

RESCUED / Sunday School- July 1, 2012

Unifying Topic: SAMUEL ADMINISTERS JUSTICE

Lesson Text

I. Israel Returns To God (I Samuel 7:3-4)

II. Samuel Intercedes For Israel (I Samuel 7:5-11)

III. Samuel Builds An Altar At Ramah (I Samuel 7:15-17)

The Main Thought: And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines (I Samuel 7:3,KJV).

Unifying Principle: People want to feel safe. What gives people a sense of security? Samuel taught the people that their security was a direct result of their loyalty and obedience to God.

Lesson Aim: To show Samuel's role as priest, prophet, and judge as well as God's victory over the Philistines.

Life Aim: To teach Christians about the need to worship the one true God and to rely on His deliverance to see them through.

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7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

7:5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.

7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7:7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

7:8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

7:9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.

7:10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

7:11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.

7:15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

7:16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

7:17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

HISTORY:

¹The story concerning the ark falls into three sections that correspond closely to the three chapters in the biblical text: the loss of the ark (4:1b-22), the ark with the Philistines (5:1-6:1), and the ark returns to Israel (6:2-7:2).

In the first section, Israel's defeat at the hands of the Philistines is determined to be the result of their proceeding into battle without the ark, the symbol of God's presence, which housed the tablets of the covenant and was carried into battle ahead of the troops in the wilderness and during the conquest of Canaan (4:1-4). This plan, however, apparently treated the ark as an idol, because this time Israel experienced even greater casualties, Eli's sons died, and the ark was captured (vv.10-11). News of the loss of the ark resulted in the death of Eli (vv.12-18) as well his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas. The devastating news brought early labor upon Phinehas's pregnant wife, and the premature birth of the child resulted in her death. She named the child "*Ichabod*," meaning "*No Glory?*" (if it is derived from Hebrew) or "*Where is the Glory?*" (if it is derived from Ugaritic), that is, "*The glory has departed from Israel*" (vv.19-22).

The middle section describes the fate of the ark among the Philistines, or better, the fate of the Philistines, since they experienced nothing but trouble after bringing their hard-won spoil to the temple in Ashdod (5:1-2). The next morning the Philistines found their god, Dagon, face down, "*worshipping*" before the ark (vv. 3-4). To make matters worse, plagues, mice, and tumors broke out among the people wherever the ark was moved throughout its seven-month sojourn among the Philistines (5:8-6:1).

The final section describes the return of the ark to Israel. The Philistines came up with an ingenious plan to rid themselves

¹ <http://www.enterthebible.org/oldtestament.aspx?rid=29>

of the dangerous ark without admitting that their troubles were the result of God's judgment. They placed the ark and a guilt offering of golden tumors on a cart drawn by two milch cows and claimed that God's responsibility would be indicated only if these cows chose to return the ark to Israel (fat chance!) rather than return to their own calves (6:1-11). That God was, in fact, responsible is unambiguously indicated by the cows' unswerving march into Israelite territory, much to the joy of the residents of Beth-shemesh (vv.12-18). When the otherwise unknown descendants of Jeconiah looked into (Hebrew; "greeted" in NRSV) the ark, seventy (50,000 in Hebrew) of them died (v.19). The adventures of the ark come to a close with its transfer to Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for twenty years (6:20-7:2).

1 Samuel 7:1-2 As a result, the people of Bethshemesh asked for help from the people of Kirjathjearim, asking that they could come and take the Ark off of their hands. So the men of Kirjath Jearim take the ark of the Lord and bring it to the house of Abinadab and Eleazar; Abinadab's son was the consecrated priest over the ark (1 Samuel 7:1). He was sanctified to keep the ark of the Lord. After the ark had remained in Kirjath Jearim for 20 years the house of Israel lamented (mourned) after the Lord (7:2). Sorrow gripped Israel for 20years.

²*The Ark would actually be in Kirjathjearim for a lot longer than this. During the reign of King Saul, the Ark would be brought to Gibeah (1Sam. 14:18), and then when David becomes king over all Israel, he will bring the Ark to Jerusalem (2Sam. 6).*

LESSON:

I Samuel 7:3-4 Israel Returns To God

7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Samuel is the one who is recognized as a judge of the Lord during this time. His main task in life was to bring the people back to the Lord. His work is revival and unification of the people under God's chosen ruler.

1. **They had to return to the Lord with all their heart.** God wanted His people to worship Him from the heart, but they had been influenced by the outward and visible form of Canaanite religion. People are not won to the Lord by the route of intellectualism, but rather by appealing to their hearts.
2. **They were to put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth.** He speaks as a prophet when he tells them to put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth. The people had backslidden into idolatry. The Astaroth (a Hebrew plural form) were statues of an almost universal goddess of sex and fertility. Whatever holds first place in our lives or controls us becomes our god. If we have foreign gods in our lives we need to ask God to help us dethrone them, making the true God our first priority.
3. **They were to prepare their hearts unto the Lord.** They had to determine to only obey the Lord. *"To determine"* means to set your mind on a course of action. This kind of commitment means that you don't back out, but you work toward the goal you have set. If you have made a decision to follow God, don't allow excuses, distractions, or second thoughts to deter you from your goal.
4. **They were to only serve the Lord.** That is, direct your hearts to Him while in His service.

It seems that there was an opposition of "if." *"If ye do return unto the Lord..."* The conditions of returning to the Lord here is the act of repentance which is returning to; a change of direction back to the Lord. Then, God will deliver the Israelites out of the hand of the Philistines; by purging them from all sin, and particularly from all inclinations to other gods. God will then be their Deliverer!

7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. These were not two particular deities, but two genera of idols; the one masculine, Baalim; the other feminine, Ashtaroth. Baalim is the plural of Baal. Baal was the chief Canaanite god, the son of Dagan, and the god of agriculture. Basically, Ba'al was the storm god, the bringer of rain, and thus fertility, to the land.

I Samuel 7:5-11 Samuel Intercedes For Israel

7:5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. Now it's time to come before the Lord's presence. It was a place of assembly for all Israel. Samuel was known as an intercessor. Samuel planned to lead the people in a time of worship and intercession for deliverance from their enemies, but if they had iniquity in

² <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/09%2015a/2002/0915a07-09.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

their hearts, the Lord would not hear them. The gathering place was Mizpeh. Mizpeh had special significance for the Israelite nation. It was at Mizpeh where the Israelites had earlier gathered to mobilize against the tribe of Benjamin (Jdgs.20:1). Samuel was appointed to judge there (7:6), and Saul, Israel's first king was crowned there (10:7).

7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. First, they had to pour out water before the Lord which became a practice at the Feast of Tabernacles, commemorating the times the Lord provided water in the wilderness (Jh.7:37-39). Pouring water "*before the Lord*" was a sign of repentance for sin; turning from idols and determining to obey the Lord alone was what the Israelites needed to do. Second, the people fasted, and this was required only on the annual Day of Atonement, which preceded the Feast of Tabernacles. The key activity that day was their confession: "*We have sinned against the Lord.*" God's covenant promise to Israel was that He would forgive their sins if they sincerely confessed them to Him (Lev.26:40-45), for no amount of sacrifices or rituals could wash away their sins. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7:7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. ³Notice what happens immediately after they are restored before God, the enemy rises up to confront them. As soon as you become a threat to the enemy, he will be right there ready to destroy you. ⁴The Philistines have not yet learned their lesson from the heavy hand of God. They assumed that the nation of Israel has gathered at Mizpeh for war. The Philistines have been victorious in waging war with the Israelites before, and so they assume they will be successful once again. The five Philistine lords (the mobilized army) went up against the Israelites. However, Israel is now afraid of what the Philistines might do to them. They do not have the Ark to take to war with them, so all they can do is cast themselves upon God and trust in Him. But, they have to remember that they had just repented and fasted unto the Lord that day. Surely, the Lord is on their side! He is their greatest weapon! He is their battleaxe! He is their armor!

7:8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. Samuel was a man of prayer and God answered him that day. He was a strong spiritual leader set there to intercede unto God for the people. "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" *Jam.5:16c*. That's why we should never cease to cry out to the Lord. Jesus, our great Intercessor never ceases, is never silent, for He's always appearing in the presence of God for us. There is power in prayer! The salvation here is purely physical deliverance from the Philistines, but it is typical of spiritual salvation; and both the word "*save*" (Heb. *yasha'*), and the concept of salvation are very prominent in this book. The name "*Joshua*" in the Old Testament and the name "*Jesus*" in the New Testament come from this word and mean "*Jehovah is salvation.*" When we cry out to the Lord to save us from our sins, He will also deliver us.

7:9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. Samuel did what the people asked and offered a lamb for a burnt offering; and the Lord accepted the sacrifice, answered the prayer for deliverance, and again saved His people. The whole Burnt Offering was a type of Christ giving His Perfection to imperfect people, at least to those who will believe. Samuel was a Levite and accordingly (1Chron.23:27-32), he could offer a Burnt Offering. He could not enter the Tabernacle, though, not being a son of Aaron; in fact, the Tabernacle, at this time, was useless as a center of worship; for the Throne of God, that is, the Ark, had been removed from it.

7:10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. Samuel's sacrifice, without his prayer, had not been an empty shadow. Getting right with God may cause the enemy to attack, but it also gives you great help from God. The Philistines didn't want to give the Israelites a chance to get their army together and they began to attack while Samuel is in the middle of offering up his sacrifice. However, God thundered with a great thunder; He moved noisily and confused the Philistines, therefore making it easy for the Israelites to attack and defeat them. When we remember that Baal was the Canaanite storm god, it makes the power of God's thunder even more significant.

7:11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.

³ <http://www.ccmanitowoc.org/Library/Guglielmo-Joe/Studies/TH/09-1SA/TH1019.HTM>

⁴ <http://bible.org/seriespage/hands-dagon-and-hand-god-1-samuel-51-717>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

It says, "...the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh", meaning the Israelites had the advantage, rushing out and chasing after and pursuing the Philistines and eventually striking them down, killing them until they came under Bethcar. ⁵There are going to be times that God will bring the victory all by Himself. But there are also going to be times that we have a part in the victory, in "chasing those Philistines" out of our life. They had sacrificed a lamb. Now they pursue the Philistines as far as the "house of the lamb." ⁶God gave Israel the victory, and instead of them being in fear of the Philistines, they rise-up and push them all the way to Beth Car, which means "house of the lamb." You see, their victory was assured with the sacrifice of the lamb, but it was not completed until they entered the house of the lamb. Our victory over the enemy began with the sacrifice of our Lamb, Jesus Christ. But the battles will continue until we go to be with Him and enter the house of the Lamb.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON

1 SAMUEL 7:12-14

⁷In order to commemorate God's help in defeating the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone between Mizpeh and Shen and called it Ebenezer, which means "stone of help" (7:12). This stone would become a visible reminder that God is the "Helper" of Israel. The Philistines' reign was over, and they were not to come near or invade the coast of Israel again. God continued to bless the nation of Israel. The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Even the cities in which the Philistines had taken were restored to Israel and peace was gained with the Amorites; they became allies (7:13-14).

BACK TO THE LESSON

I Samuel 7:15-17 Samuel Builds An Altar At Ramah

7:15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. Samuel was considered to be God's appointed leader. Mizpeh marked the beginning of Samuel's public ministry to the whole nation of Israel. He judged Israel all the days of his life. (Samuel is supposed to have lived one hundred years; he did not begin to judge Israel till he was about forty years of age; and if he was one hundred years of age when he died, he must have been a judge sixty years, and consequently filled that office during the whole of Saul's reign).

7:16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. This was about a 50 mile circuit that Samuel traveled as he instructed the people in the things of God and judged them. ⁸When he was at Beth-el, the tribe of Ephraim, and all the northern parts of the country, could attend him; when at Gilgal, the tribe of Benjamin, and those beyond Jordan might have easy access to him; and when at Mizpeh, he was within reach of Judah, Simeon, and Gad.

7:17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord. But Ramah was the place of his ordinary abode; and there he held his court, for there he judged Israel. The altar at Ramah, although it was in violation of the technical points of the law (Deut.12:5, 13), was permitted because of the need for revival and unification of the nation. It was better than having no sacrifices at all.

SUMMARY:

The story is about the repentance of Israel and God hears their cry. Samuel is set as a judge, prophet and priest with authority. We begin with Israel gathering to ask God's forgiveness. If they return unto the Lord with all their hearts; put away the strange gods, and prepare their hearts for Him, He will deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines (v.3-4). Obviously, this was long in coming, and Samuel initiated the place of meeting (v.5). When Israel gathered, Samuel offered up a young whole lamb on behalf of Israel as they drew and poured water out before the Lord and fasted. When the Philistines heard about the gathering, they had assumed that Israel was gathering to revolt against Philistine oppression (v.6-7). What they didn't know was that Israel was afraid. Samuel did not cease to cry out to the Lord. The Philistines swiftly moved against Israel during Israel's time of repentance and God showed His allegiance to Israel in no uncertain terms. The Philistines drew near, but the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, confusing them and therefore the Israelites chased and killed the Philistines back to Beth-car territory (vv.8-11). This chapter concludes with a note on Samuel's circuit, indicating that his authority was well-established, and that it continued throughout his life. He abode in Ramah (vv.15-17).

APPLICATION: God has His man in place to administer justice but God makes all things possible for the rescue of His people when they return to Him.

⁵ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/09%201Sa/2002/091Sa07-09.htm>

⁶ <http://www.ccmanitowoc.org/Library/Guglielmo-Joe/Studies/TH/09-1SA/TH1019.HTM>

⁷ <http://tomhogsed.com/>

⁸ http://bible.cc/1_samuel/7-16.htm