

Lesson 1: Crown of Grace, Crown of Jewels (1 Samuel 1:1–2:26)

When we talk about pursuing crowns from a New Testament standpoint, what are we talking about?

Doctrine of Rewards

Receiving crowns or rewards are not the same as having a place in the kingdom.

Here at FBC we believe that our place in the kingdom is granted and guaranteed at the moment of belief. Our salvation is based on faith in Christ alone by grace alone and not by works, and therefore it cannot be lost any more than it can be earned. We call that our justification. We are given a citizenship in the kingdom.

Then we go through the sanctification process, which is when we begin to pursue the reward or crown—the right to reign as royalty. But crowns are an added glorification—something for which a believer must work. They are something earned by persevering through trials and enduring tests of faith.

At the end of the sanctification journey, we receive our glorification. All who believe enter the kingdom as citizens, but not all attain to the level of reigning as royalty. This is called the Doctrine of Rewards. Not many churches teach this, but we do here at FBC, and I want to explain how we come to this understanding, because it will alter our understanding of the picture in First Samuel unless we have this foundation.

Pursuing these crowns is a reflection of our belief that we will be co-heirs with Christ as part of our glorification in the kingdom. The Lord has promised to extend the glory of royalty to us if we endure even as Christ endured.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” - Romans 8:16-17

“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” - 2 Timothy 2:11-13

Notice that living with Him is separate from reigning with Him. The first is the act of faith and identification that gives us salvation and citizenship. The second is an act of endurance through trials that is rewarded with the crown and the right to reign.

There is an endurance test that must be passed to attain the crown, and that endurance test is what we encounter during the sanctification process.

James writes:

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” - James 1:12

Paul writes:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." - 2 Timothy 4:7-8

John writes in the book of Revelation:

"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." - Revelation 2:10

Crowns can be earned, but they can also be lost in the course of the journey.

The Lord warns us in Revelation 3:10-11:

"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." - Revelation 3:10-11

Paul writes:

"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." - 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

If you do not believe that your salvation, once attained, is permanent and guaranteed, then you can interpret these verses to mean you can lose that salvation and citizenry.

If you believe that salvation is permanent, then being disqualified doesn't mean that you have lost your citizenship. It only means you have lost the right to reign as royalty.

Attaining the crown involves more than simply believing in Christ. It requires action over time. You don't just step into the position of royalty without having learned how to discern and judge issues by right values, how to submit to authority and wield authority correctly, and how to be a leader and example, even in a limited capacity.

Peter writes:

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." - 1 Peter 5:2-4 NKJV

So, what is involved with the pursuit of a crown?

There are right and wrong kings with whom to align yourself when pursuing a crown.

There are right and wrong crowns to pursue.

There are right and wrong reasons for pursuing a crown.

There are right and wrong ways to pursue crowns.

About the Books of Samuel

Who wrote the books of Samuel?

What is their narrative style?

Where do the Books of Samuel fit in the Biblical timeline?

Theme of First Samuel:

Thematic Structure of First Samuel:

First Samuel 1

Read First Samuel 1.

Structure: After the introduction, the narrative is broken into three main parts according to where they happen:

- 1) The scene at Shiloh
- 2) The scene at Ramah
- 3) The return to Shiloh

The story is capped off in Chapter 2 with Hannah's song.

The House of Elkanah

What do we know about Elkanah and his family?

1. Where did Elkanah live?
2. What is Elkanah's lineage (tribe)?
3. What do we know about Elkanah's wives?
 - a. Why does Peninnah torment Hannah?
 - b. If she is so loved and provided for, why does Hannah still weep?
 - c. How does Hannah respond to Peninnah's harassment?
 - d. How does Hannah respond to Eli's rebuke?
 - e. What is the reward for Hannah's faith?

The Bigger Picture

Before we go on to Hannah's prayer, I want to consider the author's purpose in focusing so heavily on Hannah and Peninnah as an opening picture. Of course, it is a way of introducing Samuel into the narrative, but the build-up seems to have more purpose than that. First of all, it is part of Samuel's writing style to structure his narratives with a focus on the individual before telescoping out to the greater relationships of family, community, congregation, and nation. He did this in the book of Judges, particularly in the final chapters of the book, and he does this here as well.

Here, he opens with a comparison of two individuals in a family setting, and the conflict between them is driven by Hannah's barrenness. Let's sketch a profile of each woman in regards to the reward or inheritance they are pursuing.

The Profiles

Peninnah means "rubies." She is blessed with an earthly abundance of children for which she labors, literally, and for her effort, she is rewarded with what is due her for her labor. The reward or inheritance that she pursues is of an earthly nature to build an earthly kingdom for her own glory. Her abundance of children gives her personal value, status, and validation.

The topic of rubies introduces a sub-picture to Peninnah's picture—an underlying element that expands the application. In Scripture, rubies are compared to wisdom:

"... For the price of wisdom is above rubies." - Job 28:18b

"For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her." - Proverbs 8:11

"There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." - Proverbs 20:15

"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies." - Proverbs 31:10

Hannah means "grace." Lacking the earthly abundance of physical children, she has the love of her husband and a double portion. These things are gifted, not earned, and therefore scorned by Peninnah as being unmerited.

Like Peninnah, Hannah also pursues the crown of children, but she seeks it in a different way. She seeks validation from God in asking for one child — a child who she willingly gives back to the LORD. Even as she attains that crown, she casts it before the LORD's throne for His glory and for the building up of His spiritual kingdom instead of her earthly kingdom. For this He grants her an additional abundance of children as a rebuke to Peninnah.

Peninnah's children are not mentioned in any of the great lineages, but Hannah's descendants will be among those who sing praises to God in His court.

The BIG Picture

Set the Hebrew names aside for a moment and consider the comparison between Jewel and Grace. In these two women, we see two ways of pursuing a particular reward or inheritance.

The crown of rubies is a temporal, earthly reward gained by human works. It's value is weighed by size or quantity—the more you have, the more valuable you are. A person pursuing a crown of rubies seeks glory and validation for his/herself from men only and not God.

The crown of grace is a heavenly blessing gifted by God according to a promise. Grace's worth is not in physical works or reckoned by earthly standards, and yet its honor it receives is comparable. While the person pursuing the crown of grace seeks glory and validation for his/herself, they seek to glorify God first and be glorified by God and not man. In attaining this crown, they also receive an additional blessing of the crown of rubies.

4. Which is the better crown?
5. What are right and wrong ways to pursue the crown?
6. What are right and wrong reasons for pursuing the crown?

The Barren Woman Typology

The barren woman is an Old Testament type. The conflict that surrounds her and her son(s) entwines the pictures of grace and pursuing an inheritance through grace and often contrast an inheritance of grace versus works.

- All barren women are gifted from God with sons. They include Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother, Hannah, Elizabeth (in the Gospels).
- Sarah is contrasted to Hagar just as Hannah is contrasted to Peninnah. Paul uses Sarah and Hagar as an analogy to the two covenants: One free, born of Spirit and promise, One in bondage, born of flesh and works. With Hannah and Peninnah we see two rewards: one gifted by grace and a promise, the other earned by works.
- Rebekah gave birth to Jacob and Esau, two sons who were opposite of one another. One valued and pursued an inheritance while the other despised it and gave it up.
- Samson's mother, Hannah, and Elizabeth in the Gospels had Nazirite sons.
- Samson's mother and Hannah had sons who were judges.
- Hannah and Elizabeth had sons who were Levites and prophets.

Isaiah 54 also addresses the barren woman in regards to pursuing a reward and an inheritance. She becomes a projection of Israel in a future kingdom. **Read Isaiah 54:1-6, 11-14.**

Hannah's Song

Read First Samuel 2:1-11.

Discussion Questions:

- Why would this contrast between Hannah and Peninnah, Grace and Rubies, be the first picture Samuel presents in building the theme of pursuing crowns?
- Just as wisdom is more valuable than rubies, so Hannah's example is wiser than Peninnah's. What wisdom do we take from Hannah's model?

Questions for Reflection:

- What are you pursuing in life for your legacy?
- What are you pursuing for your validation, and to whom are you looking for that validation?
- What are some ways God has blessed you that the unbelieving world might not value?

The contrast between Elkanah's wives segues to the contrast between son of the House of Elkanah and sons of the House of Eli. We are now given a comparison between priests.

House of Eli

Read First Samuel 2:12-26.

7. What do we know about Eli's sons?
8. Did Eli make any effort to restrain his sons?
9. What comparison is made between the house of Elkanah and the house of Eli?

"Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD . . . And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men." - 1 Sam. 2:21, 26

10. Who does the phrasing of that verse remind you of?

Levite Family Tree

