

## 1 Samuel 2:11-21 - Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

- Given that we're picking it up in the middle of the narrative, I'd like to quickly go over the backstory so we can sort of hit the ground running.
- Hannah has just dedicated her only begotten son Samuel to Lord, such that he will serve the Lord there in the Tabernacle alongside Eli.
- The first ten verses of chapter two recorded for us Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for Him answering her plea for a son.

- Or, as one so aptly noted, in chapter one we heard the prayer of a barren woman, in chapter two we hear the praise of a blessed woman.
- Be that as it may, we gleaned many valuable life lessons from Hannah's prayer, chief of which is that God will work everything for our good.
- It's at this juncture that we turn a corner of sorts as the narrative shifts focus from Hannah and her blessed son to Eli and his wicked sons.

(11) Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest. (12) Now the sons of Eli *were* corrupt; they did not know the LORD.

- It's interesting to note how that Samuel, as a young child ministered to the Lord. I believe this speaks to how young and old can serve God.
- What a stark contrast to Eli's older sons of whom we're told, were corrupt, and, how they did not even know the Lord, let alone serve God.
- These were the priest's sons, such that they may have known about the Lord, however, they didn't have a saving knowledge of the Lord.

One commentator writes, "It can be a difficult thing for a child to come to a true, genuine knowledge of the LORD when they have grown up in a Christian home. They just kind of assume they know the LORD because mom and dad do. But young people need to have a passionate commitment to knowing the LORD for themselves and knowing *about* the LORD isn't enough; we must know Him ourselves, in a personal relationship."

(13) 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. (14) 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. (15) 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." (16) 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." (17) Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

- To say that what they did here was wrong would be a horrible understatement, in that, this was not only detestable this was also damnable.
- In effect, they were taking for themselves that which first and foremost belonged to God, instead of being content with their rightful portion.
- So much so, in verse seventeen we're told that their sin was very great before the Lord, and that the people abhorred offering to the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon - "Yet they were priests and teachers of others. Sad was it for the people to have such ministers. Let our hearts go up to God in gratitude for the great blessing of holy teachers, who practice what they preach. Eli's sons were worse than the worst, when they ought to have been better than the best of common men."

- Before we move on to verse eighteen, I'd like to draw your attention to a most interesting detail given to us in verses fifteen and sixteen.
- Notice that they were telling the Israelites that they would only accept the fat, which was the best part of the meat before they burned it.
- This begs the question of why they wanted the meat raw, when it belonged only to the Lord. I believe it was so they could get more money.

- There's one more interesting detail woven into the fabric of this grievous narrative, and it's where we were told that they made others do this.
- In verse fifteen it says that the priest's servants would be the ones who did the dirty work for Eli's sons, who refused to do this themselves.
- The reason I point this out is that God sees right through them and in so doing charges this sin to them more than those doing it for them.

(18) But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod. (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. (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. (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.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Elkanah still offered the yearly sacrifice in spite of Eli and his sons.
- I suppose you could say, God blessed Elkanah and Hannah for their obedience to the Lord, even in the face of the priest's disobedience.
- We need look no further than verse twenty-one for the evidence of this. We're told that God gave Hannah three sons and two daughters.

- Another reason I find this interesting is, Samuel would witness the most horrific hypocrisy with Eli's sons, and still minister before the Lord.
- You would think God would protect Samuel as a young and influential child so he wouldn't be stumbled and worse yet fall away from God.
- The question is really twofold, first, why does God allow him to witness it, and how does he remain faithful to God being subjected to it?

- I would suggest, God is exposing Samuel to the grievous sin and hypocrisy of Eli's sons in order for him to learn what not to do as a priest.
- While I truly wish I could learn all my life lessons by watching someone do it right, I really learn the most from watching them do it wrong.
- The reason for this is that the horrific consequences, for such horrific sins, in someone else's life, leave an indelible impression in my life.

- I think of King David learning how not to be King of Israel by watching Saul reap the horrific consequences for disobedience against God.
- It's ironic that it would be Samuel himself that confronts Saul for his disobedience saying that the kingdom was torn from him for another.
- I can't help but wonder if Samuel realized his boldness toward King Saul had been refined in the fire of the horrific sinfulness by Eli's sons.