

The Good Old Days?

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 0 0] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, 1 Samuel chapter 1.

1 Samuel chapter 1, and we're just going to look at the first two verses this morning as we introduce this study. 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 1.

There was a certain man of Ramathayim Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, the son of Jehoram, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuth, and Ephrathite.

He had two wives. The name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Now that the summer holidays are over, and all the children and all the teachers are back to work or school this past week, it has been a delight for some and a dread for others.

[1 : 1 2] But there are some, as you know, there's some who started in primary school, some started in secondary school, others, the little, little ones, they started in scholari, and the older, older ones, they're thinking about university. And you know, it's always amazing to see that whatever age or stage the children are at, they've all moved up a year. They've all grown up another year. They're all a year older. But of course, if the children are all a year older, then so are we.

Sorry to remind you, but we're all a year older, and we're all getting older, and we're all getting old. And I don't know about you, but as I get older, and I see all the children getting a little bit older, I often think back to my childhood and when I was once their age. I'm sure you do it too.

But of course, when we think back to our childhood and we think about the day and age that our children live in, things are so different. Things are so different in so many ways from what it was like in my childhood and what it was like in your childhood. Because, well, back then, there were no distractions from mobile phones. There was no disruptions from social media. There was no delusions from all the society around us. And what can often happen is that we look back at the past with rose-tinted glasses and think of the past as the good old days. We think back to our childhood and think, well, they were the good old days. But, you know, were the good old days really that good?

Because there were many things that went on, and there were many problems then, just as there are problems now. That's because sin hasn't changed. It only appears in different forms and in different fashions from what it was like in the past. But were the good old days really that good? There's no such thing the Bible teaches us. In light of sin, there's no such thing as the good old days.

And the book of Samuel in this book in the Bible, it's there to remind us and to remind the people of this past generation not to look back at the past with rose-tinted glasses and think of them as the good old days. Instead, this people and us this morning, we're called to look forward to the coming King. We're to look forward to the coming King. And so, as we begin our study together of this book, I want us to just consider three things, three simple things in relation to this book, the context, the concern, and the conflict. That's what we see in the first two verses of this book, the context, the concern, and the conflict. So, first of all, we see the context, the context.

[4 : 0 3] There was a certain man of Ramathayim Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. Now, when beginning a study in a book of the Bible, it's always good to set the scene. It's always good to place it within its historical context, because context is crucial to understanding this book as a whole. But the thing about 1 Samuel is, as it is in the title of the book, it's only half the story. It's 1 Samuel. So, that means the sequel to the story is, of course, to be found in 2 Samuel. But what's interesting is that 1 and 2 Samuel, they were originally written as one book. They were the book of Samuel. It's unclear as to why they were separated or split into two stories. But the book of Samuel, it's one story. It's one narrative. It's one period in history. But the

book of Samuel is only a small story. It's part of a bigger Bible story. It's only a small narrative. But that's part of a longer and larger narrative in the Bible. It's only a period of history. The book of Samuel is a period of history that's actually part of a larger history, a perfectly planned history. Because as we often say, history is His story. It's God's story. It's God's perfectly planned story of salvation. And the story of salvation is the bigger story. It's the bigger narrative of the whole Bible. And as you know, the story of salvation, it began way back in the book of beginnings, in the book of Genesis, our first book of the Bible. And in the beginning, we're told there, right in Genesis 1 and chapter 1, we're told there that the story of this book was a story of perfection and purity. It was a story of happiness and holiness. Where God spoke this world into being by the word of His power. He created all things that man can see and that man can't see. And He created it all in the space of six days and all very good. It was a world of sinlessness.

But as you go through the story, Genesis 3, man succumbed to the seduction of Satan. Mankind fell into sin and misery. And when sin entered into this world, it brought with it all the things we see around us every week and every day of our lives. Sickness, suffering, sorrow, and separation. But you know, my friend, when sin entered into this world, so too did the story of salvation. Because the story of salvation, it began with a promise. Genesis 3, verse 15. There was this promise. The promise of a seed, the promise of a son, and the promise of a Savior. The promise of a seed, son, and Savior. Where the Lord said that the seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent. Genesis 3, verse 15. The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. And with that promise, the promise of a seed, son, and Savior, the story of salvation began to follow this golden thread woven through the pages of the Bible, through the pages of history. And we see that because the book of Genesis, it followed the story of the promised seed and son and Savior through the lives of

Abraham, and then Isaac, and then Jacob. And then Jacob, we're told he had 12 sons. They were the 12 sons of Israel, who became the 12 tribes of Israel. And with the promised seed, son, and Savior coming from one of those tribes, the tribe of Judah, we're told that he was the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And that that lion would be caged in Egypt for over 400 years. And so as you progress through the Bible, you read through your Bible, through Genesis, then you come to Exodus, and Leviticus, and Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And they're all books where Moses is the main character of the story. And we see God's perfectly planned story, his story of salvation, salvation from slavery in Egypt to salvation into the promised land. Then you come to the book of Joshua, which begins with the promised seed, son, and Savior crossing the river Jordan into the promised land of Israel. But even with the promised seed, son, and Savior now in the promised land of Israel that God had promised to his people long ago, even though they were there, there's a problem. And the problem is a persistent problem.

There's this recurring cycle of rebellion and restoration. There's rebellion and restoration. The rebellion of the people and the restoration from the Lord. And it goes on and on and on throughout the book of Judges. Because the book of Judges is a book that can be summarized by its concluding sentence. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. You want to know what the book of Judges is about? That's what it's about. In those days, there was no king of Israel. In Israel, everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Everyone was their king. Everyone did their own thing. Everyone made up their own rules. Everyone looked after number one.

[9 : 35] It was the recurring cycle of restoration, of rebellion and restoration. There was no king in Israel. So needless to say, you come to the end of the book of Judges and you're thinking, there needs to be a king in Israel. We need a king in Israel. But where will that king come from?

From what line? What lineage will this king come from? It has to be the line and lineage of the promised seed son and savior. And this is why you have sandwiched between the book of Judges and the book of Samuel is this little love story called the book of Ruth, where you're told there that there's this handsome and hunky Boaz who falls in love and he marries a widowed woman from Moab called Ruth.

And by the end of this little love story, they're all living happily ever after with the birth of their first child, Obed. And you know, when we read the closing words of the book of Ruth, if you just go back to the previous page in your Bible, we're told there that the promised seed, the promised son, the promised savior was to come from the tribe of Judah because Judah fathered Perez. Perez

fathered Hezron. There you're told chapter 4, verse 18, Perez fathered Hezron. Hezron fathered Ram. Ram fathered Aminadab. Aminadab fathered Nashon. Nashon fathered Salmon. Salmon fathered Boaz. That's hunky Boaz.

Boaz fathered Obed, his son. Obed fathered Jesse. Jesse fathered David. And so as you follow this line, this lineage of the promised seed son and savior, we come to David, the king that Israel so desperately needed. Because in those days, we're told, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. And you know, this is where Samuel fits into God's perfectly planned story of salvation. Because as we said, the book of Samuel, it calls us not to look back to the good old days, because they weren't good at all. We're not to look back with rose-tinted glasses.

No, we're to look forward to the coming king. The coming king, who is King David. He is the seed son and savior of Israel. But of course, King David is only a pointer. A pointer and preparation for us to keep looking forward until we see the greater than King David, the greater seed son and savior of sinners, Jesus Christ. Because Jesus, as you know, he would be the king of kings, who would fulfill the promise of Genesis 3.15 and finally come to crush the head of the serpent through his death on the cross at Calvary. And you know, my friend, when you actually step back for a moment, and when you consider the whole Bible, does it not amaze you how the whole story fits together?

[12:41] How it all holds together? Where it's his story, it's God's story of salvation. And it's a story of salvation that has been written for you. It's all written for us to read, and us to enjoy, and us to realize that this story needs to be our story. Where we need to come and see the promised seed, son and savior, as Jesus Christ, the only savior of sinners. So I hope you see that that's the context of the book of Samuel. The context of the book of Samuel. It's part of the greater story of salvation. But then we see, secondly, the concern for the book of Samuel. The concern. So the context and then the concern.

We read there in verse 1, there was a certain man of Ramathayim Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, the son of Jehoram, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuth, and Ephrathite. He had two wives.

The story of the book of Samuel, it begins by introducing us to the first character in the story. But the thing is, the first character in this story, he wasn't a specific man, and he wasn't a special man in the story, because we're just told there that he was a certain man. He was just a certain man.

What's more is that he was a certain man from this unknown, an unnamable region called Ramathayim Zophim in the hill country of Ephraim. So it was actually near to Bethlehem. We'll come back to that next Lord's Day. But his name was Elkanah. His name was Elkanah. And this certain man, Elkanah, was from the line and lineage of Levi. He was from the line and lineage of Levi. As we said, the promised seed, son, and Savior, he was from the line and lineage of Judah. But Elkanah was from the line of Levi. That's what we're told. He was the son of Jehoram, son of Elihu, son of Zuth, son of Tohu, son of Zuth, and Ephrathite. And when you trace Elkanah's line, when you trace it all the way back, when you work out who Elkanah's people are, as we often try to do when we meet somebody for the first time, we work out who they are, we see here that Elkanah was of good stock. He was of good heritage. He was from the tribe of Levi. He was from the line and lineage of Levi. And you know, the tribe of Levi, they were the ones who were set apart. They were the tribe who were sanctified by the

Lord, to be the servants of the Lord. The tribe of Levi were set apart and sanctified to be servants. They were to be the clergy of God's covenant people. They were to be the ministers in Israel.

They were to wear the clerical clothing and serve at the tabernacle. They were to prepare and present all the sacrifices on behalf of God's people. But how does the book begin? This, certain man. This certain man, Elkanah, he wasn't a priest. He wasn't serving at the temple.

[16:13] He wasn't sacrificing on behalf of the people. No, we're told here that this certain man, Elkanah, had rejected and refused the calling of the Lord upon his life as a Levite by putting his prosperity and his posterity first. You see, Elkanah, and as we'll see as you go through the chapter, Elkanah was a rich man. He was a wealthy man. He was a money man. Sadly, Elkanah trusted in all his wealth. You could say that all of Elkanah's dollars, they all had the four words, in Elkanah I trust, instead of the four important words we were teaching the children, in God we trust.

Anyway, I say that because when Elkanah offered his annual sacrifice at Shiloh, Elkanah, he didn't come with a lamb or a goat. That would be beneath Elkanah. Elkanah would come with the most extravagant sacrifice, the most expensive of offerings to the Lord. Elkanah would offer not one, not

two, but three. Three bullocks to the Lord. Now, I know that for some of you, that's a lot. That's a lot to give up to the Lord. Three bullocks being offered to the Lord as a sacrifice. But the thing about Elkanah's sacrifices was that Elkanah offered sacrifices to the Lord, not because he loved the Lord, but only to satisfy his conscience. Elkanah offered sacrifices to the Lord, not because of a steadfast love for the Lord, but only to satisfy his conscience and silence his concern for his soul. You know, my friend, this certain man, Elkanah, he was in a bad place spiritually. He was in a bad place spiritually because Elkanah, as we said, he was a descendant of the tribe of Levi. He was of good stock. He had this great heritage that followed the Lord. His family had been set apart and sanctified for the service of the Lord. He was from a family of ministers, you could say. He was from a family of elders. And Elkanah was meant to follow in their footsteps. He was meant to be a servant of the Lord. But instead of serving the Lord, Elkanah was serving himself. Elkanah was living his life like everyone else in his day and generation. It wasn't the good old days, because in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. Everyone was king, and everyone was doing their own thing. And this was a concern, because Elkanah thought he could present his sacrifice to the Lord once a year and then live the rest of the year according to his own perfect plan. Elkanah thought he could have the best of both worlds. Elkanah thought he could have a foot in both camps, where he could worship the Lord once a year at the temple and then worship his finance and his family every other day of the year at home. And you know, you come to this certain man of Ramathayim Zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and you see, well, even though we don't know who he was or where he was from, there are so many people who are still like this certain man. Maybe you're like Elkanah. You come to church once a week. On a Sunday morning, and you offer your lip service to the Lord. You make an appearance to ease your conscience, to alleviate your concern for your soul. But the rest of the week, you live as you please.

[20 : 19] You live as you please. You put self first and the Lord second. You put self first and the Lord second. You know, my friend, I was like that for many years too, till I came to realize that I need to put the Lord first and self second. And you know, that's the story of the book of Samuel. That's the concern. It's not a story about the good old days. It's a story about sinful and selfish people. It's a story about everyone doing what's right in their own eyes and putting self first and the Lord second. But it's into that context. And it's into that, with that concern, that the story of salvation is woven here into the story of Samuel. Where the Lord's people, they are reminded here not to look back to the good old days with rose-tinted glasses, but look forward. We're to look forward to the coming King. We're to look forward to the King of Israel and ultimately to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of sinners.

He is the seed, son, and Savior of his people. And so as we begin our study in the book of Samuel, we not only see the context and the concern, we see thirdly the conflict. That's what I want us to see lastly. The conflict. So there's the context, the concern, and the conflict.

We're told in verse 1, there was a certain man of Ramathayim Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, the son of Jehoram, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuth, and Ephrathite. He had two wives. The name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah.

And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. So after being introduced to this certain man, Elkanah, we're immediately informed that there's a conflict. And the conflict is there at the beginning of verse 2. He had two wives. He had two wives, which should surely be an obvious concern for conflict. Now, if I was going to be cheeky, I would say I don't know why any man would want to have two wives. One is more than enough for anyone, and I'm going to get it when I get home. But you know, that's not the real reason for not having two wives. Because as you know, marriage was created by God to be a lifelong covenant commitment between one man and one woman. That's how it's presented to us at the beginning of our Bible, that creation ordinance of marriage. So polygamy was only ever the result of everyone doing what was right in their own eyes. I want another woman. I'll take another woman. I'm king over my life.

I can do what I want. So polygamy was only ever the result of everyone doing what was right in their own eyes. Polygamy was never promoted and never permitted in the Bible. But what's interesting is that the Bible never states that polygamy is wrong. The Bible shows us that polygamy is wrong.

[23 : 41] The Bible shows us that polygamy is wrong. And it shows us here in this conflict between Elkanah's two wives. As you can see, Hannah, she's mentioned first. The name of the one was

Hannah. And well, she's Elkanah's first wife before he married the other, Peninnah. But it seems that the reason that Elkanah married Peninnah was that Hannah couldn't have children. And yet Elkanah, he loved Hannah. We're told that in the passage. He loved Hannah for who she was. He gave her, always gave her a double portion.

But Elkanah also loved Peninnah because she gave him children. She gave him an heir. She gave the man what he wanted because everyone was doing what's right in their own eyes. She gave him posterity for all his prosperity. But this, as you can see, it created conflict within the family. It created conflict. But again, the conflict was all because of Elkanah. It was all because of Elkanah's disobedience to the Lord by doing what was right in his own eyes. My friend, Elkanah's disobedience, you can see there, right from the outset, it had an impact and an influence upon his own home and his own family, which is something we should never forget. Our disobedience, it will always have an impact and an influence upon our home and upon our family. Our disobedience will have an impact and influence upon our family. And with Hannah, we see that Hannah was unable to have children because Elkanah's disobedience had withheld blessing and brought barrenness. Hannah was unable to have children. We're told that in the passage, the Lord had closed her womb. We're told that there in verse 5. Hannah was unable to have children because Elkanah's disobedience had withheld blessing and brought barrenness. Now, I want to qualify that statement by emphasizing and explaining that if a couple are unable to have children, which is often a very heartbreaking and heart-aching experience for them to go through, that's not necessarily a result of specific sin or a specific disobedience against the Lord. The Lord is not punishing them because they can't have children. And we have to be very careful and we have to be very compassionate to emphasize and explain that. And this is what we'll see as we go through this book. This book is a very human book. It's very real with real things.

But within this context, you always have to read the book within its context. Within the context of God's covenant people, Israel, the Lord had declared to His people, He had said to them, covenant obedience will bring blessing, but covenant disobedience will bring barrenness.

That's what the Lord had said. If you follow me and obey me, there will be blessing. If you ignore me and reject me, there will be barrenness. The Lord had said to them in Deuteronomy chapter 7, in the time of Moses, He said, if you are obedient, if you love me, I will bless you and multiply the fruit of your womb. But disobedience will withhold blessing and bring barrenness. And that's what we see here.

[27 : 11] Elkanah's disobedience had withheld blessing from the wife he loved. It had brought barrenness to her. And now Elkanah, he's married again. He's now got a divided loyalty. He's got a divided love in his family that's causing conflict. Elkanah, he didn't want to have a divided loyalty and love. He wanted a devoted loyalty. He wanted a devoted love. But you see here in Elkanah, the very reason we've been introduced to him right at the beginning of the book of Samuel. Because Elkanah, my friend, Elkanah is a picture and portrait of the whole people of Israel at the time. Elkanah is a picture and portrait of the people. Because the good old days, they weren't good at all. Like Elkanah, the people didn't have a devoted loyalty and love to the Lord. They had a divided loyalty and love to the Lord.

They loved the Lord. They worshipped the Lord. They sacrificed to the Lord. But they also loved their idols and followed their idols and did what was right in their own eyes. They weren't committed to the Lord. And it all goes back to that statement in Judges. There was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. They had this divided loyalty and love. And like Elkanah, their disobedience had withheld blessing and brought barrenness. Their disobedience had withheld blessing and brought barrenness. But you know what I love about the Bible? And this is what we'll see as we go through the story of Samuel. It's a wonderful story. What you see here is that despite the great sins of the people, despite their disobedience, despite their rejection of the Lord, despite their divided loyalty, God is gracious. He's always gracious. And God is gracious by gifting a son. That's what we'll see next week, God willing. God is gracious and God gifts a son because we're told, as we read it earlier on, we're told that Hannah, whose name means grace, her name means gift. Hannah is graciously blessed by God with the gift of a son named Samuel. Hannah is graciously blessed by God with the gift of a son named Samuel. And Samuel's role, he's a forerunner to King David.

He is to point the people to follow the seed and the son and the Savior of Israel, King David. And you know, you can see parallels in the book of Samuel and the books of our Gospels. A promised

seed, son and Savior, a forerunner, someone who's going to be king. And you know, it's all pointing us to Jesus. It's all pointing us to the God's gracious and greater gift of a son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what the context, that's what the concern, that's what this conflict is all about. It's pointing us forward, not to look back at the past, but pointing us forward to the greater seed, the greater son, the greater Savior of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he has been pointed to us even here in the Old Testament. Why?

So that we'll follow him, that we'll follow him, that we'll be devoted to him, that we'll be committed to him with our loyalty and with our love. My friend, even here in the story of the book of Samuel, the Bible, the Bible is pointing you to Jesus. Pointing you to Jesus. There's no getting away from him. Absolutely no getting away from him because he's the one you need to follow. He's the one you need to commit your life to. He's the one you need to trust in. He's the one you need to look to. [31 : 22] He is the promised seed, son, and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that's part one in the story of the book of Samuel. God willing, we'll continue it next Lord's Day. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for reminding us this morning that the story of salvation is thy story. It is God's story about his son. And help us, Lord, to see that he is the promised seed, son, and Savior who came to save sinners such as we are.

And that even as we consider the book of Samuel, that we would see everything pointing always to Jesus. Because Jesus is on every page, every page of Scripture speaking to us, reminding us and reassuring us that even in the darkest of moments in our life, even in the hardest of providences, that the Lord is there, that the Lord is in control, and that he is working all things together for good to those who are the called according to thine own purpose. Bless us, Lord, we pray.

Bless our study together. We pray that thou wouldst open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to receive, that we might look to Jesus more and more. Go before us and we pray. Part us with thy blessing, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing the words of Psalm 24. Psalm 24 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 24. It's on page 230 of the Blue Psalm book. We're singing from verse 7 down to the verse 10. Psalm 24. A psalm that asks the question more than once, who of glory is the King? And the answer is given, the mighty Lord is this, in that same Lord that great in might and strong in battle is. It's a psalm that calls us to look to the seed, Son, and Savior that is King David, but it's also pointing us to the one who is, as we're told there at the end of the psalm, the Lord of hosts, and none but he, the King of glory is. So Psalm 24, verse 7, down to the end of the psalm, and we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

[34 : 07] He did lift up your heads on high, He torched the last foray, He lifted up the soul again, of glory and the King. But who of glory is the King? The mighty Lord is this, He blessed him, Lord, not great in might and strong in battle is. He did lift up your heads, He dorched the last foray,

He lifted up the soul again, He lifted up the soul again, He lifted up the soul again, the King of glory and the King of glory and the King. But who is He that is the King of glory?

Who is He who is this? The Lord of hosts, and the Almighty, the King of glory is.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.