

1 Samuel Chapter 3

by Charles E. Wigg

The time had now come for God to reveal Himself to Samuel. Josephus says that he was aged about twelve years at this time. We might think that as Samuel had such a godly praying mother, and as he had been separated to God from his very birth, and for the whole of his remaining life, that he would not need such an experience as is described in this chapter. In spite of his background and upbringing, in spite of his being clothed with an ephod, and ministering before the Lord, yet he lacked something. That something was a personal experience with God, and a personal knowledge of Him.

I have met people in India that become offended when one presents the gospel to them, and insists on the need of repentance, conversion and a salvation experience. Such people have said, "Go and tell that to the Hindus, I am already Christian, I am a born Christian". The Bible is clear that no one is ever "Born a Christian". In order to become a true Christian, the person must be born again. This is the teaching of John's gospel chapter three. Though Samuel lived in a pre-Christian age, and was never a Christian, yet he needed a personal experience with God, and a personal knowledge of Him, before he could become God's prophet.

The way that the English Bible reads, it would seem that Eli slept at the Tabernacle, (probably in the Holy Place, and Samuel must have slept in the Holy of Holies). The instructions given to Moses about the Tabernacle made no provision for the accommodation of priest etc. However when Solomon built the temple, other buildings were added. Some were used to store the offerings, and for other different purposes. There were other buildings around the perimeter fence, and these were used for the purpose of accommodation. During the dark days of decline mentioned in the second book of Kings, some of these buildings were used as homosexual brothels. It is possible that other buildings could have been added to the original Tabernacle, but this is not mentioned in scripture.

We read that when Samuel arose in the morning he "opened the doors of the house of the Lord". Verse 15. There were no 'doors' in the original Tabernacle, only curtains, beautiful tapestries. Eli sat on a special seat by the gate of the Tabernacle on the outside. This was probably his 'Judgment Seat', but the gate was not a hinged wooden affair, but was also made of curtains, Exodus 27:13-16. Because of what the scripture says, I think that we are justified in thinking that the Tabernacle was the one that was constructed at Moses' command, see Psalms 78:60. If this was so, then our original assumption that Eli slept in the Holy Place, and Samuel in the Holy of Holies, would be correct.

Some question this assumption, saying that only the High Priest was to enter there, and then only once a year. We would agree that this was so when the word of God was obeyed, but there was terrible departure from that word in Eli's time. We are not even told that the Great Day of Atonement was observed. There was corruption, confusion and anarchy, and blatant sin was being practiced right there at the Tabernacle. It is true that later God dealt with Dagon the fish god of the Philistines, and brought him down before the Ark. God also slew seventy men of Bethshemesh, who out of mere curiosity lifted the lid of the Ark to look inside. He also slew Uzzah who put his hand on the Ark to steady it and to keep it from falling. Yet it would seem that such was the confusion, that Samuel had made the Holy of Holies his bedroom, and it was there that God came and spoke to him.

At first Samuel thought that Eli was calling him, so he got up from his bed and ran to where Eli was. However Eli told him that he did not call him, and instructed him to go and lie down again. This happened three times, when at last Eli woke up to the fact that perhaps the Lord was calling the boy. It had been a long time since anything like this had happened that he had not expected such a thing to take place. He then instructed Samuel as to what to do if he was to hear the voice again. He was to reply "Speak Lord for thy servant hears." Samuel must have been trembling all over, and doubtless was afraid to go to sleep. He did lie down again, but soon afterwards he heard the voice once again. It seemed to him to be coming from right beside his bed. This was indeed so, because the Mighty Eternal Jehovah had come and stationed Himself right by Samuel's bed. This was a frightening and awesome experience for

1 Samuel Chapter 3

by Charles E. Wigg

the boy. The very God to whom his mother prayed, the One whose glory she sought, had come so near to him. Samuel had known about Jehovah, and for years now he had been ministering to Him, yet he did not know Him personally, even though that God had given him as a gift to his godly mother!

God called Samuel by his name twice, "Samuel, Samuel!" This showed that God knew the boy's name, He was personally interested in him. He was not just a mighty but indifferent power, He desired that little Samuel might come to know Him personally, He wanted to enjoy a close communion with that boy, and it was His plan to make use of him as his mouthpiece. Let me say to the one that reads these words, God is no less interested in you. He wants you to come to know Him intimately! He wants to use you for His glory, and for the blessing of others also. Samuel had no Bible, except the first five books of the Old Testament, and it is possible that he had never seen even those books. (The Torah.)

When God chooses to reveal Himself to us today, He usually does so through His word. He does not do so by appearing to us in dreams, or visions, or by spoken audible voice. The Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Holy Scripture to write the words down for us, He takes that same word and through it speaks to us. He does not do so with audible voice, but instead He makes the Word itself to speak to us, to come alive, and to convict us.

In my own case, though only a small boy, yet my parents had faithfully taught me the word of God, and the simple truths that my small mind could understand. I never did reject anything that they taught me, I believed it all. Amongst the things that they taught me, was the wonderful fact that the Lord Jesus is coming to take all that belong to Him to be with Himself. I never doubted this, but it did not trouble me a bit. However the time came when I did begin to be troubled by the fact that if He did come, then I was not ready, and in the parable of the ten virgins, it was only those that were ready, that went in to the marriage feast.

This began to trouble me so much that I felt afraid, and I found it hard to sleep, and I was always relieved to wake in the morning and find that my parents were still with us. We may ask, "What made the difference, because I knew about this fact previously?" The answer must surely be that the Holy Spirit had begun to convict me of sin, and to convict me of the fact that I (though but a small child), was not fit for the presence of God. Then when one of my brothers suggested that I receive Christ as my Saviour, and confess Him as my Lord, I was ready and willing to do so. I did so at home one Sunday night after we had returned from a Gospel meeting, and I am happy to say that the Lord saved me then. He gave me the assurance that I was saved. He gave me His peace and I have never been afraid in the same way ever since. I knew then that if He should come I was ready to go to be with Him.

SAMUEL'S FIRST MEETING WITH GOD

When God came and stood by Samuel's bed, He called his name twice, & Samuel said what Eli had told him to say, except that (possibly through fright or nervousness), he did not mention Jehovah's name. However he did not yet know Jehovah, so this could have been why he did not mention His holy name. God revealed to Samuel what He was about to do. Things that He had already told Eli through the unnamed prophet and it must have sounded terrible to Samuel. God had patiently borne so long with the terrible departure from His holy word, and the horrible abuses of their privileged position, the great wickedness of Eli's sons. But now He was about to pour out His holy wrath, and over many years He would perform everything that He had said. Again He warned that no offering or sacrifice that they could offer would purge the iniquity of Eli's house forever.

Hophni and Phinehas were to die on the same day and Eli too, and his daughter in law also died on that same day. This was to have a profound effect on Samuel's life also, because he had grown to love the old

1 Samuel Chapter 3

by Charles E. Wigg

man Eli, and it was a joy to him to be able to help and serve him. But now he was to lose the protection that the old man's presence and counsel afforded him. His life would never be the same again, and (at least for a time), the burden of carrying on the priestly service would rest on his young shoulders.

It is said that "Samuel lay until the morning", (verse 15). He lay awake probably unable to sleep, pondering in his mind the implications of the message that he had been given. He feared to tell Eli the vision, the message that God had given him. This was in part because he did not wish to hurt the old man whom he had come to love. It was also in part because he did not know how Eli would react to such awful news. So when the day dawned he arose from his bed, and went about his daily duties, as if nothing had happened. But God did not allow him to keep the message to himself, and though it was very hard for him to do, yet he must faithfully deliver the message that God had given. He was to learn through this bitter experience what it was to be a channel of God's word to others.

SAMUEL BECOMES A PROPHET

Eli now called Samuel, and spoke to him in the tones of the greatest affection, "Samuel my son", and he answered with his normal willingness, "Here am I". But then he said "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" Eli then pronounced a solemn curse, that if for whatever reason, Samuel was to hide from him anything of what God had revealed to him, then the judgement would fall on Samuel himself. Samuel did not want this to happen, and though perhaps he was afraid of what Eli might do to him, he may become angry and violent. Perhaps Samuel looked around, and surveyed the surroundings, so that he might escape if this was to happen; yet he stood like a man and delivered the message that God had given him, and thus delivered his soul also.

Then for the first time in his life, he witnessed the power of God's word, (he was to see this often in the years that followed). He saw the old man bow his head, and he heard him say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". Samuel had passed the first test, but if he had failed that test, if he had kept back anything of the message that God had given him, whether out of love for Eli, or out of the fear of the consequences that might come to him, we may never have read of him again.

Thus this little boy became an example to everyone that God would call to serve Him, even in our own day. We have a solemn responsibility. Let us never flinch from declaring what ever message God may give us to whoever God would have us give it! Let us never fail to deliver, either through fear or favour, the message that God has given us, and let us leave the results with him! The word is not ours, but His, and we must answer to him finally. Paul could say to the Ephesian elders, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God". Acts 20:18-27. If we fear what men may do to us, then the fear of man brings a snare, let us not be taken in that snare!

THE LORD WAS WITH HIM

Thus began for Samuel a life of sweet communion with God. The Eternal God was no stranger to him now, and as he grew he became a constant channel of the word of God to others. God let none of his words fall to the ground. He did not have to trumpet his successes, or to resort to advertising or publicity, because all Israel from its furthest bounds knew That Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

Shiloh had once again become a place of blessing, because the Lord appeared there again, He revealed Himself, (not to every one), but to Samuel, by the word of the Lord. A spiritual revival had begun. It began first with Hannah, then with Samuel, and ultimately it spread to all Israel.

1 Samuel Chapter 3

by Charles E. Wigg

This is how true spiritual revival always begins. It always begins with an individual, but it is the work of the Living God, and it will then spread to others by His living word. May our prayer be "**Lord let it begin with me!**"