

Here I Am Lord: Samuel is Called

Scripture: The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. ²One night Eli, who could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go lie down.” So he went and lay down. ⁶Again the Lord called, “Samuell!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call.” ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸A third time the Lord called, “Samuell!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹So Eli told Samuel, “Go lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” . . . ¹⁰The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

¹¹The Lord said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹²At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

¹⁵Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶but Eli said, “Samuel, my son.” Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ¹⁷“What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide anything he told you.” ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything. Then Eli said, “He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.” ¹⁹The Lord was with Samuel, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. ²⁰All Israel recognized that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord. ²¹The Lord revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

I Samuel 3 (condensed)

Discussion Questions

1. I Samuel 3 opens with “the word of the Lord was rare in those days.” Why do you suppose that was? Would that describe our time? If not, how does He speak and how can we distinguish God’s voice from our subconscious or wishful thinking? I Samuel 3:1
2. “Then the Lord called Samuel.” This is Samuel’s inauguration into prophetic ministry, and his calling was a big deal. In fact, scripture hadn’t recorded a named prophet since Moses. But all three times God called out to him, Samuel thought it was Eli. Why didn’t Samuel recognize God’s voice? Has God ever tried to tell you something you chalked up to some other source? If so, what happened? I Sam. 3:4-10
3. Eli gave Samuel wise counsel. What are some important elements of Eli’s instructions to Samuel? What would your reaction be if you heard God calling your name? I Samuel 3:8-10
4. This is a critical moment as power is transferred from Eli’s corrupt religious dynasty to the new era that would be headed by Samuel. Discuss the significance of God’s message regarding the judgment against Eli’s household. What can we learn about the consequences of disobedience? I Samuel 3:10-14
5. We can understand Samuel’s reluctance to share what the Lord said to him with Eli. The reason Eli’s family is being cut off started with his apathy. What are some ways we become apathetic? Is Eli’s response surprising to you? Why or why not? I Samuel 3:14-18
6. The main reason we don’t hear God’s voice isn’t because He’s not speaking; it’s because we’re not listening. Samuel listened, and so did Eli. How can we become attentive to God’s voice and respond with obedience and surrender?

Wrap Up: This is one night Samuel will never forget! The people may have felt far away from God in those days but Samuel didn’t. He grew up in the Tabernacle. It was all so familiar to him, yet he hadn’t had a personal experience with the Lord. Unfortunately that’s where a lot of us stay. We read the Bible, do the right things, and even call ourselves Christians, but we never make it past the “knowing about Him” stage to actually “knowing Him.” And knowing God is where real life begins.