

THE DAVID CHRONICLES III: THE SONG OF HANNAH

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INTRODUCTION:

God heard the prayer of Hannah, and He gave her a son. She understood what was at stake, and utters a glorious psalm of triumph, a prayer that served as a model for our Lord's mother, Mary, when she triumphed in much the same way. The horn of Hannah was exalted—and this is a striking image of masculine authority and power. But in order to do this, God would have to bring about a great reversal.

THE TEXT:

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. . . .” (1 Sam. 2:1-36).

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

Recall that the first chiasm in this book ends with v. 11 here in chapter 2, when Elkanah and family return to Ramah without Samuel. This chapter also includes another chiasm (vv. 12-26) that is worth noting.

- a The sons of Eli are worthless and do not know God (2:12)
- b The wickedness of Eli's sons is described (2:13-17)
- c Samuel ministers before YHWH (2:18)
- d Hannah is given more children (2:19-21b)**
- c' Samuel grows up before YHWH (2:21c)
- b' The wickedness of Eli's sons described (2:22-25)
- a' Samuel grows in favor with YHWH (2:26) .

Hannah prays in exaltation; her horn is exalted (v. 1). No one else is a rock like our God (v. 2). God is a God of knowledge, and so human boasting and arrogance must cease (v. 3). Mighty men are brought low, and the lowly are raised (v. 4). The full are empty, and the empty full. The barren are fruitful, and the fruitful come to nothing (v. 5). The Lord kills and raises to life (v. 6). He makes poor and rich, and brings low and raises up (v. 7). He brings the poor from the dust and the beggar from the dunghill, and sets them among princes, on thrones of glory (v. 8). He keeps His saints, and the wicked are silenced (v. 9). He brings His enemies low, and sustains His king (v. 10).

Elkanah returns home (v. 11). The sons of Eli were sons of Belial, who did not know God (v. 12). Their custom with the sacrificial meat was to take the first for themselves (vv. 13-14). In addition, they took the fat (which was the Lord's) for themselves by threat of force (vv. 15-16). Their sin was very great, and they brought the worship of God into disrepute (v. 17). But Samuel ministered before the Lord (v. 18). His mother would visit him annually, and bring a coat she had made (v. 19). Eli blessed her, and she had five more children (vv. 20-21). And Samuel grew before the Lord (v. 21b). Eli was old, and heard about all his sons were doing, including their adulteries. He didn't stop them, but just admonished them (vv. 22-25). Samuel grew in favor with God and man (v. 26).

An unnamed prophet then came to Eli and delivered the word of God to him (v. 27). Didn't God choose Eli's line to minister in the first place (vv. 27-28). The prophet charges Eli with honoring his sons above the Lord, and with making himself fat with the offerings (v. 29). But God will honor those who honor Him, and will light esteem those who despise Him (v. 30). Eli's priestly line will therefore be cut off (vv. 31-33). The sign that this will happen will be the death of his two sons on the same day (v. 34). God will then raise up a faithful priest who will serve forever (v. 35). The house of Eli will then serve this new house (v. 36).

WHAT REVERSAL MEANS:

Hannah's song is filled with reversals. This is not a song that exalts a leveling spirit, but rather points to a series of reversals. The poor become rich, and the rich become poor. The mighty fall, and the powerless are raised to life. The lowly are exalted, and the exalted are humbled. Because this happens in time and in history, each group that is raised must remember that God must be honored before, during and after His action of exaltation.

Eli's house was chosen, and was promised that it would remain forever (v. 30). But because God was dishonored by him, God then selected Samuel, and promised him that he would walk before God "forever" as well (v. 35). But Samuel's sons took bribes, and a king replaced him. Later in this book Saul rises, then stumbles and falls. Then *David* does the same. Men love to think that their mojo, once it gets going, is the kind of thing that must last forever. Haman was really excited about getting a dinner invitation from Queen Esther. He thought he was headed for high places, which a gallows is, I suppose. Watching men try to be faithful over generations is like watching the tide go in and out. It will not come in completely until the Christ comes, and the earth is as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The prophecy given to Eli is *typified* by Samuel, but is fulfilled in *Christ* alone.

A MODEL PSALM:

Hannah's description of "raising and lowering" is enacted immediately afterward. It is not just a model of history, but is also a model for the remainder of this chapter. Eli's sons are set up for a humiliation, and the humble boy Samuel is set up for exaltation. They are brought low, and Samuel is promoted. At the center of the chiasm, Hannah is given a quiver full of children—she is given a seat of great honor in the Scriptures. She had the privilege of providing a model psalm to our Lord's mother.

ELI'S FAILURE, OUR FAILURE, AND GOSPEL PROMISE:

Eli admonishes his sons, but he does not stop them. The prophet who brings the charge against Eli says that he honored his sons over the Lord, even though Eli "agreed with" the Lord and not with his sons. It appears that Eli was in some manner dependent on his sons' methods of getting the choicest meat—and had gotten fat through their impudence. Eli was in fact fat (1 Sam. 4:18).

Ironically, Eli's warning to his sons actually applied to him. If a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him? Here is Eli's failure, and if we are honest, we will see our own problem with sin as well. And here is where we must grasp the gospel promise.