

## 1 SAMUEL 1:1-4:1a A FAMINE OF THE WORD

As the book of 1 Samuel opens, God has kept his promise to settle his people in the Promised land. But ever since they moved into the land, the Israelites have been making a mess of things. Judges closes with these words: *In those days Israel had no king; Everyone did as he saw fit (Judg 21:25)*. The root of the trouble is the problem of leadership, the priesthood had collapsed into evil. Hope comes in the form of a child born to a desperate but faithful woman. Israel must still recognize that God is their *ultimate* king. *How is Israel going to have a human king and still serve God as its king?* That is the question of 1 Samuel.

*Read 1 Samuel 1:1-11, 20-28.*

1. Who is Hannah? What is her situation?

2. How does Hannah demonstrate her trust in the Lord?

*Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25.*

3. At the time of 1 Samuel, the tabernacle was located at Shiloh in Israel's centre, and was manned by the priests Eli, Hophni and Phinehas (Eli's sons). How are Hophni and Phinehas described?

4. What is the root cause of their behaviour?

*Read 1 Samuel 2:27-36.*

5. What does God think of Eli's response to his sons? (See also 3:13.)

6. What does God promise to do as a result?

7. How would you describe the contrast between Hannah and Eli, Hophni and Phineas?

*Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21, 26; 3:1-4:1a.*

8. How is **Samuel** described? How does Samuel compare to Eli's sons?

9. What situation is Israel in under the leadership of Eli and why (3:1)?

10. As the passage ends, what situation is Israel in under the leadership of Samuel (3:19-4:1a)?

11. Why do you think the word of the LORD was so rare under the leadership of Eli and his sons? Compare 3:1 & Judges 21:25

*Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11*

12. Who does God humble, and who does he exalt when you consider the people in these chapters?

13. How is v10 fulfilled in Jesus? Also see 2:35

## **Implications**

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- Read Hebrews 1:1-3. How do these verses show us the clearest way in which God speaks to us today? How does this shape the way we should think about God revealing himself to us?
- One of the greatest ways God can bless a church is when his word is heard clearly and often. How are you doing with this in your church? Is the Bible at the centre of its ministries? How might you be able to make it more central?
- Even if the Bible is taught clearly, God's people can still starve from lack of listening to and submitting to it. Are you putting up any defences to listening to and submitting to the word of God? If so, what are they, and how can you lower them?

## **Give thanks and pray**

- Give thanks that God now speaks to us completely and powerfully in Jesus (Heb 1:1-3).
- Give thanks for the people who teach the Bible to you, and pray that they would be godly, attentive listeners to His Word.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to hear God's voice in 1 Samuel as you work through these studies.