

## GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE

### “HERE I RAISE MY EBENEZER”

## Introduction:

1. The nation of Israel had rejected God as their King.
2. As a result, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines and Israel was soundly defeated in battle.
3. God proved His power by returning the Ark to the land of Israel.
4. When the Israelites sinned by looking into the Ark, the men of Bethshemesh asked the men of Kirjathjearim to take the Ark of God.

- I. Return of the Ark of God (7:1-2)
  - A. These two cities were located west of Jerusalem.
    1. Bethshemesh (“house of the sun”) was almost due west of Jerusalem.
    2. Kirjathjearim (“city of forests”) was almost due north of Bethshemesh and northwest of Jerusalem.
    3. Kirjathjearim was also known as Kirjath-baal and Baalah (Josh. 18:14; 1 Chron. 13:5-6).
    4. It was not a priestly city, but was near Bethshemesh and located on a hill – thus, chosen to receive the Ark.
  - B. The men came down and brought the Ark to the house of Abinadab.
    1. The Ark would remain here until David returned it to the Tabernacle in Zion, or Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-11; 1 Chron. 13:5-8).
      - a. The Tabernacle was moved from Shiloh to Nob, then to Gibeon (1 Sam. 21:6; 1 Kin. 3:4; 2 Chron. 1:3).
      - b. However, during this time the Ark remained in Kirjathjearim.
    2. The 20 years in this verse was the time of Israel’s mourning after God.
  - C. Keep in mind that these chapters are playing out like one of the stories in the book of Judges.
    1. Israel is being oppressed by the Philistines.
    2. Finally, they are beginning to cry out to the Lord.
    3. So, Samuel – the last judge – will help to deliver them.
  
- II. Repentance of the Children of Israel (7:3-6)
  - A. Apparently, some 20 years have passed since we last read of Samuel.
    1. Shiloh has been destroyed and the Tabernacle moved to Nob.
    2. Samuel has returned to his hometown of Ramah, where he built his house and an altar to the Lord (vs. 17).
    3. While Israel has been oppressed, Samuel has been growing in faith – now serving as prophet, priest, and judge (cf. Jer. 15:1).
    4. It is possible that during this time he married and had two sons, Joel (“Jehovah is God”) and Abiah (“Jehovah is my Father”) [8:1-2].
  - B. Now, the children of Israel had a change of heart and Samuel is there to guide them back to Jehovah.
  - C. Israel had a desire to return to the Lord, but they needed instruction in how to do it.
  - D. Samuel commanded them to do three things: Repent, Reform and Pray.
  - E. First, they had to prepare their hearts to serve the Lord.
    1. One does not serve God by accident.
    2. It must be a deliberate choice (cf. 2 Chron. 12:14; 20:33; Ezra 7:10).

1 Samuel 7:1-17

3. Repentance is a change of heart, brought about by godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-11).
  - F. Second, they had to reform their lives and cease their idolatry.
    1. True repentance always leads to a change of life.
    2. They had to begin to serve the Lord only.
    3. They had to remove the idols of Baal and Ashtaroth from their lives.
    4. They had to acknowledge their sins and mourn over them.
  - G. Third, they needed the prayers of a righteous man like Samuel.
    1. The name Mizpeh means “watchtower” (cf. Gen. 31:49).
    2. God watched over the repentance of Israel and became their Savior.
  - H. Thus, Samuel became the judge over Israel.
- III. Restoration of the Land of Israel (7:7-14)
- A. When the Philistines heard of this gathering of the Israelites, they thought it a prime opportunity to defeat them in battle.
  - B. The children of Israel displayed a true change of heart, for – even though they were afraid – they asked Samuel to pray for them.
  - C. In response, Samuel offered a lamb as a sacrifice to God and prayed for his people.
  - D. As He had promised, God heard the prayer and delivered His people.
  - E. God sent a supernatural thunder among the Philistines that so frightened them, they became a confused mob – easily defeated by Israel (cf. 2:10).
  - F. To mark this victory, Samuel set up a stone that he named Ebenezer, saying, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”
    1. He meant that up to that point in their history, God had been their helper.
    2. It was not Samuel, Samson, Gideon, Joshua, or Moses who had saved the nation of Israel.
    3. God was their helper and their Savior! And, He was their King!
  - G. Thus, the Philistines were defeated, the lands they had taken were restored to Israel, and the nation had peace.
- IV. Responsibilities of Samuel, the last Judge (7:15-17)
- A. Samuel spent his days as judge of Israel, riding a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpeh and back home to Ramah.
  - B. This was a demonstration of his love for the people and his devotion to serving his God.