



The Rise of the King

The Call

1st SAM 2:12-3:21

I. Context: The Sin of the Priests (2:12–25)

- **Hophni and Phinehas: A Corrupt Priesthood**
 - “They did not know the LORD” (2:12).
 - Position without relationship leads to corruption.
 - Abused their authority, disregarded sacred offerings, and openly committed immorality (2:22).
 - **They refused to listen** (2:25), showing hardened hearts.
- **Eli’s Complicity**
 - “Why do you honor your sons more than me?” (2:29)
 - Eli’s weak rebuke showed misplaced priorities. He valued family approval over God’s holiness.

II. Transition of the Priesthood (2:26–36)

- **God’s Pronouncement:**
 - "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart" (2:35).
 - What is in the heart of the Lord? Faithfulness, purity, obedience, justice, and worship from genuine relationship.
 - Foreshadows Samuel's rise, ultimately fulfilled perfectly in **Jesus Christ**, our faithful High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–15).
- **Eli’s Fading Vision (3:1–3)**
 - “Eli’s eyesight had begun to grow dim...yet the lamp of God had not yet gone out” (3:2-3).
 - Symbolizes spiritual darkness and fading discernment.

- But God's presence and hope remain ("lamp had not gone out"). God is always working—even in darkness.

III. Samuel's Heart: Ready, Awake, Listening (3:1–10)

Samuel's Character & Daily Life:

Samuel faithfully served under Eli long before personally encountering God. His routine included practical tasks such as assisting with sacrifices, carefully maintaining sanctuary lamps, opening the temple doors each morning, and other daily temple responsibilities. These actions were disciplined, consistent, and diligent—yet something essential was still lacking. Samuel was fulfilling the role faithfully, yet **"Samuel did not yet know the LORD"** (1 Sam 3:7).

- **Word Study: "Know" (Hebrew: Yada)**

The Hebrew word **yada** implies deep, personal intimacy, experiential understanding—not mere intellectual awareness or distant familiarity. Samuel had faithful obedience, but he still awaited a genuine encounter and personal revelation of God's voice and presence.

Samuel's Response: "Here I am" (Hebrew: Hineni)

Samuel's immediate response, **"Here I am" (Hineni)**, carries rich significance in Hebrew. It goes beyond simply acknowledging presence; it signals total readiness, humility, and full surrender. Hineni expresses:

- **Readiness:** I am available now.
- **Humility:** I place myself at your disposal.
- **Surrender:** Speak, and I will obey—no conditions, no reservations.

Samuel models for us the posture required to truly hear and respond to God's call.

Eli's Instruction: "Speak, LORD" (Hebrew: Dabar)

Eli guided Samuel to respond specifically: **"Speak, LORD, your servant is listening"** (1 Sam 3:9). The Hebrew here is subtle but profound. The word **"speak"** here is **dabar**—a weighty Hebrew term denoting powerful, authoritative communication, capable of initiating change or fulfilling promises. Eli recognized God was not merely whispering encouragement but speaking destiny. When we say **"Speak, LORD,"** we invite divine authority, acknowledging His words shape our future and require obedience.

Notably, Samuel addresses the LORD (**Yahweh**), recognizing God's authority and sovereignty. This wasn't a casual conversation—he was responding directly to the divine voice, prepared to act on whatever would follow.

Other Hebrew words for "speak"

1. דָּבַר (Dabar)

- **Meaning:** To speak, declare, command, promise, or establish through authoritative speech.
- **Usage:** Often indicates powerful, divine speech or authoritative communication.
- **Example:** (*Genesis 1:3*) - God spoke creation into existence. God's speech as authoritative and effective.

2. אָמַר (Amar)

- **Meaning:** To say, speak, utter, or express verbally. This is a simpler, more common term for ordinary speech.
- **Usage:** Most frequently used in casual conversation or to indicate general speech.
- **Example:** (*Genesis 3:1*) - "He said to the woman..." This reflects everyday dialogue, straightforward communication.

3. נָאֵם (Na'am)

- **Meaning:** To declare, speak, utter prophetically or solemnly; typically carries a divine or prophetic weight.
- **Usage:** Frequently in prophetic contexts, often translated "declares the LORD."
- **Example:** (*Jeremiah 31:31*) - "Behold, days are coming," declares (na'am) the LORD..." Suggests a formal, divine proclamation.

4. קָרָא (Qara')

- **Meaning:** To call out, proclaim, read aloud, or summon.
- **Usage:** Often used when calling someone's attention, summoning, or publicly proclaiming something significant.
- **Example:** (*Isaiah 40:3*) - "A voice calling (qara') in the wilderness." Denotes public proclamation or invitation.

5. שִׁיחַ (Siach)

- **Meaning:** To meditate, muse, talk, or converse quietly.
- **Usage:** Indicates thoughtful, reflective speech or contemplation. Less formal and authoritative.
- **Example:** (*Psalms 119:15*) - "I will meditate (siach) on your precepts." More internal dialogue or personal reflection.

6. חָוָה (Chavah)

- **Meaning:** To show, declare, or make known clearly.
- **Usage:** Often refers to explicitly declaring or expressing something to clarify or explain.
- **Example:** (*Job 15:17*) - "I will show you (chavah); hear me." Clear, intentional instruction or explanation.

Why Dabar in Samuel's Context?

In **1 Samuel 3**, the Hebrew "dabar" emphasizes the weight and authority of God's communication. It's not casual speech (amar), reflective meditation (siach), or mere conversation. Rather, it is purposeful, authoritative, and life-shaping. Samuel's calling required him not just to listen, but to obey and align his life with God's decisive word.

Understanding these nuances underscores the powerful significance when Samuel says, "**Speak (dabar), LORD, your servant listens**" (1 Sam 3:10).

The Magnitude of "The Call":

Many people are fascinated by the idea of a calling but recoil from its demands. God's calling isn't merely intriguing—it's powerful, authoritative, and often costly. Samuel didn't fully

comprehend what responding "**Hineni**" ("**Here I am**") to "**dabar**" (**the divine word**) would entail; he had no idea of the magnitude of purpose God was laying before him. This call required Samuel's everything: absolute trust, obedience, courage, and surrender.

- Samuel's calling was monumental. He would become Israel's judge, priest, prophet—his entire life would be dedicated to God's purpose.
- He was not yet aware of the trials, demands, or hardships awaiting him; yet in that single response, he stepped forward into relationship with the King of the Ages.

Big Picture of Samuel's Journey:

Samuel's story unfolds from simple, faithful service in obscurity, to a decisive moment where he stood at the threshold of divine purpose. He didn't know what would come next, yet in faith, he chose immediate obedience.

His life teaches us:

- **Faithful obedience in the mundane prepares us for profound revelation and purpose.**
- The call of God comes with weighty responsibility—but also unmatched intimacy with Him.
- Answering "**Here I am**" means surrendering fully, not knowing every detail, yet trusting completely.

Application to Our Hearts Today:

Today, God still calls individuals into extraordinary purpose. Each calling demands the same posture Samuel demonstrated—humility, readiness, surrender, and courage. The voice calling Samuel that night in the temple is the same voice calling us today.

- Are we willing to say "**Hineni**"—"Here I am" to God, without conditions?
- Will we allow the powerful, authoritative "**dabar**" (**Word**) of the LORD to shape and direct our lives?
- Like Samuel, we stand before the King of the Ages. Our answer could change everything. Let us respond boldly, humbly, and sincerely—"Speak LORD, your servant is listening."

IV. God Speaks: Samuel Brought into Divine Drama (3:11–18)

- **Imagine the weight Samuel carried:**
 - Samuel's first word from God was one of judgment against Eli's family.
 - God trusted Samuel with a difficult truth because his heart was humble, ready, and surrendered.
 - His obedience established him as a trustworthy prophet ("none of his words fell to the ground" 3:19).
- **Social Role of the Priest (Eli's Position):**
 - Spiritual authority, mediator between God and Israel.
 - Eli's role represented leadership, spiritual responsibility, and accountability to God. His passivity affected the nation's spiritual health.

- Samuel's rise signifies a critical leadership transition, not just personnel but spiritual vision and direction.

V. The Divine Transition & Call of the Lord (3:19–21)

- **This transition was years in the making:**
 - "The boy Samuel grew" (2:26, 3:19). Simultaneously, while Eli's sons were corrupting the priesthood, God was quietly cultivating Samuel.
 - God always works behind the scenes, preparing His faithful servants for pivotal moments.
- **God's Call: Not Instant, But Intentional**
 - Samuel's life and calling were intentional from birth (1 Samuel 1). He was prepared, shaped, and positioned specifically for this moment.
 - Our greatest transitions often happen in quiet places of faithful obedience.

VI. Application & Personal Challenge: Generation of Samuels

- **A Generation Rising:**
 - "Here I am, Speak Lord."
 - We desire to see this posture of readiness and humility mark a new generation.
 - God is still calling individuals who will faithfully, humbly listen and obey.
- **Misplaced Focus Warning:**
 - Samuel initially placed his loyalty in Eli—like some may do with pastors or leaders today. But God's desire was personal intimacy and direct obedience.
 - "If you're here to simply serve me, your heart is misplaced. I'm here to help you know God personally."
- **Success Defined Clearly:**
 - True success is lifelong willingness to be led by the Lord, not popularity or position.
- **Vision for His Youth (HY):**
 - Big plans are ahead, but only if our posture matches Samuel's:
 - A humble readiness to hear from God personally.
 - Authentic faith, deep discipleship, and consistent obedience.
 - We believe God's voice, clearly heard and obeyed, will propel us into unimaginable Kingdom impact.

Conclusion & Christ Magnified:

- Samuel's story points forward to **Jesus Christ**, the ultimate faithful High Priest whose obedience and intimacy with the Father brought eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11–12).
- **Invitation:**
 - Who among us today will say, **"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening"**?
 - The call of God requires a humble heart willing to serve, ready to listen, and courageous enough to obey.

Key Scriptures for Further Reflection:

- 1 Samuel 2:35 (God's heart and faithful priesthood)

- Hebrews 4:14–16 (Jesus, the great High Priest)
- Colossians 3:23 (Serving from the heart as unto the Lord)