

HANNAH'S PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 73 describes the feelings of Asaph at the apparent prosperity of the wicked:

“as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish ... and they say, How doth El know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.” (Ps 73:2-12).

Such are the ways of those who enjoy and seek after the rewards of iniquity. Being desirous of the fruits of unrighteousness, they become filled with this world's goods, taking all that their hearts desire in open defiance to the Ways of the Most High God. They spread themselves out in power like a green bay tree (Ps 37:35), in apparent prosperity and blessedness. By contrast, Asaph considered his own circumstance:

“Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning” (v 13,14).

He felt that remaining pure hearted was vanity, given the tribulations that were being brought upon him. Forgetting for a faltering moment that the chastisement of the Father is a token of love towards His sons (Heb 12:6), he found himself becoming envious at the prosperity of the ungodly. So he pondered until: “it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of El; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction” (v 16-18). As he entered into the Sanctuary, he would have beheld the brazen altar and its covering of the beaten censers of Korah's company (Num 16:36-40). In seeing these, he was reminded of the eventual end of the wicked; to be cast down into destruction, descending into *sheol*, the pit from which there is no deliverance from the faithless. “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins”, he said, as he recognised the folly of being envious of those who are destined to remain in the dust of the ground, as contrasted with the glory laid up for the faithful.

In a certain relation of things, the circumstance of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was similar. She was barren, unable to bring forth fruit. But by contrast, her husband's other wife, Peninnah, possessed many children (1 Sam 1:2,4). As the family went up year by year to the Sanctuary in Shiloh, Peninnah exalted her fruitfulness against Hannah's barrenness: “her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because Yahweh had shut up her womb ... year by year, when she went up to the house of Yahweh, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat” of the peace-offering, the meal of fellowship held at that place (vs 6,7).

Hannah was therefore much provoked by the fruitfulness of the unrighteous—and at the time of year which ought to have been the occasion of much rejoicing at the blessings Yahweh had given, at the feast in Jerusalem. She, in her bitterness, prayed unto Yahweh that he would grant her a son, that she might devote him to His service, ministering in the Sanctuary. And though Peninnah, as those whom Asaph became envious of, may have assumed that Yahweh was not cognisant of her trespass against Hannah, Yahweh, the God of Knowledge (1 Sam 2:3) hearkened to her prayer, and granted her heart's desire. She conceived, a son was born in due course, and as soon as he was weaned, Hannah brought him to present him before Yahweh in Shiloh. And thereupon, she uttered a most wonderful prayer of thanksgiving; a prayer echoed in that of Mary in thankfulness of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a prayer which demonstrated a deep conviction and understanding in the ways of the Most High El (Luke 1:46-55). In order to grasp more fully the sentiments of Hannah, we propose to examine her petition section-by-section:

My heart rejoiceth in Yahweh, Mine horn is exalted in Yahweh:

My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.

In these opening words, Hannah expresses her joy in Yahweh. She recognises that the strength to conceive, was not her own, but of the Father, and accordingly commences her words by giving Him praise. In Scripture, a horn is the symbol of power; animals using the horn for purposes of both defence and attack. For the horn to be exalted, is for its bearer to achieve victory over the adversary (see verse 10). This is the first time such an expression is used in Scripture, and it is alluded to several times elsewhere, in other prayers of thanksgiving. For instance, Psalm 89:17 speaks of the redeemed:

“They shall walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For *Thou art the horn of their strength; and in Thy favour*

our horn shall be exalted. For Yahweh is our defence.” And again, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the greater David, “My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him: *and in My name shall his horn be exalted.*” (Ps 89:24, cp Ps 112:9).

The expression “*I will rejoice in thy salvation*” only occurs 3 other times in Scripture, all in the Psalms, and all in the context of the poor being exalted to victory against the prosperity of the wicked: Psalm 9:14, 13:5, and 20:5. Notice the terms that Hannah is moved by the Holy Spirit to use; here she speaks of “salvation”, and being enlarged over her “enemies”, rather than simply a thanksgiving for the birth of a son. So it is, that Yahweh’s handmaid is here looking beyond the difficulty of her own personal circumstances, to the greater victory to come. It is significant that throughout this prayer of thanksgiving, she does not speak specifically, and directly of the birth of Samuel. Rather, as we shall proceed to consider, she saw in that event, and in her triumph a shadow of greater times to come, when the poor shall be exalted, and those who magnify themselves against the servants of the Most High shall be brought low. And as we shall see, seeing in herself the principle of life emerging from that which was barren, she saw the greater deliverance to be effected by the Lord Jesus Christ; emergence from the womb of the earth - salvation from death in resurrection from the dust.

*There is none holy as Yahweh: For there is none beside Thee:
Neither is there any rock like our Elohim. Talk no more exceeding proudly;
Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: For Yahweh is an El of knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed.*

In these words, Hannah speaks not of herself and her own affairs, but rather extols the wonderful attributes of the Most High; emphasising the fundamental principle that Yahweh being glorified ought to be preeminent in any form of deliverance; the means of salvation being but the means by which His glorification is accomplished. She speaks of *His Holiness*; there is none Holy like him (cp Ex 15:11; Is 43:10-11; 44:6-8). *His Strength*, as a Rock (cp Deut 32:4; 2 Sam 22:32; Ps 18:31). *His Wisdom*, for he is an El of Knowledge (the only time this title occurs in Scripture, cp Ps 73:11). And *His Justice*, for by him actions are weighed in the balances of righteousness (cp Dan 5:27; Prov 16:2; 21:2; 24:12).

David also addressed *Elohim* as a Rock in his prayer of deliverance; and again in the context of there being none beside him who is able to save:

“Who is El, save Yahweh? And who is a rock, save our Elohim? El is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet: and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hand to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms ... thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip” (2Sam 22:32-37; v 2-3, 47).

Here, David, like Hannah (1 Sam 2:9), recognised that it is Yahweh who keeps the feet of His saints (1 Sam 2:9), that He girds with strength to break the bows of the adversary (1 Sam 2:4), that He exalts the righteous to high places (1 Sam 2:8), and that He is their Strength, and Rock of Salvation. And his prayer of thanksgiving, like that of Hannah, speaks of a day yet future when all the enemies of Yahweh shall be removed (2 Sam 22:38,39; 1 Sam 2:9,10), being trodden underfoot by the power of Yahweh invested in Christ and his brethren.

*The bows of the mighty men are broken,
And they that stumbled are girded with strength.*

This reference to “the bows of the mighty” proves that Hannah is looking to a day yet future to her own personal circumstance, for although she suffered at the hands of her Husband’s other wife, the Scriptures do not describe her being the target of mighty men’s bows. She here speaks of the Age to come when nations shall “beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (Is 2:2:4) and learn war no more. The Psalmist speaks in similar terms, presenting a glorious picture of the Kingdom age; a world at peace following the stormy judgements of Yahweh Tzvaoth:

“Come, behold the works of Yahweh, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire” (Ps 46:8,9).

In that day, the weapons of those who desire to overthrow the people of the Most High (Ezek 38:4; Joel 3:10) shall be destroyed, and those who take the sword shall perish with the sword (Mat 26:52). The mighty men shall be thus rendered powerless, as those who stumbled, are girded with strength (cp Ps 18:32). But who are those that stumbled?

Not those who trust in the Most High, for as we shall see, he keeps their feet from stumbling (1 Sam 2:9). Rather, those who have fallen, yet who shall now arise as the arms of their oppressors are broken. Those who stumbled at the Lord Jesus Christ; “for they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom 9:32,33; 11:11). They who stumbled shall be delivered (Rom 11:26), and exalted, as it is written: “In that day shall Yahweh defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble (*Heb. he that stumbles*) among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as Elohim, as the Angel of Yahweh before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zech 12:8,9).

*They that were full have hired themselves out for bread;
And they that were hungry ceased: So that the barren hath born seven;
And she that hath many children is waxed feeble*

During the yearly visits to the tabernacle in Shiloh, because of the provocation of the adversary Hannah was unable to partake of the peace offerings, and so went hungry: “she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? And not I better to thee than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:7-8). So it is, that in her prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, she praises Yahweh that those who hungered have ceased to be hungry, and those who were full; the adversary, has now fallen on such hard times, that they have had to sell themselves as slaves for food.

Under the Mosaic Law it is written: “if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: but as an hired servant and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee” (Lev 25:39,40).

Hannah speaks of how those who were full, have fallen into this state. Once being free, they have become like a sojourner in a strange land, a hired servant. This was the circumstance of the man, popularly styled “the prodigal son” who features in a parable of the Master. He was in a state of prosperity, enjoying his father’s goods, yet upon demanding his inheritance prematurely, he squandered it with riotous living: “the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.” (Luke 15:13,14). He joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, and found himself being sent into the fields to feed swine “and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many *hired servants of my father hath bread enough and to spare*, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: *make me as one of thy hired servants.*” (verses 17-19). The Parable continues, however, to show that the Father, filled with love and mercy towards his son, received him back as if he had returned from the dead instead! He said to the elder brother, “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (verse 32).

Hannah speaks of this same contrasting principle in terms of a barren woman yielding seven children, whereas a mother who yielded many children waxing feeble, or languishing. In her immediate circumstance, we can readily recognise her rejoicing over her adversary Peninnah, who had many children, but as Hannah only had six children in all (1 Sam 2:21), and as there is no reference in the record to Peninnah languishing, it is evident that as with the other matters detailed in her prayer, we are to look further, to later circumstances, concerning which her situation was but a type.

The Scriptures speak of another woman yielding children at the time of the end, having previously been barren; Jerusalem: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; Break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child: For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Yahweh” (Is 54:1,2).

And again in expounding this passage, the Spirit through Paul wrote:

“Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” (Gal 4:26,27).

The barren which hath born seven then, is Jerusalem, the “mother” of “all” the faithful. Seven is a number used frequently in the Apocalypse to denote the complete body of the redeemed (cp Rev 1:20; 4:5, 5:6), as in the *Seven*

lampstands for instance. It therefore indicates the fullness of Jerusalem's fruitfulness, as contrasted with her previous barrenness (see Jer 15:8,9).

Yahweh killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.

Yahweh maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up.

In these words, Hannah speaks of Yahweh as the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh; the One with the right and power to bring the wicked to dust, and raise up the righteous from the dead. Looking to the future, she speaks of the fall of the wicked, to sleep a perpetual sleep in the dust of the ground, yet the exaltation of the righteous from the grave. Moses' song of redemption, outlining the experiences to befall Israel speaks in a similar vein: "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me: *I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal*: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut 32:39). And again the Spirit through James draws out words of exhortation from this same principle: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low" (Jas 1:9-10).

The true riches of which Hannah speaks, however, are not this world's goods in which men delight. Those who serve at the altar of mammon, being desirous of his dainty meats are not those whom Yahweh shall elevate from the dust. Rather, the riches of the saints are the riches of wisdom; to be more greatly desired than rubies and the finest gold. As the Proverb states: "there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Prov 13:7). A man may have an abundance of material wealth, yet if he lack wisdom he is as the beasts that perish. He is as those of the Laodicean class, who whilst supposing themselves to be rich, and having need of nothing, are in the Spirits estimation, "wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17).

The Lord Jesus Christ however, is one who made himself poor (Phil 2:7), yet who has great riches. He is the greatest example of one who was brought to the grave, yet lifted up by the glory of the Father. And he, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Here are the true riches granted by the hand of the Father; the fullness of grace extended through the Lord Jesus Christ, even life eternal.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, And lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill

To set them among princes, And to make them inherit the throne of glory

For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's And He hath set the world upon them

(Compare Psalm 113:7-9). So it is that those who are raised from the dust, being elevated from a humble station, shall be appointed to reign in the coming Kingdom. Notice however, that there is a plurality of persons who shall inherit a single throne: "to make *them* inherit the *throne* of glory".

How is this so? Inasmuch as the Throne of Glory described in Scripture is the Davidic seat of power restored (Mat 19:28, see Jer 14:21), and that those who are kings and priests in the age to come, by a figure, occupy that throne. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of this: "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in His throne" (Rev 3:21). Here, there are two thrones referred to, the Father's throne that is shared by the Son, and the Son's throne which will be shared by those who overcome. These will be set among princes, elevated to glory and honour and immortality; no longer despised of men, but administrators of divine justice throughout the globe. These constitute the pillars of the Millennial Age (Gal 2:9, Rev 3:12), upon which the government of the world shall rest.

He will keep the feet of His saints, And the wicked shall be silent in darkness

By contrast with those who stumble (verse 4), the saints are kept from falling, their ways being under constant Angelic supervision (Heb 1:14). Jude alludes to these words, by way of encouragement to those who earnestly contend for the faith, against the wicked whose ways are darkness, and whose end is the grave. "Now unto him that is *able to keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (verse 23). And speaking of the wicked, "these are spots in your feasts of charity (cp Peninnah 1 Sam 1:6) when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear (cp the priests 1 Sam 2:12-17)) ... wandering stars, to whom is reserved *the blackness of darkness for ever*" (Jude 12-13). Here we again have the two classes of men that Hannah speaks of; those who are kept by the father through faith unto salvation (1 Pet 1:5), and those who walk after their own ungodly lusts. For the one, their feet stand firm and sure, but for the other, they shall be silent in the darkness of *Sheol*.

For by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces
Out of heaven shall He thunder upon them

Those who lift up their strength against the saints of the Most high prove themselves to be enemies not only of the righteous, but also of Yahweh himself. Indeed it will be, that when the Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned in Zion, that Harlot-system that sought to oppress his brethren in times past, shall gather the kings of the earth against Him (Rev 19:19). Psalm 2 describes how the strength of man shall be directed against the power of omnipotence: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his anointed, saying Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. *He that sitteth in the heavens* shall laugh ... then shall he speak unto them in his wrath” (verses 1-5). The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces, for Christ will issue the decree: “I will declare the decree: Yahweh hath said unto me, you art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potters vessel*” (verses 7-9).

The strength of man shall certainly not prevail, as the rebellion is quashed in order that righteousness might be imposed upon the earth.

*Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth;
And He shall give strength unto His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.”*

The horn of Yahweh’s Anointed shall be exalted over the enemy, as Divine Rule shall be enforced upon the earth. As the Spirit of Christ spake in the Psalmist of Yahweh’s adversaries: “Lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil” (Ps 92:9-10). Herein lies the ultimate fulfilment of this prayer of Hannah, not merely a temporary victory over her adversary through the birth of Samuel - but a lasting victory over all the adversaries of Yahweh through His King, the son of His love; the coming deliverer of Israel, and judge of all the earth.

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