

1st Samuel Chapter 2- John Karmelich

1. My title for this chapter is simply, "Contrasts".
 - a) What we are going to read in this chapter is a sharp contrast between two lifestyles.
 - b) The focus is on the type of people who are obedient to God and those who are not.
 - c) Let's make this clear: The bible does believe in absolute's, as opposed to "shades of gray". Again, this is on the issue of obedience to what God commands us to do.
 - i) This does not mean the good person is perfect nor the bad person imperfect.
 - ii) The focus is on obedience to God. Those who seek God's will focus upon that task no matter what the circumstances. They (ok, we ☺) mess up a lot as we are imperfect people and we still have the sin nature. Despite that, we strive to do what is pleasing to God.
 - iii) The "contrast" are people who for all intents and purposes, live for their own desires. Such people give God lip service every now and then, and may even attend church on a once and while basis. But when it comes to how they spend their free time, how they spend their disposable income, and what are the desires of their heart, their own interest is a priority over God.
 - iv) With all of that said, there is a "black and white" difference between those who seek God and those who don't. I'm not saying all religious people are saved because the bible is real clear that one must be obedient in a specific way (i.e., trust Jesus as your Savior, etc.) as opposed to just "I believe in God and that's that".
2. Like the last lesson, the question then becomes, "Gee John, that's neat. What does this have to do with 1st Samuel?" Again, I'm glad you asked that question. ☺
 - a) First, let's summarize this chapter:
 - i) The first ten verses are a prayer by Hannah. Most of the verses are contrasts between what happens to good and bad people.
 - ii) Most of the remainder of the chapter deals with the high priest Eli and his two sons. The chapter explains how they are all disobedient to God and His desire for their lives. In essence, they get "judged" here on earth.
 - iii) At the same time, there are a few brief references to Hannah and her son Samuel. They are all good and positive.
 - b) The big picture is to see the contrast in lifestyle between those who are obedient to the commands of God versus those who are not. The opening 10 verses are a prayer that describes this contrast. The remainder of the chapter are living examples of people who live one or the other lifestyle.
 - i) Hannah and her son Samuel are both fine examples of those who trust God and desire to put God before any other aspect of their lives.
 - ii) Eli and his sons are both examples of those who put other things before God, and thus suffer the consequences.
 - c) Does this mean Eli and his sons are in hell? The text doesn't say. From studying the subtleties of the text, I suspect Eli is saved, but not his sons, but it's just my opinion.
 - i) How one lives their lives becomes a reflection of how one will live for eternity. For example, I believe in heaven we're going to spend a lot of time praising God. If this is something you enjoy now, you're going to love heaven. ☺
 - ii) The reverse is to for someone who say, is a believer, but not a strong one. For example, if praising God bores you and you avoid it, you won't care for heaven.
 - iii) In that sense, how you live now becomes a reflection of how one lives for eternity.

- iv) Eli's sons in this story basically don't care for the things of God. If God sends them to hell, God is "giving them what they want". To be sent to hell is God saying in essence, "You don't want to live by my rules? You don't want to spend eternity with me? OK fine, then I'll send you to where you want to be!" My view is hell is not for sinners. We are all sinners. Hell is a place for those who truly reject God's free provision of salvation and live a life that ignores God.
3. Chapter 2, Verse 1: Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance."
- a) The first 10 verses of Chapter 2 are a prayer by Hannah. There is lots of bible speculation as whether or not she wrote this herself or was it some common prayer of that time.
 - i) Some wonder how did Samuel record this prayer? Maybe her mother wrote it down and eventually gives it to Samuel. Again, it is not known.
 - ii) The point is this prayer itself is God inspired and becomes part of the text.
 - b) For those who like "bible structure stuff", ☺ 1st Samuel has this prayer of praise near the beginning of the book. Near the end of 2nd Samuel (remember, they were originally one book) there is another prayer of praise by David at the end of his life (2nd Samuel 22). There are many parallels to be studied in those two prayers.
 - i) In the New Testament, when the angel told Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah to come, she also has a prayer of praise. There are lots of parallels between Mary's prayer (Luke 1:46-55) and this prayer by Hannah. Some argue that Mary is quoting part of Hannah's prayer in these ten verses.
 - c) Before I analyze to death this prayer itself, ☺ I want you to think about "why" this prayer was performed:
 - i) To recap chapter 1 in a few sentences: Hannah was barren. She prays to God that if God lets her be pregnant she will give that son back to God. That means the boy will be raised and live in the place of the high priests. His "job" from childhood to adulthood will be to minister to God. The mom will only see the boy once a year when she makes an annual pilgrimage to this meeting place. All of this happens, and now is the difficult moment when Samuel is about 2-3 years old, and the mom is turning the boy over. That moment is how the chapter ends.
 - ii) What is to be learned from this event is how Hannah handled the event. Don't take this lightly. Imagine having to take your little child and turn them over to a church, and you could only see them a few days a year!
 - iii) One needs to read this prayer realizing how difficult this was for her. Her faith in God and her obedience to the vow she made is more important than her love for her son. This reminds me of something Jesus taught:
 - a) "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26 NIV)
 - b) Jesus is not being literal in the sense we are to hate our own family members. This means that Jesus wants us to make Him a priority over our own family. Hannah's giving of her son to God is an example of this.
 - iv) Does this mean God calls us to say, turn our children over to be sacrificed?
 - a) Good heavens, no! ☺ Jesus paid the price once and for all, and therefore no further sacrifice is needed. Nor does this mean we are to take our little kids and drop them off at a local church to be raised. The church would just bring them back to our house. ☺

- v) The modern application of this prayer and this issue is about making God a priority over our children. It is about teaching our children what is right because our allegiance to God is greater than our allegiance to our children.
 - a) Let's give some practical examples: "Son, you're going to church today whether you feel like it not." "Honey, this family prays together before meals whether you think it is right or not. "Child, that behavior is not tolerated in this house. In this house, we follow God and obey His commandments. We as your parents both made a decision to follow God and that means live our life accordingly. When you grow up and our own your own, you have the free will to do what you want. In the meantime, God calls us to raise you by His standards, and that is what we're doing!"
 - vi) Many Protestant churches do "dedication" services for Christian children. This is a public declaration of the parent(s) to raise their children in Christ. The prayer is a reminder that children belong to God and He "gives" them to us with the responsibility of raising them. What Hannah did is an inspiration for this ritual.
 - d) OK, on to the prayer itself: Let's state verse 1 again. I forgot what it was. ☺
4. Verse 1 (again): "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.
- a) Notice it starts with the heart. Not the literal blood organ, but a word-picture of "the life that is inside of us". A paraphrase would be "the inner-me, the true me, the what-I-am" rejoices in God for the promises that He delivered to me.
 - b) The next word picture is "horn". Think of animals with horns. It is their instrument of power. Thus a "horn" is a bible word-picture of power. This is Hannah saying that God is her strength the same way an animals' horn is their strength. Hannah is saying God gave her the spiritual power to perform this vow.
 - c) The second sentence is Hannah "boasting" over her enemies.
 - i) Let's tie this to something Paul said: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14 NIV)
 - ii) We as Christians tend to think of "boasting" as a negative thing. Paul is saying that "boasting" is ok, as long as we are boasting about God and not ourselves.
 - iii) This ties back to Hannah. She is boasting that God is the deliver from her enemies, as opposed to Hannah herself.
 - d) OK, why pray this prayer? What is the practical purpose? Stop and think about the times you are really hurting. Think about the times you really wanted to go out and get revenge against someone. Now read Verse 1 again. Our trust is in God for deliverance, not our self. Hannah delighted in God's deliverance.
 - e) Remember in Chapter 1 Hannah still didn't have any children. The one she just had, she gave to God. She still has the other wife of the same husband picking on her. In that culture, for a woman to not have children is a source of shame. I'm sure Hannah was picked on not only by the other wife, but also by the community. She is trusting in God for her deliverance. This is hoping in a future, not in the present.
 - f) When we are going through low-times, it is good to redeemer God's promises. To paraphrase Hannah, "God, the bible says You love me and you will deliver me out of this situation. I don't know how you're going to do it, but I'm trusting in your reputation, not mine to fix this. I'm going to have peace about this because I know you are going to work it out. Now get going, Amen". ☺

5. Verse 2: There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.
- a) Verse 2 is the reminder we trust in God, and God alone to fix things. The emphasis is on the first (of the 10) commandments that says, ““You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3 NIV). Verse 2 reads like a commentary on the first commandment.
 - b) Sometimes, in order for God to work, we have to get to the point where we give up on all other resources. Let’s say there is something you want very badly. No matter how hard you try, nothing is working. You finally say to God, “OK God, I give up. If you don’t want me to have this, I’ll accept that. I’m out of options. If you want me to have this, it is up to you and you alone.”
 - i) I have found that God is often waiting for you to get to “that point”. When you get to a point where you realize it is “God alone” who can help, He does. This way God, and God alone gets the glory.
 - ii) Praying like Hannah here reminds us that God alone is in charge. We put our trust in God and God alone to fix things. That does not mean for example, we don’t go to the hospital when we are in pain. For all we know God works through those doctors to cure us. The point is we give God the glory for the victories.
6. Verse 3: Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.
- a) I stated in the introduction to this lesson that it is about “contrasts” and I meant it. ☺
 - b) Verses 1-2 are about bragging in the Lord, while Verse 3 is about those who brag about themselves. Verse 3 is meant as a contrast to Verses 1-2.
 - c) That reminds me to teach you about Hebrew Poetry. ☺ In Hebrew, “poetry” is not rhyming words like we think of poetry. It is about “connecting or contrasting thoughts”. Hebrew poetry is about two sentences where a similar thought is connected. It often follows along the lines of, “Good people do this, but bad people do that”. Much of the Book of Proverbs is that style of Hebrew poetry. Some is more blunt than others. The first 10 verses of Hannah’s prayer is that style of poetry. It may even have been a song.
 - d) Verse 3 speaks of the negative aspect of pride. To many Christians including myself, the root of all sin is pride. Pride is about putting one’s one desire above God’s desire. The “output” of pride is usually the mouth, as we speak out our desires out loud. That is what Hannah is condemning in Verse 3.
7. Verse 4: The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.
- a) Beginning in Verse 4 we are going to see “pairs of contrast” (there’s that word again. ☺)
 - i) This is where the first part of the verse speaks of one type of person, and that is contrasted with another type of person (or virtue) in the latter part of the verse.
 - b) The idea behind this verse is that God can and does make people strong and God can and does make people weak. In the first part, the “bows of the warriors are broken”. It is the idea of the mighty warrior brought down low. (By the way, this verse has nothing to do with the topic of war. We’ll save that topic for another day.)
 - c) That first part of the verse is contrasted with a lowly person “those who stumbled” are armed with strength.
 - d) Think about this verse from the perspective of Hannah. She had a very low self-esteem because she couldn’t have children. I suspect this verse is a “shot” at the other wife Peninnah. Hannah saw her as “mighty” as she had lots of children. This is also the woman who constantly picked on Hannah. Hannah saw her as prideful. My point is you can read some of these verses as Hannah herself applied them to her own life.

- e) The application for us is we don't know God's plans for our future. We may see others as "being warrior's over us". We may see a situation as being overwhelming and there is "no way we can win". That is often when God does His best work. In such situations, God only gets the glory as there is no other way to explain the outcome.
8. Vs. 5: Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.
- a) Verse 5 continues the same type of thought as Verse 4. It compares someone who "thinks they are ahead of the game" being brought down low to another person who is low and is then brought up higher than the first person.
 - b) Again, the main point for us to see is "God knows the outcome of a situation and not us." Those who only care about their own life and not eternity "think they are winning". They have lots of stuff and think, "This is it, I'm doing well in life."
 - i) Jesus said, "And I'll (a nonbeliever) say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you... This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:19-21, NIV).
 - ii) Jesus' point is some who think they are rich and "set for life" have no idea that they are condemned to hell. They are more concerned with possessions than the rewards of eternal life. The same "idea" is being spoken by Hannah. Sometimes God "turns this around" in our lifetime, where the righteous get rewarded and the proud get sent low, but often it doesn't happen until judgment day.
9. Verse 6: "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. ⁷ The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world.
- a) These verses are giving more examples of contrasts of different lifestyles.
 - b) Further, the verses remind us that, "God is in charge and we are not."
 - i) Remember the children's riddle: Where does an 800-pound gorilla sleep? The answer is "anywhere he wants to". That concept applies to God. God is in charge, not us. These verses are teaching us that God is capable of doing anything. When we get down and depressed and think there is no way out of a situation, ask yourself, "Is God big enough that he can handle this situation?"
 - c) In Verse 6, Hannah mentions being resurrected from the dead. This is the first mention in the bible of the dead being raised back to life again.
 - i) That means the idea of the resurrection was understood in Judaism, although it was not literally expressed until this prayer.
 - d) Again, one can read this verse two-fold:
 - i) One can see it as a word-picture of a "low person" who for all intents and purposes was "dead" and God raised them up in power and prestige.
 - ii) One can also read this verse literally about resurrection and eternal judgment.
 - e) This verse also reminds us that it is God alone who does and can resurrect us.
 - i) A lot of people stumble over this concept. They can't see how God can resurrect the dead to life. This gets back to the concept of "If you can handle the first verse of the bible, you can handle the rest". In the first verse, God created the heavens and the earth. If you believe in a God powerful enough to create life in the first place, then that same God can resurrect the dead back to life.

- f) In Verse 8, we have “hints” of what heaven is like: It says, “He raises the poor from the dust...he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.”
- i) When you read the book of Revelation, besides the throne of God, there are also referenced to “24 elders” sitting on other thrones around the main throne. (Revelation 4:4, 11:16). Most commentators believe those thrones are a word-picture of the church. Here in Hannah’s prayer we read of those who were “low” being raised up to such thrones.
 - ii) Remember that when Jesus was resurrected, he could walk through walls. He suddenly appeared in a locked room (John 20:26). Personally, I believe in heaven people can occupy the same space at the same time as we will exist in more than three dimensions. That is how the whole church can occupy these 24 thrones. (Hey, it’s just my weird little theory. We’ll see when we get there. ☺)
- g) The last part of Verse 8 says, “For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s; upon them he has set the world.”
- i) God is not Charles Atlas standing outside the universe holding it up. ☺ This is simply a word-picture that “God created the world as we know it, God is in charge and He has set it in place”.
10. Verse 9: He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails; ¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."
- a) These last verses are continuing contrasts between those who are saved and those who are condemned. The prayer “goes up a level” in the last few verses. In the early verses, it contrasts differences in behavior. In the last set it focuses on eternal judgment.
 - b) We have now made it to the end of the prayer. The chapter now switches stories after Verse 11. The story switches focus to the sons of the High Priest. Remember this chapter deals with contrast. The idea is to see Hannah doing what is right in compared to the sons of the High Priest disobeying what God commanded them to do.
 - i) In that sense, this prayer is also a prediction about the life of Samuel. The sons of the high priest will be struck down from their position for disobedience. At the same time, this little boy Samuel, an “insignificant son of lowly Hannah” will be raised up to be a great prophet in Israel. It is a living example of how God raises up those who are obedient and strikes down those who are prideful.
 - c) There is a subtle reference the Messiah in Verse 10.
 - i) The Hebrew word translated “anointed” is the same word used to describe this coming Messiah, or king.
 - ii) Remember when Hannah gave this prayer, there was no king in Israel. The first king didn’t come until a generation later. Here is Hannah contrasting those who spend eternity in heaven and hell and ends the prayer with the fact that God the Father will “exalt the horn of his anointed”. It is as if Hannah understood the concept that a Messiah would come one day and rule over the earth.
 - iii) For a Jewish woman living in a time when most of the Israelites were turning away from God, her theological knowledge is impressive! ☺
11. Verse 11: Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.
- a) Notice it doesn’t say Hannah went home, but it mentions Hannah’s husband Elkanah went home to Ramah. Remember this was difficult for her husband Elkanah as well. God holds the husband accountable as head of the household and his name is mentioned here.

- b) I suspect it took all the strength Hannah had to let go of her son at this point. Her prayer of “God is in charge” gave her the strength to turn away.
 - c) The last part Verse 11 reads, “The boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest”.
 - i) How does a three year old boy minister anyway? ☺ I suspect Eli had him doing little cleaning chores and followed him around. It is a subtle reminder that we are never too young to be used by God.
 - ii) In the next set of verses talk about how wicked Eli’s sons are. It is amazing how Eli’s sons never corrupted Samuel. It is a reminder that Samuel himself made the free-will choice to follow God despite his surroundings. I also give Hannah a lot of credit for prayer support to keep Samuel on the right path.
12. Verse 12: Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.
- a) In a sense, Verse 12 is “all you need to know” about Eli’s sons. The next set of verses is just examples of how they are wicked and had no regard for the LORD.
 - b) In fact, when a person “has no regard for the LORD”, sin always follows. In that sense it no shock of the sins listed in the next set of verses.
13. Verse 13: Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴ He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵ But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."
- a) When people would come to this tabernacle to offer a sacrifice, the custom was to boil the animal. The people offering the animal would then share in the meal with the priests. If you are familiar with boiled meat, it breaks easily and you cannot grab a big piece.
 - b) These priests were grabbing big hunks of the meat before it was thrown into the boiling pot. Most likely these priests were making extra money by then selling the meat on the open market.
 - c) The most important thing is that they were violating what God commanded them to do. The Book of Leviticus has specific instructions on the duties of the High Priests (and his sons), as well as what portions of the food they could have. This is about being disobedient to God’s commands.
14. Verse 16: If the man said to him, "Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would then answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."
- a) Among the requirements of the priests is that the fat is to be burned up and not eaten. (E.g., Leviticus 4:31). That is a word picture of the “fat (waste) of our lives” is not to be offered, but I’ll expand upon that when I teach Leviticus one day. ☺
 - b) The verse says that if a person making the offering refused to cooperate in cutting off the fat, the servants of the High Priest would take it by force. (Now there’s a minister to avoid on Sundays! ☺)
 - c) Notice the corruption of the two sons of Eli-the-High-Priest has spread to the servants. Once corruption sets in, it spreads.
 - i) What is interesting is that you don’t read of Eli rebuking the servants who were doing the “dirty work.” Eli’s sons were responsible and they get the rebuke.
 - ii) Later in the chapter, we will read of God rebuking Eli, but not his sons. In a sense, God is respecting the same “chain of command” and holding Eli accountable for the actions of his sons.

15. Verse 17: This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt. ¹⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the LORD--a boy wearing a linen ephod.
- a) Here we are reading the contrast again between the "good" of Samuel and the "bad" of the sons of Eli and their servants.
 - b) This is another reminder to give some credit to Samuel. Samuel was a little boy living amongst these guys. Give him credit for avoiding the corruption and being obedient to God despite his surroundings.
 - c) Here was Samuel wearing a priest's ephod. An ephod is a sleeveless "shirt" that covers over the robe. Ephods were part of the garments of the high priest and his sons.
16. Verse 19: Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home. ²¹ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.
- a) This would be another great scene for a movie. Hannah, in her love for her son, prepares for her annual trip. I can just picture her crying every time she sees her son, knowing she can only see him for a few days a year. Each year she would sew him a new robe as he would outgrow the old one.
 - b) Each year, Eli the Priest would bless Hannah and her husband Elkanah to have children. Hannah went on to have five more children. (The number "five" in the bible is often associated with the grace of God.). I visualize every year the priest blessing Hannah, and the next year Hannah would come back with another kid. After five kids, you would think the dad would say, "Hey, could you hold off on more blessings, padre?" ☺ (For those of you who come from big families, I'm just kidding. ☺)
 - c) Back in Verse 5, Hannah prayed, "She who was barren has borne seven children".
 - i) I don't think Hannah was shooting for seven kids. The number seven in the bible is associated with "completeness". God rested on the seventh day and the number seven is used in the bible to represent completeness.
 - d) This does not mean that in order to get pregnant, you need a priest or pastor to bless you.
 - i) If you are dealing with barrenness, I do believe prayer makes a difference. I believe this is simply God responding to Hannah's willingness to give the first of her womb to God. Remember that you cannot out give God.
 - e) The last sentence says, "Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD."
 - i) You have to wonder what Hannah said to Samuel every year. It was probably something to the nature of "Now listen to Eli and keep away from his sons. Do what God is telling you do to. I love you and I'm praying for you every day."
 - ii) The verse does not say that Samuel grew up in the presence of Eli, but in the presence of the LORD. When that word is in all capitals, it means it is referring to "Jehovah", the most holy name of God.
 - iii) I could give a whole sermon here on the wonders, joy and privilege of growing up "in the presence of the Lord". Blessed is the child who has that privilege. With that privilege, also comes the responsibility as God then holds you accountable for the knowledge you had growing up.

17. Verse 22: Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people. ²⁵ If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.
- a) OK, here is where things get interesting. The father hears about all the rotten things the sons are doing. The sons are sleeping with women at the temple. The Hebrew can be read as either prostitution or seduction. Either way, it is bad news. Further, there is the improper stealing of the beef and ignoring God's commands for the priests.
 - b) Essentially, Eli gives his sons a mild rebuke and that's it.
 - c) Here is what Eli should have said. "Listen boys, I've heard what you are doing. I love you both, but my allegiance to God is greater than my allegiance to you. You are now relieved of duty. Someone else will fill your place. I truly hope you find happiness in whatever occupation you can find. You will always be my sons and I will always love you, but I cannot tolerate your behavior and let you continue to be priests. May God bless your lives and you learn to serve Him."
 - i) Think of the faith it took Hannah to let go of her son Samuel.
 - ii) Contrast that to the lack of faith that Eli had to "not let go" of his two sons.
 - d) Part of the duty of the High Priest was to properly train his sons to replace him. That duty is equally as important as any direct service to God.
 - e) At the same time, the grown up sons also have to accept personal responsibility. If they out of their own free-will go down the wrong path, they must be punished. There is no "family privilege" to get into heaven. You can't be saved because your mom and dad were devout Christians.
 - f) The last part of Verse 25 says, "For it was the LORD's will to put them to death."
 - i) Was it God's will to raise up Samuel and put these two guys to death? Yes.
 - ii) Does that mean the two boys were not responsible for their actions? No.
 - iii) In Christianity and Judaism, we have to accept both the "free-will" aspect of our choices and at the same time accept God's "pre-destiny" aspect of His sovereignty.
 - iv) I do believe that one can grow in their rebellion to God of a "point of no return". It is as if God is saying, "OK, for years you have rebelled against me. If that is what you want, I'll make it so you can't change". The only unforgivable sin in the New Testament is "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:31). This is the lifetime denial of Jesus as God.
 - a) In an "Old Testament way", if one fails to be obedient to God and fails to live up to what God calls you to do, one can get to a point of no return.
 - b) In a sense, Eli was saying the same thing to his sons. Eli said, "but if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" That is the same idea of rebelling against God to a point where no one can help him or her.
 - v) Take comfort in the fact that if you are reading this study, you are not guilty of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit". If you have enough interest in God to be reading this, you never have reached a point of no return. There are Christians out there who worry they've committed this sin in the past and it's "too late". Folks, if you are currently serving God or have an interest in serving God, you are not guilty.

18. Verse 26: And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men.
- a) Once more we see contrast. This verse is placed here to show the contrast between how Samuel was following God and how Eli's other two sons were rebelling.
 - b) The last set of verses focus on Eli and his sons. The next set of verses focus on Eli and his sons. Yet, the bible "slips in" this one verse in the middle as if to say, "Despite the corruption going on, despite the lack of respect for God going on in the tabernacle, God is in charge and God has a plan. Despite the immorality going on all around us, God is still raising up faithful people to serve Him in this world."
19. Verse 27: Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: `Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? ²⁸ I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites. ²⁹ Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'
- a) In Verse 27 there is an unnamed man who comes to Eli and scolds him. Essentially this guy says, "I made a contract deal with your ancestors to be the high priest. You, Eli knew that and knew all the requirements. You knew the stories of Moses and how I made Aaron the High Priest. You are a descendant of Aaron and knew what you were supposed to do. Because you didn't scold your sons for their immorality, that means that you Eli are putting your sons' interest before God."
 - b) Notice in Verse 29 it says, "fattening yourself". It sort of implies that Eli was also guilty of taking the best part of the meat to be sacrificed, either directly, or indirectly through his sons. The point is that God held Eli accountable, as he was the high priest.
 - c) What I found interesting is we don't read of God scolding Eli's sons. I mentioned a few pages back that we don't read of God scolding the servants who were under the command of Eli's sons.
 - i) Jesus taught, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48b, NIV)
 - ii) The high priest is "entrusted with much". Therefore God held Him accountable more than his sons.
 - d) Notice in Verse 29 the word "my". God calls it "my sacrifice" and "my dwelling".
 - i) First of all, God does not need food or dwellings. This is about people willing to give up what is theirs for God's sake. God requires we give a portion of what we earn to Him as a sign that we are trusting in Him. In that sense giving, say 10% of what we earn is God's. It does belong to Him.
20. Verse 30: "Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: `I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: `Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. ³¹ The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line ³² and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. ³³ Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.
- a) Beginning in Verse 30, God declares His "problem".
 - i) God said that the descendants of Aaron would minister before God forever. That is stated in Verse 30. It is also stated in Exodus 27:21 among other places.

- ii) At the same time God cannot tolerate disobedience. God can't let Eli's sons get away with their behavior.
 - iii) God sets his ground rule in Verse 30: "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained."
 - iv) Bottom line, just because you are a "Son of Aaron" doesn't mean you can slide your way into heaven and at the same time be disobedient.
 - v) That same rule applies to the children of Godly pastors, Godly parents, etc.
 - b) God is not "changing his mind" in these verses. A direct descendant of Aaron remained in the office of High Priest until the time of Jesus. In 70AD, when Rome destroyed the Jewish temple, all the genealogical records were also destroyed. Israel did not exist as a country again until 1948 and were scattered around the world for about 1900 years. Today, no one can prove they are a direct descendant of Aaron, although there is one family name ("Cohen") that appears to be of the tribe of Levi. Aaron was a decedent of Levi. Not everyone of the tribe of Levi is a direct descendant of Aaron.
 - i) But what about God's promise of a descendant of a high priest being there "forever". Did God go back on that promise? No. We'll get to that. ☺
 - c) The last few verses of this section describe the future prediction of Eli's descendants:
 - i) Verse 32 states that no descendant of Aaron will live to their old age.
 - ii) This becomes partially fulfilled in Chapter 4 when both of his sons are killed.
 - iii) One of those two sons had another son before he died (1st Samuel 4:21).
 - iv) The "ultimate" fulfillment of these verses did not happen until the time of King Solomon. He removed the last direct descendant of Eli as the High Priest:
 - a) "So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the LORD, fulfilling the word the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli." (1st Kings 2:27 NIV)
 - b) After Solomon's actions, another family took over the High Priest function. A direct decedent of Aaron was still the high priest, but not of Eli's family.
 - v) Does that mean God punished innocent descendants of Eli for the "sins of their father"? No. The high priest that Solomon removed had his own problems, as described in 1st Kings Chapter 1-2. The point is that "corruption spreads", just as it spread from Eli's sons to their servants, it also spread to their descendants.
21. Verse 34: "And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you-- they will both die on the same day. ³⁵ I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. ³⁶ Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead, "Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat."
- a) God is saying, "Just so you know this prediction is true, both of your sons will die on the same day. It will be a sign that all of this that happens will be true.
 - i) That event happens in Chapter 4. They both died on the same day.
 - b) The prediction to Eli is not only that his two sons would be killed, but that God would appoint someone else to be the high priests. Eli's descendants would eventually be "beggars" and beg for some priestly duty so they could have food to eat.
 - c) OK, back to the other question: What about God's promise of a High Priest forever?
 - i) First we have the New Testament prediction about Jesus being our High Priest: But God said to him, "You (Jesus) are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:5-6 NIV)

- ii) Melchizedek is a minor character in the book of Genesis who was a “High Priest of God”. (Genesis 14:18). He would have stayed in obscurity if it wasn’t for a prediction by David in the Psalms that the Messiah would be the High Priest forever according to the “order of Melchizedek”. (Psalm 110:4).
 - iii) Jesus intercedes between God the Father and us. When we pray “In Jesus name” it is a reminder that Jesus is there interceding for us. He is acting as our high priest.
 - d) The other question has to do with the “House of Aaron”. God promised that a priest from that line would minister before God forever.
 - i) With that in mind, notice something from the text of 1st Samuel: “He will minister before my anointed one always”. (Verse 35). That means whoever “he” is, that he is not the anointed one. That “he” ministers before the anointed one.
 - ii) The word “anointed” describes the Messiah. So how will a descendant of Aaron be a priest forever and minister to Jesus? Is there a future role for the High Priest?
 - iii) The answer comes from Ezekiel Chapter 44-48. In the last 8 chapters of Ezekiel, he is describing life during the millennial reign (1,000 years) of Christ. This is when Jesus comes back and reigns from the earth over all the earth.
 - a) There is a new character in Ezekiel 44-48 that is usually translated “the prince”. We know he is not Jesus himself as, among other things he offers sacrifices for his own sins. (Ezekiel 45:22). This section of Ezekiel also tells how the “Sons of Zadok”, which is part of the Sons of Aaron minister to Jesus in the temple.
 - b) During this time, animal sacrifices will return. In the same way the animal sacrifices pointed forward to Jesus in the Old Testament, these new animals sacrifices will “point backward” (i.e., remember) what Jesus did.
 - c) My point is there is a literal fulfillment of the descendants of Aaron being the High Priest again during the 1,000 year millennium, and maybe beyond that. I believe “the prince” is similar to the High Priest. Ezekiel uses a different term (prince versus high priest) as Jesus also is our High Priest as an intercessor between God and Man. This “prince” takes the traditional role as the head-priest in that new temple.
 - iv) Even if you forget all of these details, just remember the bible is true, and the predictions of the bible do come true and will come true, period.
22. It’s time for the wrap up. If I had to pick one main idea to get out of this chapter, it is as follows:
- a) Hannah loved God more than her son, and was willing to give up her son for God’s sake.
 - b) Eli loved his sons more than God’s requirements, and was not willing to discipline his sons for the sake of God.
 - c) Hannah gets blessed by God by having five more children.
 - d) Eli loses the two children he does have.
 - e) That is the way God works. If we are willing to let go of what we have to God, He will turn around and bless us in far greater ways than we can imagine. God will never be a debtor to you. At the same time, God is saying, “I know this is difficult, just trust me. I know it is tough to let go of your sons, or your possessions, or whatever. Trust me. I want what is best for you. I want you to let go of what you are holding on to “too tightly”. I want you to trust me more than your family or your possessions.
 - f) That is what following Jesus is all about. Jesus said, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33). Watching Hannah’s life is an example of doing what Jesus asked. Watching Eli’s life is an example of the danger of refusing to let go, especially to a person who has the knowledge to know what is the right thing to do.

23. Let's pray: Heavenly father, we thank you for these lessons contrasting those who follow you and those who don't. Give us the faith of Hannah so we can have the strength to be obedient to your commands over all other desires of our lives. Help us to learn that you want the best for us, but that requires us to serve you first and then you give us the desires of our heart. May we be well pleasing to you by our obedience. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.