

Jesus and Samuel

There are clear similarities between Jesus and Samuel, who lived a thousand years before. Both had remarkable mothers, both had spiritually mature childhoods, both grew in wisdom and both were men of prayer. Both were loved by God. Many of these similarities can be identified from the Gospel of Luke. They teach us that Samuel had much in common with Jesus, which gives us hope that we too can be Christ-like if we learn from his example.

Faithful Mothers

Samuel's mother was Hannah. She was a woman of prayer who showed great humility and described herself as the 'maidservant of the Lord':

She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head" (1 Samuel 1:11).

Hannah was truly thankful for her son as her wonderful prayer demonstrates: *"My heart rejoices in the Lord...Because I rejoice in Your salvation" (1 Samuel 2:1).*

These themes of humility and rejoicing which can be found in Hannah's prayer are also clearly reflected in Mary's reaction when the angel Gabriel gave her the news that she would give birth to Jesus:

Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:46-48).

Like Hannah, Mary saw herself as a servant of God and remembered to rejoice and be thankful for the blessings He had given to her. Hannah and Mary are excellent examples of prayer, thankfulness and joy, and therefore must have made wonderful mothers.

Spiritual Maturity

The record emphasizes to us that Samuel was still young when he began to undertake his work in the tabernacle. For example:

Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice (1 Samuel 2:18-19).

Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli (1 Samuel 3:1).

This demonstrates Samuel's early spiritual maturity, which far exceeded those around him such as Eli's own sons, Hophni and Phinehas (see 1 Samuel 2:22).

The spiritual maturity of 'the boy Jesus' (Luke 2:43) was likewise outstanding. At the age of 12 he was in Jerusalem, talking to the religious leaders:

Now so it was that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:46–47).

Neither Samuel nor Christ were content to stand still, however. Both appreciated the need for spiritual growth as the following passages demonstrate:

The child Samuel grew before the LORD... And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favour both with the LORD and men (1 Samuel 2:21, 26).

The child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men (Luke 2:40, 52).

It is obvious that Luke's Gospel is drawing a comparison between Jesus and Samuel – Jesus is presented as a spiritually mature boy who is growing and will perfect the attributes which Samuel practised in his life centuries before.

Dedicated to Prayer

A further similarity between these two men can be seen in their dedication to prayer:

It grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night (1 Samuel 15:11).

Now it came to pass in those days that he [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12).



It is essential that godly men and women engage in prayer to God; Samuel and Jesus are extraordinary examples in this regard. Their examples also prove that long prayers are not intrinsically displeasing to God (a mistaken conclusion drawn from passages such as Luke 20:47 and Ecclesiastes 5:2). Drawn out prayers for show are certainly wrong, but at particular times in our lives, spending a long time in prayer is surely beneficial for us and pleasing to God, provided it is made with the right mind-set.

Jesus and Samuel share many qualities which are particularly emphasized in the Gospel of Luke. They both had spiritual mothers who saw themselves as servants of God and whose souls rejoiced in His blessings. They both demonstrated spiritual attributes from a young age and continued to mature. They both spent whole nights in prayer to God.

Finally, they were both extraordinary characters who can inspire us to grow spiritually and prayerfully. The Lord Jesus Christ set the perfect standard of a life pleasing to God. Let's try to follow these examples, so that we too might grow in favour with the Lord.

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