

I SAMUEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Samuel chapter 7 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study we saw Israel fight against the Philistines and lose badly. Not only were Eli's sons killed in battle, Hophni and Phinehas, not only did they lose some 43,000 soldiers, but also the Philistines captured the Ark of God. When Eli heard that he fell over dead and when the pregnant wife of Phinehas heard that not only was her husband killed in this battle but the Ark of God was captured, she went into premature labor, and before she died giving birth, she named her son, Ichabod, which means the glory has departed!

And for some seven months the Philistines had the Ark of God but God was pouring out His judgment upon them in the form of hemorrhoids and rats. It was so bad they were passing the Ark of God around like a hot potato until finally they sent it back to Israel and the people of Beth Shemesh took it in. The problem here is that they did not handle the Ark of God as the Lord had told them, they looked into it and some fifty-thousand and seventy men of Beth Shemesh were killed! Some believe it was only seventy but I don't see that as a great slaughter.

And as we closed last time the men of Beth Shemesh did not want the Ark of God and they sent word to the men of Kirjath Jearim to come and take it off their hands. They did not repent of the wrong they did, they just wanted this Ark of God out of their sight. That is where we will pick up our study this evening, in I Samuel chapter 7, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word!

I SAMUEL 7**VERSES 1-2**

1. So the men of Kirjath Jearim take the Ark of God to the house of Abinadab and they consecrated his son, Eleazar to care for the Ark of God. Keep in mind that the people remained in spiritual darkness, their hearts were far from God and for twenty years the Ark was in Kirjath Jearim and then the people started lamenting after the Lord. In fact, the Ark of God will remain here until the time of David and he will bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem.

Now why did the children of Israel lament after the Lord? We don't know for sure but it is possible that they were tired of being under the control of the Philistines, that their armies were defeated. They wanted God to defend them; they were tired of living in rebellion against Him! It is as Spurgeon said of this period of time and I believe he is right. He wrote:

It may very naturally be asked, 'Where was Samuel all that time?' I know not what he was doing during those twenty years; but I have a suspicion, I may say, I have a firm persuasion, that he was going from place to place, preaching in quiet spots wherever he could gather an audience; warning the people of their sin, and stirring them up to seek Jehovah, this endeavoring to infuse some spirituality into their national life.

- Spurgeon

Sometimes it does take a while for us to realize where we are at and why we are in the position we are in. For the children of Israel, it was some twenty years and then they lamented. But don't wait that long. When you realize that your relationship with God is distant, then repent and get right with God and follow Him!

VERSE 3

1. I like this, the people want to get right with God and Samuel does not water things down. He tells it like it is, he challenges them to get right with God! And notice that this is not just an outward action, but it begins in the heart and then it overflows in their actions. First they needed to return to the Lord with all of their hearts and then they were to put away the foreign gods! How can you tell if a person is changed inwardly? By their actions, that is the only evidence we have because only God knows the heart of a person!

2. And notice the gods that they were worshiping. There was Baal, a male deity who was the god of thunder and rain. In other words, this so-called god was attractive because he could bring good weather for their crops and make them prosperous! Then there was Ashtoreth or Astarte, and this was a female deity, the god of both love and war, as were her Babylonian and Greek counterparts, Ishtar and Aphrodite. Thus, I guess I don't have to tell you why this goddess was attractive to them; she was the god of love, of sex! Of this Baldwin writes, "Ashtoreth was worshipped over a wide area as the goddess of fertility, love and war, and plaques of naked female figures from the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine are numerous. The *Baals* were the corresponding male deities."

3. And here's the thing. Samuel, acting as the moral and spiritual consciousness of the nation, was calling them to renounce these gods, turn away from them and turn to the true and living God. This is why Samuel was raised up in the first place, to be the mouthpiece for God, to speak forth the things of God to a nation that was in spiritual darkness. Why did God raise us up folk's? I believe we are the ones who are speaking forth the Words of God, we are His mouthpiece and as we share the Word of God with people, we are shining the light of God upon a nation and world that is in darkness! We, in a sense, are the spiritual consciousness of the nation!

VERSES 4-6

1. After some twenty years of ministering, the people have turned back to the Lord and what a joy that must have been for Samuel. And as they gathered in Mizpah, which was about 5 miles north of Jerusalem, in the area of Benjamin, they poured out water before the Lord. That seems strange, what was that about? I believe the water symbolized their heart and they were pouring out their heart to the Lord, just confessing their sins, ready to return to Him. In Lamentations 2:19 we see this played out as we are told, "**Rise, cry out in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him For the life of your young children, Who faint from hunger at the head of every street.**"

This can also symbolize their cleansing and before this could happen they needed to repent before the Lord, which they did. The water was meaningless if they did not repent. In fact, the water was only symbolic of what has and was taking place in their hearts!

2. We are also told that Samuel Judged the children of Israel and what that means is that Samuel is the last Judge, but Samuel's role as a Judge was not really a military position as much as it was a position of spiritual leadership, which the nation needed more!

VERSE 7

1. Notice 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. And Israel is now afraid of what the Philistines might do to them. Was there a reason for them to be afraid? Well, from past experience yes, but now things were different, they had returned to the Lord and thus, the Lord was fighting for them this time as we will see!

VERSES 8-9

1. This is interesting to me. Remember the last time they were in a conflict with the Philistines, what did they do? They cried out for the Ark of God to be brought into battle with them. And they lost that battle. Now they know it is not the Ark of God but the God of the Ark that they needed and they cry out to Samuel to intercede for them before God that He may deliver them from the Philistines!

2. Now with the Philistine army coming upon them, what does Samuel do? Interestingly enough he is not making any battle plans, he is sacrificing to the Lord! That may seem foolish but it was the best thing to do. You see, the burnt offering was a consecration offering. It symbolized that they as individuals, and as a nation, surrendered their lives over to God. Notice the order here: **CONFESSING**, **CLEANSING**, and now **CONSECRATION**. And Samuel, as their spiritual leader, was presenting them before God and encouraging them that God has accepted them. That they should not fear for the Lord is with them and He will give them the victory, as we shall see. In fact, we are told that the Lord answered the prayer of Samuel and thus, the battle was over even before it began!

VERSES 10-12

1. Remember that Baal was the god of weather and he was sometimes pictured with a thunderbolt in his hand. Thus, the true and living God is basically saying, as He thundered from heaven, “You want to see the God of thunder, it is show time” and He let’s them have it! This thunder that confused the Philistines became the call to battle for the children of Israel 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!

2. So in this victory we see Samuel set up a stone, and he called this stone, Ebenezer, and it means, “stone of my help.” This was to be a reminder to Israel that the Lord is the one who has given them this victory over their enemies “so far.” What does that mean? It means up to this point and to continue being victorious they needed to walk with the Lord! Thus, this stone reminded them of the faithfulness of God just as Joshua had set-up the 12 stones on the west side of the Jordan River, in Gilgal, to remind them of what God had done so far and to encourage them to forge ahead and be secure that what God has done in the past, He will continue to do in the present. (Joshua 4). I think it is important to look at what God has done in our lives, for it will encourage us in what He is going to do in our lives. I think it is important to read the Scriptures and learn the lessons that the men and women of the Bible went through to help us in our walk with the Lord. You see, it helps our faith to grow as we meditate on the faithfulness of God.

VERSES 13-14

1. Keep in mind that Samuel was not a military leader, but a spiritual man and because of that, there was success because God gave the children of Israel the victory. You see, the Philistines were not in check during the time of Samson, even though he was a powerful military man, albeit he was a one-man army, but his sin distanced himself from God and he did not accomplish all that God had for him. Now Samuel is getting the victory and the enemy is in check and there is peace in the land. In fact, the Philistines were in check until the time of Saul, who was not a spiritual man and this war with the Philistines, during the time of Saul would continue on until the time of David!

VERSES 15-17

1. This was about a 50-mile circuit that Samuel traveled as he instructed the people in the things of God and Judged them. And when he was done he returned home. Did this affect his home life? It may have affected his children being gone so much, but that is no excuse for their behavior. Samuel did the best he could and he did return home!

2. I like what William MacDonald said regarding this chapter of I Samuel. He wrote:

Chapter 7 is a study of revival. God first raised up a man, Samuel, who called the people to repentance, confession, and cleansing. Intercession was made through the blood of a lamb (a type of Calvary's Lamb), and then there was victory. These are the steps to individual as well as national revival.

- William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary, p. 302

I SAMUEL 8VERSES 1-3

1. As Samuel grew old he placed his two sons as Judges in Israel, in Beersheba or the southern area of Israel. Now the problem here is that God is the one who appoints Judges and this position is not passed on from one member of the family to another. The other problem is that his sons were not good people, they were more interested in monetary gain, how they can make a profit off of this than in serving the Lord! How could Samuel do this? Maybe, because they were his sons he either did not see this or he ignored their actions, and in either case, he was wrong!

2. Today there are many who are in ministry who want to make a profit off of God and they will sell you anything and everything. They will get you to give your last penny if it will benefit them! In fact, Peter tells us in I Peter 5:2-4, **“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”** And think about what these false shepherds are after, things that will fade away, things that will not last. But, in contrast to these false shepherds, we see that the true shepherds of God will receive that which will not fade away, but their rewards will be eternal! Not only that, but true shepherds of God will not be interested in themselves, monetary gain, but in the people that God has entrusted to them!

VERSES 4-5

1. What the elders of Israel did was correct, they saw the wickedness of Samuel’s sons and they wanted these boys removed. The problem is that they wanted a king and they wanted a king for all the wrong reasons. They wanted a king so that they would be, **“like all the nations.”** Morgan made these remarks regarding what they were requesting. “This is the revelation of the supreme wrong. They had been chosen to be unlike the nations, a people directly governed by God.” Folk’s, as Christians, may we not be like the world, desire to have what the world has. May we want to be like Christ and have what Christ had, live the life that He lived in a sense for that is what is best for us!

2. We will see as we move on the difference between a Judge and a king. Just keep in mind that a Judge was more of a local leader while the king was over the entire nation.

VERSES 6-8

1. Instead of yelling and screaming at the people, instead of being upset and mad, Samuel brings this request that is breaking his heart to the Lord. What a great lesson for us. Too often we react in the flesh instead of bringing it to the Lord and see how He would have us respond to the situation. Meyer put it like this:

Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased for our own sakes and God's. We had planned in one direction, but events issued in another; and the results have threatened to become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse them before God - spreading the letter before Him, as Hezekiah did; making request like Paul; crying like Samuel . . . Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray so little.

- Meyer

2. God tries to let Samuel know that it is not his fault, they really are not rejecting him but the reality is, they were rejecting God. Think about it, they wanted a king, they wanted a government to save them, better politics to deliver them from all their problems. Sound familiar? It should because we are seeing that in our country today and instead of looking to the Lord we are looking to man to save us! That is what Israel was doing! It is truly sad when a people and a nation remove God from the throne of their lives and it is never a good thing!

3. God tells Samuel that this is nothing new to Him, for the children of Israel have done this before. Ever since He brought them out of Egypt their relationship with God has waxed and waned back and forth. And as they move to the period of the kings, the nation was moving from a theocracy, governed by God, to a monarchy, governed by man. No longer did they want to be ruled by God, but they wanted a man to rule over them. And we can look at the world today and see the result of what can happen when God is removed and man is placed in charge - it is a disaster. Psalm 33:12 says this, “**Blessed is the nation who’s God is the LORD, and the people whom He has chosen as His own inheritance.**” When God is in control of a nation, when He is leading, that nation is greatly blessed. But when man is in control of a nation, only death and destruction follow for mans heart is desperately wicked!

VERSE 9

1. God tells Samuel to warn the people of what is going to happen, what it is going to be like to have a man rule over them. There are consequences in having an earthly king to rule over them, and its effects will touch everyone's life. You see, God wanted them to know the consequences of their actions so they can make an informed decision and thus, they are then accountable for their choice! Like Israel back then, those that reject Him today can't say, "We didn't know!" How can that be? Because even nature itself declares that there is a God and if you seek after the God that has created the Heavens and the earth He will reveal Himself to you!

VERSES 10-18

1. God gives to Samuel seven warnings or consequences of having an earthly king. They are:

- He will take your sons and draft them into his army.
- He will take your sons and make them work in his fields.
- He will take your daughters and they will serve him.
- He will take some of your land for himself.
- He will take your land and put a tax upon it.
- He will take your servants for himself.
- He will take your animals and put a tax upon them.

Notice that over and over we see that phrase, "**He will take.**" If this is what you want then this is what you will get! If you want a man to rule over you, he will take!

2. Now why does the Lord tell Samuel that they, “ . . . **will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day.**” Because they wanted a king and it was not time for them to have a king. Thus, God was going to give them what they wanted instead of what He wanted. You will see as we go through I and II Samuel that God wanted David to be the king but it was not time yet. But because the people wanted a king, He gave them Saul, which was a disaster! If they had waited for God’s king, then they would not have needed to cry out to the LORD over the king that they chose!

VERSES 19-20

1. You would think after hearing all the Samuel said regarding a king that they would have rejected this king and turn back to the Lord. But they refused to listen and heed the warning. You see, the reason they wanted a king was so they could be like other nations, like the world around them. How sad it is when the church follows suit and tries to be like the world. And even we as individuals do the same many times. But light and darkness don't mix and what ends up happening is that your light grows dim and you are consumed in the darkness. Your light can be extinguished in the darkness.

They wanted a king to fight for them. But what about the Lord, I thought He was the one who fought their battles and gave them the victory? He was but they were so focused on getting what they wanted they refused to listen to the Lord. They will get what they want but they will find out it was a big mistake; they got really what they should have rejected!

VERSES 21-22

1. God told Samuel if that is what they want, then give it to them. In Psalm 106:15 we read, **“And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.”** Many times, like the nation of Israel, we want something so bad, and God knows it is not good for us. It is not something He wants us to have. And yet we complain and cry and if we keep it up God may just give it to us. And it may satisfy the flesh for a while, but spiritually it will weaken you. They should have wanted God for their king, but instead they wanted a man to rule over them. And we are going to see that Saul was not a man of God and by his actions the nation will suffer both spiritually and physically, just as God had said.

And think about it, they did not want God to rule over them and yet, it is the Lord who will give them what they want and not what He wants. God will never step off His throne and nothing is done without His knowledge or permission. Of this Baldwin said, “There is no compulsion to accept the rule of God, yet ultimately there is no escaping it, for he appoints the king.” And folk’s, there is no escaping His rule in our life, He may give us what we want, but it is never a good thing if it is not His will!

3. Hertzberg comments on this struggle that goes on inside the heart of man. He says, “Here one of the basic features of world history emerges: the struggle of man against God already beginning in Gen. 3 - a struggle which, according to the general outline presented in the Bible, has its roots in the special position given to man in Gen. 1. Samuel experiences what Moses, the prophets, and even Jesus experienced, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’” (Luke 19:14).

I SAMUEL 9**VERSES 1-2**

1. Kish was a wealthy man, a Benjamite and the father of Saul. Kish was also a influential man in Israel. Thus, Saul came from a wealthy, influential family. And His son, Saul, was tall, dark and handsome, he was the people's choice you might say. What is interesting in these verses is you don't see God mentioned and again, the reason is simple, God did not want Saul as king and thus, there was nothing for God to say here. He is just stating the facts about Saul.

2. The world loves to find people to lead them who are tall, dark, and handsome. They look for strong natural leaders. In other words, they have a picture of what a great king or leader should be and that is how they pick them. That is not a good way to do it, but it even happens in the church today. Let me share this with you, this memorandum and you will see what I mean.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jesus, son of Joseph, Woodcrafter, Carpenter's shop, Nazareth

FROM: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests. We have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant. It is the staff's opinion that most of the nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings and they both registered a high score on the manic depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

All of the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,

Jordan Management Consultants

Funny, yes but tragically that is how we do things many times. We need God's direction, His guidance and Israel was not doing that and they are going to get what they want and it will not be good for them.

VERSES 3-6

1. Many would see this as just bad luck as Kish's donkeys are lost and he wants them back so he sends his son Saul to go and find them with one of their servants. Folks, this is not bad luck but God is going to lead these donkeys in a direction so that He can lead Saul to the place that He wants Him to be. And as they look, they can't seem to find them and Saul is now concerned that his father will worry about him and not care about those donkeys. So, just before they start to head back home, they see that a man of god is in town and that he might be able to help them find these donkeys! Obviously Saul did not know God was guiding him, but He was and that is true many times in our lives and it is not until we are on the other side of the situation that we see God's hand upon the whole situation!

VERSES 7-9

1. When you consulted a prophet it was a common courtesy to bring them a gift, it is not that Samuel was requesting it. Now when we read this word, “seer” we tend to think of pagan activities but it was not in this case and now they called these men prophets as they spoke forth the words of God, forth telling the things of God and spoke of future events, foretelling the things of God!

VERSES 10-13

1. Imagine, it just so happened that on the same day that Saul was out looking for his father’s donkeys is the same day that Samuel the prophet is in town. That is God orchestrating these events, not just a lucky break! And as they come to town they ask some women about the prophet that was in town and they told him to hurry for he is preparing to go and eat but before he does, he will make a sacrifice and blessing and the people are waiting for this so they may eat.

VERSES 14-17

1. Look at the contrast between these two men. Saul had no relationship with God and thus, God was guiding him by these donkeys. On the other hand Samuel did have a relationship with God and the Lord spoke to him and told him the day before that he would meet this man who will be commander and now, when he sees him, the Lord basically tells him, “That’s the one!”

This expression in verse 15, **“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear”** literally means, “The LORD had uncovered Samuel’s ear.” And it was derived from the Middle East practice of pushing aside another man’s hair or the corner of his turban in order to whisper a secret in his ear. God told Samuel that he was going to meet-up with Saul, and this is the king that the people want.

VERSES 18-21

1. Saul did not tell Samuel anything about these donkeys being lost, and yet God had already told Samuel. Samuel was showing Saul that he was the Seer or Prophet that he was looking for. And Samuel tells Saul not to worry the donkeys were found. And Saul understood by the words of Samuel that he was to be special but I don’t think he understood yet all the ramifications of what he was saying to him. I don’t think he fully understood that he was going to be king over all Israel but again, he does know this is special and notice his humility here. He recognizes that he is not worthy for any of this, and yet God does use nobody’s because they can’t take the credit. The problem for Saul is he let the position go to his head and he will think he can maintain it by his might when in reality it is God who has allowed him to be king. And in the end, it is pride that will bring him down! And as we will see as we look at the life of Saul, he did not have a heart for God; he did not have a heart of worship!

VERSES 22-24

1. At this meal Saul was given the seat of honor and a special part of the meal. Saul was being honored here. Interestingly enough, the shoulder was considered to be the prime piece of meat. But there is another part of the animal that was also important and that was the breast, that was a special delicacy. Think about this. Saul did not have a heart for God and thus, was not given the breast of the animal to eat, but the shoulder because he was a strong man. Folks, I would rather be weak, uneducated and in love with the Lord than to be tall, dark, handsome and powerful and not love the Lord!

VERSES 25-27

1. Samuel is about to tell Saul that God has appointed him king over Israel. But before he does, Samuel sends Saul's servant on ahead so that he and Saul are alone. But notice what God says in Hosea 13:11 regarding Saul as king. The Lord said, "**I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.**" God gave them what they wanted, but it was not the best thing for them. As I said before, if you are so determined on some issue, even though God knows it will bring pain, He may just give it to you. But it will not be what you thought it would be, for it is not what God wanted for your life. The nation of Israel is about to find this out.

2. Look at all God is doing here. You see the hand of God working and some come to the conclusion that they don't have to do anything then. They can sit back and let God do His thing. And folks, the best thing to do is to seek God with all your heart, to be in His Word and let Him guide you, direct you just as Samuel was directing Saul. You need to be moving, walking by faith and God will direct you for it is much easier to direct a rolling stone than a stationary one! Spurgeon sums this up like this. He wrote:

Suppose, now, it were known that the events of a certain battle would depend entirely on the skill of the general. The two armies are equally balanced, and everything must depend on the tact of the commander; would the soldiers therefore conclude that they needed not to load, or fire, or draw a sword, because everything depended on the commander? No, but the commander works, and his soldiery work together with him. So it is with us. Everything depends on God, but we are his instruments.

- Spurgeon

3. As I close, let me leave you with this thought. In Psalm 103:19 we are told, **“The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.”** The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.”** And The Living Bible puts it like this, **“The Lord has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything there is.”** God is in control and if we have asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior He is already reigning and ruling in our hearts, but one day He will establish His kingdom on this earth! That is what the nation of Israel should have desired but instead they chose for themselves a tall, dark and handsome man to rule them as their king. God gave them what they wanted. And again, we will see as we go through this book, that it will be a big mistake. We must never look at the outward appearance of a person, but what they do, what they say, and God will look at their heart. But for a king, it is only the Lord for He is King of kings and Lord of lords! May we not forget that!