

1st Samuel

Lesson 6

d) Samuel's Hearing

(1) The Prophecy from a Man of God to Eli (2:27a)

As Samuel grew year after year, serving with Eli in the Tabernacle complex, we come a time when that we will call Samuel's hearing. It was the time when the LORD was going to speak audibly with Samuel. But first, there would be the prophecy from a man of God to Eli, Samuel's mentor.

Verse 27a. *"Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him"* (2:27a)

The writer does not tell us the name of this *"man of God."* Samuel is writing this book many years after this time in his life. In fact, Samuel was probably already serving with Eli when a *"man of God"* appeared to Samson's mother and then to Samson's mother and father the next day to announce the birth of Samson (Judges 13:6). This *"man of God"* could have been human, but because of how Samuel uses the term in the book of Judges, it was more than likely the LORD God Almighty speaking to Eli, just as He was talking to Mr. and Mrs. Manoah, Samson's parents. How do we know that? Samuel tells us that answer in the next verse.

(2) The Prophecy of the LORD God to Eli

(a) The LORD's Heritage for Eli (2:27b-28)

From the prophecy from a Man of God to Eli, we come to the prophecy of the LORD God to Eli. The prophecy begins with the LORD's heritage for Eli. Verse 27b. *"Thus says the LORD, 'Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house?'²⁸ 'Did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel?'"* (2:27b-28)

Just as the LORD always presents His case to mankind, especially those of His chosen nation, and specifically those who represent Him before the people, the LORD reminded Eli of his heritage as a man in the priestly line.

(b) The LORD's Questions for Eli (2:29)

Then we come to the LORD's question for Eli. Verse 29. *"Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?"* (2:29)

The LORD nails Eli to the wall. Here is where parents get in trouble with the LORD. Let us remember, Eli had already warned his sons about their sin. Yet, he had failed to correct their sin. He had the power to do so. All parents love their children, and they want to think their children will do everything right. But, as we know, children of Godly parents do not always follow along on the Godly path of their parents. Some become downright evil. In Eli's case, his two sons knew the laws extremely well, yet, they blatantly ignored them to seek after their own desires and even use their positions of power to sin against the people and the LORD.

In the Law, the LORD specifically stated what He approved and disapproved of. Sexual sin, He did not approve. Breaking the law for the handling of the sacred offerings, He disapproved. Eli's sons did both. I know in our families, many of us have children who are walking far away from the will and ways of the LORD. As parents, we must love our children. However, we must hate their sin. In addition, we must not act as if they are not engaged in outright rebellious sin. What must we do? We must build a bridge to them where they know that we, as their parents love them unconditionally. They are welcome where we are. That we will not reject them or discard them

because of their sin, yet, at the same time, they must know that we cannot condone their sin or approve of their sin. As such, do we turn our backs to them? No. We invite them to family parties and get-togethers. We give gifts at Christmas. We eat together; we fellowship together. We invite them to worship with us together.

When one of ours wants to be called by a new and different name, so be it. Call them by the name they want to be called. It is just a name. It is just a set of symbols that we put together to make a sound when we call for that person. But when they want to do to a medical facility to alter their body to look like something they are not, we cannot invest in that procedure. We must let them gather the funds for on their own. We love them as a person. We will attend them as a person. We will not provide such a thing to allow them to run headlong into something that the LORD does not approve. It is a fine line. For the children who earn their living in prostitution and criminal activities, we must still love them but hate the sin simultaneously. Yes, sometimes, our children get so far into sinful things that they might bring harm to us. Then, at that time, we might have to show them that we love them but at the same time communicate that because of the dangers their activities might bring to us, a time of separation is paramount. Even with that, we must not forget that evil always drags along evil. And, evil will always turn on those who are evil. It never fails. When loved ones are taken by evil, sinful people to pressure the sinful child to do something else that he does not want to do or divulge. Then, the Godly family members become prey for the evil to harm in order to force a sinful member of the family to do something or divulge something. It never works well, and evil comes to the Godly. With all that said, Eli had ignored his son's sins and evil, most likely because of his love. Yet, he did not take the required actions to correct them. A warning was not good enough for the LORD. Here the LORD questions Eli. Eli surely knew the answers.

(c) The LORD's Desire for Eli (2:30)

And so, we come to the LORD's desire for Eli. Verse 30. *"Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever"; but now the LORD declares, Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed."* (2:30)

The heritage of Eli had been established in men from the beginning of the priesthood with Aaron. They were not perfectly Godly men at all, not one of them. Yet, the LORD would keep His promise to have them as His priests. But now, the LORD sets a standard. "... *for those who honor Me I will honor*" It seems pretty clear. Moving on, the LORD says, "*and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.*" What does "*lightly esteem*" mean? These words mean *to determine a value*. When we use the word *esteem* today, we think of greatness. To *lightly esteem* would mean *a little greatness*. But, in this verse, it means *no greatness*, not even a dab of goodness at all. If you despise the LORD, He will despise you. In this case, the LORD is speaking directly to Eli about his sons that he has not corrected.

(d) The LORD's Declaration for Eli (2:31-32)

Therefore, we come to the LORD's declaration for Eli. Verse 31. *"Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house."*
³² *You will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever."* (2:31-32)

Here we must understand that the LORD has a standard for the general population of His people and a different standard for the priests of His people. That point came out clearly in our study of the book of Leviticus. In that book, the LORD gave the instructions for the life and duties of the priests, those who oversaw the daily lives of the people in religious and civil matters. They were the ultimate judges in every matter. As such, the LORD laid out instruction for the life of the His priests and their families and then laid out the instruction for the life of the common man in the

tribes of Israel. The standard for the priests, the LORD's ministers, was much stricter than that of the people. For instance, a priest was not to drink wine or strong drink so that he would be sober when he was needed to lead, instruct, and judge the people of the Nation of Israel. However, the people would bring wine to drink as they partook of the meals with the required sacrifices. There we have just one example of the different standards of the LORD for a priest and the common man.

In this case, in this passage, because of this declaration, the LORD is finished with Eli and his sons as priests. After the death of Eli and his two sons, which will occur on the same day as we will soon discover, no descendant of Eli will serve as a High Priest again, not even his grandson that he, nor the father of his grandson, will ever see or hold while serving as a priest. Have you heard the name, Ichabod? Eli's grandson will be born on the day of the death of Eli and his sons, and Eli's daughter-in-law, who will die giving birth to her son, will name that son Ichabod, which means *there is no glory*. There will be no glory for the house of Eli ever again as a priest of the LORD.

(e) The LORD's Promise for Eli (2:33)

We come to the LORD's Promise for Eli. Verse 23. *"Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that your eyes will fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life."* (2:33)

Alas, Eli's sons will die in the prime of their lives. Yet, blind Eli will not see their deaths. Blind Eli will not see his grandson. However, blind Eli will not be without a descendant. As we have spoken before, and as we will discover in this book, Eli's grandson will be named Ichabod. Because he is of the priestly line, his job should be to be a priest, but we are not told that he ever serves as one. He is not the only person in the priestly line not to serve as a priest. When we traverse the pages of 2nd Samuel, we will come across the name of Benaiah, a young son of a High Priest who disqualified himself from being a priest before coming to the age of entering the training for the priesthood. Instead, he broke all the Laws for a member of the priestly line and became the chief of the bodyguards of King David and King Solomon. Therefore, there were consequences for breaking the standards set in place for the priestly line. Not all in that line were able to serve as priests because of those consequences. On the other hand, we will learn that Ichabod's brother, who had to be older than Ichabod, will wear the ephod and serve as a priest, but never the High Priest. He will serve with the line of Zadok, who will take Eli's place when he dies.

In addition, we will see in 1st Kings 2:26-27 that the priest Abiathar was put out of his priestly office for treason and sent to live on a farm where he would never enjoy the amenities of the priestly office again. Therefore, not all priests will serve in the office of the priests because they have forfeited that gift somehow.

(f) The LORD's Sign for Eli (2:34)

Then comes the LORD's sign for Eli. Verse 34. *"This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die."* (2:34)

Blind Eli must have been heartbroken by this news. Would it happen that day? No. Would it happen on the following day? No. Would it happen in a year? No. The LORD does not count time as we count time. He works on heaven's timeclock. A day to the LORD is as a thousand years here on earth. Have you ever calculated the math on that? If you did, you would find out that a second in heaven is equal to more than four days here on earth. An hour in heaven is equal to more than forty-one years on earth. After giving this sign to Eli, the Lord would wait a minute or two in heaven's time before he acted. That would give Samuel time to grow into a full-grown and respected man in Israel, fully viewed as Israel's judge by the time Hophni and Phinehas, as well as Eli, would die on the same day. But Eli does not know that his death will occur that same day.

(g) The LORD's Announcement for Eli (2:35-36)

Moving on, we come to the LORD's announcement for Eli. Verse 35. *"But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. "Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say," "Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread."'"* (2:36)

After the death of Eli, the High Priest's office will be filled by Zadok. The descendants of Zadok will hold the High Priest's office until the destruction of Solomon's Temple, yet to be built, and the exile of the Southern Kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar in about four hundred years. But that logic does not seem fit to hold to in this passage. It seems that here, the LORD is speaking of Samuel, the priest, who also holds the nation's attention as their judge. In the next chapter, the LORD says this about Samuel. *"All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD."* (2:20).

As we will see in this book, Samuel was the faithful priest. He was the LORD's anointed. Everyone knew it. Even Ichabod's bother will seek the counsel of Samuel. As we have already stated, not every man in the priestly line will serve in a priestly office because they will forfeit that gift from the LORD. Instead, those who have forfeited, especially from the descendants of Eli, will have to beg for money and food instead of being having the privilege of freely partaking.