

1 Samuel 1-2:11 • Spiritual Revival

Introduction

With the death of Moses and Joshua seemed to come a “death” of references to God’s Word. Throughout the books of Judges and Ruth there is nary a word concerning the priesthood or anyone living according to God’s Word. The repeated phrase provided is that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes”. Not even the priests nor the Levites seem to be living according to God’s Word. This is the most prominent feature of 1 Samuel in the sudden flood of references to who is and isn’t being obedient to God’s Word (also symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant) and its affect to produce a much needed spiritual revival amongst God’s people.

¹Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ²He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there.

⁴When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; ⁵but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. ⁷It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What does the geographical and genealogical information here provided boil down to? What is it intended to communicate?

A: Samuel’s father, Elkanah, was a Levite (specifically descended from the family of Korah) living in Ephraim. This is why Samuel will be so readily accepted to grow up in and live at the tabernacle and later serve as a priest, because of his Levitical heritage.

Q: Is there something peculiar about Elkanah?

A: On the one hand he seems to be very observant concerning some laws in his yearly commitment, but contrary to the Law for Levites he has taken more than one wife. It’s an example that opens the book of 1 Samuel in the manner the book of Judges was closed, with most people being only partially obedient to God.

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25

[Read v.4-7]

Q: What is implied in the facts that as a Levite Elkanah wasn’t supposed to take more than one wife—but did anyway—and that Hannah’s inability to bear children was due to the will of God?

A: It implies that the familial discord and unhappiness experienced on everyone’s part is the result of spiritual weakness and sin. They are experiencing the consequences of their actions.

Q: Why did the author go out of his way to point out that “year after year...she wept and would not eat”? What does it mean?

A: The sacrifices were not 100% complete by biblical standards until these portions had been consumed. Hannah’s personal unhappiness was tied to her spiritual unhappiness with God and revealed by the author in her refusal to eat. It’s another example of not wholly and completely following God’s Word.

⁸Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

⁹Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ¹¹She made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.”

¹²Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. ¹³As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴Then Eli said to her, “How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.”

¹⁵But Hannah replied, “No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation.”

¹⁷Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.”

¹⁸She said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

[Read v.8-18]

Q: What is the one thing Hannah does differently THIS year from years past? How might this indicate a change in her spiritual condition?

A: She completes the terms of the sacrifice by eating it. It's an indication of a heart moving from disobedience to obedience.

Point: *Obedience to God in the big things is only possible if first achieved with the little things.*

Q: Given the discussion to this point of people that are only partially obedient in their lifestyle, why is Hannah's vow to bear a Nazirite (v.11) a startling turn of events?

A: To be a Nazirite is to adhere even more strictly to the Law than normally required. It's an indication that Hannah's heart is changing, no longer seeking to satisfy herself but God.

Q: What is the play on words in Hannah's response to Eli's accusation concerning being drunk? How does it further indicate that Hannah was not a righteous woman to begin with but undergoing spiritual renewal?

A: She is not consumed with the false spirits of this world, but being renewed by the Spirit of God in pouring out her soul so that it can be filled with nothing but God's Spirit.

Point: *There is a difference between sinners coming to know Christ for the first time—that is, being evangelized by the Word of God—and Believers returning to a right relationship with God, otherwise known as “revival”. They are not one and the same thing. For the world in general we pray for and should be engaged in evangelization by sharing the Gospel so the “lost” may be “found”. “Revival” is something that is only necessary to recall backslidden Believers into a right relationship with Him. In this sense, “revival” is something we shouldn't constantly desire because the church should be naturally obedient and never in need of it. But when it does, it begins **NOT** by displays of signs and wonders but a recommitment to God's Word. This is an historic, common denominator in all revivals.*

¹⁹Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD."

[Read v.19-20]

Q: "Samuel" means "heard by God". What did it take for Hannah to be heard by God?

A: She had to change her disobedience into obedience.

Q: How does this fit with the observation here that "the LORD remembered her"?

A: It's a very poetic and literary mechanism to convey the fact that God never actually "forgot" anything, but that it was a human that "forgot" to follow Him faithfully according to His Word. God "remembered" in parallel with Hannah remembering the whole of God's Word.

Point: *Obedience in our walk produces obedience in our prayer-life which aligns the results with the will of God.*

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2

[Read v.21-28]

²¹Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. ²²But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever."

²³Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him.

²⁴Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. ²⁵Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. ²⁶She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. ²⁷For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. ²⁸So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Q: Why is Elkanah's admonition "only may the LORD confirm His word" important? What does it indicate on a spiritual level?

A: People can use the name of the Lord, even claim something as accomplished by Him, without it actually being of or sanctioned by Him. Elkanah's encouragement is to seek **God's** affirmation rather than man's.

Point: *Even something that begins by the inspiration of God can be misapplied by man. "Look what He did through ME" can come to take the rightful place of God.*

Q: What is the stark contrasting difference between Samuel and his father Elkanah as discussed at the beginning of this lesson?

A: Although both are Levites and supposed to be dedicated 100% to the full-time service of God, Elkanah never appeared to so be dedicated as is Samuel. There is a spiritual picture here of service that is divided in its loyalties versus wholly committed to God.

Q: In today's world and according to our way of thinking, how might we consider Hannah as NOT having her prayer answered in the ideal fashion?

A: Originally her distress was at not having any children. Bearing a child and giving it up might appear to our modern way of thinking as not getting what she really needed or deserved in a son to have and hold exclusively for herself. What we might miss in the joy of her willingness to fulfill this vow is the corresponding joy that came from being reconciled to a right relationship with God. The process of having the child resolved the much bigger spiritual issues in her life expressed by the one earthly issue.

Application: *Is it possible that some of your cares and desires prevent your achievement of greater spiritual accomplishments? Is your list of prayer requests oriented more towards pleasing yourself or seeking to please God?*

¹Then Hannah prayed and said,
“My heart exults in the LORD;
My horn is exalted in the LORD,
My mouth speaks boldly against my
enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.
²There is no one holy like the LORD,
Indeed, there is no one besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God.
³Boast no more so very proudly,
Do not let arrogance come out of your
mouth;
For the LORD is a God of knowledge,
And with Him actions are weighed.
⁴The bows of the mighty are shattered,
But the feeble gird on strength.
⁵Those who were full hire themselves
out for bread,
But those who were hungry cease to
hunger.
Even the barren gives birth to seven,
But she who has many children
languishes.
⁶The LORD kills and makes alive;
He brings down to Sheol and raises up.
⁷The LORD makes poor and rich;
He brings low, He also exalts.
⁸He raises the poor from the dust,
He lifts the needy from the ash heap
To make them sit with nobles,
And inherit a seat of honor;
For the pillars of the earth are the
LORD’S,
And He set the world on them.
⁹He keeps the feet of His godly ones,
But the wicked ones are silenced in
darkness;
For not by might shall a man prevail.
¹⁰Those who contend with the Lord
will be shattered;
Against them He will thunder in the
heavens,
The LORD will judge the ends of the
earth;
And He will give strength to His king,
And will exalt the horn of His
anointed.”

¹¹Then Elkanah went to his home at
Ramah. But the boy ministered to the
LORD before Eli the priest.

[Read v.2:1-11]

Q: What is the overall theme of Hannah’s prayer? What does it indicate about Hannah’s spiritual transformation?

A: The sovereignty of God. It recognizes her finally attaining a right and restored relationship with God as King and Ruler. She experienced success when she no longer tried to take the place of God in her own life.

Q: What does Hanna term this in v.1?

A: “Your salvation”. Not just a one-time event, it’s something worked out in the course of a life-time of obedience.

Q: What in v.3 indicates the greater work and need for obedience to God’s Word?

A: “For the LORD is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed.” It’s not enough to **know** God’s Word but to **put it into action**.

Q: There are several contrasts of God’s working in v.6-8 such as “He brings low, He exalts”. What is being communicated?

A: Those who remove the spiritual roadblocks by forsaking earthly wealth, status, etc. for their spiritual opposite are elevated by God; otherwise they are brought into a condition whereby they are confronted with the same. Humans are never ultimately in control of anything.

Q: What is intimated in v.9 with the statement, “He keeps the feet of the godly ones”?

A: Steady feet upon a stable path is a recurring biblical teaching of walking according to God’s Word and ways exclusively. It’s a confirmation of the work of obedience.

Q: How is v.10 a personal testimony concerning Hannah’s own experience?

A: “Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered” is what happened to her all those years she was deficient in complete obedience. When she was finally broken to the point of compliance to His Word and proper submission to Him, her old life was shattered “for the good” so to speak to make way for renewal.

Q: What is theologically important about v.10?

A: It’s the first biblical reference to the “Messiah”, often translated as “His anointed” (“Christ” in the Greek). Hannah’s spiritual renewal has inspired a glimpse of its working not just in her own present time but for all generations to come.

Application: How quick are we to praise God for His person and the working of His will as opposed to answering a prayer for a personal need? Shouldn’t we be hungering for God to be doing greater things through us than just meeting the needs of our existence?