After Darkness, Light: Samuel Established as a Prophet

1 Sam 3:1-4:1a

I. *Post Tenebras Lux* - "After Darkness Light" (Protestant Reformation motto in Geneva)

A. Context of 1 Samuel 3

1. Israel needs God to graciously give them a leader who fears God and listens to God's Word (It is the time of Judges).
2. So, in a book about God providing his people with a King, we find that His Word must return to primacy.

B. The bookends of 1 Samuel 3 (3:1, 4:1a) take us from darkness to light.

II. Spiritual Darkness: God's Silence (1 Sam. 3:1-3)

A. The Word of God was rare (1-2). Why?

1. Eli and his sons were not ministering the Word faithfully
2. God's silence becomes a judgment (cp. 1 Sam. 28:15, Amos 8:11-12, Rom. 1)

B. But God is not done showing mercy – The lamp has not gone out (3)

III. The Lord Calls Samuel to Receive His Word (3:4-10)

A. Why didn't Samuel or Eli recognize the LORD's voice?

1. Eli is spiritually dim-sighted due to his sin/self-indulgence.
2. Samuel did not yet know the LORD (3:7. Cf. with Eli's sons who rejected the Lord in 2:12)

B. Why does Samuel run to Eli when he hears his name called (v. 5, 6, 8)?

1. His reflex is to respond with listening ears to his human authority.
2. Application to child-rearing: Training children to respond to the voice of parents is preparing them to respond to God's Word.
    a. Do we exercise our leadership in a way that prepares those under our care to respond quickly to God's Word?
    b. Do we place ourselves under God-given authorities with quick obedience to model this too (and to prepare our reflexes to respond quickly to God's commands)?

C. Application: Don't look for special revelation, but obey the written Word of God.

1. This section is not teaching us how to learn to hear special revelation, secret revelation, from God (see Heb. 1:1).
2. We have God's word. We need to pick up His Word and read it, to hear it, and obey Him.

IV. The First Message Given to Samuel (3:11-18)

A. The ear-tingling prophecy (1 Sam 3:11-14 cp. 2:27-36)

1. What had Eli done wrong? (1 Sam. 3:13)
    a. Literally nothing. Inaction with God-given authority is egregious sin.
    b. As a priest and as a father, he failed to wield the authority God gave him for God's glory.

2. Why can it "not be atoned for by sacrifice"? (1 Sam. 3:14)

a. Their sin was a total repudiation of the need and means of being reconciled to God (of the idea that God was holy and the sacrifices to make one right with God).
b. Hebrews 10:26-29 gives a New Testament warning about repudiating the means the NC gives for reconciliation to God.

B. Delivering the message (1 Sam. 3:15-18)
1. What will Samuel do with the Word of the LORD?
   a. Samuel must be faithful to speak the Word (see how he does this to Saul and David later)
   b. Samuel's must fear God more than man. This is the foundation of godly leadership.
2. Application
   a. Speaking the truth in love is key in ministering God's Word to one another – we must not shrink back from declaring any of God's Word (Ezk. 3:17-21, Acts 20:26-27)
   b. If a preacher (or friend) never speaks a Word from God that convicts you, then you should wonder if he truly loves God.
   c. If he is always happy to speak difficult words, you may wonder if he loves you.

C. What should Eli's response have been? (repentance)

V. After Darkness, Light: Samuel is Established as a Prophet (3:19-4:1a)

VI. Conclusion

A. What God does in response to the leadership crisis
1. He doesn't bring them a leadership consultant. He raises up a prophet (i.e., gives His Word)
2. God's Word received and obeyed is the prerequisite for any spiritual leadership.
3. God is demonstrating that by taking insignificant, powerless Samuel and giving Him His word so that he can be the priest and prophet Israel needs BEFORE giving them a king.

B. We are not in Israel's position
1. We are not in need of another prophet like Samuel.
2. Christ has come as the ultimate prophet, priest, and king.

C. However, we must still apply the centrality of God's Word to our lives and leadership needs.
1. "Revival and reformation in the church, and in our individual lives, can come only in the same manner as it came to the Israel of Samuel's day: by the restoring of the divine Word in the hearts and minds of God's people"[1]
2. Every generation must receive and proclaim God's Word, lest we have a famine of the Word of God as we saw in Judges and in Amos 8:11-12.
   a. We might think, "Thankfully the Word of God isn't rare now since we have the Bible in our language."
   b. But we can have it and neglect it, as Dale Ralph Davis points out, "Starvation may not come from absence of food but from lack of appetite."[2]

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[1] Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken and Richard D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 68.

[2] Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 44.