

1st Samuel Ch 1

Samuel sort of serves as a segue from the judges to the kings, he's that bridge that spans the gap from the time period of the judges to the ushering in of the kings, him being Israel's last judge and basically 1st prophet of his order. Remember that the book of Ruth actually took place during the time period of the judges so don't be confused as to the chronology. Samuel basically comes onto the scene not too far along after Samson, Samson basically failing in his call, and Samuel following through and staying faithful throughout his life. And there are some interesting similarities between them in that they were both born of women who were previously barren, both were set apart from before their birth to be used of God in a powerful way. They were both to be Nazirites and they were both to have an impact on the nation that would lead the nation back to its focus, and following after God. Now Samson failed in practically every area and became enslaved to his own flesh which would ultimately wind up binding him, blinding him and grinding him and he would die and broken individual with an overall sad track record. But Samuel will serve the Lord faithfully and stay true to the calling that God will place on his life.

So again the book of 1st Samuel marks the transition period between the judges and the kings and he will actually anoint Israel's 1st 2 kings, Saul, who will fail, and David, who will succeed. And so as Warren Wiersbe said, "At a time period when the ages were colliding and everything seemed to be shaking, Samuel gave spiritual leadership to the nation of Israel and helped to move them toward national unification and spiritual rededication.

And not unlike today, we live in a time whereby things are changing all the time on a worldwide level in radical ways. And the church needs leaders like Samuel who will help the people of God realize where they've been, who they are, and the direction they need to be headed, what it is they're called to do.

So understand as we dive into this book that we're in a time period that's on the heels of the judges, which was a time period where the Israelites were in dire straits. They lacked godly leadership, the priesthood was defiled, God's Word was basically being ignored and the Lord really wasn't speaking to the people that much, He'd seemed to pretty much have had it with their compromise.

But praise God we serve a God of love and mercy, because in the midst of all this chaos, God would begin to solve the chaos by sending a baby (as He always does). He reached out to the children of Israel beginning with the birth of baby Moses, He would prepare the way of the Lord with the birth of Elizabeth's baby, J.B. And when the fullness of time had come God sent forth His own Son as a new born baby through the virgin Mary. And here God wants to do a new work and so He's going to send forth a baby, babies speak of new beginnings, they usher in new life and they testify of the weak things that God uses to put to shame the things which are mighty.

And many times just to ensure the fact that there's no confusion as to who's doing the work we find that in scripture it's not at all uncommon for God to begin that work with what was previously a barren woman as was the case with Ab and Sarah, Rebekah who had Jacob and Esau, and Rachel who had Joseph.

And so as we begin 1st Samuel just bare in mind that really it's simply a continuation of the time period of the Judges, sometime shortly after the time period of Samson and as for it's authorship; it's believed that Samuel himself authored a portion of it, up until his death and then as for who wrote the things that take place after his death seems to be conjecture for the most part.

Vs1

So the story begins with a certain man, and that's always how any great move of God begins, with a certain man who's willing to be used of God. The bible tells us that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and He's looking to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. He's looking for a certain man, a certain woman who has a heart that's loyal to Him, not torn by selfish ambitions or worldly and carnal appetites.

And so the book begins with a certain man, the eyes of the Lord have rested for the moment on this man by the name of Elkanah, and really it would seem in the end that God was really searching out his wife, but I believe that the text demonstrates the fact Elkanah was in fact a godly man who loved the Lord. And it mentions here that he was an Ephraimite, but that's only because he lived in the regions of the tribe of Ephraim, the fact of the matter is that he was a Levite, specifically a Kohathite according to 1 Chron 6:33. But since the Levites didn't inherit land they were just sort of identified with their geographical location.

Vs2

So he, like so many it seems in the OT lived in a polygamous relationship, and the assumption is that he married Hannah 1st but when she couldn't bear him children, he then married Peninah. Now the law didn't specifically condemn polygamy, but if you examine the lives of any of the men in scripture who had more than one wife you will always find that their relationships were prone to problems and frustrations. And this is no exception, now when we get to the NT Jesus made it clear that from the beginning God's desire was 1 man and 1 woman. And He demonstrated that through creation, God created 1 man and 1 woman, and Paul says that if you want to be in ministry, then you need to be the husband of but 1 wife. So by means of the NT God sort of clarified the issue and brought the focus back to His intent for 1 man and 1 woman to be joined together becoming 1 flesh. Anything more than that is destined for problems, but we read here regarding Elkanah.

Vs3

Shiloh was the worship center for the nation at this time and even though it just sort of seems like these 2 fellows, are just sort of thrown into the story (Eli's sons) we'll see in chapter 2 that they were mentioned because they're key illustrations as to the spiritual declension of the nation. They were just total losers.

Vs4-7

You might say that these 2 gals weren't exactly on speaking terms. Now there are a few things here that we want to draw out of this scene. Basically what's happening here is that Peninah and Hannah are both vying for the love and attention of their husband and as to where Peninah is having him children, Hannah isn't. And in that culture having children was considered a blessing from God and to not have children was considered a reproach, because every young gal just beamed over the fact that maybe, just maybe the Messiah might come from her lineage. And every year he would take his family on a vacation to go to Shiloh and sacrifice to the Lord, and this time of sacrifice was to be a holiday, it was to be joyous occasion that was full of feasting and fellowship with God. God desires our worship experience to be one of joy and happiness, but Hannah (which means grace by the way) would never enter into the joyous aspect of worship but instead she was always weeping because Peninah was always provoking her because she couldn't have children. Now it seems sort of unfair that this woman of seemingly sort of a cruel disposition would be able to bear children, but Hannah who seemed to never lash back, but just take her sorrows to the Lord couldn't. But God's ways are not our ways and He was working something deep into this woman and was seeking to get her to that place of broken and total surrender, because He had a great plan for the fruit of her womb. But I want you to notice the fact that what was meant to be a joyous occasion, in this feast and celebration of worship before the Lord, for her wound up being a loathsome time of turmoil and strife. Why? Problems in the home, problems at home can so easily affect our time before the Lord, here Hannah is, and she's at the house of the Lord, she has a full, blessed, double portion in front of her to *feast* upon and be satisfied with plenty to spare and she can't even enjoy it. Our lives at home are so critical to our times of worship, Peter tells us that problems in the home hinders our prayer lives. And I would venture to say that anyone who's been married for any amount of time at all knows what it's like to come to church fresh after a fight with your spouse and just sit here miserable. You put your game face on, and suck it up, but your just hating life, well, Hannah didn't even have a game face at this point, she just couldn't fake it, her heart was broken.

And one more thing, I told you a while ago that Eli's sons were losers, they were total rip off artists and you might say the original scam artists of the ministry. And when we get to ch 2 we'll see that they didn't have anyone fooled about it either, everyone knew what they were up to so much so that they began to cause people to despise giving to the Lord. (Not much different than many today.) So Elkanah knew that these guys manning the tabernacle were hypocritical jerks, but I want you to see the fact that that didn't stop him from making his journey to the house of God to worship Him. Even though the high priest's sons were wicked, it didn't hinder him from doing what he needed to do. He understood *personal accountability*.

How many people today justify staying home and not coming to church to worship the Lord because of the actions of some so called “Christians” or “Preachers”? and They seek to justify their own sin by the means of the sins of others, but it doesn’t work that way, each man stands alone before God to give an account as to what they’ve done with their lives, whether or not they surrendered to with and lived a life that honored Him or not.

It doesn’t matter what John Doe does in his relationship with God, or if he even has one, or what he does in the name of God that’s a total joke. What matters is what am I doing and what’s the motive of my heart for doing it, Elkanah didn’t care what other people were doing, he knew that he needed to honor the Lord, and that’s what he did.

Vs8-11

Here we have the cry of a broken and contrite heart, vs 10 says she was in “bitterness” or “deep distress” of soul. And probably everyone in this room has at one point or another, or maybe a few times in their lives been able to identify with Hannah in that regard. Something has brought to that point of utter brokenness and deep distress of soul, but Hannah didn’t keep it all bottled up inside of her allowing it to eat her up from the inside out, she (as it were) poured herself out before the Lord, she carried it all to the Lord in prayer.

And I pray that we all learn this lesson from her, guard against bottling up your anxieties and hurts, pour them out before the Lord. Ps 34:18-19 tells us that, “*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*”

But there are also times when we do take our hurts to the Lord or our concerns to God, and yet God delays in His response to us. And I’m certain that such is the case here, Hannah had no doubt been praying for a son for a long time. I mean after all it wasn’t just that she had yet to have a son, she couldn’t have children at all, and so as far as her society was concerned she was cursed of God. And so certainly she’d prayed many times that God would just give her a son, “God just give me a son.” “Lord how I want a son” “God I just don’t know why you won’t give me a son.” and Yet God seemed not to answer her prayers, or was delaying His answer at best (which was the case.)

God has 3 answers that He issues to any prayer, “Yes”, “No”, and “Wait”. Now “Yes” we love, “No” can be painful, but “Wait” is probably the hardest, Tom Petty wrote a song one time and the chorus says, “The waiting is the hardest part” and you know that’s true. And for no doubt years, Hannah had been in the wait, but often times God causes us to wait, not because there’s an issue on His end, but because there may be an issue on my end, and He’s trying to get me to a certain place of maybe dependency upon Him, or selfish ambitions on my part, removed.

I would imagine that for the longest time Hannah's prayers were selfishly motivated. "God, I just want a son to nurse and take care of for myself", "God give me a son, so this other woman will shut up and quit nagging me." "God it hurts to be made fun of all the time, just please give me a son." The bible tells us that we really don't know how to pray as we ought, and that many times we ask and we don't receive because we ask amiss, so that we might consume our petitions on our own lusts. And we sort of see God as a divine Santa Clause, "I want this and I want that, and by the way could you take care of the other." But that's not the way God would have us inter act with Him (like a divine Santa Claus).

Now the bible *does say* that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. "*And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*" But too often we're not asking according to His will, but our own.

Because God didn't want to just give her a son so that Peninah would shut up; He wanted to do a great work that could only come "through grace" (remember what Hannah means?) But before He could do that work, He needed to bring her around so that she would line up, not with her own wants, but with His purposes.

Because He wants to show Himself strong, but you remember He needs a heart that's completely surrendered, or turned towards Him. And so God was through various trials and heartaches allowing Hannah's heart to be completely turned towards Him. Because God was needing a man to point the nation back to Him during these desperate days of transition. A man that He could speak to and that would speak to the people for Him, because during these days (we read in vs 1 of ch 3 that the Word of the Lord was rare), in other words God just wasn't really speaking to man, there were no ears that were really in tune with Him, and open to Him. And so Hannah finally comes to this place where it no longer matters what's in it for her, as a matter of fact, "God, if you'll just give me a son, I won't even keep him, I'll just give him back to you that he might serve you all the days of his life."

Now this is what God was desiring, it's what He was looking for, and so when she finally came to that place of absolute surrender, abandoning herself to God, God finally answered her prayer, and He'll answer it in abundance.

Vs12-16

John Bunyan, (the man who wrote Pilgrim's Progress) once said, "In prayer, it's better to have a heart with out words, than words with out a heart." and That's how Hannah was praying, she'd come to the point where words really could no longer express the anguish of her soul. You know the bible says that God understands the moanings of your spirit, sometimes you just don't know what to say, and all you can really do is just sigh, or sort of groan in anguish, and somehow God understands that prayer, just the groanings of our hearts. But again this sort of show's us the spiritual degradation, or declension of the nation and leadership of Israel, the bible tells us to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

And so Eli should've sought to comfort her, and pray with her, see how she was hurting and what he could do to be of service, but he just assumed she was drunk.

It must not've been all that uncommon to see people drunk around the tabernacle, but Hannah hadn't been pouring out wine, she'd been pouring out her soul. And she says, "I have been speaking until now, but now I'm just too overwhelmed even for words."

Vs17-18

She can eat again, and in here lies a lesson for us in restoration regarding the joy of fellowship in the house of God, and simply put, she poured out her soul before the Lord and then received His Word with Faith. The bible tells us in Heb 6:12 that we inherit the promises of God through faith and patience. And since she believed God's Word it changed her whole attitude, and this is one of the marks of faith, believing that you have something before you even have it. Faith is the substance or the reality of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. If God has promised me something, why walk around worried, or all upset, or act as though I'm uncertain. Because if I really believe God's promises I'm going to be rejoicing, my actions and attitudes are going to correspond to what I believe.

Now, God has promised you everlasting life in Christ, He's promised you the Kingdom of God, He's promised you forgiveness of everything you've ever done, (in Christ), does your life correspond with those promises, does your attitude line up with those facts? Hannah believed the promise of God by faith and walked away a changed lady.

Vs19-20

Samuel means "asked of God" or "heard of God" so he would always be a reminder to her that she asked for him of God and that God heard her cry.

Vs21-23

Again we see the earmarks of godliness in Elkanah, under the law he could've annulled her vow before the Lord, but he didn't. And as far as he knew this would be the only child that was given him by the woman he truly loved, and yet he would allow her to fulfill her vow to the Lord, and the babies were generally around 3 before they were completely weaned.

Vs24-28

Now again knowing the way that things were @ that time, this was a great step of faith for Hannah and Elkanah, because I don't think I would just hand over 1 of my children #1 and #2 knowing that there was radical compromise and even wickedness taking place by Eli's sons, I don't know that I'd entrust my son into his care. But Hannah had made a vow and she trusted the Lord with her son, and I think that as parents we need to come to the place where we trust that God is able to take better care of our kids than we are. Now we're to train them up in the ways of the Lord, but I'm always worried about what will happen with my kids if something were to befall me.

But God wants to take us to that place where we trust that He can watch over them better than we can and Hannah was assured of that fact. And of course this is where we get the biblical premise for baby dedications. There is no biblical premise for infant baptisms, but as far as dedications go, this is it. We recognize that God is the giver of life and as He would choose to bless us with such a gift we recognize that He gave us the child, therefore we want to dedicate the child back to Him, that His purposes and His will might be accomplished in that child's life.

Now again, we need to be responsible to raise our children the way God would have us to, but as for dedicating our children to God, this is where we get that.

And so this huge step of faith for Hannah and Elkanah, and no doubt a sacrifice in their hearts led them to worship the Lord as she fulfilled this vow of hers to Him.