

## Offered to the LORD 1 Samuel: 1:21-28

### INTRODUCTION

We return this morning with our study of **1 Samuel**. 1 Samuel is not a fictional tale, but a true historical narrative. These people lived on our earth, and these events happened in our world. We meet real people this morning as we continue to study the birth of Samuel. Having said this, please remember the **following: although the book's narrative took place thousands of years ago, it is included in the Bible for our instruction and encouragement. Beginning with barren, brokenhearted Hannah, this story introduces us to ordinary people with real aspirations, fears, and failures who are helpless and hopeless unless God does something.**

After years of backsliding, Israel was a spiritually fruitless nation, Hannah's barren condition mirrored her people's predicament. When the Lord granted Hannah a son, then, He answered more than a mother's prayers: Samuel's arrival fulfilled God's covenant promise to establish His Word by providing leadership for Israel. God did not intervene because Hannah or the Israelites earned His favor. Rather, He always acts according to His unfolding plan of redemption and care for His people.

**The story of Hannah is set within the context of a nation in turmoil.** The ending of the book of Judges gives us the context: at that time there was no king, and the people did whatever they wanted to; everybody did what was right in their own eyes. **So, the nation of Israel is experiencing instability, is confronted by insecurity. And in many ways, Hannah's picture of her life is a microcosm of that larger picture.** She is childless, and in many ways, the nation of Israel is fruitless. And the answer that God is providing for the predicament of Hannah is part of His answer for the predicament of His people.

As we saw last time, the story opens with simple, barren Hannah. **And it's a story of going from barrenness to blessedness...**

**from being barren to being blessed.** God uses Hannah to transition the people of Israel out of the chaos they were in. It is from her that Samuel comes onto the scene; Samuel, the righteous prophet who organizes the people under the banner of the Lord again. **Make no mistake, Hannah's simple strength in pain and adversity is the turning point of Israel's history, and therefore a major turning point in the story of God's redemption.**

We saw last time that her path from barrenness to blessedness included \_\_\_\_\_ (*1:1-8 'year after year'*), \_\_\_\_\_ (*1:9-18 'only her lips moved'*), \_\_\_\_\_ (*1:19-20 'and the LORD remembered her'*)

**So far, so good, we might say regarding Hannah.** Arriving at the tabernacle with the grief of childlessness on her heart, Hannah turned to the Lord for help. **Afflicted by the mean-spirited barbs of her rival co-wife, Hannah prayed not for vengeance but for a son whom she might offer to God.** Instead of stuffing her heart with bitterness and resentment, Hannah poured out her soul before the LORD. And when Eli, speaking in his office as high priest, gave words of benediction over her prayer, Hannah received it as God's answer and went home with peace and joy.

But now, at the end of this opening chapter, these critical questions **remain: Will Hannah make good on her promise to the Lord? Will she fulfill her vow to consecrate her little son in lifelong service to God? Or will she see things differently once the baby boy is rocking in her arms?** Were Hannah to renege on her vow—a promise made under duress but forgotten once the trouble passed—she would not be the first and certainly not the last to do so. Perhaps God would understand if she adjusted her promise to allow little Samuel to serve the Lord at home in Ramah. Perhaps she would now think it best to devote more time to spiritually nurture the child and allow him to make his own decision.

## I. Vow \_\_\_\_\_ (1:21-23)

At the time of his usual pilgrimage, Elkanah prepares for his usual annual festival trip (1:21; cf. 1:3), though this time he goes not only **“to offer his annual sacrifice”** but also to offer **“his vow.”** This would indicate that he has confirmed Hannah’s vow (Num 30:6–15) and his godly devotion is shown in his taking it as his own. The passage stresses Elkanah’s exemplary piety. He faithfully led his family to participate in annual Torah-prescribed pilgrimage festivals (Deut 12:5–7) and voluntarily made vows and then fulfilled them (Num 30:2; Deut 23:21). Although the Torah explicitly gave him the right to nullify Hannah’s vow regarding Samuel’s service in the Shiloh sanctuary (cf. Num 30:10–15), he chose instead to confirm her vow to the Lord, even though it meant losing the firstborn son from his beloved wife’s womb.

During the child’s infancy Hannah keeps Samuel to herself. She will not even take part in the annual trip up to Shiloh. There’s a purpose behind this decision. **What is it? She pours her life into preparing him for the life to which she is going to hand him over. But she has an even more important task. She must wean him off dependency on her and Elkanah and teach him to be dependent on God. His relationship with his mother must take second place to his relationship with God.**

## II. Vow \_\_\_\_\_ (1:24-28)

When she and Elkanah brought Samuel to the temple, they brought with them a special sacrifice. Normally a lamb would be required (Lev 12:6), if the couple were poor, they could bring two pigeons or doves, this seems is what Joseph and Mary brought (Luke 2:24). That Hannah and Elkanah brought a bull, a very expensive animal, shows the depth of their gratitude for their child. The cost of the sacrifice of the bull, however, would be nothing alongside the cost of the sacrifice of their son.

Hannah’s single-minded testimony cannot have failed to impress Eli as he recalled the occasion when she had stood near him, lost in prayer. Her point is emphasized by a wordplay on the root *šā’al* (**asked or petitioned**; four times it occurs, **“the Lord has granted me my petition which I petitioned him. Therefore, I have petitioned [the verb also means ‘lent’] him to the Lord ... he is petitioned to the Lord’.**

The **“he”** who worshipped before the LORD (v. 28) may refer to **Elkanah**, the leader of the family and the main man in the context. It might also refer to **Eli** to whom Hannah was speaking. If refers to **Samuel**, the most immediate antecedent of **“he”** in verse 28. If this interpretation is correct, this reference marks the beginning of Samuel’s ministry, which all of chapter 1 anticipates.

## **CONCLUSION**

What can we take with us this morning? Hannah left that temple as childless as she was at the beginning of the story. In fact, she did go on to have more children. But that was later. That day she went home with no little boy holding her hand. God had given her everything, and now she gives God everything. **She did not go home with her little boy, but she did go home with God.** A God who had given once and who would in time give again. In fact, this is how God would have us live. Receive and then give, and then receive again, and give again.

- **Hannah shows us how to receive blessings: not with \_\_\_\_\_, but with \_\_\_\_\_.**

That takes God-given fortitude. It's hard to give up what we believe we need. But when we do, God uses our sacrifice as a catalyst for the kingdom. These are the kinds of prayers God loves, when his people pray: ***“God, bless me for the building of your kingdom.”***

**Hannah's dedication of Samuel is a reminder that everything we have comes from God, and we should dedicate all that we have to the Lord.** Your family, your home, your business, your income, your schoolwork, your reputation, your talents, and time – we should dedicate all that we have to God and to his glory. Will you dedicate your life to the Lord today?

- **When it comes to eternity, there really is only one story, the story of our \_\_\_\_\_ with God**

**For all of us there is only one story.** The story of us and God. That story will include many events and many other characters, but none of those events or characters will ever be center stage. Only God and ourselves will ever be center stage. And when all the events are over, when all the other players are gone, it will be just you and God left to do business.