

## 2. A Comparison at Its Finest

10/27/2002

Black and white, mountain top and valley low, light and dark and good and evil - we are noticing that we are hearing comparisons one to another. In this morning's study, we are going to find a comparison at its finest.

Last Sunday we learned that Hannah who was barren prayed to the Lord and asked for a son who is going to live all of his life as a dedicated man of God. God granted her wish and gave her a son, Samuel. Now we are eavesdropping on Hannah's prayer at the tabernacle as she dedicated her child to God.

### A. HANNAH'S PRAYER

*1 Sam 2:1-2 And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. "No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.*

One of the best praises & prayers recorded in the Bible is here by Hannah. This time Hannah is praying to the Lord not as a barren woman, but as a blessed woman.

She rejoices in the Lord. She does not, and she can not rejoice in the leaving of her son. But she can, and she does rejoice in the Lord. In the most desperate situations, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, we can still rejoice in the Lord.

The horn is an often used as a picture of strength in the Bible (Psalm 75:4-5; 92:10). Hannah is speaking of her strength and power being exalted in the Lord.

In the Book of Luke, we find, 'The Magnificat of Mary.' It is that expression of Mary when she meets her cousin Elizabeth. And it gives us insight into the character of Mary. It helps us to see what a deeply spiritual person she was. As she busts forth, "My soul magnify the Lord, and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of his handmaid." She goes on in this glorious exaltation to God. There is nothing in it in scripture to equal except this glorious declaration and exaltation of Hannah here in the Old Testament.

*1 Sam 2:3 "Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the Lord is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.*

Even though her prayer is very much heavenly and praising God who came to her side, Hannah does not forget to insert a few jabs toward her rival Peninnah. While Hannah certainly has her rival in mind, her "fellow-wife" Peninnah here. But in some way, she sees Peninnah as just a representative of all the proud and arrogant people in the world.

*1 Sam 2:4-8 "The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble. "The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, And He has set the world upon them.*

Her prayer is like a poem. We may not see a format of poem in English due to lack of rhyme. But in Hebrew language, we find that Hannah was repeating the same content in different ways. That is one of the Hebrew poem styles.

God is not a respecter of human's social status, wealth, fame nor power. But He cares very much about those who humble themselves before the Lord and He rewards those who diligently seek Him more than seeking their own profits.

*James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

## **B. HANNAH'S PROPHECY ABOUT HER MESSIAH**

*1 Sam 2:9-10 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. "For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed."*

At this time, Israel did not have a king. So when Hannah speaks of His king, she is looking ahead to the Messiah, who will finally set all wrongs right.

The original Hebrew word for "Anointed" is *Mashiycha* which translates to Messiah in English. This is the first place in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as the Messiah.

Hannah first applied to Jesus the remarkable epithet Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek, and Anointed in English.

This word also was adopted by David, Nathan, Ethan, Isaiah, Daniel, and the succeeding prophets of the Old Testament; and by the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, quotes Hannah in Luke 1:69, when he prophetically calls Jesus a horn of salvation, quoting from 1 Samuel 2:10. Mary, the mother of Jesus, in her beautiful prayer found in Luke 1:46-55, seems to quote Hannah's song often.

*1 Sam 2:11 Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.*

V11 mentions the complete trust in God by Hannah and Elkannah for Samuel's well being.

It also ends with a very interesting phrase, "*the child ministered to the Lord.*" How can a little child minister to God? With what? I don't believe that little Samuel was ministering to God just as another priest-to-be. I strongly believe that he was ministering to the Lord with all of his heart and mind as the Lord sets in his little heart.

The word "minister" in Hebrew is "*sharat.*" It occurs ninety-six times in the OT. It has a meaning of a special relationship to God. In other words, little Samuel was having a very close intimate relationship with God not necessarily as a priest-to-be, but in personal base.

## **C. ELI'S SONS - THE OTHER BAD END OF THE SPECTRUM**

*1 Sam 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord.*

So far, we were looking at a wonderful scene of praise and adoration of the Lord from Hannah and how little Samuel ministered to God. But now, all of sudden, we are looking at a horrible scene at the tabernacle.

The Bible does not waste words, nor misuse words. The original word "corrupt" should be translated "worthless." Literally, in Hebrew it means sons of Belial. Belial was a pagan god, and the phrase sons of Belial refers to worthless, wicked men. This was a significant problem, because the sons of Eli were to succeed him as high priest, and were already functioning in the priesthood.

When the rapture happens, some of pastors and priests will not go up with the Lord Jesus. Why? Because they don't believe the deity of Jesus Christ, salvation through personal relationship with Christ, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. I always wonder why they are even in their jobs as pastors and priests. Just like Eli's sons, these people don't know the Lord, and they are stench to God.

*1 Sam 2:13-14 And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.*

According to other passages in the Old Testament, the priest was supposed to receive a portion of the breast and the shoulder. But now, some four hundred years after the law of Moses was given, the priestly custom had changed - they would not take the prescribed portion of the breast and shoulder, but take whatever the fork brought up out of the pot.

*1 Sam 2:15-16 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force."*

The portion that was to be given to God was always to be given first, so it was wrong to take the priest's portion before they burned the fat.

The fat was thought to be the most luxurious, best part of the animal, so that was given to God. The idea was that God should always get the best, and God should get His portion first. But in their pride, the sons of Eli took their portion before they burned the fat. Then they would sell the raw meat they took away from people for their profits.

*1 Sam 2:17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.*

The actions of these Eli's sons and their servants were detestable to the Lord. We can all agree with God.

It was bad enough what they themselves were doing; but the greater sin of Eli's sons was in how they hurt other people. Our self-destructive sins are bad enough; it is even worse when we destroy someone else.

It is the same today with greedy, corrupt ministers, who make others hate the offering to the Lord. God will judge them by a high standard.

*James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

## D. SAMUEL'S CHILDHOOD MINISTRY

*1 Sam 2:18 But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.*

The scene is changed again to a bright setting. Even though little Samuel was not a full pledged priest, he already earn respect from the people around him to wear a linen ephod which is a sleeveless priest garment.

*1 Sam 2:19 Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.*

I can picture Hannah making a little robe for Samuel to wear throughout that year.

*1 Sam 2:20 And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord." Then they would go to their own home.*

This is one of those verse from NKJV that is not quite clear to me. The New American Standard Bible version put it in a lot better way for me:

*Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home.*

*1 Sam 2:21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the Lord.*

Hannah gave one child to God and received more children. We can never outgive God.

Never be afraid to commit our unknown future to the known God Jesus. Because God will surprise us whenever we yield to His will and His ways.

## E. APPLICATIONS

1) What would please our Lord more than anything? Would that be money we bring to Him? Would that be ministries we get done in His name? Would that be a big size congregation and church building?

The answer of "Yes" for these questions might have some good points. But the most important way of pleasing God is nothing more than simple obedience and faithful heart that we can learn from children. It is not our capabilities God desires, it is not our money He needs to run the universe, it is not our effort to reach out to those non-believers. **IT IS OUR HEARTS HE DESIRES.**

*2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*

2) Let's be careful how we present ourselves to non believers at work or neighborhood. Because they may not believe in God, but they are not stupid. They can see our attitude and language. If we make them to have wrong impression about God because of our wrong behaviors as Christians, it is better not tell anyone that we are Christians. Please remember that non-believers would rarely pick up a Bible and start to read it and become a believer. You and I are the only Bible they are reading. **TO BE EXACT, THE WAY WE LIVE, THE WAY WE TALK, AND THE WAY WE HANDLE CRISIS WILL LEAD THEM TO CHRIST.**