

Eli & Sons

1. Read I Samuel 1:3; 2:12-17,22-25,27-36; 3:1-18; 4:3-4,10-22; 21:1-9; 22:9-23; I Kings 2:26-27,35; I Chronicles 24:1-3.
2. God graciously chose Eli to be high priest and judge. He was a male descendant of Aaron by Ithamar, the youngest of the two sons left after God killed Nadab and Abihu, leaving a clear lesson for future priestly malfeasance (Lev 10:12; I Kings 2:26-27; I Chron 24:1-6). He was a judge of Israel for 40 years (I Sam 4:18).
3. He had two sons also serving as priests, Hophni and Phinehas (I Sam 1:3).
4. He was the high priest who comforted Hannah with the promise of Samuel and took him as an apprentice after his weaning (I Sam 1:9-28). And he also blessed her to have three more sons and two daughters (I Sam 2:20-21).
5. He was a faithful high priest and judge with solemn zeal for God's worship (I Sam 1:9-18), humble submission to the sovereign will of God (I Sam 3:18) and holy care for the things of God (I Sam 4:13,18).
6. But he was not severe enough in ruling his children, so God ground him and his family to powder (I Sam 3:13). He lost promised blessings, had his family judged permanently, and was left with no room for repentance or mercy (I Sam 3:14).
7. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, priests, would steal of the people's sacrifices and commit adultery with the women coming to worship (I Sam 2:12-17,22).
8. He rebuked them wisely and strongly, but it was not nearly enough, for God is holy and expects us to honor Him with severe measures (I Sam 2:23-25). He should have been like Phinehas, who was blessed perpetually (Numbers 25:1-15).
9. God told Eli by a prophet He would (a) take back His promise of blessing, (b) cut off his family from the priesthood, (c) give the office to a competitor in the time of great prosperity, (d) create grief by any survivors, (e) kill his descendants in their youth, (f) kill his two sons in one day, (g) raise up a faithful priest to replace him, and (g) cause his decimated family to beg him to survive (I Sam 2:27-36).
10. Here we find that wonderful text we use often, "Them that honour me I will honour." The rest of the sentence runs, "And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The honour here is defending God's truth and worship against those

who disobey and profane them. Eli, by not severely restraining his sons, was counted guilty by God of kicking at His sacrifice and offering and stealing from the worshippers. By not killing them, Eli was an accomplice in their wickedness.

11. The popular Bible story about Samuel hearing God in the night is a further declaration of God's anger over this compromise (I Sam 3:1-10). God told Samuel He would certainly fulfil all that had been spoken against Eli. He had promised to judge his house forever, and He would do it in such a way that it would cause every hearer's ears to tingle with the horrible news. There would be no sacrifice or offering for this compromise forever (I Sam 3:11-14).
12. Eli required Samuel to tell him the Lord's message, which he did fully; and Eli submitted himself meekly, but weakly, to the Lord's judgment (I Sam 3:15-18).
13. Having been defeated in an initial skirmish by the Philistines, Israel took the Ark of the Covenant into battle with Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, where it was captured and they were killed by the Philistines (I Sam 4:1-11).
14. Eli, trembling for the ark of God rather than his profane sons, heard the news about the ark and fell backward off his seat and broke his neck (I Sam 4:12-18).
15. As news of the disaster spread, the pregnant wife of Phinehas went into severe labor and died. But before dying, she named her son Ichabod, meaning, the glory is departed from Israel. For she saw God's judgment on her husband, her father in law, and the ark (I Sam 4:19-22).
16. Eli's descendants were then only a couple young men, and with the ark of God gone from Shiloh, their priestly office fell into disrepute. But they did grow up and multiply through Ichabod and Ahitub, his brother (I Samuel 14:3).
17. Fifty years or so later, Doeg the Edomite, by Saul's wicked order, viciously killed 85 of Eli's family and destroyed the city of the priests, after he saw Ahimelech give the shewbread and Goliath's sword to David (I Sam 21:1-9; 22:9-23).
18. Solomon threw Abiathar out of the priesthood, and replaced him with Zadok, from Eleazar's line, fulfilling God's promise (I Kings 2:26-27,35; I Chr 24:1-3).
19. This event, like Lot's life, shows that the way of transgressor's is hard (Pr 13:15).
20. It is our solemn duty to hate sin and treat sinners by God's Word. We should covet to be men like Phinehas (Num 25:1-15) rather than Eli (I Sam 2:30; 3:13).