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## International S. S. Lessons.

LESSON XI.—DECEMBER 14, 1902. THE BOY SAMUEL.

1. Samuel 3: 6-14. GOLDEN TEXT.—Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.—1 Sam. 3: 10. TOPIC.—A child can serve God.

Time.—Probably about 1124 B.C.; the common chronology makes it 1141 B.C. Place.—Shiloh, where the ark and tabernacle were.

Persons.—Samuel, twelve years old, and Eli, then perhaps seventy-eight years old.

DAILY READINGS. M.—Hannah's Prayer for a Son, 1 Sam. 1: 1-18. T.—The Birth of Samuel, 1 Sam. 1: 19-29. W.—The Sin of Eli's Sons, 1 Sam. 2: 1-23.

LESSON EXPOSITION. I. The Calls.—The Lord called yet again, Samuel, v. 6. Samuel was yet a mere boy, "a child," helping Eli, the aged priest, in keeping the house of God in order.

The boy heard his name called several times, and each time ran to Eli, believing the priest had called him. But Eli declared that he had not called, and bid the boy lie down again.

Samuel did not yet know the Lord, v. 7. It was a new experience. Even in the sanctuary the boy had not heard of the Lord calling to the priest, much less to himself. The second clause explains the first; for Samuel did not know that the Lord intended to speak through him, or had purposed to make him a prophet.

The Lord called yet again the third time, v. 8. The Common English Version makes the second and third responses of Samuel emphatic, "thou didst call me;" but the Hebrew makes the force the same in the three responses. (See Revised Version.) Three times in succession Samuel springs up and answers what he supposes to be the aged Eli's calls.

The Lord called and stood, and called, v. 10. The call is as before, but now there is an appearance, a being standing, a presence seen by the child. The sacred writer seems to call on the reader to note this difference. Moreover, he uses a different word for vision. In v. 11 it is hazon, in v. 15 it is mareh, the latter meaning a natural sight.

Now, too, there is a double call, Samuel, Samuel, as if the Lord would have the lad recognize and remember the voice by repetition. The repeating may also indicate the earnestness of the call. II. The Startling Message.—I will do a thing in Israel, v. 11. Or, "I do a thing." The historic present is very common in prophecy.

The seer appears to behold the events passing like a panorama before his vision. Though the judgment upon the sons of Eli was delayed some years, yet it appeared as already occurring. It is quite probable that Samuel was twelve, entering his thirteenth year, thus becoming "son of the law"—the same age that Jesus was when he went up to the temple to the passover. It would therefore be a fitting time for Samuel to receive this prophetic message. It introduced him as a prophet; Eli could attend the call; the first message would clear the way for Samuel to become the reformer, since Eli's house was to fall. This news would make the ears of all to tingle.

When begin, I will also make an end, v. 12. Or, "from the beginning even unto the end." The Lord would be thorough, completing the judgment that had already begun, since Samuel was now doing what properly belonged to Eli's sons.

For the iniquity which he knoweth, v. 13. The "thing" which the Lord would do (v. 11) would be so unexpected and dreadful that it would make both ears tingle, as if the hearer had received a slap upon both ears at once. This ought not to have been overlooked for by Eli or his sons, for they had been fully warned (v. 12). They had not heeded; the sin continued; judgment must fall (v. 13). His sons went on recklessly, in spite of the warnings to Eli, and brought "a curse upon themselves." The old Greek version renders the clause by assigning the reason for the judgment: "they reviled" or did "speak evil of God." They answered the warnings by cursings, condemning God and charging him with harshness because of their lot. Eli "restrained them not." The Hebrew thought more exactly may be, "he humbled them not"—that is, he did not dismiss them from the priestly office, but allowed them to continue in it, and this added to their iniquity and disgrace in the divine service. For this aggravated sin God would send terrible and swift judgment. Their sin could not be "purged"—that is, "expiated"—by sacrifices or offerings, for their hearts were hardened in sin.

Shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever, v. 14. This seems to point to the perversion very common in all ages respecting the value of sacrifices. Probably Eli or his sons believed that if they made the offerings and sacrifices required under the Mosaic law, their sins would be cancelled, and they might go on in any kind of evil which pleased them. They forgot that sacrifices were accepted only as signs and expressions of repentance and of forsaking sin. But if sin is wilfully continued there is no true repentance, and the sacrifices become a mockery and an abomination to God.

Then Samuel had the painful duty of making known this message to Eli. Samuel lay until morning, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and then was required by Eli, who appears to have apprehended the nature of the terrible tidings, to tell it all to the aged high

priest. So Samuel was recognized in all Israel as a prophet of the Lord. The good children led to noble and godly manhood. Great characters do not require great experience in sin. It is not needful that sin abound in the youth to have godliness or grace abound in the adult. God trains his public servants in various ways. Paul had an Egyptian scholar and courtier; Augustine was a great student of logic and rhetoric; Chrysostom was a brilliant lawyer; Anabros was a conscientious civil officer; Timothy was trained in the Jewish Scriptures.

### TOPICS FOR CLASS WORK.

1. The duties of the boy Samuel in God's house.
2. The calls; how many, and how answered by Samuel.
3. The character of Eli's sons; and Eli's sin.
4. The message of the Lord, and what it meant to Eli and to Samuel.
5. How Samuel revealed the painful truth to Eli, and the weak response.

### THE LESSON FROM THE DESK.

1. The young can serve God by helping parents, teachers and ministers.
2. The smallest service may be a better test of character than the greatest work.
3. The calls of God may come at first without explanations, and require faith and prompt obedience.
4. God may delay judgment upon the wilful sinner, as he did upon Eli's house, but it will be terrible when it comes.
5. Faithfulness even in unpleasant things brings its reward; while unfaithfulness in parent and in child costs the comfort and peace of any home in the end.

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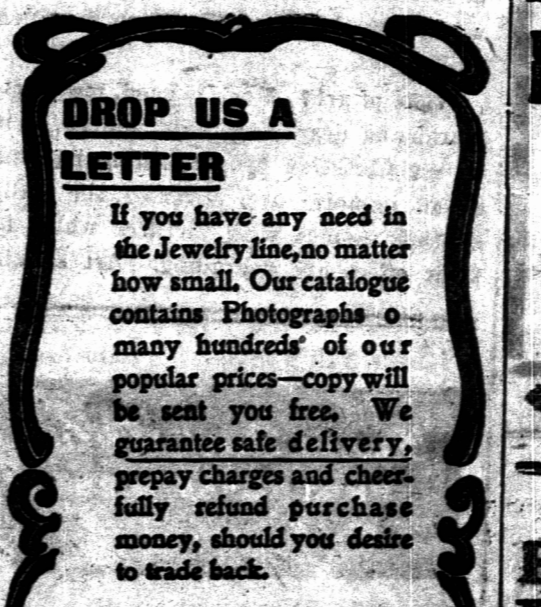
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