

Theme: An absence of God's Word is a great curse, but God is faithful to raise up true prophets to speak forth His word.

I. Literary devices - A New Character

- A. The way new characters are introduced is important
- B. Samuel is a major character in these books
- C. He is introduced in relation to the Word - a prophet
- D. This tells us about Samuel - and Israel's problems

II. When the Word Was Rare In Israel

- A. The Word of the Lord had been absent from Israel
The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.
In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. 1 Samuel 3:1

- 1. The word was rare - in Israel!
- 2. Not many visions - no prophets to hear from God

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 1 Samuel 3:7

- 1. Samuel had faithfully ministered for several years
- 2. But he did not know the Lord - the Word had not yet been revealed to him
- 3. This was why he did not recognize when Yahweh called him
- 4. And he was the best they had at the tabernacle!

- B. When God's Word is absent - it is severe judgment!

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land — not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. ¹² Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. Amos 8:11–12

- 1. Amos predicted this calamity for Israel - no Word
- 2. No greater judgment can befall a people
- 3. This was what had happened in Eli's day
- 4. This is a disaster for any people - but especially the people of God!
- 5. This explains the sin of chapter 2!

III. The Word Returns To Israel

- A. Whole passage is centered on the return of the Word
The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.
In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. 1 Samuel 3:1

And Samuel's word came to all Israel. 1 Samuel 4:1

- 1. An inclusio - begins and ends with the word
- 2. Beginning - word is rare; ending - word to all Israel
- 3. The word DBR - word - occurs 14 times in chapter

- B. The Word is seen as returning throughout the passage

- 1. The Word comes to Samuel for the first time

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: **The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him...**¹⁰ The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, **“Speak, for your servant is listening.”**¹¹ **And the Lord said to Samuel:** “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. 1 Samuel 3:7, 10–11

- a. Samuel had never heard the Word
 - b. Samuel is open and hears the Word
 - c. God speaks to Samuel
2. Eli stresses that the Word is returning through Samuel
- “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 from me **anything** he **told** you.” 1 Samuel 3:17
- a. Some form of DBR occurs 5 times in this one verse
 - b. “What was the **word** he **spoke** to you?...Don’t hide from me any **word** of all the **word** which He **spoke** to you.”
 - c. Eli is recognizing - the Word has returned!
3. God’s Word returns through Samuel the prophet
- The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and **he let none of his words fall to the ground.**²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.²¹ **The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.**¹ **And Samuel’s word came to all Israel.** 1 Samuel 3:19–4:1
- a. Samuel’s word is linked to God’s Word (3:19; 4:1)

- b. God continues to appear at Shiloh
- c. God revealed to Samuel through the Word
- d. We have vision and word like in 3:1
- e. But this is a complete reversal of 3:1
- f. The Word has returned

IV. The Word and the Prophet

- A. Samuel is seen to be a prophet of the Lord
- And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.²¹ The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.^{4:1} And Samuel’s word came to all Israel. 1 Samuel 3:20–4:1
1. All Israel - north to South - recognizes Samuel as a prophet
 2. God appears to Samuel in vision & word - signs of a prophet
 3. Samuel’s word goes out to all Israel - prophet
- B. The prophet and the Word of the Lord
- And the Lord said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family — from beginning to end.¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.¹⁴ Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’” 1 Samuel 3:11–14

1. This is a very tough first word!
2. Hard to say this to anyone - much less your 'father'
3. A prophet does not relish speaking difficult words
 - a. Samuel did not jump up and tell Eli
 - b. He was clearly reticent - Eli had to encourage him
 - c. This is not just because he was young - it is compassion
 - d. Later we will see Samuel loves Saul - not the judgment placed on Saul
 - e. Anyone speaking the law of God with relish is warped - not spiritual
4. The fearful call of speaking God's Word

"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 from me anything he told you." 1 Samuel 3:17

 - a. A prophet must never hide or alter God's word
 - b. Faithfulness to the Word of God is paramount

C. Our call as prophets of God

1. Of course, Samuel the prophet is just a type of Jesus - THE PROPHET
2. Through Jesus, we all have the Spirit and are prophets of God

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. Acts 2:17-18

- a. In the new covenant, all of us have received the Spirit and are prophets
- b. All of us are called to hear and speak God's Word
- c. This can be a fearful call - but we must speak
- d. But as new covenant prophets our emphasis is on the Good News - Christ has come!
- e. But we must faithfully proclaim that Word to all
- f. We leave the results to God - we proclaim the Word far and wide!

V. Applying the Word

A. Do we receive the Word from our Prophet - Jesus?

1. This is where it begins - we must receive before we speak
2. How central is the Word of God in our life?
3. Do we hear the Word of the Lord - or just the world?
4. Do we take time daily to say "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening?"
5. Do we gather weekly to say "Speak Lord for your servants are listening"?

B. Do we speak the Word of the Lord to others?

1. We are all given the Spirit and called prophets
2. Prophets do not just hear the Word - they tell it to others
3. Do we speak God's Word to others - spouse, children, neighbors, friends?

4. Do we speak God's Word faithfully - of compromise for popularity?
5. To speak faithfully, our identity must be found in God - not others
6. No reason for a famine of the Word in the new covenant - lets speak God's Word boldly!

C. The Table of Our Prophet, Priest and King

1. Bread - the Word of the Prophet Jesus concerning our sin
2. Wine - the ministry of our priest to forgive our sin
3. Covenant renewal - receive the Word of our King and speak it to others

The Word and the Prophet

1 Samuel 3
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Communion
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24