

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Hearing From God

By Dan Trygg

“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to Yahweh before Eli. And word from Yahweh was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. Now Samuel did not yet know Yahweh, nor had the word of Yahweh yet been revealed to him. ⁸ So Yahweh called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ Then Eli discerned that Yahweh was calling the boy. ⁹ And Eli said to Samuel, ‘Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, “Speak, Yahweh, for Your servant is listening.”’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Then Yahweh came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for Your servant is listening.’ ...¹⁹ Thus Samuel grew and Yahweh was with him and let none of his words fail. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of Yahweh.”

1 Samuel 3:1,7-10,19,20

“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord Yahweh, ‘When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of Yahweh. ¹² People will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, but they will not find it.’”

Amos 8:11-12

“After this I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions. ²⁹ And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

Joel 2:28,29

As I was reading about Samuel, I was thinking of how he lived at a time when “word from Yahweh was rare”. **There *are* times and places where it seems that hearing from God is *not* the experience of most people. It is *unusual*, ..uncommon enough to be *unexpected* and *not pursued*. We live in such a time as this.** The average person, ...even the average churchgoer..., does not seem to *experience* or *expect* God to communicate with them, ...especially not in a “word from the Lord”. **People do not *anticipate* communication from God. They simply go to church, or go about their daily lives, with no awareness that the Living God *could*, or *would*, communicate with them.**

Then there are also times and places where people become aware that communication with God *is* a possibility, and they are *hungry* for it. They *long* for it. They go here and travel there, hoping to have an encounter with God, or to “get a word from the Lord”, ...but there is *nothing* for them. **God Himself has withdrawn from freely sharing His word with people, there in that place. He has sent a “famine on the land, ...a famine for the hearing the words of Yahweh”. This seems to be in judgment upon an unjust and uncaring culture, ...a society where some were very wealthy, living in luxury, while others were needy and were uncared for. The corrupt, greedy and dishonest dealings in business, and the lack of concern for the vulnerable and powerless, brought the wrath and withdrawal of God upon their society. A spiritual dullness was the consequence of their disregard of God and people. We live in such a time as this.** Our society has been moving in a similar direction. And, in Israel, severe judgment was soon to follow, according to the prophecy of Amos. And, historically, we know that it *did*.

Yet, even at such a dark, heartless time, there will be some who will be stirred to seek for more of God. Something will capture their attention. They become aware that there is *more*. They hear of God’s dealing with people in the past, and their hearts will be stirred. **They will long to see something *authentic*, ...something that is unarguably God.** They will be like Gideon, who heard of the great things God had done in the past, and **recognized that things should not be like this!** (Judg. 6:13) “If God is with us, why are things like they are?” **This very recognition and longing is from God Himself. He will put this desire in them.** This interest, this desire, this pursuit does not come from the natural man. The apostle Paul tells us that **a natural person, a self-oriented person, does not receive or welcome the things of the Spirit of God, ...they seem to be *irrational* and *foolish* to such a person** (1 Cor. 2:14). So, this interest, this recognition, this longing is not from the natural self. These future seekers will be drawn and called out by Yahweh. **God is the Initiator of spiritual hunger.** Even in secular, unjust societies, ...even in the darkest of times, He will not leave Himself without a witness. He reveals Himself, in some measure, to every person. **He is the One who calls. Even in the darkest of times, God is already beginning to call forth the next revival, ...the next great season of new life.**

Those who Amos spoke of will be the “Samuel’s” of their day. He was called at one of the lowest of times in Israel’s history, a time of lawlessness, rebellion and disregard for God, ...a time when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes”. **We live in such a time as this!**

And like Samuel, they also will ...*be unacquainted with an experiential knowledge of God, ...not able to recognize when God attempts to communicate with them, ...and not know how to respond to the promptings of God.* I wonder how many people in history have simply shaken off or disregarded a word, or message, or prompting from

the Holy Spirit, because they did not recognize it for what it was, or were not taught how to respond to God? **How many have even been steered away from the voice of the Lord by other people**, ...who did not believe that (1.) God still speaks to people, ...or, that (2.) He might speak to someone who seems of no account, untrained, unrecognized? Or, how many have been steered away from following the counsel or prompting of God, because (3.) it seems like foolishness to the natural minds of other people? **How many of us have been like Samuel, ...not yet experientially-knowing God, not recognizing how He is trying to communicate with us, and not knowing what to do to respond to the “God sightings” or the communications from God that come into our lives?**

Yet, for those Amos prophesied about, there would apparently be very few, if any, “Eli’s”, ...older mentors, with more experience with hearing from God, who could advise them. And, what a sorry advisor Eli himself was! Oh, he may have been a powerful man of God in his early days, but over time he had compromised the standards of God, when he refused to investigate, confront or correct the irreverence and abusive behavior of his sons. He was a significant priest at the tabernacle center at Shiloh, and he judged Israel as a primary leader for 40 years. Although he had become weak in faith, he apparently had at one time known how to draw near to God, and hear His voice. **When he recognized that it was Yahweh speaking to Samuel, Eli gave the boy sound instruction as to how to respond to God.** Even though Eli had not remained a strong leader right through to the end, he *did* come through in this instance. **That practical counsel was sufficient to open up Samuel to focus on, acknowledge and welcome the communication from God, and then Yahweh expanded and developed this area of Samuel’s life.**

It is important to point out that throughout all of the centuries Israel was in the land of Canaan, from the time of Joshua to Samuel, and from Samuel through the time of Amos, and to the very end of the northern kingdom of Israel, until the exile, a period encompassing nearly 700 years, there was never a time when Yahweh was not worshiped, ...and there also were many competing beliefs and practices within the land of the Israelites. There were also many false prophets, who claimed to speak for Yahweh, ...and many religious places that purported to be serving Yahweh, ...and even so-called “schools of the prophets” which claimed to be able to train people to become prophets of God. People from virtually every social class practiced at least some outward form of religious activity. Yet, Amos said that people will be searching here and there, and everywhere for the word of Yahweh, but will not be able to find it. This verse has been understood and interpreted in a variety of ways. Some have taken it to refer to *sound teaching* -- that people will be looking for good, sound Bible teaching, and not be able to find it. Others have taken it to mean *a sound prophet of God* – that these people are looking for a reliable oracle from God. Actually, in both Amos 8:11 and 12, there is no “the” before “words of Yahweh” or “word of Yahweh”. Basically, **these people are searching for some authentic communication from Yahweh for themselves. It is more about authentic communication from Him than about theology, teaching, or prophecy. I think we live in such time such as this!**

All of this sets the stage for the prophetic promise of Joel 2:28,29, which of course was fulfilled with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Peter referred to Joel’s prophecy in his explanation of the miraculous speaking in tongues which accompanied the Spirit’s coming. Not only did the believers speak with other tongues, but each person from many different countries, heard them speaking of the wonderful works of God *in their own native languages*, ...a feat that was clearly impossible. **This was a fitting grand entrance for the new ministry of the Holy Spirit.** He had come to glorify Jesus, but also to be our Helper and Teacher, and the One to reveal to us the things God has freely made available to us in Jesus (Jn. 14:16,17,26; 15:26,27; 16:7-15; 1 Cor. 2:7-12). The new dynamic which was introduced with His coming was the expectation that He would be able to lead and direct us. In fact, this is a critical characteristic of those who are Christ’s, ...those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (Rom. 8:14). **He is the revealer and communicator of the spiritual treasures and resources which are ours in Christ, and His ability to communicate with us is a key and crucial part of what He brings into our experience.** Whereas under the Old Covenant, only a few people had the Spirit come upon them for a specific task, now **He has come to dwell in each of us to enable us to live by the leading and power of His inworking life.** You cannot read the book of Acts, or the NT epistles, and not see how much is dependent upon this ability to be led, directed, taught and guided by the Holy Spirit.

While all of this is true, and part of the inheritance we all are meant to understand and live by (Isa. 54:13-17; Jn. 6:45), **we have those same challenges that Samuel faced: (1.) There is an experiential-knowledge of the Spirit that needs to be developed; (2.) we need to learn to recognize how He communicates with each of us, and, (3.) we must learn to acknowledge and respond appropriately to His promptings in order to benefit from them, and learn to open ourselves up to more of God’s leading and empowerment.** This is NOT a matter of head-knowledge. This is an experimental faith process. **It is believing that God’s Word is true, and applying ourselves to discover its reality for ourselves.**