

THE WICKEDNESS OF ELI'S SONS

THE FAITHFULNESS OF SAMUEL

Introduction:

1. As the first section of this book ended, Samuel was left to serve in the Tabernacle under the watch of Eli, the priest and judge.
2. The focus of the first part of this book is on Samuel.
3. Thus, it begins with his family at his birth and now shifts to his family and surroundings at the Tabernacle.
4. In this section, there is a calculated contrast drawn between Eli's sons and his new ward, Samuel.

- I. The Corruption of the Priesthood (2:12-17, 22-25)
 - A. Eli was an old man who was going blind (4:15).
 - B. Thus, he left most of the duties of the Tabernacle to his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.
 - C. The Bible describes these two men as "sons of Belial."
 1. Literally, this means that they were the offspring of wickedness.
 2. The word means "worthless, unprofitable, base, good for nothing."
 - D. Furthermore, even though they were priests, they "knew not Jehovah."
 - E. So, they turned the priesthood and the Tabernacle services into their own personal den of iniquity.
 - F. They rebelled against God by stealing from Him and from their fellow Israelites.
 1. God had clearly instructed what portion of the sacrifices made at the altar was to go to the priests (Leviticus 7:28-36; 10:12-15).
 2. He had also instructed that the fat of an animal sacrifice was not to be eaten.
 3. Yet, the sons of Eli took not only their rightful part of the meat, but also part of that which was left over for the family of the one making the peace offering.
 4. They took these things before the fat was burnt so they could have raw meat to roast instead of boiled meat as God had commanded.
 5. If anyone argued with them, they were threatened with violence.
 6. Thus, the sons of Eli abhorred the offering of the Lord.
 - G. They rebelled against God by committing fornication with the women at the Tabernacle.
 1. It seems that these women were noble, pious, and highly devoted to the religion of God (cf. Exodus 38:8; Luke 2:37).
 2. Yet, the sons of Eli abused these women for their own gratification.
 - H. They rebelled against God by rejecting the admonishment of their father.
 1. Though Eli rebuked his sons, it does not seem that he disciplined them (cf. Deuteronomy 21:18-21).
 2. Because they would not listen, God would slay them. {*The word "because" in this verse literally means "therefore."*}
 - I. Clearly, by the time of Eli's service as priest, the priesthood had become corrupt and repulsive to God.

1 Samuel 2:12-36

- II. The Rejection of the Priesthood (2:27-34)
 - A. Thus, God made the decision to reject the priesthood of Eli and his descendants.
 - B. He sent a man – an unnamed prophet – to deliver His word to Eli.
 - C. First, he reminded Eli of the priesthood's **past** (vs. 27-28).
 1. It was an honor and privilege to be allowed to serve as God's priest.
 2. Furthermore, it was due to God's grace that descendants of Aaron were chosen.
 - D. Next, he dealt with the priesthood's **present** (vs. 29).
 1. Eli's sons despised and scorned the Lord's instructions.
 2. Eli honored and loved his sons more than he respected God.
 - E. Finally, he focused on the priesthood's **future** (vs. 30-36).
 1. Thus, God would no longer honor Eli or his sons.
 2. He would cut off the strength of Eli's bloodline.
 3. None of his descendants would live to old age (cf. 4:11; 14:3; 22:18ff; 1 Kings 2:27).
 4. Those who survived past youth would have to beg for food.
 5. As a sign that God meant what He said, both of Eli's sons would die on the same day.
 - F. Thus, God rejected the priesthood under Eli.
 1. It seems that initially the priesthood descended through Aaron's son Eleazar (after the death of Nadab and Abihu).
 2. At some point, it shifted to the descendants of his brother Ithamar.
 3. Now, God will return the priesthood to the line of Eleazar.
 4. However, there is one exception – the service of Samuel.
- III. The Replacement of the Priesthood (2:35-36, 18-21, 26)
 - A. Notice that what seems to be an absolute promise of God is actually a conditional one (Exodus 29:9; 40:15; Numbers 25:10-13; etc.).
 - B. God would raise up a faithful priest.
 1. This seems to be a reference to Zadok, not Samuel (cf. 1 Kings 2:26-27).
 2. Samuel did not have a "sure house" for his children were unfaithful.
 - C. The faithfulness of Samuel will see God's people through this time of turmoil and confusion.
 - D. He stands in stark contrast to the children of Eli.
 - E. However, there is bigger picture to see here.
 - F. God's true High Priest with a sure house would be Jesus the Christ.
 1. He was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi.
 2. But, He would be a priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 2:17; 5:1-10; 7:1 – 9:28).

Conclusion:

1. God rewards the faithful.
2. God punishes the rebellious.
3. Obedience reveals one's love and honor toward God.