



## **LESSON ONE**

### **An Introductory Word and the Origin, Birth, and Youth of Samuel**

Scripture Reading:

#### **1 Samuel 1:1-28**

- 1:1** Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.
- 1:2** And he had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah. Now Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.
- 1:3** And this man went up from his city year by year to worship and to sacrifice to Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of Jehovah, were there.
- 1:4** And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters.
- 1:5** But he would give a double portion to Hannah, for it was Hannah whom he loved; but Jehovah had shut up her womb.
- 1:6** And her rival provoked her bitterly to irritate her, because Jehovah had shut up her womb.
- 1:7** And so it happened year after year; when she went up to the house of Jehovah, the other provoked her this way; and she wept and would not eat.
- 1:8** And Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why are you weeping, and why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?
- 1:9** Then after the eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah rose up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat at the doorpost of the temple of Jehovah.
- 1:10** And she was bitter in soul and prayed to Jehovah and wept much.
- 1:11** And she made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head.
- 1:12** And while she continued praying a long time before Jehovah, Eli watched her mouth.
- 1:13** And Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk.
- 1:14** And Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you.
- 1:15** And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord. I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before Jehovah.
- 1:16** Do not take your female servant for a worthless woman; for out of the greatness of my anxiety and provocation I have been speaking all this time.
- 1:17** Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your request that you have requested from Him.
- 1:18** And she said, Let your servant find favor in your sight. And the woman went her way; and she ate, and her countenance was sad no more.
- 1:19** And they rose up early in the morning and worshipped before Jehovah; and they returned and came to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and Jehovah remembered her.
- 1:20** And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah.
- 1:21** And the man Elkanah went up with all his house to offer the yearly sacrifice to Jehovah and his vow.
- 1:22** But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, When the child is weaned, then I will bring him up, so that he may appear before Jehovah and stay there forever.

- 1:23** And Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what is good in your sight; stay until you have weaned him. Only, may Jehovah establish His word. So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she weaned him.
- 1:24** And as soon as she weaned him, she brought him up with her, along with three bulls and one ephah of flour and a skin of wine; and she brought him to the house of Jehovah in Shiloh, although the child was young.
- 1:25** And they slaughtered the bull and brought the child to Eli.
- 1:26** And she said, Oh, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here by you, praying to Jehovah.
- 1:27** It was for this child that I prayed, and Jehovah has granted me my request that I requested from Him.
- 1:28** Therefore I, for my part, have lent him to Jehovah; all the days that he lives, he is lent to Jehovah. And he worshipped Jehovah there.

## **QUESTIONS:**

### **Section 1:**

1. What do we need to understand the Bible as the divine revelation?
2. What are the extracts of 1 and 2 Samuel?
3. What did Samuel's ministry bring in?

### **Section 2:**

1. What is the content of 1 & 2 Samuel?
2. What does God desire us to be?
3. How did Hannah cooperate with God? How do we cooperate with God today?

### **Section 3:**

1. What was the origin of Samuel?
2. How did Hannah pray and how shall we pray today?

### **Section 4:**

1. Who is a Nazarite?
2. What are the characteristics of a Nazarite?

----- [SECTION 1] -----

In studying the Bible, the book of books, we need to be clear that the Bible is not a book of doctrine. Strictly speaking, the Bible is not even a book of truths. What, then, is the Bible? The Bible is the divine revelation. The Greek word for revelation means to uncover something that has been hidden or concealed. The Bible is totally God's revelation concerning Himself, the universe, and humanity. There are a great many sentences in the Scriptures that could have been uttered only by God.

To understand the Bible as the divine revelation, we need a spirit of wisdom to know and a spirit of revelation to see. This was the reason Paul prayed that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would give to us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. 1:17). This indicates that we need divine wisdom to understand the divine revelation. The natural human mind and the common human knowledge cannot apprehend the revelation of God. For this we need a spirit. Thank God that He has created us with such an organ! As Job 32:8a says, "There is a spirit in man." God has created for us a spirit particularly that we may know Him. Today we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know and to see the things which are covered, hidden, concealed.

We must admit that we do not know the Bible. Only the processed and consummated Triune God knows the Bible. The more we realize this, the more we will pray, "Lord, we need You. We need Your mercy and Your blessing. Lord, we need You as the Spirit and as the Word. Otherwise, we may read the Bible again and again and still not know anything."

The Bible as the divine revelation reveals God's eternal economy, which is for a particular person—Christ. Christ is God Himself from eternity, but one day He became a man. He is the complete God and a perfect man; hence, He is called the God-man. We can see God only in Christ. Apart from Christ, or outside of Christ, we cannot see God. Likewise, the real humanity is only in Christ. Apart from Him, we cannot see a true, real, and genuine man.

Christ came to do the will of the Father (John 6:38; 4:34; 5:30), to carry out God's economy. He lived on earth and tasted all aspects of human

life. He then went to the cross and died an all-inclusive death. Three days later He rose in His humanity, and by resurrection He brought His humanity into divinity, making His humanity a part of the Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4). In this way He became the firstborn Son of God, regenerating us as the many sons of God (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:3).

He as God became a man, and we as man are becoming God in life and in nature but not in His Godhead. He is the source, and we are the produce. The produce must be the same as the source. Thus, we, the children of God (John 1:12), are the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead, in the person of God. As a whole, we are the Body of Christ. Christ as the Head and we as the Body form the new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10-11). As believers in Christ, we all are parts of this new man. This is a brief sketch of the divine revelation concerning God's economy.

Without this governing view of God's economy, we cannot understand the Bible. If we do not have such a view as we read the Bible, we will wrongly understand the Bible. The principle is exactly the same with the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. These books are part of the revelation concerning God's economy and contain pictures related to our participation in God's economy.

In 1 and 2 Samuel there are four main persons—Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David. The crucial matters regarding these persons may be expressed in the following four statements, which are extracts of 1 and 2 Samuel:

1. Eli's failure in the people's degradation brought in the waning of the stale priesthood.

2. Samuel's ministry in the Nazarite vow ended the judgeship and brought in the priesthood for God's oracle and the kingship for God's administration.

3. Saul's fleshly life insulted the kingship in the divine government and caused him to lose it.

4. David's godly life secured the kingship in God's economy, and his indulgence contaminated the kingship of God's holiness.

At the beginning of 1 Samuel, there is a picture of Eli's failure. This failure took place in the degradation of the people of Israel. Eli was a priest who brought in the waning of the stale priesthood.

Samuel's ministry brought in the prophethood for God's oracle and the kingship for God's administration. The priesthood ordained by God was supposed to do two things: to speak the word of God and to carry out God's administration, His governmental dealing with His people. Thus, on the one hand, the priests were God's spokesmen and, on the other hand, they were God's representatives. They spoke the things of God, and they represented God in His administration. Because the priesthood at the time of Eli was stale and was waning, Samuel was raised up to replace the stale and waning priesthood. Samuel did not have a failure. Rather, he had a ministry in the Nazarite vow that ended the judgeship and brought in the prophethood for God's speaking, for God's oracle, and also brought in the kingship for God's administration.

Although it may be difficult for us to understand Samuel, it is easy for us to understand Saul because he and we are sick with the same disease. Saul's life was fleshly, and our life also is fleshly. No matter what our nationality may be, we all are Sauls. Saul's fleshly life insulted, offended, the kingship in the divine government and caused him to lose it. He brought shame upon God's kingship in the divine government. In a sense, many believers have done the same thing and have lost their kingship.

David is a contrast to Saul. Whereas Saul's life was fleshly, David's life was godly. The word fleshly denotes the fallen man, and the word godly refers to one who is with God. Saul's fleshly life caused him to lose the kingship, but David's godly life secured the kingship in the divine economy. However, David's indulgence in lust contaminated and damaged the kingship of God's holiness. Although David did not lose the kingship wholly, he lost a very large part of it. Only one tribe, Judah, was left for him.

----- [SECTION 2] -----

## **I. FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL BEING ONE BOOK IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES**

In the Hebrew Scriptures 1 and 2 Samuel are one book. First Samuel 1 through 24 was written by Samuel. The remainder of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel were written by Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer. The time of the writing of 1 and 2 Samuel was about 1171—1017 B.C. The place of writing was Ephraim and Judah.

## **II. THE CONTENT**

The content of 1 and 2 Samuel is the history of Samuel, Saul, and David, which continues the history of the judges and which is a crucial part of the central line of Israel's history. Samuel was a Levite by birth and a Nazarite by consecration, to be a priest, a prophet, and a judge. He initiated the prophethood to replace the waning priesthood in the speaking for God, terminated the judgeship, and brought in the kingship. Saul was the first king among Israel in the negative sense. David was the king in the positive sense according to the heart of God.

God's heart is to carry out His economy. His heart is not that we always please Him and make Him happy, nor that we should be good, spiritual, holy, or victorious. He desires neither a good man nor a bad man but a God-man. God created us according to His image and wanted us to take His life, signified by the tree of life. Because we became fallen, God became a man to save us, to redeem us. He died an all-inclusive death for us, and He resurrected to beget us by imparting God's life and nature into us, making us God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

We should not regard the Bible as a book that teaches us to be a good man or a spiritual man. The Bible reveals that God wants us to be a "Christ-man." To be a Christian is to be a Christ-man, a man of Christ.

When some hear this, they may argue, pointing out that different portions of the Bible exhort us to be patient, humble, and perfect. There are many such exhortations in the book of Proverbs and in the Epistles of Paul. In understanding these portions we must take the Bible as a whole. The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom. Wisdom is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ is our wisdom in our daily living. Furthermore, the Epistles of Paul stress repeatedly that whatever we are and do must be in Christ.

### III. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of 1 and 2 Samuel is that the fulfillment of God's economy needs man's cooperation, as illustrated by the history of Samuel's mother Hannah, Samuel, and David, in the positive sense, and by the history of Eli and Saul, in the negative sense. Such a cooperation is related to the personal enjoyment of the good land, which typifies the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ. Hence, 1 and 2 Samuel are a continuation of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, giving us the details concerning the enjoyment of the God-given good land. The good land enjoyed by the cooperators with God became the kingdom of God, in which they reigned as kings. This is a type of the New Testament believers' enjoyment of Christ, which issues in their reign in the eternal life (Rom. 5:21).

We need to be impressed with the fact that the fulfillment of God's economy requires our cooperation. To cooperate with God means to be bound together with God. We may use a three-legged race as an illustration. The runners in such a race must run in pairs, with each partner having one leg bound to one of his partner's legs. In order for the partners to run, they must cooperate with each other and not move independently. This is a picture of the proper Christian life. To be a Christian is to be bound together with Christ and to have one living with Him by one life.

The birth of Samuel involved Hannah's cooperation with God. The old priesthood had become stale and waning, and God wanted to have another beginning. For Samuel's birth, God initiated things behind the scenes. On the one hand, He shut up Hannah's womb; on the other hand, He prepared a provoker (1 Sam. 1:5-7). This forced Hannah to pray that the Lord would give her a male child. In her prayer she made a vow and said, "O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but give to Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head" (v. 11). This prayer was initiated not by Hannah but by God. God chose Hannah because she was willing to cooperate with Him. God answered her prayer and opened her womb, and Hannah conceived and bore a son (v. 20). Then according to her vow, she offered her son

to God, placing him in the custody of Eli. From this we see that Hannah, Samuel's mother, was one who cooperated very much with God. Her case shows us the kind of persons God expects to have today.

Today many continents and countries are open to the Lord's recovery. There is the need for some to make a vow like Hannah. I hope that many of the young people will make such a vow. You need to say, "Lord, I am Yours. I just lend myself to You." God will take your heart and accomplish something to fulfill what you vow to Him.

----- [SECTION 3] -----

### IV. THE SECTIONS

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel have three sections: the history concerning Samuel (1 Sam. 1—8), the history concerning Saul (1 Sam. 9—15), and the history concerning David (1 Sam. 16—2 Sam. 24).

These books of history portray how God wants His people to enjoy the good land. In the Old Testament God allotted the good land to Israel. In the New Testament God has allotted Christ as our portion for our enjoyment (Col. 1:12). Eli's failure ended his enjoyment of the good land, but Samuel enjoyed the good land to the uttermost. Eventually, he was established to be a prophet, a priest, and a judge.

The types in 1 and 2 Samuel are a portrait showing us how we can and should enjoy Christ as our God-allotted land for the establishment of the kingdom, which is the church. The state of our relationship with God is a condition for our enjoyment of Christ. If we are right with God, this gives us a condition that we may enjoy Christ. We need to enjoy Christ to such an extent that our enjoyment of Christ becomes the kingdom of God in which we reign in life with Christ. The kingdom today is the proper church life (Rom. 14:17). In this kingdom we reign with Christ in His eternal life. This is the content and the central thought of 1 and 2 Samuel.

### V. HIS ORIGIN

In 1:1-20 we have a word regarding Samuel's origin. We should not consider that Samuel came

out simply from his father, Elkanah. Actually, Samuel came out of God's economy. God had His eternal economy, but the carrying out of God's economy had come into question. God had ordained that Aaron's descendants would be the priests for the carrying out of His economy, but that priesthood became stale and waning. God's heart's desire was to gain someone to replace that priesthood.

In order to gain such a person, God brought together in marriage Elkanah and Hannah. Elkanah had two wives. According to God's sovereign arrangement, the second wife, Peninnah, had children, but Hannah had no children. Furthermore, "her rival provoked her bitterly to irritate her, because Jehovah had shut up her womb" (v. 6). This forced Hannah to pray desperately not mainly for herself but for God. She promised God that if He gave her a male child, she would return the child to Him by the vow of a Nazarite. God was pleased with Hannah's prayer and her promise and He opened her womb. Hannah conceived, bore a child, and named him Samuel. From this we see that actually no human being was the origin of Samuel. God was the real origin, who motivated His people sovereignly and secretly.

### **A. His God-worshipping Parents**

Humanly speaking, Samuel's origin was his God-worshipping parents (vv. 1-8).

#### ***1. Remaining in the Line of Life Ordained by God for His Eternal Purpose***

In the midst of the chaos of the degraded Israel, Elkanah and Hannah remained in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose. The line of life is a line to bring forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God.

Elkanah and Hannah remained in this line of life not merely for God's eternal salvation but for His eternal purpose. God's salvation is mainly for our benefit, whereas God's purpose is related to the fulfilling of God's desire. We need to ask ourselves whether we are here for our profit or for God's purpose. Today on this earth everyone is concerned for his own profit. Even the majority of Christians do not care for God's purpose. But we are for God's purpose,

remaining in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose, which is to gain the Body, the organism of the Triune God, that He may have a full expression in a corporate way.

### ***2. In Cooperation with the Move of God on Earth for the Accomplishment of God's Economy***

This couple was in cooperation with the move of God on earth for the accomplishment of God's economy. Elkanah and Hannah were not the only ones moving; they were moved by the moving One, by the unique, divine Mover, who was moving secretly behind the scene. Under God's sovereign dealing, Hannah was suppressed in her soul with a burden in her spirit to pour out before Jehovah. This was God's move. Because of God's moving in her, Hannah could not have peace until she prayed for a son. God, the sovereign One, kept moving her and motivating her so that she had to pray, even though Eli, the one taking care of the service in God's house, did not understand her. In her prayer Hannah cooperated with the move of God.

God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life. As long as He can gain such a person, He has a way on earth. I hope that at least some of us will be today's Hannahs and say, "Lord, if You have anything on Your heart to accomplish for Your purpose, I am here. I am remaining in the line of life for the carrying out of Your economy." If you do this, I have the full assurance that you will be the ones whom God will move. He will come to you and motivate you. God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

### **B. Especially His God-seeking Mother with Her Prayer**

The origin of Samuel was especially his God-seeking mother with her prayer (vv. 9-18). Her prayer was an echo of the heart's desire of God. Her prayer was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy.

We should no longer pray old prayers in a formal way. Instead, we need to pray something that is an echo of what is on God's heart. This means that what we say in our prayer is exactly what God wants to speak. Such a prayer is the

speaking out of God's heart. Hannah's prayer was like this. God wanted a Samuel, yet He needed Hannah's cooperation to pray to Him, saying, "Lord, I need a son." This prayer was very human, yet it was a cooperation with the divine move for God's economy.

----- [SECTION 4] -----

### **C. The Moving God with His Answer to the Prayer of Samuel's Mother**

#### ***1. According to God's Desire and Intention for His Move among His Elect***

In a very particular way, the origin of Samuel was the moving God with His answer to the prayer of Samuel's mother (vv. 19-20). After such a prayer as Hannah prayed, it was easy for God to do something, because man's cooperation had become a base on which He could move. The moving God answered the prayer of Samuel's mother according to His desire and intention for His move among His elect.

#### ***2. In Keeping with the Principle That God Needs Man's Cooperation***

God's move in response to Hannah's prayer was in keeping with the principle that God needs man's cooperation with His move in His economy. This is the principle of incarnation.

#### ***3. To Produce a Nazarite Who Was Absolute for the Fulfilling of His Desire***

God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite who was absolute for the fulfilling of His desire. A Nazarite is one who is consecrated to God absolutely. A Nazarite could never cut his hair or drink wine. In the Bible, long hair signifies the headship, the authority. A Nazarite's keeping his hair long was a sign that just as a female takes her husband as her head, he takes God as the Head, considering God his Husband. Thus, a Nazarite is one who submits himself to God, taking God as the Head, the authority. This is why Hannah prayed that if the Lord would give her a boy, no razor would come upon his head (v. 11). In the Bible, to drink wine is to enjoy the worldly pleasures. A Nazarite not only submits to God as the authority but also has no interest in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Even before he was born, Samuel was consecrated by his mother to be

such a person. This is a great thing, for it was Samuel who brought in a new age.

The New Testament age was brought in by another Nazarite—John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus was a Nazarite, as were Peter and Paul. Actually, everyone who remains in the line of life is a Nazarite. If we would be today's Nazarites, we must take God as our Head and Husband, submitting to Him, and have no interest in worldly pleasures.

We need to be impressed with Samuel's origin, with his source. Because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person. Rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ.

## **VI. HIS BIRTH**

"In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah" (v. 20). This verse speaks of Samuel's birth, which came through God's answer to man's prayer. His name means "heard of God" or "asked for of God."

## **VII. HIS YOUTH**

### **A. Offered to Jehovah by His Mother to Fulfill Her Vow to God**

In his youth, perhaps at the age of two or three, Samuel was offered to Jehovah by his mother to fulfill her vow to God (vv. 21-28, 11). It was not easy for Hannah to take her child from her bosom and place him under the custody of another person, especially a very old person who had nearly lost his sight. Nevertheless, Hannah fulfilled her vow by offering Samuel to God.

### **B. To Be a Nazarite**

As we have seen, in his youth Samuel was offered to Jehovah to be a Nazarite (v. 11b).

### **C. The Offering Mother's Prayer**

In 2:1-10 we have the offering mother's prayer. In her prayer she praised God for His salvation through His marvelous deeds. Her prayer was related to God's move in His economy and

indicated that she realized something concerning God's economy.

#### **D. Ministering to Jehovah before Eli the Priest**

In his youth Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli the priest (vv. 11b, 18-19). To do anything requires some learning. Eli taught Samuel the way to minister to God.

##### ***1. As a Priest Not by Birth but by the Nazarite Vow***

Samuel ministered to the Lord as a priest not by birth but by the Nazarite vow. By birth most of us have no standing. We were Gentiles, but God had ordained the Jews. Yet there is a "back door"—the Nazarite vow. Such a vow was ordained by God in Numbers 6. That opened the door for any person to be a priest. Samuel became a priest in this way, not in the ordained way but in the way of a voluntary vow.

##### ***2. Supported by His Mother***

First Samuel 2:19 indicates that Samuel was supported by his mother. In the Lord's recovery today, we also need support, and we thank the Lord for the many mothers in the church life.

#### **E. Growing before Jehovah in Favor Both with Jehovah and with Men**

Finally, in his youth Samuel grew before Jehovah in favor both with Jehovah and with men (vv. 21b, 26). To be in favor with God means that God is for us, and to be in favor with men is that men are for us. Samuel was in a position that both God and men were for him. We may experience this in the church life today. If we are real Nazarites, we will be in favor with the saints, and the whole church will be for us. We will enjoy Christ to the uttermost and be a blessing to the church.