

## 1 Samuel 7-8

Good morning and thank you for joining us. We're continuing our study through the book of 1 Samuel, so would you please turn in your Bibles to chapter 7?

Last week we saw the wild events that took place resulting from the Philistines capture of the Ark of the Covenant. And you'll recall after getting the ark back, that the Israelites in Beth Shemesh disobeyed God by peering into the ark, and over 50k died in the city, so they shipped off the ark.

Now remember, up until this point we're still in the period of the judges. That's why the book in your bible before 1 Samuel is the book of Judges-they tie together.

We're going to study chapters 7 and 8 this morning, and the title of this morning's message is LOOKING FOR A KING

Let's pray.

**1 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.** Now this is not Aaron's son named Eleazar that we read of back in Exodus, this is several hundred years later. We don't know if this Eleazar was of the proper priestly lineage.

**2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD** At this point in history, Israel had good reason to lament. Their cities were in ruins, their armies were defeated, and they were under Philistine domination. All their difficulties could be traced to one source- because they had turned their back on God.

We know from many of our previous studies that the ark was in the tabernacle in Shiloh. But there's no mention of the tabernacle

here, which leads many to believe the tabernacle had been destroyed by the Philistines.

Now you've likely noticed up to this point, the book of 1 Samuel hasn't really talked much about Samuel has it? That now changes as Samuel and his actions come into focus...

**3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths[fn] from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."** Samuel calls the distraught nation to repentance.

Yet as is always the case, the inward repentance has to come first. That is why Samuel first called Israel to return with all their hearts, then told them to put away the foreign gods.

And here's the challenge we all face- when someone inwardly repents, it's hidden isn't it? Because no one can really "see" the heart of another person.

Yet the inward action of repentance will in time be revealed by outward actions.

This is why I personally don't get super excited at the statistics of large evangelistic crusades or altar calls. To be clear I think they're wonderful and necessary, but the experience of conviction of sin proves nothing. It is the response to conviction that demonstrates repentance.

So Samuel 1<sup>st</sup> calls Israel to return to God with all their heart. To exalt God to His rightful place in their lives.

Second, they were to rid themselves of anything that syphoned off their devotion to God.

4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths,[fn] and served the LORD only. The nation's actions demonstrated their repentance

5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." **SHOW PIC** Mizpah was a location seven miles north of Jerusalem. It was easily accessible from all over Israel... **CLOSE PIC**

Now for you Bible students, the name Mizpah may sound familiar. Mizpah was where Jacob separated from Laban in Genesis 31 and was the gathering place for a repentant Israel in Judges 20. Mizpah was a place remembered for separation and repentance

And it's here that Samuel holds a national Day of Prayer – he has a prayer meeting for the nation.

See Samuel is going to lead the nation against the Philistines, but he realizes that every victory for God is first bathed in prayer.

6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

Samuel performs a ritual to symbolize Israel's fresh commitment to God. Samuel pours out water. Why? Can you think of a more irreversible act than that? Once a liquid is poured from its container onto the ground, it can never be fully retrieved. When it's gone - it's gone.

This is the kind of commitment that God requires from us - an irreversible act. **Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,[fn] and follow Me.**

**SHOW PIC** A few years ago for Christmas, we took our kids to see the Harlem Globetrotters. You've likely seen the trick where they have a ball on a rubber band. They throw the ball up, but it snaps back. It's a cute show. **CLOSE PIC**

Sadly, this is what some folks do with the Lord. They profess to give their lives to Jesus - but then later want to take it back. We need to pour out our lives to the Lord.

Now the end of verse 6 says Samuel judged the children of Israel. Samuel was the last judge in the days of the Book of Judges. But as we'll see, Samuel's leadership was more spiritual than military.

**7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.** (Pause here-it's no surprise after a spiritual revival that the enemy rears up to attack)

**...7 And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.** Israel seemed to have more faith when they trusted in the ark than when they are humble and repentant before the LORD. But small faith in the true and living God is more powerful than strong faith in a lie.

8-9

**8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.**

**SHOW PIC** I'd like you to think about this poor lamb for a moment— an innocent lamb who never hurt anyone or ever sinned itself. Yet its throat was slit, its blood poured out, then its body cut up, and its carcass burned. Why-this seems incredibly cruel doesn't it? **CLOSE PIC**

The sacrifice of an innocent animal was necessary because Israel recognized the fate of the lamb is what they themselves deserved for disobeying God. It was an act of worship, they were praising God that He accepted the punishment of the innocent lamb instead of demanding it upon them.

Remember when JTB saw Jesus he said **John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

Jesus fulfilled all of the law and sacrifices, took our sin penalty upon Himself! Jesus is our sacrificial lamb!

So picture the scene. The whole nation is in Mizpah, they've repented, they're worshipping, and the enemy is getting ready to attack! To an outsider this wasn't the time to sacrifice. This was the time to come up with battle plans, figure out logistics, and gather the food for war!!

But the Hebrews decided to worship.

**10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.** As Samuel interceded, God came to Israel's defense. The Lord orchestrated natural phenomena in some miraculous, supernatural way that confused the Philistines.

And notice the irony. This was the kind of victory Israel hoped for when they brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle last week. But what was the difference? Repentance and seeking the Lord.

**11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and**

Shen, and called its name Ebenezer,[fn] (which means “stone of help”) saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.”

This paints a beautiful picture. Samuel’s saying ‘we’ve got a long way to go, but so far the Lord has been our rock –everything we need’.

Don’t you feel that way about your life?

One of my favorite hymns was written by a man named Robert Robinson. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing says, “Here I raise my Ebenezer; here by Thy great help I’ve come; and I hope, by Thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home...”

It’s important for all of us to have these Ebenezer’s, these memorials and memories of how faithful Jesus has been. God’s been faithful to us hasn’t He! And He’ll be faithful to bring us home.

13-17

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. 17 But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD. Evidently, Samuel was Israel’s first circuit preacher. He made a loop each year around Israel to point them to the Lord.

Chapter 8 is one of the most significant moments in the history of the nation of Israel. See chapter 8 marks the transition from judgeship to kingship in ancient Israel.

**1 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.** So now we fast forward several years till Samuel is old. Samuel was one of the godliest men in the entire Bible, but here we see a potential problem in verse 1.

We never have the pattern of judges being appointed by men or of the office of judge being passed from father to son. It appears that Samuel made a big mistake in appointing his sons' as judges over Israel.

**2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, ("Yahweh is God") and the name of his second, Abijah; ("My [divine] Father is Yahweh")**

**they were judges in Beersheba. 3 But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.**

Just like Eli's sons, Samuel's sons succumbed to the seduction of money, taking bribes from God's people.

It's a further illustration that no matter how Godly a parent may be, or how wonderful the upbringing of a child may be, each individual must decide for themselves if they will follow the Lord almighty and walk in His ways.

**4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."** Samuel's age, and his wicked sons were used as the reason for Israel to demand an earthly king. Yet if you study the OT this isn't the 1<sup>st</sup> time Israel demanded a king. Remember, they wanted to crown Gideon.

See the Hebrews real motive is at the end of verse 5, “make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

The name “Israel” means “governed by God.” God called Israel to be holy, to be different than all the other nations as a living witness of God. Instead, the Hebrews utter the familiar catchphrase every parent of a teenager has heard, “Everybody else is doing it- why can’t I?”

Israel wanted a king and all that came with one: a throne, a crown, a scepter, a court, a coronation, some pomp and circumstance.

Rather than have faith in the invisible God, the Hebrews wanted a visible ruler on which they could fix their aspirations and hopes. On the field of battle - while facing the enemy – the Israelites assumed it would be easier to rally around a leader they could see with their eyes, than it would be to have to continually trust God.

6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. Instead of lashing out at the people, instead of expressing his frustration on the people, Samuel takes it to the Lord. This reminds us of James 1: 19 So then,[fn] my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Whenever we get frustrated with other people, when the blood begins to boil, it’s always a good idea to slip away to a quiet spot and talk it over with the Lord first thing.

Whenever I don’t do this—when I blow my top, let off steam, or give someone a piece of my mind—I always regret it later.



7 And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. Evidently, Samuel felt personally rejected. But as he prays, he hears God say, “It’s not about you, Samuel, they’re not rejecting you as judge, they’re rejecting Me!

Israel’s request for a king had nothing to do with Samuel – or his sons. Rather the simple commands of trusting and obeying God became too much for the people of Israel. They didn’t want to exercise faith.

See a human king provided more options. You can hide stuff from a visible king who can’t read your mind and heart. But there’s no fooling God!

An earthly king’s judgments can be debated and amended - God’s laws are absolute.

A king and his court can be manipulated, and favors gained. God is just and will not be manipulated by any man.

You get the point-boil it all down and Israel wanted a system to follow - rather than a relationship to maintain.

The same happens today too! Some folks want a list of religious tasks to check off rather than bask in the freedom and grace that a real relationship with Christ brings.

This isn’t the only time when Israel will reject God as their king. When Jesus stood before Pilate, **John 19:15 But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them,**

“Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

Jesus was a rejected King.

But in a wonderful display of God’s mercy, look what He says in verse 9

9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.” God is going to comply with their request, but not before He warns them! Verse 10-18 gives Israel a list of what they have to look forward to...count the times it says ‘he will take’

10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. 11 And he said, “This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. 12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men,[fn] and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18 And you 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.” Not exactly a ringing endorsement for a candidate huh? But God knows what happens when Kings come into power.

**SHOW PIC** Over the next 500 years, of the 42 kings who'll rule over both the northern and southern Hebrew kingdoms, only 9 will earn a positive approval rating from God. **CLOSE PIC**

All because Israel wanted a king like the other nations had.

So given the news of how their kings will act, how does Israel respond?

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." At this point, the people still had an opportunity to admit they had made a mistake in asking for a king. But that's not what they did.

God just won a spectacular battle for Israel in chapter 7-we just read it!

Israel didn't lack a king — they had a king in the LORD God. What they wanted was the image of a king. Their desire for a king was really the desire for someone who looked like what they thought a king should look like.

This was never God's goal for Israel. **Exodus 19:6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.'**

God wanted to make Israel something special, and they wanted to be just like everyone else.

And if we're not careful, as Christians we can be just like these ancient Hebrews.

**Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

CCC?

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. I so admire Samuel because he goes back to the Lord once again. He talks to God about the issue.

Of course God knows all things. God wasn't in need of information from Samuel. But Samuel was in need of spending time with Him.

22 So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."

And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city." One of the biggest dangers of the of the "Name it and claim it" school of thought is that that we know better than God.

God is the King. He knows what's best for me. He knows what will ultimately bring me joy. See, I think I do—but I'm often wrong.

Yet many churches and pastors today teach "God, I know this thing, that person, or that career is perfect for me, so I claim it in faith." But by doing this, without realizing it Christians become their own king, trying to use God to bring about their own wishes.

Folks that's not how it works with God.