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Samuel's Arrival In Shiloh

"She ... brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh".

1 Samuel 1:24 NKJV

Samuel's Parents

The first three chapters of 1 Samuel show how God intervened in a day of spiritual and moral decay and deterioration. Prophetically, this time presents us with a picture of the last days before the coming of the Messiah, the King of Israel. This is also the theme of Hannah's song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. The many individuals who abandon the ways of God, known as apostates, will be judged, but a poor and small remnant of faithful followers will be lifted up by God's power and the appearance of His anointed King. When David came to power, these expectations found their *preliminary* fulfillment. However, the *final* realization will only take place in the end time at Christ's coming.

We may apply the outlines that are sketched here to ourselves as well, because we are living in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1), just before the second coming of Christ. Ours is a time of decay. The service of God is disparaged because people bearing the name of servants and ministers of God behave improperly, like Eli's sons (2:12-17, 22-25).

Yet, even in bad times, God does not stop working. In 1 Samuel He raised up a prophet who, at a later stage, was to bring in the king after God's own heart: David (consider Acts 13:22). God does not let His people down even though they may have strayed far away from Him. He began to speak using a servant – Samuel – who was ready to hear His voice: "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" (3:9). Today we

have the prophetic ministry of God's Word, announcing the coming of our Lord in power and glory.

First of all, we can learn from the example of Samuel's parents. They were faithful to the service of God and went to Shiloh yearly to worship the LORD of hosts (1:3). In those days the ark of the covenant, on which God sat enthroned and with which He had linked His presence, remained in Shiloh – a "place of rest." It was there where God had found a place of rest and dwelt in the midst of His people.

In the day of grace – today – the place where God dwells among His own is not a special geographic location. We worship the Father in spirit and truth. This is realized wherever believers, recognizing the true Center given to us by God, are gathered together unto the name of Christ (Mt. 18:20). The ark of the covenant was a symbol of Christ dwelling in the midst of His own by His Spirit and blessing them by His presence.

In spite of the decay found in Shiloh, Samuel's parents never ceased to recognize it as God's dwelling place. The sons of Eli had made a mockery of the priesthood, and because of their behavior the offering of the Lord was abhorred. Eli himself was made responsible for this. He was told that judgment on his house had become inevitable and Shiloh was going to be set aside as a place of worship (1 Sam. 2:27-34; see Jer. 7:12).

However, since this had not yet happened it was important to remain faithful and to continue to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. We find this personal faithfulness in Samuel's parents, and we also see it in their son from the very moment he was brought to live in Shiloh.

Samuel's Dedication

The second thing we would like to consider is the way in which Samuel was dedicated to the service of the LORD. His mother brought her little son into the house of the LORD at Shiloh and lent him to the LORD. When doing so, she brought sacrifices to offer to Him: three bulls, one ephah of flour and a skin of wine (1 Sam. 1:24).

This can be applied to us as well, spiritually speaking, for we are dedicated to the service of God by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. Just as Samuel appeared before God in Shiloh by virtue of the offerings mentioned above, so we too serve and worship our God in the sanctuary on the basis of the sacrifice of His beloved Son. Whenever we appear before God, we do not come with anything of our own but with the sacrifice

of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips (Heb. 13:15). The object of these spiritual sacrifices is Christ.

The bulls mentioned in 1 Samuel 1:24 speak of the value of the sin offering, as shown in the consecration of the priests in Exodus 29. According to this chapter one young bull was offered as a sin offering. In addition, as part of the offering taught in Exodus, there were two rams, one for the burnt offering and the other for the dedication ceremony. Here in the first book of Samuel we also find three sacrificial animals, and although no difference is made between them, we do read that Hannah brought her young son to Eli after having slaughtered one bull. This was indeed a sin offering. Similarly, we serve God on the basis of Christ's sacrifice for sin. Christ was made to be sin for us, a sacrifice for sin, an offering in which sin was judged and put away from the presence of a holy and righteous God in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Now, we are able to draw near to God.

Hannah also offered a meal offering consisting of one ephah of flour. This was an offering without blood and points to Christ's life here on earth, which was without spot or blemish. In Scripture the meal or grain offering is always linked with the burnt offering. Having shown His perfection in every trial during His walk here on earth, Christ offered Himself on Calvary's cross, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. It was an offering without spot; a perfect person accomplishing a perfect work. Therefore, when we approach God as New Testament worshipers and priests it is only by virtue of Christ's finished work. God has made us accepted in the Beloved, and we draw near as priests in this new dignity.

Finally, Hannah also offered a drink offering – a skin of wine was poured out over the other sacrifices. In the Word of God, wine is a picture of joy. The drink offering was linked with the burnt offering and the meal offering (see Ex. 29; Num. 15). It speaks of dedication to God even unto death as being a matter of joy. Hannah gladly gave her young son Samuel to the Lord because He had answered her prayers and had a right to the young life He had graciously given.

Samuel's Spiritual Growth

The third point which we would like to consider is Samuel's remarkable spiritual growth after his arrival in Shiloh. He was consecrated to the LORD in the way we have just considered – and this shows that even in a dark day personal dedication to the Lord remains possible. The Lord blessed this young servant and began to use

him in order to bring about a change in the lives of the people who had departed so far from Him.

“Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD” (1 Sam. 2:21). Without a doubt this was the secret of his growth: he was in the LORD’s presence and therefore was blessed in every respect. In 1 Samuel 3:3 we see that his resting place was near the ark of God. This points to a life lived in the presence of the Lord, who is the true Center of the worship of His people. We should find our resting place in Him and in His will. When Barnabas visited the believers in Antioch “he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (Acts 11:23). Our service in the sanctuary has to take place in His presence, but we would be unable to serve Him if we did not find our resting place in Him as well.

“And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men” (1 Sam. 2:26). The wording of this verse reminds us of what is written of the Child Jesus: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Like Christ, Samuel was a *prophet* (1 Sam. 3:20). Because he was ready to hear the LORD’s voice he was also able to speak to the people on His behalf. Samuel was also the last *judge*, who at the request of the people introduced the kingship (1 Sam. 8–9).

Moreover, he acted as a *priest*, since the priesthood of Eli and his sons had failed miserably. In Jeremiah 15:1 he is put on the same level with Moses as a *mediator* between God and the people. However, the starting point of all these important aspects of his public service was his life in Shiloh in the presence of the God who blessed him and made him a blessing to others.

Shiloh was within the territory of Ephraim, where the tabernacle was located at the close of the life of Joshua (Josh. 18:1). The ark remained at Shiloh until it was carried into the camp and captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:3-11).