

Week 1 - The Last Judge is Born

I Samuel 1-2

Introduction

I and II Samuel covered a time period of tremendous change and turmoil in Israel. Up until now Israel is a collection of 12 tribes, all lead by "Judges" appointed by God. They were spiritual leaders, like Samuel the prophet, who God used to speak for Him.

It was a pure theocratic society - God was their only King.

Samuel will be the last Judge of Israel, and we will see the rise of Saul and David as a result.

The story begins with Samuel's mother, Hannah.

When Godly Desire Becomes Your Identity

READ I Samuel 1:1-8

Elkanah has two wives. Hannah and Peninnah.

Monogamy was predominant in the OT, but there were still instances of multiple wives. David and Solomon seem to have done so for political reasons. It was also common for a man to marry a second wife if the first could not bear children.

It is likely that this is what happened here. Hannah was probably first, married because they loved each other. Peninnah likely came second because she could have children.

So, both women have an identity problem. Hannah is loved, but miserable because without children she is seen as worthless by the world. Peninnah can produce children, but is miserable because her worth is wrapped up in being loved by Elkanah which makes her jealous of Hannah.

Both women want what the other has.

Elkanah's answer to Hannah's mourning? He proposes that he himself is all she needs (v. 8). He is well-meaning, but utterly self-centered. He doesn't point her to God, or tell her that she has value with or without children. Instead, he tells her that he is all she needs to be valuable.

God Blesses Hannah

After this conversation with Elkanah, Hannah is even more distressed. She goes to the temple, and prays fervently for God to give her a son.

She tells God that if He grants her a son, she will make him a Nazarite and a priest.

This is the turning point for her. She goes to God with her trouble, not Elkanah or anyone else. Despite the fact that how she sees herself and her value before God is broken, she still knows where to go with her pain. Only God can help her.

READ I Samuel 1:12-18

Eli assumes she is drunk and a “good for nothing woman”, which ironically is how the world already sees her because she cannot have children.

She explains her situation, and Eli blesses her.

The family returns home, and she gets pregnant with Samuel.

We need to recognize that Hannah's desire to have a child is complicated. She lives in a world where a woman's value and power is determined by whether or not she can produce strong sons. Not just children, but sons.

Without a son, when Elkanah dies she becomes a widow without a son to take care of her. Peninnah won't care for her, that much is for sure.

Hannah isn't just asking God for a child, she's asking God for a future.

Notice that she has joy after she prays, not after she gets what she prayed for. She dumps her burden on God, and gets up in joy. Her joy is dependent on God, not on God's answer.

The Nazarite Vow

In those days, you had to be born into the Levite tribe in order to be a priest. If you were not a Levite, and wanted to be a priest, you had to take a Nazarite vow - you renounced all your possessions, family, home, land, etc. Everything connected with being from a particular family was gone, and you joined a new family to live at the temple.

Hannah makes the Nazarite vow FOR SAMUEL, thereby renouncing all of the things that make being a parent fun for the parent. This includes Samuel's ability to take care of her in her old age. She is renouncing every advantage that having Samuel gives her.

Samuel is Born

Samuel is born, and when he is weaned (1 - 3 yrs old), Hannah brought him to the temple to live there with Eli set apart as a priest.

In chapter 2, she prays a beautiful worship prayer about how God lifts the lowly up, and destroys the proud.

Samuel is repeatedly referred to as being in the temple “ministering to the Lord”, with his mother Hannah proudly looking on from a relative distance while being blessed by having even more children.

READ I Samuel 2:11, 18-21

Mary & The Magnificat

Our HC Group is reading Luke together, and I was just reading Mary's song after learning that she would become pregnant with Jesus.

Her reputation would be smeared - no one would believe she was a virgin if she was also pregnant!

Yet, the true and better King was coming through her. Samuel would find, and prepare the way for, Israel's first and second king. John the Baptist would find and prepare the way for Jesus, the King of Kings.

The Messiah was prophesied to be a "Son of David", as Jesus would be. But the people thought the Messiah would rule like David, instead the Messiah would come to rule a spiritual Kingdom.

All of this is being setup, right here, in the womb of a barren woman crying out to God for her future.

Two women in desperate situations. Two women with no social power, no means to improve their situations, used by God to restore the people of God to God.

Conclusion

What might God do with your barrenness?

When you look at your need and your lack in life, look with eyes of faith. When you look at your lack with faith, you will see Jesus using it to usher in redemption.

Your barrenness is not a barrier to God's purposes.

Like Hannah, let's lay down our burdens at the feet of Jesus in prayer and then rise up in joy.