

# SS-1 Samuel 7:1-12 Samuel's Leadership Brings Victory-07/12/20

Intro: "A cavalier attitude toward God or rejection of Him will bring His wrath. "

## I RECOVERY OF THE ARK—I Sam. 7:1-2

- A** **Consecrated**—Although our trip through the book of Judges has concluded, our study of the period of the judges has not. Samuel, in fact, is the last of the judges and the first in a line of prophets (Acts 3:24). Born to Elkanah and Hannah, Samuel was dedicated to God at birth (I Sam. 1). He was taken to the tabernacle and raised by Eli the priest. At a young age, Samuel was called by God to his special ministry (chap. 3).
- B** **Captured**—The Philistines defeated Israel in battle and captured the ark of the covenant. When Eli learned that his sons had been killed and the ark captured, he fell from the place he was seated and died (I Sam. 4:16-18). The Philistines soon learned that the ark was not the boon they had expected (chap. 5), and they sent it back to the Israelites several months later (chap. 6).
- C** **Control - Retrieving the ark (I Sam. 7:1)**
- a** **Recovered**—Men from Kirjath-jearim were asked to retrieve the ark from Beth-shemesh, where the Philistines had sent it (6:14, 21). So, they came and *“fetched up the ark of the Lord”* (7:1) as requested.
- b** **Revered**—The ark of the covenant was built at Mount Sinai, at the same time the tabernacle was constructed (Exod. 37:1-9). This most sacred object in the nation symbolized the very presence of God among them. Its capture was seen as a great tragedy and its return as a great blessing.
- c** **Residence**—The ark was taken to the home of Abinadab, and his son Eleazar was consecrated as the ark’s caretaker. “His business was to guard the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched by curious Israelites” (Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Zondervan). Since we know nothing of Abinadab and Eleazar, we do not know why they were given charge of the ark. One suggestion is that they were from the tribe of Levi and chosen for that reason.
- d** **Route**—Previously, the ark had been located in the tabernacle at Shiloh. At some point, though, Shiloh was destroyed. Jeremiah later used it as a warning in his day that Jerusalem would be similarly destroyed (Jer. 7:12-14).
- D** **Corrected - Israel turns to the Lord (I Sam. 7:2)**
- a** **Time**—The ark’s twenty years in Kirjath-jearim probably refers to the length of time it was there before Samuel addressed the people. The ark would actually remain there until the time of David, who brought it to Jerusalem when he made that city his capital.
- b** **Temperment**—The people *“lamented after the Lord”* (vs. 2). This means they mourned and sought Him. Perhaps reflecting on God’s goodness (Rom. 2:4) and their previous defeat by the Philistines elicited a willingness to rededicate themselves to the Lord.

## II REPENTANCE REQUIRED—I Sam. 7:3-4

- A** **Israel called to repent (I Sam. 7:3)**
- a** **Repentance**—True repentance does not just include sorrow for sin, though that is an essential part (II Cor. 7:9-10). It also means that people live differently and forsake sin (Isa. 55:6-7). “True repentance and conversion begin in mourning after the Lord. It was better with the Israelites when they wanted the ark, and were mourning after it, than when they had the ark, and were prying into it, or priding themselves in it” (Henry).
- b** **Representatives**—*“All the house of Israel”* (I Sam. 7:3) does not mean every single individual in the nation but representatives from the various tribes. These were the people to whom Samuel spoke. These leaders could then relay his message to the people in their respective towns and villages.
- c** **Removal**—Samuel’s message was fairly simple: if they truly wanted to return to the Lord, that meant the removal of the “strange gods” among them. “Strange gods” means foreign gods, that is, the deities of the nations around them that were a source of temptation.
- B** **Israel turns from false gods (I Sam. 7:4)**
- a** **Ritual**—Among the most popular false gods in that region were the “Baalim and Ashtaroth.” While they were worshipped under various names with localized distinctions, these were the premier fertility gods of the region. Baal was the male god and Ashtaroth his female counterpart. Ritual prostitution was often associated with their worship.
- b** **Request**—If the people were really going to return to the Lord, they must “serve him only” (vs. 3), as they had been directed in the Ten Commandments. False gods must be “put away” (vs. 4), or completely removed. If they did this, Samuel promised that God would deliver them from the Philistines. Israel in fact took Samuel’s exhortation seriously and complied with his request. But as subsequent history reveals, this was not permanent, as they backslid many times. Even today, believers must be on constant guard against slipping back into sin. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12).

## III RESTORATION BEGUN—I Sam. 7:5-8

- A** **Confession (I Sam. 7:5-6)**
- a** **Place**—There are various places in the Bible named Mizpeh or Mizpah. The name simply means “lookout” or “watchtower.” This particular Mizpeh was less than ten miles north of Jerusalem and was a frequent gathering place for Israel. It was here that Samuel summoned the people for a time of spiritual renewal. He promised that he would intercede for them at that time.
- b** **Pardon**—The pouring of water before the Lord was symbolic of their repentance and cleansing, similar to water baptism (cf. Matt. 3:6, 11; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21). Various Old Testament purification rituals utilized water, so what the people did was not unusual. Matthew Henry says that it signified “their humiliation and contrition for sin, acknowledging themselves as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” Another suggestion is that they were “denying themselves liquids as a symbolic confession that the Lord’s favor was more important to them than life-sustaining water” (Bergen, New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, B&H).
- c** **Practice**—Fasting from food was frequently practiced during times of national repentance. On the Day of Atonement, when blood was sprinkled on the lid of the ark of the covenant, the entire nation was required to fast.

<b>d</b>	<b>Process</b> -Important during any time of spiritual restoration is <b>an acknowledgement of guilt</b> . Hence, the people declared, “ <i>We have sinned against the Lord</i> ” (I Sam. 7:6). To a large degree, <b>people do not readily admit their personal sinfulness</b> , yet <b>this is the first step toward receiving forgiveness from God</b> (cf. I John 1:7-10). Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (cf. Ps. 34:14-22; Isa. 59:1-2).
<b>e</b>	<b>Prince</b> -The fact that Samuel “ <i>judged the children of Israel</i> ” (I Sam. 7:6) meant that <b>he led them</b> . He was both <b>a spiritual and military leader</b> . “The function of a ‘ <i>judge</i> ’ during this period was <b>more executive than judicial</b> . ‘Judge’ often paralleled ‘ruler’ or ‘ <b>prince</b> ’ ... and one of the most common roles of the judge was to <b>repel invaders</b> ” (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition, Zondervan).

#### **B Consternation (I Sam. 7:7-8).**

<b>a</b>	<b>Foe</b> -When the <b>Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpeh</b> , their leaders saw this as <b>a serious challenge</b> , no doubt <b>thinking that Israel was gathering for battle</b> . Apparently, the Philistines decided it was to their advantage to <b>attack first while the Israelites were still gathered at one location</b> .
<b>b</b>	<b>Fear</b> -Clearly, the Philistines possessed military superiority. <b>Having suffered defeat earlier at the hands of the Philistines, the Israelites were afraid when they heard of their advance</b> . Obviously, the Israelites were not viewing the situation through eyes of faith. This is something that often happens to us and can ultimately lead to defeat.
<b>c</b>	<b>First</b> -In spite of their fears, the Israelites properly asked Samuel to keep praying for them. It is to their credit that they recognized that the Lord was their ultimate Deliverer. Far too often people seek the Lord only when all other avenues have been pursued. This does not mean there is nothing we can do to alleviate fears or problems, but <b>we should not view God’s help as a last resort. He, in fact, should be our first option</b> .

### **IV REQUEST ANSWERED—I Sam. 7:9-12**

#### **A A sacrifice offered (I Sam. 7:9)**

<b>a</b>	<b>Sacrifices</b> -During the Old Testament period, <b>animal sacrifices were common in religious ceremonies</b> . The fact that the people had admitted their sinfulness (vs. 6) made it appropriate to offer a sacrifice at this point. While some sacrifices were shared by both people and priest, with only a portion burned on the altar, this was a “ <i>burnt offering wholly unto the Lord</i> ” (vs. 9).
<b>b</b>	<b>Symbols</b> -The people’s <b>repentance was symbolized in the animal sacrifice</b> , and Samuel cried out to the Lord on their behalf. Moreover, Yahweh “ <i>heard</i> ”—that is, He answered—Samuel’s prayer on their behalf.
<b>c</b>	<b>Supplication</b> -As believers, <b>we should not only pray for ourselves and our own needs but also intercede for others</b> . While we all probably pray for the sick (Jas. 5:13), there are others we should pray for, including earthly rulers and the lost (I Tim. 2:1-4). These are often the same people!

#### **B A prayer answered (I Sam. 7:10)**

<b>a</b>	<b>Suffering</b> -Some prayers are answered immediately, while others are not. Of course, God answers some prayers by giving us grace to <b>endure suffering</b> , as He did with Paul’s “ <i>thorn</i> ” (II Cor. 12:7-10). In this situation, God answered even as Samuel was offering the sacrifice.
<b>b</b>	<b>Sounds</b> -The Philistines had already made their way to Mizpeh and were on the verge of attacking the Israelites when “ <i>the Lord thundered with a great thunder</i> ” (I Sam. 7:10). Exactly what this entailed is unclear. <b>It may be that the thunder was so loud and long the Philistines concluded this was an ominous sign of their defeat</b> . Since the Philistines and many others in antiquity believed their gods controlled the weather, this would be an audible demonstration of the power of the Lord. God’s voice is also depicted as thunder in the Bible (cf. Ps. 29:3-9; John 12:27-30).
<b>c</b>	<b>Stricken</b> -The Philistines were “ <i>discomfited</i> ” (I Sam. 7:10), meaning <b>they were panicstricken and confused</b> . This led to their defeat by the Israelites, who responded with an immediate counterattack.