

Revelation - 1 Samuel 3:21

I. INTRODUCTION = 1 Samuel 3:1-4

II. TEXT

A. A Dark Time

1. It was a dark time; a time really, not unlike our own.
2. Israel was weak because she was turning away from God.
3. The nation was fractured & divided.
 - a. Each of the 12 tribes was governed by their own leaders who were preoccupied with their own problems.
 - b. The nation was struggling politically, economically & socially.
4. There was no national vision, no purpose that united the tribes in a single pursuit of greatness.
 - a. There was nothing positive on the horizon; no goal deemed worthy of working toward.
 - b. Everyone was consumed with the struggle of daily survival.
 - c. The future was uncertain; more something to fear than look forward to.
5. The one institution with the potential to unify & instill hope was the priesthood at Shiloh where the tabernacle stood.
 - a. Three times every year all the adult men gathered there to worship God.
 - b. Eli the high priest could then remind them they were the people of God; their great privilege was to take His revelation to the ends of the Earth.
 - c. But Eli was lazy – a mere functionary who only went through the motions of his office.
 - d. He'd delegated the *real work* to his sons, Hophni & Phinehas.
 - e. They followed their dad's lead & furthered the departure from their holy calling by turning the priesthood into a *scam* to satisfy their greed & lust.
6. The result was a massive loss of interest in religion.
 - a. People *hated* going to Shiloh to worship because they knew they'd only get ripped off.
 - b. The thing that made Israel *unique* among the nations was her covenant with God.
 - c. But because of the corruption of the priests, the people had lost interest in the covenant.
 - d. Like a ship without a rudder, they fell to the mercy of the battering waves of world events; carried about by things beyond their control.

7. V. 1 says the Word of God was *rare* in those days. There was no widespread revelation –
 - a. Meaning God was not at the center of the national life.
 - b. The Torah, the Law of Moses was no longer the governing principle.
 - c. The priests, who ought to have been the teachers of the nation, had traded in God's counsel for the wisdom of man.
 - d. As well, there was no *nationally recognized* man or woman of God.
 - f. There *were individuals* like Hannah & Samuel who resisted the downward slide into apostasy that had gripped the nation & these enjoyed *personal* intimacy with God.

- g. But there was no one serving as God's spokesperson to the entire land.
- 8. God's revelation was no longer seen as the major factor in Israel's identity.
 - a. They were still called "Israel = Governed by God" –
 - b. And the tabernacle still stood at Shiloh; the religious show was still going on;
 - c. But the fact was, God had little to do with *any* of it.

B. Our Dark Time

1. There are some striking parallels between that time & our own.
 2. Like then, *our* nation is fractured & divided. We seem to have lost our way.
 - a. Our national destiny as stalwart defenders of Liberty has been dealt a series of blows by endless scandals.
 - b. Instead of standing for the cause of liberty, many both inside & outside our country see the US as a belligerent bully who uses its economic clout & military muscle to topple regimes that stand in our greedy way.
 3. Across the board, confidence in leadership is at an all time low.
 - a. Every branch & level of *government* is distrusted.
 - b. Some would lay the blame for that with the *media*, but the media fares no better; they aren't trusted either!
 - c. *All authority* is suspect.
 4. There's one scandal after another; in government, business, education, health care, you name it.
 5. People are left to fend for themselves against mounting daily struggles.
 6. And every month, another new crisis is added to the already seething cauldron of anxiety.
 - a. Terrorism, Global warming, the S/S crisis, Bird flu
 - b. Healthcare, Escalating fuel costs, Immigration, China.
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7. Where's the Church in all this? Where are the religious leaders who are divinely ordained by God to lead His people with diligence & integrity?
 8. Well, it would seem that for the most part, they're imitating Eli of old.
 - a. They're lazy functionaries,
 - b. Going through the motions of "churchianity."
 9. The Church has seen its own share of scandals among its leaders; it has its own Kenneth Lays & William Jeffersons;
 - a. They are modern day Hophnis & Phinehases—driven by greed & lust,
 - b. More interested in building an *earthly religious empire* than the Kingdom of God.
 - c. In their desire to attract a crowd, they use all kinds of gimmicks & tricks.
 - d. And you know what – the people come: But then a strange thing happens; some of you in this room today have experienced it firsthand . . .
 - e. Once the crowd comes to church, attracted by whatever flashy bait was used to bring them in, they say to themselves,
 - 1) "Okay, here I am IN CHURCH – tell me about God."
 - 2) "And I know the best tool to do that is His Word, the Bible. So let's go; give it to me."
 - f. And they wait, & wait, & wait—and all they get is more flashy bait.
 - g. They begin to wonder: "Are the leaders here really interested in me & my

- growth in Faith or just getting more people in the door?”
- h. Is this about the Gospel of Jesus Christ or *Joe Smith Ministries*
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10. Studying to prepare a sermon that’s a faithful explanation & application of the Scriptures is hard work.
- Because it’s difficult & requires concentration & effort, a lot of pastors & preachers opt for other ways to fill their pulpit time.
 - They join a sermon subscription service & receive weekly messages they quickly edit to make it sound more personal.
 - There are online sermon sites with tens of thousands of ready made messages.
 - Or you can buy packaged church programs & can take your congregation on a 40 day journey toward purpose.
 - The possibilities are endless.
 - But what’s missing from almost ALL of it is a commitment to be faithful to declare the whole counsel of God by teaching **through** The Bible.
11. Some years ago, one of the CC pastors was talking with Dr. J. Vernon McGee.
- As you probably know, his whole ministry was centered on teaching through the Bible = that’s why his ministry was called, *Through The Bible Radio*.
 - McGee lamented that so few pastors actually taught the Scriptures.
 - When asked **why** he thought that was, his reply was classic & telling, “Lazy! They’re all just a bunch of lazy preachers.”
12. This same CC pastor was at another time talking with one of the leaders of the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association* who said how much they’d come to respect the CC’s they’d worked with at Graham’s crusades.
- The reason why was because of the great job of follow up the CC’s did after a Crusade.
 - They’d done **lots** of studies over the years & were distressed by the low rate of retention of converts.
 - Only 30% of them were still going to church 5 years after the Crusade.
 - At the CC’s it was in the high 70’s.
 - When asked why, he said it was because those new believers were being taught the Word of God.
 - They weren’t learning ABOUT it, they were learning IT.
 - And that was laying a solid foundation for spiritual maturity.
13. This man went on to say something I thought profound.
- He said that at first the *Graham’s people* were concerned about CC because most of the pastors hadn’t attended seminary.
 - But after working with CC he’d **personally** come to the conclusion, that really, seminaries are an indictment against the church – that it’s not doing its job.
 - If the Church was doing & being what it’s supposed to – what NEED would there be for some **other** institution to train Christian leaders & pastors?
 - The Apostles didn’t attend seminary. Barnabas, Paul, Silas, Timothy & Titus didn’t attend seminary.

- e. They hung out with Jesus, Who IS the Word of God.
- f. If the church was doing its job of
 - Winning the lost **by** the Word,
 - Discipling the saved **in** the Word, &
 - Sending out the called **with** the Word,
 we wouldn't need a separate institution to train pastors.

C. **Not All Dark**

1. So there are some interesting similarities between our time & the period of Israel's history we're reading about here.
2. The most **important** similarity is found in the first half of v. 1.
3. Even though they were dark days, there was a bright spot in young Samuel.
4. Even though the professional priesthood was corrupt, there were a few individuals like Hannah & her son who refused to allow **that** to keep **them** from following God.
5. If you can see what's wrong, it means you **know** what's right.
6. Instead of **complaining** about what's wrong, **pursue** the good.
7. That's what Samuel did.
 - a. And no one knew better than he how bad things were with the priests;
 - b. He **lived** in Eli's home & served in the tabernacle.
 - c. He saw **firsthand** the wickedness of Hophni & Phinehas.
8. Yet he determined to do what was right, even if no one else went with him.

9. It's no secret that Christianity is no longer the favored faith of modern America.
 - a. Secular humanism is the darling of most today, specially in the courts.
 - b. As the Christian Faith loses it's influence & the Church becomes increasingly worldly,
 - c. The number of those who worship God in Spirit & Truth will likely diminish.
 - d. But it ought not matter to the quality of **our** walk how many go with us.
 - e. I wish **everyone** was saved & passionately pursuing purity.
 - f. But I'm not going to let my love & obedience be effected by who or how many feel the same way.
 - g. As the song says, "Though none go with me, still I will follow."
10. Samuel maintained a wonderfully vibrant walk with God at the very heart of darkness in Israel.
11. His light shined all the brighter **because** of the darkness. **So can ours.**

D. **The Word Came**

1. Then, as Samuel gave himself to God & served Him in whatever ways he could, God began to move in a **new** way that eventually brought revival to **all** of Israel.
2. God called to Samuel one night as he lay on his bed.
 - a. You know the story: At first Sammy didn't recognize the voice as God's. He thought it was Eli.
 - b. But eventually he learned it was God & acted upon what he heard.
 - c. That faithfulness—to do what he'd been told, led to **more** encounters with

God that eventually brought all of Israel out of her spiritual darkness back into the light of God's blessing.

3. Look at the last vs. of ch. 3 – v. 19 . . .

19 So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel *had been* established as a prophet of the LORD.

- a. The word of God which had been so rare became less so as Samuel faithfully proclaimed what God told him to say.
- b. His counsel & teaching, based as it was in the eternal truth stood fast when tried & provided the guidance so long missing from the land.
- c. As people applied what they heard from Samuel, they found things went better.
- d. His reputation as a faithful leader who provided national guidance grew.

4. Then in v. 21 we read -

21 Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

5. The word for “appear” means to see – to be visible.
 - a. It was at the tabernacle at Shiloh that God's presence was manifested in the Holy of holies, above the ark of the covenant.
 - b. But as we've already seen in earlier studies, God was so disturbed by the corruption of the priests, it seems His glory had left.
 - c. With Samuel's faithful service, God was pleased to restore His glory.
6. But what made that restoration of God's glory *possible* was Samuel's commitment to faithfully seek God *through* His Word.
7. Besides the *new prophetic* Word Samuel received, was the Word of God *already given* in the Torah, the books of Moses, which Samuel studied.
 - a. As he studied, God revealed Himself in greater & greater measure.
 - b. And as God's nature & character took shape within Samuel's mind & heart, His glory took shape in the tabernacle.
8. The *result* of it all is found in 4:1 -

1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

9. Because Samuel's message was derived from God.

10. No longer was the nation without a leader.

- a. Now they had someone they could trust because his direction wasn't self-seeking or personally ambitious.
- b. Samuel's sole ambition was the glory of God & God Himself had put the seal of approval on him by appearing once more.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Lukewarm ?

1. I know I've said this many times, but I want to reaffirm it this morning—
2. As long as I'm pastor here at CCO, we will give ourselves to the teaching of the Word of God.
3. It doesn't matter what other churches are doing or what's proving successful in growing a congregation of thousands.

4. We will *never* forsake our mission & calling to simply teach the Word simply.
5. It may not be as exciting or entertaining as what's happening down the street or across town, but I'm not called to excite or entertain– I'm called to grow you up in Christ.
6. One of the brothers called Thursday because he was troubled.
 - a. He'd heard from some people from another church that CC is *lukewarm*.
 - b. It's not that they've been here to see; it's just their *assumption* because we're not into the same kind of kind of wild stuff they are.
7. So, I want to know – how many of you know more about God, are closer to Him, & more in love with Jesus, *because* of what you've learned here?

B. Revival

1. We live at a crucial moment in history.
2. The words of man have proven hollow.
 - a. The promises of politicians - vain.
 - b. A hope in science - empty.
 - c. The experts aren't be so smart after all.
3. Yet the Word of God stands sure in *every* generation.
4. Let's renew our commitment this morning, *each of us* to **Learn & Live God's Word**.