

Chapter Sixteen – Samuel Grows Up

Samuel was born when his mother was very old. His mother prayed to God and promised him that if she had a son, she would make sure that he would serve God for the rest of his life. Because of this, he was sent to stay with the priest Eli when he was a boy.

Now Eli had two sons who were also priests but they were scoundrels and misused their authority to rip off the pilgrims and worshippers. Eli warned them but they did not listen to him. God appeared to him and told him that he and his family would be punished if they did not fulfill their duties as priests.

Now Eli was very old and almost blind. One night Samuel heard someone calling him. At first he thought it was Eli so he went to his room and said, "Here I am, have you called me?"

"No," said Eli, "I did not call you; you must be dreaming. Go back to sleep."

This happened three times, and finally Eli realized that it was God calling so he said to Samuel, "If you hear the voice again, speak to the Lord and tell him that you are listening." When God called him for the fourth time, Samuel got up and said, "Speak Lord, I am listening." Then he heard the voice of God speaking, "Tell Eli that I am going to punish him and his family for not listening to the warnings I gave him about correcting the evil-doing of his sons. On a certain day in the near future he and his sons will die."

When morning came, Samuel was afraid to meet Eli. Eli asked him what message God had given but Samuel did not want to tell him. Eli insisted that he had to tell him the message or else God would punish him. So he told him. And when Eli heard the message, he said, "He is the Lord; he will do whatever seems best to him."

A short time later there was a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. When the Israelites began to lose, the two sons of Eli took the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield. They knew that the Ark would put more fighting spirit into their warriors. They did this without telling Eli. At first, the Philistines were struck with fear when they heard that the Ark was with the Israelites. However, God was not on the side of the Israelites. They lost the battle and the two sons of Eli were killed together with many others. Moreover, the precious Ark was taken away by the Philistines. A messenger was sent to Eli to tell him the terrible news. When he heard about the Ark, he was so shocked that he fell backwards from his chair and broke his neck and died.



Young Samuel is presented to Eli

Questions:

1. What evil things did the sons of Eli do?
2. What was the responsibility of Eli towards his sinful sons?
3. Why did Samuel not want to give God's message to Eli?
4. Find out and explain the meaning of the Ark of the Covenant.
5. Besides Samuel, choose one other person from the Old Testament who followed the "voice of God". Explain your answer.
6. Suggest a person in the modern world who followed the "voice of God". Explain your answer.