

E100 Block 7.1 The Rise of Israel (1 & 2 Samuel)

Mothering Sunday 2011

The Birth of Samuel -- Samuel 1v 1a, 2-20 (1 Sam 2: 12- 25a)

Introduction

A Story of Two Families

The story of a mother and her longed for child, and the story of a father and his two very wayward sons. *(Tolstoy quote re: happy and unhappy families)*

Context

In our journey through the Bible in 100 readings in the last block we covered the books of Judges and Ruth. These books described the time when the people of Israel were living in the promised land, but not as a united people, as during the days of conquest under Joshua, but as a disjointed group of 12 tribes. A loose confederation with God-appointed judges ruling in widely separated areas.

During this period, the Israelites lacked real godly leadership. The priesthood was defiled, there was no sustained prophetic message from the Lord (3:1), and the Law of Moses was being ignored throughout the land. It was an anarchic time -- summed up by the verse in Judges 17 "in those days there was no king in Israel but every man did what was right in his own eyes" Judges 17:6

As He often did in Israel's history, God began to solve the problem by sending a baby. (Moses -- Jesus)

To make the event seem even greater, God sometimes selects barren women to be the mothers, as when He sent Isaac to Sarah, Jacob and Esau to Rebekah, and Joseph to Rachel.

So, to the family of Elkanah and Hannah, God sends Samuel.

In many ways, Elkanah seems to be a good and godly man, except that he had two wives. Apparently Hannah was his first wife, and when she proved barren, he married Peninnah so he could have a family. We don't know why Elkanah didn't wait on God and trust Him to work out His plan, but even Abraham married Hagar (Gen. 16) and Jacob ended up with four wives!

While bigamy and divorce were not prohibited by Jewish law (Deut. 21:15-17; 24:1-4), God's original plan was that one man be married to one woman. (Mark 10:1-9).

Each year Elkanah took his family to Shiloh to worship (Ex. 23:14-19), (Jerusalem temple not yet established) and together they ate a meal as a part of their worship (Deut. 12:1-7). This annual visit to the tabernacle should have been a joyful event for Hannah, but each year Peninnah used it as an opportunity to irritate her rival and make fun of her barrenness. When Elkanah distributed the meat from the sacrifice, he had to give many portions to Peninnah and her children, while Hannah received only one portion. Elkanah gave her a generous share, but his generosity certainly didn't compensate for her infertility.

The name "Hannah" means "a woman of grace," and she did manifest grace in the way she dealt with her barrenness and Peninnah's attitude and cruel words.

It seems unfair that a woman with Peninnah's ugly disposition should have many children while gracious Hannah was childless.

A devout prayer (1 Sam. 1:9-18).

During one of the festive meals at Shiloh, Hannah left the family and went to the tabernacle to pray for a son.

You could say that, humanly speaking, the future of the nation rested with this godly woman's prayers; and yet, - much in history has depended on the prayers of suffering and sacrificing people, especially mothers.

Hannah laid bare her soul before God.

It was a prayer that involved submission, for she presented herself to the Lord as His handmaid, to do whatever He wanted her to do. It was a prayer that also involved sacrifice, because she vowed to give her son back to the Lord, to serve the Lord all his life

Hannah's faith and devotion were so strong that they rose above the misunderstanding and criticism of the nation's highest spiritual leader. (Eli - who thought she was drunk)

Hannah was a woman of prayer (1:27) and taught her son to be a man of prayer. As we read further of Samuel the Kingmaker, we will see that The future hope of the people of Israel was to rest with that young boy learning to serve the Lord.

By contrast -

In chapter 2 the focus shifts to Eli and his family- his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Since Eli was an old man with failing vision (4:15), he left the work of the tabernacle to his two sons, and they took advantage of their father by doing what they pleased.

Hophni and Phinehas not only showed disrespect for the sacrifices on the altar, but they also had no regard for the women who served at the door of the tabernacle- volunteers who assisted the priests and Levites.

Godly people told Eli about his sons' sins, and he spoke to them about their conduct, but it did no good.. He could and should have done more than just feebly speaking to them..

To tolerate sin and not deal with it is to participate in that sin.

As high priest, Eli had the authority to discipline his sons, call them to repent; and if they refused, he could and should have replaced them.

He did not discipline them.

From the human viewpoint, it looked as though Eli's sons were getting away with their disobedience, we later read later Judgment was coming to Eli and his family - priesthood taken from his line and given to line of Zadok the priest. (not sing)

CONCLUSION

An African proverb says, "The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people," and Confucius he taught, "The strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of its homes."

These stories teach that the life and future of a nation depends on the character of the home, ...- and the character of the home depends on the spiritual life of the parents.

Now, God has not blessed with godly offspring all parents who have had the same desires for their children that Hannah did. Children are responsible for their own decisions as they grow up (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Some choose to turn away from God.

Nevertheless Never underestimate the power of the home.

The influence of a wise and godly parent can overcome many other ungodly influences in a child's life.