

SEEING THE LIGHT AGAINST THE DARKNESS

1 Samuel 2:12-21

April 28, 2024

Introduction: We can see the stars and planets at night because the sky is dark.

The Scriptures often teach us by contrasts. Exs. Psalm 1 and Proverbs 21:8 “The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright.”

Our text today contrasts Eli’s worthless sons, Hophni and Phinehas, with Samuel, the man of God. As we see the light of the stars against the darkness of the night sky, we see the light of hope our God is raising up in the boy Samuel and all he represents in God’s redemptive plan, against the darkness of sin in Eli’s house. As we have seen in previous weeks, one world is ending. Eli and his priestly line will be cut off and a new world has been born and is growing. God will now shepherd His people through Samuel and through those he will anoint as kings. I Samuel 2:12-21 does much more than continue the story filling in background information. In these verses we find clues which anticipate all that follows...

Our text divides into two sections: First, the darkness of Eli’s house in verses 12-17. Secondly, the light of hope in Samuel in verses 18-21.

- I. The Darkness of Eli’s House (12-17)
 - A. Who they were: “sons of Belial” (2 Cor. 6:14-15). “What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Beliel? or what portion does a believer have with an unbeliever? Hophni and Phinehas, lawless, corrupt, wicked...
 - B. Why they were this way: “they did not know the Lord” (Jer. 2:8)
 - C. Examples of their rebellion and great sin (verses 13-16)
 1. They robbed the worshippers (13-14) The custom of the priests with the people...when any man offered sacrifice, the servant of the priest (na’ar) with his three-pronged fork... all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Question: was this according to the Law? (Lev. 7:31-32)
Note: the breast and the thigh belonged to the priests (Aaron and his sons)
The law specified exactly what portion belonged to the priests and what portions may be eaten by the worshipper and his family in the peace offerings.
 2. They robbed Yahweh (15-16) (Lev. 3:3-5; 16-17)
Note: to burn the fat signified offering it up in smoke as a pleasing aroma to Yahweh.
 - D. Commentary: “the sin of the young men was VERY GREAT” vs. 17
The priests were to guard knowledge and instruct the people as messengers of Yahweh (Mal. 2:7ff). Hophni and Phinehas were doing the exact opposite. They were false shepherds, who would incur a stricter judgement. The priests were to be holy to the Lord, for holiness befits His house. **Yet they treated the offering of the Lord with contempt** and lead the people of God astray, as many religious leaders do today.
Application: How was this possible? Hophni and Phinehas had grown up near the sanctuary of Yahweh. No doubt they had been taught about the God of Israel and His law. Yet they did not know Him...Without a true reverence and fear of God, for them the holy had become common place and mundane. Worst still, they

robbed the worshippers of God and even God Himself! They were so close and yet so far away. They did not know the Lord.! Rom. 2:20ff describes their actions. They had the law but dishonored God by breaking the law. As a result, the Name of God was being blasphemed or scorned because of them. As Malachi goes on to say, “But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of Hosts.”

II. The Light of Hope in Samuel (18-21)

A. What he did “ministering before the Lord” (vs. 18)

B. His clothing was appropriate to his calling (18-19)

1. Linen ephod – the garment of the priests (Ex. 28:4)

2. Little robe – outer garment worn during religious service

What is ironic, is that he is not of the priestly line of Aaron. Also, he is only a boy (na’ar), the same term used for the priest’s servant in the first section...

C. Eli’s blessing upon Elkanah and Hannah (vs, 20)

D. This was not a fruitless blessing

1. The significance of God’s blessing on Elkanah’s family – As we saw last week, when a woman who is barren and without child receives the promise from God that she will have a son, God is up to something. In this time when the Word of the Lord was rare, Samuel has been born and given to the God of Israel as a Nazarite.

2. Yahweh visited Hannah (As He did Sarah - Gen. 21:1-2)

3. God’s blessing of three sons and two daughters

E. Commentary: The section on Samuel is bookended with verses 18 and 21

“And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord. (lit. with Yahweh)

God has not forsaken His covenant people.

Everything here stirs in us anticipation and hope to see how God will bring salvation to His people.

III. Principle Applications to us at Christ the King

A. This passage shows us the depths of sinful, fallen, human nature – both in terms of Eli’s sons and Eli himself. Sadly, there are many today who lead the people of God astray and have by their lives and teaching caused people to blaspheme the Name of God.

B. Ultimately, all the priests, prophets, and kings fell short of their role to shepherd God’s people. In the time of the judges, the priests and the Levites were abandoning their service to Yahweh.

C. Our faithful God raises up His chosen instruments even during the darkest of times and sometimes in the darkest of places. Samuel was ministering to the Lord and growing in Shiloh! He would go on to serve the Lord of might and strength faithfully all his life judging Israel. He would be established as a prophet of the Lord and offer sacrifices as the law of God prescribed. In this way, Samuel is a

type of Christ, the true Prophet, Priest and King and points us to Him as the True Light.

- D. While I do not want to conclude this message by veering off in a moralistic direction, there is much to learn from the example of young Samuel. Final exhortation to covenant children: “His mother used to make for him a **little** robe and take it to him each year...” (2:19) Grow in the Lord (Ps. 92:12-15) “The righteous flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.” As covenant children, you have an incredible privilege and responsibility. God has given you a home as in Deut. 6 where you are taught the things of the Lord. In your education you are being taught about the mighty acts of God and how our world and life view must flow from all that God has revealed about Himself. You are blessed to be a member of a faithful church where you receive the means of grace in the Word, prayer, and sacraments. Don’t make the common, foolish mistake of many to think that your childhood and youth is the pre-game, and what you do, think, and say doesn’t really matter until you are an adult, until it really matters. Today really matters! Now is the time! God has greatly blessed you! Grow strong and flourish in the house of the Lord.
In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration: Bless the covenant children of this church to be light in the darkness. May each generation be more committed to You and to your Church than the previous one until You return. Strengthen and consecrate the under shepherds of our church and all heads of households to lead their families by their teaching and example according to Your Word.