

MAY 8

1 Samuel 2:22-4:22

1 Samuel 2:22-36

Vs. 22-25 The obvious question is why Eli didn't stop his sons. I have a theory, but here it is enough to say that if Eli knew they were wrong and he loved the Lord, he would have stopped them. Jesus said, *whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me* (Matt.10:37). I think that statement held true back then also. This would be strike one for him.

V. 25 This is a strange editorial note that the Lord wanted to put them to death. Sad as it seems, Eli should have been the one to bring them to trial. If Eli had acted now, things would have been different, but alas.

V. 26 This is another strange editorial note, but we know where it's leading. God is getting Samuel ready. This sentence indicates the passage of time. This also sounds like the comment regarding Jesus in Luke 2:52, *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.*

Vs. 27-36 It was bad enough that Eli personally allowed this, but God's own people suffered as a result. Eli did what was right in his own eyes too. Think of the contrast between this priest and Phinehas in the book of Numbers, who saw the plague on the camp, heard the cries of the people dying and then saw this guy take a Midianite woman into his tent. Phinehas raced into action to save the people. Eli allowed the people to die and sink into ignorance and spiritual adultery.

The punishment promised on Eli's family's lineage will begin soon. It will become almost fully fulfilled as David runs from Saul, and then, just before David's death, it will be complete. From that point on, no other Levites of this lineage will ever serve as priest. Just for some balance here: the sins of the fathers do not determine the fate of any who choose to follow the Lord. One famous son who comes from the family lineage of Eli will never serve as a priest, but did pretty well as a prophet: Jeremiah.

Notice the references here to food in vs. 29 and 36.

So, after receiving this condemnation from God, Eli does nothing. Time passes by and life goes on. Maybe God forgot.

1 Samuel 3

V. 1 This is another "passage of time" verse. Actually, there is a kind of interchange going on between Eli and his sons, and Samuel.

Vs. 2-3 The idea here is that because of his eyes, Eli was using Samuel more and more. The lamp was the lampstand in the Holy Place. Samuel had to sleep in the Holy Place to trim the lamp before it went out. I don't get this, but apparently they were trying to conserve oil or something and so they only filled it just before the oil was gone. On the other side of the veil was the Holy of Holies, the ark of the covenant and the presence of God. That is where the voice came from.

Vs. 4-9 Funny. Eli finally got it.

Vs. 10-18 This was not only Samuel becoming a prophet, but it was a confirmation to Eli. It is funny how the Lord used this. Only Eli and the "man of God" would have known what God said to him. Now, those words and that condemnation came out of Samuel's mouth, and Eli knew without a doubt that it was the Lord who spoke to Samuel.

So why didn't Eli run out and remove his sons and send them both somewhere bad, into exile, like Hollywood, or Las Vegas or Australia? This is strike two. Don't say God doesn't give people chances to hear the Word and do it. Eli still could have honored God and found mercy.

Vs. 19-21 Who knows how old Samuel was and how much time had passed; but, no thanks to Eli, God was preparing Samuel for leadership and acceptance by the people. Obviously, 1 Samuel 4:1 belongs to this block of verses. It is interesting to see how the Lord gave Samuel his stature. His renown was that the Lord spoke to him, and the words that Samuel communicated were sure. 1 Samuel 4:1 belongs here, too.

It is probably during this time that Samson was roaming the earth, got dumb, got caught and died, taking the Philistine leadership with him. Israel would have seen this as an opportunity to rebel and break the Philistine dominance.

1 Samuel 4

Vs. 2-4 Notice that no one asked the Lord if this battle was a good idea. After the defeat, it just seemed like a good idea to bring the ark. Now they would be invincible, right? I think this was the thinking behind "Raiders of the Lost Ark." The problem with this premise is that the ark was taken into battle due to disobedience and ignorance, and Israel lost the battle. Actually, it didn't work out any better for the bad guys in Raiders.

Thinking our thoughts are God's thoughts is crazy. If we have the Word, we know better. The Word warns us against presuming on God. Just before this, it mentioned that Samuel had established a supernatural track record of being right and speaking the Word of God. Why didn't they go to Samuel?

Vs. 5-11 The Philistines were bad guys and pagans but they did have some knowledge of Israel and their God. I'm impressed with the Philistines and their courage here, but really they express the reason they fought. This same God had allowed Israel to be their slaves. There wasn't anything wrong with God, but there was something awfully wrong with Israel.

Vs. 12-18 The only thing I want to draw your attention to is the death of Eli. Verse 18 says that Eli was a fat guy. The Lord doesn't go out of His way to mention size often. I think Eli was fat because he ate way too much. Where did Eli get his food? From his sons. This is just me, but I think Eli's god was his belly. The reason he didn't stop his sons was because that would have stopped the food, and the forbidden cuts of meat he received from them. And besides, God didn't seem to care. God's silence and those nice cuts of meat were the reason Eli never took direct action. Now God did something like Judo. He used Eli's own weight against him, to bring his death.

Vs. 19-22 Phinehas' wife died giving birth to a son at this awful time in Israel's history. She gave the boy an awful name, *the glory has departed*. Talk about being marked for life. I'm sure that was a hit in junior high school.

Humanly speaking, this seems like Israel's darkest hour. The high priest and his sons were dead, the ark was captured and the armies of Israel were defeated. Everything was bad, except for one young man who had been prepared for this moment.

After this reading today, I see two things that are important for us as disciples. First, we should never assume God has to bless us because we use His stuff. Israel used the ark, assuming God would bless because they dragged it into harm's way. Because we attend church or do something, "in the name of God," doesn't cause God to have to bless us. Nothing replaces understanding His Word and obedience to it.

Second, when the Lord grooms a person to follow and to lead, it has to do with knowing God and His Word, not just having "god thoughts" and "god feelings" based on our feeling of what God would do if we were Him. Our lives are separated from everything and made "holy" by the Word. John 17:17 *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

John 5:24-47

Reading John is like reading a book subtitled, "The Story of the Word Made Flesh, Who Dwelt Among Us." There is a lot of "Word" going on here. It might be worth your while to read John 5:1-23 from yesterday to get the context here. If you read this whole chapter and are confused, that's good. Unless you are gifted or brilliant or something, it takes you more than one time through to really get the gist of what Jesus is saying. I've had to pray for help understanding this and I've had to read it through...so far, maybe 30-50 times. It really is a matter of how honestly you want to seek God to understand something.

As you read this, underline the personal pronouns, *me, I, my*.

V. 24 This is the grand conclusion to v. 23. Jesus, the Son, sent from the Father, gives eternal life by His Word.

Vs. 25-30 Jesus has said that the Father gave all judgment to the Son in v. 22. Jesus now explains this in a way the Pharisees would understand since they believed in the resurrection.

Notice that vs. 25 and 28 both refer to hearing the Son's voice. Jesus is saying that He is the responsible party.

V. 25 This verse talks about hearing *the voice of the Son of God*. Then it gets strange because it talks of the Father granting the Son the right to have life in Himself and giving Him authority. If the Son is the Son of God, God the Son, He already has that life. But, Jesus is the Word made flesh, and as a man, that authority has to be conferred upon Him as a human representative of God, the Son of Man. Jesus is the only human being to whom this ability and authority has ever been conferred.

V. 27 As the human representative of God, Jesus is the Son of Man, the coming eternal king from Daniel 7.

V. 28 The voice that the dead will hear is from the divine Son of God and the human Son of Man. The Pharisees would have understood the meaning of these titles and they would have understood Jesus claiming to be God. I'll bet as Jesus was talking, the chief priest and scribes and Pharisees could feel their hearts hardening.

Vs. 31-40 After such a mammoth claim, there had to be some confirming testimony. How would you know this was true? Jesus gives four sources of testimony.

Vs. 32-35 John bore testimony to Jesus. Jesus says that He didn't need John's testimony, but it was something that was easily familiar to these men, something they understood. Notice too why He used John as testimony to Himself in v. 34, that they would accept this and be saved. Jesus was hoping for some faith.

V. 36 The signs from the Father bore witness. This is what led Nicodemus to Jesus in John 3.

Vs. 37-38 The Father Himself bore testimony. Whether they believed it or not, the Father sent the Son. They could deny the testimony, but they couldn't deny that Jesus was with them. They just refused to see the connection. The testimony was still true. Verse 38 is a rebuke to their unbelief.

Vs. 38-40 The Scriptures bore testimony to Jesus. This would have been an insane claim if Jesus were not God the Son, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior of mankind. But He was and is.

Vs. 41-44 This is part of the summary of the chapter, a chapter which deals with Jesus being glorified by the Father by the signs He performed as He followed the Father. It is interesting that Jesus says they did not seek for the glory that came from God. Their entire focus was to be held in esteem by one another.

Vs. 45-47 Jesus shocked them saying that their condemnation would come from Moses. This is interesting because this sounds just like what Abraham told the rich man who had died. *But he*

said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.” (Luke 16:31)

What breaks the power of sin is welcoming God's Word of deliverance, turning from our sin and welcoming Christ into our lives as Savior and Lord. That is all conveyed through the Word. In some terribly small but important way, like a person lying in the throes of death, we raise our eyes in faith and acknowledgement of that Word...and life begins.

Psalm 106:1-12

For the next few days we'll be in Psalm 106. It is interesting to me, that when Israel needed to remember the *steadfast love* of the Lord, they thought back to the Exodus and wandering through the wilderness.

For us, too, there are times when the Lord allows us to have to cling strongly, over weeks and months and years, to His steadfast love. So, what do you remember? What do you go back to? Many of us have one or more significant experiences, but one that I notice many people do not mention first is their own salvation.

Israel's confirmation of God's love was to have sprung out of their love and gratefulness for their rescue, their salvation, and their inclusion in God's plan of redemption. That is the same for us. And there are seasons when He allows us to go through hard times so we can redefine ourselves, our values and our lives to the one thing that is really the most important thing about us, Jesus.

It looks to me that this psalm could have been written during the time that David was building unity in Israel at the beginning of his reign. The psalm more or less ends with a reference to the confusion in Judges. God's faithfulness through Exodus to Judges is highlighted. Many lands had captured people from Israel, and David would have been asking for God's grace to rebuild the nation and to lead the people back to Israel.

On the other hand, this could have been written after the exile as a reminder to God to show that same grace in bringing the exiles back to Israel. I would vote for the time of David, but after the exile works too.

Vs. 1-3 The emphasis of the *steadfast love* of the Lord in this call to worship sounds like David. Also the call to praise is very familiar.

Vs. 4-5 This seems to come from the king of Israel, asking for help to rebuild the nation and to lead them into the promised blessing. After the exile there was no king.

Vs. 6-12 Built into the law was the command to pray to God, confessing one's own sins and then confessing the sins of their fathers.

Proverbs 14:30-31

So, when the earth shakes around us and the nations rage and the thoughts of our hearts disquiet us, where do we learn to find tranquility? Our money? Our job? Our comfort in life? Our nationality? Those things anchor us to the earth and make our hearts thirst for more earth.

If He is our tranquility, we become pilgrims here on earth who are ready to share bread from the One who shared bread with us. I was just reading Jesus saying, *Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* (John 12:25)