

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 5A

FIRST SAMUEL

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

The Bethshemites did exactly what the Philistines had done when calamity struck. They passed the object that was the root cause of the calamity to somebody else. The problem was not with the ark of the Covenant but with the people themselves. All too often what the believer needs is a little introspection to help him in his walk with the LORD. It is defeating to look for a scapegoat for our problems.

The people of God were not worthy of the ark of the Covenant. Samuel taught the people what was needed for them to receive the blessing and protection of God. The same applies to us today. How can believers walk worthy of the LORD? It is rare to find such godly examples in our materialistic society. Even if one were to stand in front of us, we would probably criticize that person and try to find out what was wrong with him rather than examine ourselves and see the sin in our own lives.

I Samuel 7 teaches us how to repent and what that repentance entails from God's perspective.

COMMENTARY

Clean House!—7:1-6

At the invitation of the Bethshemites, the men of Kirjath-jearim went to Bethshemesh to fetch the ark of the LORD to their city. The people of Kirjath-jearim seemed confident of handling and keeping the ark. They brought the ark to the home of Abinadab which was situated on a hill. Eleazar, his son, was then sanctified (set apart) to keep and look after the ark. It was not mentioned whether Abinadab and his son Eleazar were from priestly descendants of Aaron or Levites. However the name Eleazar had appeared in priestly genealogies.¹ The ark remained in Kirjath-jearim for the entire period until David transferred it to Jerusalem.² The 20 years mentioned here is not a reference to the length of time it remained in Abinadab's home but to the time it took all the house of Israel to lament after the LORD.

It is sad that it took such a long time for the people of Israel to finally realize and do something to bring the ark of God back inside the Tabernacle where it belonged! It was better late than never!

They "lamented after the LORD". Samuel called the people to demonstrate the wholehearted sincerity

¹ Numbers 3:2 And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

² 2 Samuel 6:2 And David arose, and went with all the people that *were* with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth *between* the cherubims. ³ And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

of their repentance by putting away the idols they worshipped – “Baalim and Ashtaroth” (7:4). The word “Baalim” is the plural for “Baal” (literal meaning: lord, master, owner or husband) who was the chief male deity of the Canaanites. This had become the nickname of the chief god of the Canaanites. The Canaanites believed that Baal controlled the thunder and rain and therefore determined the fertility of the land. Ashtaroth (other names Astarte, Ishtar) was the female companion of Baal and the chief female deity of the Canaanites. Ashtaroth was the goddess of war, love and fertility. The worship of these two Canaanite deities included immoral practices such as temple sexual rituals to gain fertility. This was a “husband and wife” team that had gripped Israel, the people of God, for hundreds of years since the beginning of the time of Judges.

The spiritual condition of the Israelites was at a low point. They had forsaken the LORD and had turned to the gods of the Canaanites believing that these idols could prosper them in the land. Samuel’s ministry must have been very difficult. His patience and perseverance finally bore fruit as seen by the Israelites’ spiritual revival. Samuel told all Israel that if they truly “lamented after the LORD”, they should destroy all their idols. They should prepare their hearts to worship the LORD and resolve to serve only Him and no one else. Samuel promised that if they did what he had told them to do, the LORD would deliver them from the Philistines who were intent on conquering and enslaving them. The

children of Israel did as Samuel instructed. They put away the Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the LORD (YAHWEH) only.

This is the twofold ministry that is often forgotten by believers today. We must put away our sins first before we can serve God in an acceptable manner. Our service which includes worship service is a mockery before God if we have a known sin in our life that we refuse to deal with. Repentance of a known sin is a prerequisite for proper, godly and God honouring worship and service.

Samuel then called them to assemble in Mizpeh (Mizpeh means a “watch-tower” or a high ground where the surrounding regions could be easily seen). Mizpeh was a small hill just north of Samuel’s hometown of Ramah. Samuel promised to intercede for them there. The Israelites responded positively. They poured water before the LORD, an act symbolizing their confession of sins and their need to be cleansed. This was accompanied by fasting which involved a sorrowing of the spirit and a public confession of their sins (7:6). Samuel, as their judge and God’s spokesman, witnessed all that the Israelites did in Mizpeh.

When Spiritual, Attack Follows!-7:7-12

The Philistines heard that the Israelites were gathered in Mizpeh. They must have thought that this gathering was a regrouping in preparation for an attack. As a result, without any provocation from the Israelites, they marched into Israeli

territory and launched an attack at Mizpeh. When the Israelites heard of the impending attack, they were afraid because the Philistines had defeated them twice not long ago and they had suffered great losses. The children of Israel pleaded with Samuel to cry out to the LORD their God to save them from the Philistines (7:8). They had just fasted. They were not prepared for war at all. But a physical war is in reality a spiritual war and the people of Israel did not realize how prepared they really were! Nevertheless they acted correctly when they asked Samuel to “cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.”

Samuel acted. Samuel offered a young lamb for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD. Burnt offering is for the atonement of sin. This whole burnt offering signified total repentance and consecration of the Israelites. While they were making the offering, the Philistines attacked the Israeli camp. The LORD “thundered with a great thunder”. It was so loud and terrifying that the Philistines panicked and were in disarray. God had intervened and created an opportunity for the Israelites to smite them. The Philistines were smitten in front of Israel. The Israelites were in no doubt that it was the LORD, and through the prayer of Samuel, that they had the victory over the stronger and better prepared Philistines. God fights for His people all the time especially when His people are walking right with Him. The people of Israel pursued the Philistines from Mizpeh to Bethcar (House of Pasture). Bethcar was west of Mizpeh. The

Philistines were fleeing back to their own territory when they were caught in Bethcar.

After the Philistines were defeated, Samuel took a stone and set it up at a place between Mizpeh and Shen. He named it – Ebenezer – which means “the stone of help” in acknowledgment of God’s help in their hour of need. The exact phrase used by Samuel was “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us”. The memorial served the purpose of reminding the Israelites of the spiritual renewal and reaffirmation of their faith to the LORD and the LORD’s intervention that enabled them to defeat their adversary. There were very few memorials in Israel’s history during this period of Judges. It was a dark period with only a few glimmers of bright lights. This was one of them.

Samuel’s Ministry-7:13-17

The Israelites regained control of the coastal plains of the land. The LORD protected them against the Philistines for the rest of the period when Samuel was with them. Peace reigned between Israel and the Amorites (a general name for the original inhabitants of Canaan).

Samuel continued the ministry which God had called him to do. He served as a circuit / itinerary judge to the Israelites. Each year, from Ramah his hometown, he would visit Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh and judged the people in all these cities. He decided legal matters and settled disputes amongst them. These were in addition to his responsibility and duty as a prophet.

PRACTICAL VALUE

These are recorded and divinely preserved through the ages for our learning and admonition.³ We see that true repentance and spiritual renewal must be authenticated by appropriate action. The Israelites destroyed their idols and turned to the LORD God, serving Him only and no one else.

We learn that when the people of God have the desire to engage in spiritual renewal, they will face opposition. This has been the experience of many believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many had been persecuted by even their loved ones because of their faith. The correct response is to wait upon the LORD and to know that the battle is HIS. He will defeat the enemy.

When God's servant prays and the people repent, the LORD is more than willing to help. The supernatural destruction of the Philistines before the Israelites must have encouraged the Israelites greatly. It gave them courage to pursue the Philistines and God gave them the victory. It was not how strong the Philistines were that matters but how strong God is.

The problem was not with God but with Israel. When Israel learned that

lesson, help was at hand. When they remained in sin, they experienced the painful chastisement of the LORD.

Peace in the land of Promise was the reward they enjoyed during the ministry of Samuel. It was a blessed time for Israel as they lived in accordance with God's Holy Word.

³Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

¹1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 7: 1-17.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 7:1-17.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 7:1-17.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 7:1-17.

Friday: 1 Samuel 7:1-17.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 7:1-8	
1 Samuel 7:9-12	
1 Samuel 7:13-17	

2. In what way did the Israelites show their sincerity in seeking the Lord? What are the equivalents for Christians today?

3. What lesson can we learn about the importance of fasting from the Israelites in Mizpeh?

4. What was the real cause of the defeat of the Philistines?

Discussion Questions

1. What are the conditions of spiritual victory taught in this chapter?

5. Is it always true that “trials” will follow when one desires to be spiritual?

6. If the answer to question 5 is yes, does it mean that the believer should not strive to be spiritual since he will not wish to “suffer”?
