
Day 85 - March 26

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Samuel Brings About Transition

Readings: *1 Samuel 1:1-2:36*

Reflections:

- This is a vastly new period in the life of Israel. As we will see, the hope of a king will not ultimately change the hearts of the people. The hope of a secure nation is also tied with this. Again, this is placing hope in a rightly ordered external environment to help enable the people to keep the law. The fact is though that knowing the law of God, having forgiveness, having a secure nation that supports the laws, having priests that teach it, and having a king that is supposed to keep it all on track - none of this works. The human heart is still unchanged by these external forces. We will see that we must be changed from the inside out and that no amount of outside influence can change us from the outside in.
- The period of the monarchy starts where the formation of the nation begins, with a barren woman and a rival wife. This is a picture that the Lord wants to paint. The two women represent the two versions of humanity. One is the broken and barren version that is longing after God and is totally dependent on God working inside them to save them. It is a picture of God working supernaturally on the inside to save them and transform their futures. The other has children but their hearts are not right. They are greedy and grabbers, striving to meet their own needs. God wants Israel and all of his followers to see that through Sarah, Hannah, and Ruth that God works to bring salvation. God does all of this by revealing his power in the powerless and weak. It is a wonderful picture.
- Hannah is more deeply loved than Peninnah by her husband and receives double portions from him. Again, this is a picture of God's heart for her.
- The exchange between Hannah and Eli is fascinating. First, it is a powerful picture of a righteous person pouring out their heart to God. It is also interesting that Eli's agreement with Hannah resulted in her having peace that God would answer her prayer and her spirit was no longer downcast. The final point of interest is his thought that she may be drunk. In this story, it could be one of two things. First, this could signify that she was experiencing such heartache that he thought she had turned to wine to ease the pain. It may show the blurred line between having wine and being consumed with God. This occurs a few times in Scripture, most notably at Pentecost. More likely it signifies that Eli's heart is not right and is

attributing God's work in Hannah's life with self-indulgence. Later in this section we will see that this is the case for Eli and his sons. Anyway, just something interesting to note. Her commitment to God is that her son would be totally devoted to him under a Nazarite vow.

- Samuel is conceived and born. His name sounds like "heard of God" which both signifies how God heard Hannah's plea and how his life will prophetically be played out in his amazing ministry as a prophet.
- Hannah's dedication of Samuel to the Lord after the boy is weaned no doubt finds a parallel with Abraham offering Isaac, although to a lesser degree. It shows the incredible faith and obedience of Hannah. It breaks my heart to imagine how she felt leaving her little boy and not having him as her own. But this demonstrates her incredible faith in God and desire to honor him alone. Key statement about Samuel: "For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord."
- Hannah's song is beautiful. The reference to the barren woman having seven children is probably at this point a reference to having a perfect, God given child rather than having seven children. Seven is being used as God's perfect number.
- Hannah's song is probably one of the clearest and most profound expressions of God's heart.

"The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.

The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes
and has them inherit a throne of honor.
"For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
upon them he has set the world.

He will guard the feet of his saints,
but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.
"It is not by strength that one prevails...."

- Here we see what will ultimately be revealed in Christ when those who humbly trust in Christ are raised up in Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms (See Ephesians 1). Also she notes, "it is not by strength that one prevails" for God's power is perfected in our weakness.

- Her prayer ends with a promise of a coming king. In this context they await a king but as we will see, it is ultimately the Messiah (literally the anointed one) or Christ that will bring the long awaited restoration of a true people of God and a true kingdom of peace.
- Eli's other sons were not honorable and had a practice of dishonoring the offerings to the Lord and how those offerings helped cared for the priesthood. This practice of dishonoring the Lord's offering is said to be a sin that was "very great in the Lord's sight. When Eli, the father confronts them, we also discover that they were also sleeping with women in the service of the tabernacle. It is interesting that it appears that God's primary concern is how they dishonor him in their worship and that he doesn't mention their sexual practices. This is not to suggest God doesn't care about their sexual sin but rather that their heart condition towards God was foundational to how they viewed all relationships. They didn't care about God and they didn't care about others.
- Eli confronts them but they don't repent. Eli still does nothing about it. We do learn that they are under God's judgment. In the final section we discover how sad a judgment it will be. Such a sad statement about what happens under God's judgment. Definitely a warning for all readers but as we will find, such warnings alone do not stop people from doing terrible things against God and others. His family line will go from fattening themselves before God to starving for food.
- Hannah is blessed for having offered her son to the Lord and is given five more children. In particular, Samuel is blessed. Key statement: "And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men." Here we see a new hope for Israel is emerging in the midst of corruption within the Priesthood.