilling all of the qualifications and even the requirements of the biblical prophet.

It was to be one. I want to say what God has told me in secret and I want to declare it in public. That is the office of the prophet. We see it in particular happening here with the man Samuel.

Probably at this age the young man Samuel. Some say around 12 years of age. And we see his call. His call is very peculiar but it sometimes is even very common.

[6 : 33] We see his call has some characteristics that other calls have. The two-fold repeating of his name Samuel, Samuel. His conversion is at his call.

We see that just like when God called Saul later known as Paul on the Damascus road. His conversion was in his call. So he was called and converted at the same time.

So was Samuel. So we see God doing things in an amazing way. But sometimes there's some similarities. Sometimes it's very singular. But as we see this call we want to understand exactly what's going on here.

The first thing we see is this is a time of famine. This is a time of famine. Now it doesn't necessarily mean famine from food. Because we know, we read the book of Ruth, there was a famine of food as well.

Because there was a man who took his family out of the land because of a famine. But we looked at the reality that that was probably a localized famine. That was something that was just going on in Bethlehem.

[7 : 31] And those type of famines when God did not send rain was a judgment of God upon the people to get their attention. Remember that. Any famine in the Old Testament is also a declared judgment of God or a way for God to get his people's attention.

But here the famine is not necessarily one of a lack of food but a lack of the word. Because it says, now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And the word from the Lord was rare in those days.

The word from the Lord was rare in those days. Now think about this just for a moment. Just as far as history goes, a short time before this.

Now it's probably several hundred years prior to this. God had miraculously led his people out of Egypt across the wilderness region. Ministering to them daily.

Leading them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The man Moses with the tent of meeting outside the camp. Right? And he's going out and meeting with the Lord and coming back in his face.

[8 : 38] He's radiating the glory of God as he's had this encounter. And he's declaring to them what God has said. And God sets up the office of the priest. And he declares this, you know, the high priest and the priest and the Levites.

And God establishes his parameters. This is how I'm going to meet with you. There's the tabernacle. There's the Shekinah glory of God that falls. And every major decision is to come before the tabernacle or the temple.

And God would declare their judgments to them. And we keep moving throughout this. And then the walls of Jericho fall down. And after, you know, there's this encounter. Joshua meets the angel of the Lord who we believe is Christ.

It's a Christophany or a theophany in appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. And he has this word for him how he should do things. And God is continuing to speak to his people and continuing to minister to his people. And then we enter into the period of the judges where every man is doing what is right in his own eyes.

And one of the famines we see there is that the word from the Lord was rare. Now, there are priests. There's a tabernacle at Shiloh.

[9 : 38] So there's a place. The Ark of the Covenant is still there. It's not going to be in the next chapter. We'll see it. It's going to be taken away in the next chapter. But here, everything's still there. Everything's still in place. There are the people.

There's the place. Everything is still present. But yet, God's not saying anything. God is almost all but silent. Now, we do know he has a couple of people because we can meet the man of God in chapter 2.

He comes and tells Eli what's about to happen, that unnamed individual. We don't know who he is and we don't need to know who he is. We do know he came with a message. But the word tells us that the word from the Lord was rare.

May we not ever be surprised with the reality that when man is doing what is right in his own eyes, it is usually combined with the scarcity of the word of God. That there's a famine of the word.

And it says that the word from the Lord was rare in those days and visions were infrequent. That is, God wasn't manifesting himself to his people.

[10 : 43] God wasn't declaring, this is what I want you to do. Now, what surprises me in this is that the word of God was rare and the visions of the Lord were infrequent.

Even in service, people are serving and still not hearing. I mean, a case study for this would be Samuel. Samuel is serving the Lord at Shiloh before Eli.

That is, he's serving the Lord. He's doing what is right. He's doing what his mother gave him up to do. He is serving the Lord at Shiloh in the presence of the priest, Eli.

And he doesn't have a word from God. As a matter of fact, it tells us later in the chapter, Samuel did not yet know the Lord. So service does not always imply or even mean that you know what God is saying.

It is quite possible, by the way, to go through the motions of service and never hear a word from the Lord. We see that. Sometimes we say, well, they were doing all the right things.

[11 : 53] They were serving, yes. But service doesn't equate knowledge or personal relation.

There's a famine of the word. And even Samuel, not to any fault of Samuel yet, just because God hasn't called him yet.

Samuel has been serving for years and still doesn't know the Lord because the word is rare. What's even more astounding is we fast forward many, many years.

We get to the book of Malachi and God says something. And then there are over 400 years of absolute silence. 400 years of absolute silence that God doesn't say a thing.

That's a long famine. From Malachi to when Zechariah is standing in the temple, there's 400 plus years of silence.

Now, a lot goes on in history. But probably one of the most astounding things that goes on in history is that people are still going through temple service. Think about that.

[12 : 55] Zechariah went into the temple to burn incense. All the service was still going on. And yet nobody had heard a word from God. Nobody had heard a word from God.

Nobody had heard him say anything. No one had seen a vision for over 400 years. Because before God can get his people's attention, sometimes he has to go silent.

And sometimes the greatest judgment that God can have upon his people is to leave them to their own ways. We've looked at it.

But the book of Romans declares the first and second chapter that that which may be known about God has been clearly revealed by God, yet men reject that knowledge.

Right? We're not here to get into all the theology and that. But man rejects what could be known about God. And so here's the judgment. So God gives them over to themselves.

[13:57] That God goes silent. And the famine of the word was a judgment of God upon his people.

They did not want to hear what he had to say. So God quit talking. It's a judgment upon his people. And quite often we say, God, I just want to hear a word from you.

God, I want to. And we all go through that, right? We go through times where we feel like our prayers stop at the ceiling and they can't go any higher than that. We feel like God's just not speaking. And we really want to desperately, at least I hope we go through those seasons because we should go through those seasons of just really searching ourselves.

And God, why haven't I heard a word from you? What's going on that I can't get a clear word from you? What sin is in me? And search me, oh God, and try me and know my desperate thoughts. And Lord, just let me know what it is because there's this famine of the word.

And we see it going on here at this critical point in the nation's history. God went silent. It's a time of famine. The second thing we notice is it's also a time of failure because the famine of the word is usually connected with the failure of the people.

[15:10] They go hand in hand. We've already discussed Eli and his family, but they're brought up again, so we have to bring them up again. Now, the text says it happened at that time that Eli was lying down in his place.

Now, we know physically it's in the middle of the night because Eli's asleep, Samuel's lying down. But I think there's also a spiritual application there that Eli was lying down on his job.

When God was calling his replacement, Samuel, it's because Eli had not been fulfilling his responsibilities.

There's a failure. And it says, now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well. We know by the time we get to the next chapter, he actually goes completely blind.

So these are physical realities, but they're also spiritual truths. He's lying down and losing his sight. He has no vision for the people. And God declares this judgment.

[16:11] And this judgment is very clearly revealed. And it's actually a confirmation of what the man of God has already declared to Eli, even though Samuel did not know that, right? Samuel more than likely wasn't present when the man of God came to Eli and had this meeting with him and said, this is what God's going to do.

Your son's going to die. You're not going to have any old man in your house. And judgment has come. So God confirms that word with his prophetic call to Samuel. And we see here, he speaks of the failure.

He tells him in verse 11, the Lord said to Samuel, behold, I'm about to do a thing in Israel, which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

And that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end. For I have told him that I'm about to judge his house forever. Here it is for the iniquity, which he knew the iniquity, which he knew because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.

Remember, we've been looking at the reality that Eli is not innocent in all of this because he knew. 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.

[17:25] The implication here is, is they have high handedly sinned. It's the best way of putting it. The layman's way of putting it is they have knowingly sinned and thought they could get away with it.

It is what Bible scholars call the sin of high handedness. It is looking at God saying, I know this is wrong. I know I should do something different. I know I should not act this way, but I'm going to do it anyway.

And the high hand says, I'm greater than you, God, and I'm going to show it by doing what I know to be wrong. The book of Leviticus tells us that there is no sacrifice for that type of sin.

The guilt offering does not cover the sin of high handedness, the knowing, intentional sin of action. So God declares here, since he has known of the iniquity, chose not to do anything about the iniquity, and they continued in the iniquity, even with the full knowledge of it being wrong, their failure will lead to their judgment.

And even though they knew this to be right, see God, even in the midst of this famine, sent this man of God. We don't know how many years prior to this. He had sent a man of God to warn Eli, yet Eli had done nothing.

[18 : 47] And now judgment is going to come because the reality is there is no offering for the sin of intentionality. There is no sacrifice that can atone for that sin.

And so judgment is coming. Judgment is coming upon them because what they should have done, they chose not to. What they knew not to do, they chose to do, and man has failed.

So when God calls the prophet Samuel, it's a time of famine and it's a time of failure. And what is happening in Eli and his household is just a representation of what's happening in the nation.

But that brings us to the third and final thing because it's a time of famine, a time of failure, but a time of faithfulness. And by faithfulness, I do not mean the faithfulness of God's people, but we are astounded at the faithfulness of God himself.

We are astounded. At least we should be. It is simply amazing that God would call anyone. What's even more amazing is the fact that in the way in which God calls Samuel.

[19 : 58] God had every right to forsake his people because they had forsaken him. The covenant's name of God is used here, Yahweh.

He is the, that is the covenant, the relational God. He's a God of relationship. Now you remember that relationship all the way back at Mount Sinai. I will be your God and you will be my people if, there was that big word if.

If is a big word because if connected the responsibility of the people to the responsibility of God. God would be faithful to do these things if his people would walk in faithfulness as well.

They had broken that covenant. Time and time and time and time again, they had broken that covenant. Now that covenant was conditional. But the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional.

The covenant he made with Abraham. The Davidic covenant will be unconditional. The covenant that he makes with David. Now the reason we know that the covenant he makes with Abraham is unconditional is because the ratification of the covenant was a strange thing.

[21 : 06] You would take beasts and you would slay them and you would cut them in half. And you would put half of it over here and half of it over here and half of it over here. And you would have all these offerings and then you would light a torch and I would light a torch.

And we would walk back and forth between the halves like these pews were the halves. And we would go back and forth and you would pass by me and I would pass by you. And when we walked by one another with our lit torch, we were essentially signing the covenant.

We were saying, I'll do my part and you do your part. You remember Abraham had all the sacrifices laid out there and then Abraham fell asleep. He got tired because he was trying to keep the vultures off the sacrifice. Remember that?

And then when Abraham woke up, he saw furnaces passing back and forth. He saw these flaming furnaces going back and forth between the carcasses of the dead animals. Because what was going on here is Abraham didn't do any walking because Abraham wasn't signing his name.

God went back and forth himself because the covenant he was making with Abraham was totally unconditional upon Abraham, but completely conditional upon God. If God is faithful to himself and his purposes, then these things will come about in spite of Abraham.

[22 : 10] When he makes the covenant with David, he does the same thing. There is no if. He said, I will build a house out of you. Your seed, singular by the way, will set upon the throne eternally. He, your seed, singular, will rule with a rod of iron.

Your seed will build my temple. Singular. All those are singular. And the singular seed that is found in the faithfulness of God in the covenant of David is Jesus. Right.

So all these things, right? The same covenant he makes with Abraham, by the way, is seed, singular. He says to Abraham, we go back. It's easy to trace it through David. Now stay with me.

We're doing a lot of Bible tracing.

It's okay. Stay with me. When you go back to Abraham, the reason we see that it is unconditional there is because he tells Abraham that in your seed. Now when you read your scripture, you're

going to open up and say, in your descendants, the earth will be blessed.

That's what it says, right? So we think, oh, well, the nation of Israel is a blessing to the earth. And it is. But that's not what the literal word says. The literal word says, in your seed, singular, the earth will be blessed.

[23 : 09] Well, who is blessed? Through Jesus, right? He is the seed of Abraham as well. And in your seed, your seed shall possess the gate of its enemies. Singular. So all these are unconditional because they're found in the person of Jesus Christ.

But they are absolutely dependent upon the faithfulness of God. And when we come to a time like the book of Judges, and we come to a time where we have this bridge, right? The book of Judges is like God just needs to walk away because his people are failing.

They're not living up to the covenant that was at Mount Sinai. They're not living up to that, the Decalade, the Ten Commandments, and all this. They're not doing any of those things. And so the if seems to be playing a big role here.

I know I'm chasing a long ways around, but this is the way my mind works, so just stay with me.

He's getting ready to do an amazing thing. And yet his people are living in the middle of a famine.

They're not hearing a word from God. They're not seeing a vision of God. Those who should have been leading the people are literally failing. And they're about to be judged for their failures. But look how faithful God is.

[24 : 14] Because he goes to Samuel and he says, Samuel. Samuel gets up and runs to Eli because who else is in the house? But there's this word there. And it says for us, And the lamp of God had not yet gone out.

Eli was lying down and his eyes were failing. And the lamp of God had not yet gone out. Now chronologically, this tells us it was the middle of the night. It was in the middle of the night.

It was the priest's job to trim the lights every evening and ensure that they continually burn and trim them again in the morning. But the lamp that was in the tabernacle was to be a sign veiled in the tent that only the priest knew that the presence of God was still there.

It's the golden lamp stand. Remember it has like all the flowers and all those almond blossoms and it's kind of like a candelabra. It's got 12 things coming out there and it's all ornate, pure gold.

But it was to be a visible representation that the presence of God was still there. Because the Ark of the Covenant was assigned in the Holy of Holies.

[25 : 27] This was outside the tent so that everybody could see it, the priest could see it. If we take this to the book of Revelation, Jesus says judgment comes when the lamp is removed from the church. That again is the presence of God among his people.

But the lamp of God was still burning. The people were in the midst of a famine. They were failing in the midst of the famine. But the lamp was still burning. So God calls Samuel.

Samuel runs to Eli and says, here I am. He says, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep. Look at what it says. So the Lord called him yet again. Samuel. So he gets up and he runs.

Eli says, here I am. He says, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep. It says, so the Lord called him a third time. Samuel. He went back to Eli and he says, here I am. You called me. And Eli says, something's going on. Eli isn't the most faithful priest, but at least he has a little bit of sense.

He said, I'm not calling you. Must be the Lord calling you. Next time he calls you, say, here I am, Lord, for your servant. Listen. Speak, Lord, for your servant. Listen. Now, he leaves out the word Lord when he responds to God because he is not yet his Lord.

[26 : 29] He will be later. But what we see here is that God speaks to him a third time. Now, he doesn't go. He goes to Eli. He says, go back. And now we read down.

It says, and then the Lord came and stood next to Samuel. It said, Samuel, Samuel. Notice the faithfulness of God.

Four times he called him. Samuel had no initiative on his own. Again, the initiative is solely and wholly the Lord God.

There's no reason that he should have called him. I wanted to put this message together. It's like, well, Samuel was in the right place. He was in the right position. He was, you know, he was in the tabernacle.

He was in a place of humility. He was, but the more I considered it, the more I prayed about it, no, Samuel was just there. It was God doing all the work. Because he didn't yet know the Lord.

[27 : 32] But God's calling him to be a prophet to the nation. And we notice the faithfulness here. And if you're in the habit of underlining, you need to underline, there's one phrase in this chapter that really stands out to me.

And it's at the very end, in verse 21. It says, The Lord appeared again at Shiloh. The faithfulness of God. He didn't have to, because the visions were infrequent.

The word was rare. But the Lord appeared again. How did he appear again? Because the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

God showed his faithfulness to his people by revealing himself to Samuel so that Samuel could live among his people as a representative of the Lord God.

Do you know how God shows back up? God shows back up when he finds us ready to listen and to respond. He shows back up when he reveals himself to his people who live in the midst of a land of famine and failure.

[28 : 44] And he finds his people ready to listen and not afraid to declare the truth. The very next thing, I mean, think about this, the test of the prophet. The first thing Samuel had to do as a prophet was tell the man he was living with, God's judged your family.

The very first thing he had to do was say, God's gonna kill your sons, both of them in the same day. But it says, and Samuel did not fail to tell him.

And he was confirmed. Now, before we read that Samuel grew in favor with man and with God, now we read that Samuel grew and the Lord was with him.

Because now he knows the Lord. And God shows back up. The land had lived in famine and people had lived in failure. But God shows back up.

And it says, from Dan to Beersheba, that is from the very northernmost part of the land of Israel to the southernmost part of the land of Israel. This is a national presence.

[29 : 52] God reveals himself, not just in one locale, he reveals himself to all his people because he found one man. He found one man. Because, see, God can overrule the famine and the failure when he finds one who will be present.

But that one is completely dependent upon the faithfulness of God. And when that one stands on his faithfulness, not man's faithfulness, but God's faithfulness, the Lord reveals himself again at Shiloh.

Because Samuel heard the word. It did not fail to proclaim the word. Here we see the call of the prophets. Times are going to get worse before they get better.

But God's got his man. He's got his man. And when he takes this man, this man will be used of him mildly. And we see this in 1 Samuel chapter 3.

Thank you, my brother. Thank you.

[31 : 37] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.