

Asked of God and called into his service.

In 1 Sam 1 we read of the pain and agony of Hannah, an infertile woman desperate for a child. We are told about the mocking she received from her husband's other wife. We are told how she went into the tabernacle, and proceeded to pour out her bitterness and anger to the Lord and prayed passionately, even desperately, for a son.

The Lord wasted no time in answering Hannah's prayer. Within a year a boy was born. Hannah named him "Samuel," saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him." The name "Samuel" means "asked of God". This Samuel who was asked of God, was also called by God. In presenting the boy to Eli, the high priest, Hannah could say, (1Sam 1:27) *I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him.*

Why did the Lord answer Hannah's prayer and granted Hannah's request for a son? At first it appears that her prayer was selfish and self-centred. She wanted a son to take away her disgrace, to quiet her rival, and to ensure her place in the covenant community. But remember, she also was willing to give this son back to God's service, let him stay in the tabernacle and allow him to learn to know the voice of the Lord.

Never forget the setting of a Bible story. The time of this story is the days of the Judges. It was a wicked and infamous time in Israel's history. The book of Judges ends with these daunting words:

(Judges 21:25) *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*

What was needed in the days of the Judges is the same thing needed today: God-fearing leaders through whom *only God rules and leads* his people.

God gave Hannah a son, because Samuel was going to be the Lord's anointed leader, filling the need for godly leadership amongst his people. It is through Samuel that the Lord would carry on his work amongst his chosen people. It is through Samuel that the Kingdom of God would be served and the rule of God would be established.

Samuel, the future leader of Israel, was asked of God and called by God. That same pattern should be found in the church of Christ today.

"What we need are good leaders," we often say and pray.

We need people who are all the time praying for good leaders, like Hannah prayed for a son. We need people praying with Hannah's passion. We need people praying to God for leaders like Samuel - asked of God and called by God. We need to pray that the Lord will call leaders through whom *only God rules and leads* the church in his ways and paths.

A God-led church is a glorious treasure and comfort.

A God-led church is served by leaders begged of God and called according to his purpose.