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The Lord Will Be Exalted Among The Nations (II)

1 SAMUEL 6:17-7:17

Introduction

1. As you may remember from our study over the last few weeks, the Israelites during the days of Samuel had relegated God to a position of convenience in their lives.
2. Only when they needed Him did they call upon Him?
3. However, that didn't work too well for them.
4. Over a two day battle with the Philistines they lost 34,000 men, the Ark of the Covenant was captured and Israel's High Priest, Eli, and his two sons, Hophni & Phinehas died.
5. The Philistines quickly realized that the God of Israel was not one to be trifled with.
6. The punishment which God inflicted upon them because they treated the Ark as nothing more than a spoil of the battle.
7. After seven months, when they could stand it no more, they sent it back to Israel with guilt offerings, hoping to remove the curse it brought upon them.
8. As we shall see tonight, the Israelites finally learn their lesson and turn to God in true repentance.
9. Let's look at their response and what came about as a result.

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I. The Importance of God's Holiness (1 Samuel 6:17-7:1)

A. FOOTNOTES TO THE ARK'S RETURN (6:17-18)

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"These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned for a guilt

offering to the Lord: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone on which they set the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.” (1 Samuel 6:17–18, NASB95)

1. The purpose of this summary is twofold:
 - a. To provide evidence of the accuracy of the account to the original readers.
 - b. To stress that the offering represented all of Philistia
 - 1) Not just the five main cities
 - 2) But the towns and villages as well.
2. The five golden tumors represented each of the major Philistine cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron.
3. The golden mice represented all the remaining towns and villages under their rule.
4. The large stone in verse 18 is referred to by the translators of the KJV and NKJV as “the large stone of Abel”.
 - a. In Hebrew, the word for stone and the word for Abel are different by only one letter nba and lba.
 - b. In both translations, the words “stone of” in verse 18 are in italics indicating the translators added the words to make sense of the text.
 - c. Also, the term “large stone” is found previously in verses 14 and 15.
 - d. It would make sense that a scribe made a mistake in copying the text which was repeated by a few others but not the majority and thus made it into the KJV and NKJV translations.
5. This stone in the field of Joshua became a “witness” or monument to this important event.
 - a. Future generations would look at it and remember what took place

here.

- b. It would also serve as a warning of what would happen to those who showed disrespect for the living God.

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E. THE INCIDENT AT BETH-SHEMESH (6:19-21)

“He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter. The men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?” So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord; come down and take it up to you.” (1 Samuel 6:19–21, NASB95)

1. God had punished the Philistines for their abuse of the ark, now it is the Israelites turn.
2. The Israelites actually treat the ark with less reverence than the Philistines.
3. According to the Law of Moses, when the Israelites transported the ark, it was to be hidden under three different coverings
 - a. The first was the veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies (Numbers 4:5).
 - b. The second was a covering of “badger skins” KJV, NKJV (“porpoise skin” NASB, “sea cows” NIV, goatskin “RSV) (Numbers 4:6).
 - c. Finally, these two were overlaid with a blue cloth (Numbers 4:6).
 - These coverings would not only protect it from the elements but also from staring eyes since it was a most holy object.
4. We are not told whether or not the Levites covered the ark when they removed it from the cart.
5. However, because of there lack of reverence for the Ark, a number of of men from Bethshemesh were struck down because of their irreverence.
6. The majority of the major translations present the reason for God’s

punishment as being the men having looked into the ark.

7. However, the Hebrew means “to look *upon* or *at* a thing with lust or malicious pleasure.”
 - a. It may be that the men of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark, possibly to confirm that the items belonging there had not been removed.
 - b. It is also possible that they looked upon it (gawked at it) in a way that was incompatible with the holiness which the ark of God demanded.
 - ❑ Whatever it was that the men of Bethshemesh did, it violated the regulations which God had set forth for the tabernacle furniture (Numbers 4:1-20).
5. Another problem in translation is found in the number of men which the Lord struck down.
 - a. “The majority of Hebrew MSS read literally ‘seventy men fifty thousand men’”¹
 - b. However, this is not the usual way the Hebrew would indicate 50,700 men.
 - c. The ESV, NIV, RSV, NRSV translators chose to follow three Hebrew MSS which omitted the fifty thousand (Josephus also omitted the fifty thousand, cf. *Antiquities* 6.1.4).
 - d. The rest of the major texts included the 50,070 number reinforcing the idea of a “great slaughter.”

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6. The result of this great slaughter was that the men of Beth-shemesh were afraid to have the ark in their midst.
 - a. They questioned whether anyone could stand in the presence of the Lord and His ark.
 - b. They began looking for another village that might be willing to accept responsibility for the ark, saying, “To whom shall it go up from us?” (v. 20)

¹ James E. Smith, *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 2000, pp. 106.

7. They approached the men of Kiriath-jearim who agreed to come down and take the ark up to their village.
 - a. Kiriath-jearim was about nine miles from Beth-shemesh and some eight miles west of Jerusalem.
 - b. Though it was neither a priestly nor a Levitical city, it may have been chosen because it the nearest city on the road to Shiloh.

Slide 6**F. THE ARK AT REST (7:1-2)**

“And the men of Kiriath-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. From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” (1 Samuel 7:1–2, NASB95)

1. The men of Kiriath-jearim removed the ark from Beth-shemesh and carried it to Abinadab’s house which was on a hill.
2. This location may have been chosen for one of two reasons
 - a. Such a location would provide security for the ark.
 - b. High elevations were considered proper places for worship of the Lord.
3. Abinadab’s son, Eleazar, was consecrated for the purpose of guarding or keeping the ark.
4. Twenty years in Kiriath-jearim.
 - a. This is not an indication of the total time the ark was in Kiriath-jearim.
 - 1) The ark would not leave here until David had it brought to Jerusalem.
 - 2) That would be another 60 to 70 years in the future.
 - a) Saul would reign for 40 years (1 Samuel 13:1; cf. Acts 13:21)
 - b) David would reign in Hebron for 7 ½ years as king over Judah before capturing Jerusalem, building a palace there and being anointed king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:3-5).
 - b. Rather it seems that this time is connected with Israel’s mourning

(lamenting).

- 1) The evidence seems to suggest that the Philistines attacked Shiloh after the rout of the Israelites at Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4) and in the process destroyed the tabernacle which left the ark somewhat homeless.
- 2) The prophet Jeremiah refers to the destruction of Shiloh as a reminder that Israel should not place too much confidence simply in the presence of the Temple or Tabernacle (Jeremiah 7:12-16).
- 3) So it is that Israel has been lamenting the displacement of the ark for these twenty years and now Samuel is preparing them to act.

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III. The Lord's Mercies Are New Every Morning (7:3-17)

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A. ISRAEL'S REPENTANCE (7:3-6)

“Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.” So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone.” (1 Samuel 7:3-4, NASB95)

1. After twenty years, Samuel “spoke to all the house of Israel” and called upon them to “return to the Lord” (v. 3)
2. In his call to repentance, Samuel includes the phrase, “with all your heart” — to emphasize that God requires genuine repentance.
3. His point is that genuine repentance is *tangible* repentance.
 - a. It does not stop with tears and weeping.
 - b. In includes concrete action — “remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone” (1 Samuel 7:3a, NASB95).

- 1) Baal (v. 4) was the god of thunder and rain who made the earth fertile.
- 2) Ashtoreth was the female goddess of love and war.

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- c. After his return to Bethel, Jacob told all those who were in his household to “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments.” (Genesis 35:2, NASB95)
 - d. At the end of his life, Joshua commanded the Israelites to do the same — “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14, NASB95)
 - e. Samuel’s command is simply his reminder of God’s first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:3, NASB95)
 - c. After removing these false gods from their homes, the Israelites must commit themselves anew to the Lord and serve Him exclusively (Deuteronomy 6:13f).
3. Samuel promised that if they would make this total commitment, the Lord would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines (v. 3).

“He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines” (1 Samuel 7:3b, NASB95).
 4. The Israelites respond to Samuel’s preaching in a positive way (v. 4).

“So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone” (1 Samuel 7:4, NASB95).

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5. Samuel sent messengers throughout the tribes summoning the people to gather at Mizpah where he promised to pray for them (v. 5).

“Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord

for you.” They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the Lord.” And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah.” (1 Samuel 7:5–6, NASB95)

6. The people responded to Samuel’s invitation and did three things (v. 6).
 - a. They poured out water before the Lord which seems to suggest a number of things — Repentance, Total surrender, Humility, Self-denial
 - b. They fasted
 - 1) This was a way of showing that they were focusing on spiritual, not material things.
 - 2) It was also a sign of their inward distress of mind on account of their sin.
 - c. They acknowledged their sin against the Lord.

Slide 11**B. THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD’S MERCY (VV. 7-10)**

“Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”” (1 Samuel 7:7–8, NASB95)

1. The Philistines heard of Israel’s gathering at Mizpah and assembled there for the purpose of attacking Israel (v. 7).
 - a. The fact that the Philistines had enough time to muster an army suggests that the assembly at Mizpah must have lasted for several days.
 - b. Knowledge of the approaching Philistines invoked fear in the Israelites.
2. The Israelites learned of this and instantly “were afraid of the Philistines” (v. 7).
3. They pleaded with Samuel — “Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us,

that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines” (v. 8).

4. The Israelites realized their helplessness and turn to God in prayer.
5. In this chapter, we no longer find Israel dabbling in religious magic (cf. Ch. 4).
6. Now, they are walking by sheer faith — they know that God is the only one who can save them from the hand of the Philistines.

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7. Samuel offered “a whole burnt offering to the Lord” and then cried out to the Lord on their behalf (v. 9).

“Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel and the Lord answered him. Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel.” (1 Samuel 7:9–10, NASB95)

8. The Philistines advanced as Samuel offered his sacrifice (v. 10).
9. God responded to their advances against His people — He “thundered with a great thunder” (v. 10).
10. This threw the Philistine army into confusion causing them to flee before the Israelites.
 - a. This is what God promised to do many years earlier while they were still wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 26:7-8).

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“But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword.”

(Leviticus 26:7–8, NASB95)

- b. It is what Moses said would happen before he died (Deuteronomy 28:7).

“The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.” (Deuteronomy 28:7, NASB95)

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- c. It is what Samuel’s mother, Hannah, said would happen when she prayed to the Lord after giving Samuel to the Lord there at Shiloh all those years before (1 Samuel 2:10a).

“Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens . . .” (1 Samuel 2:10a, NASB95)

NOTE: Consider the church

- We too can be blind to our true state.
- We think we can improve our situation by our own cleverness.
- However, there is a form of spiritual warfare in which we cannot be successful by better administration or by brighter or more creative ideas.
- There are times when God takes our props away and forces us to depend on Him alone for our support.
- Only when we realize apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), that He alone can rescue, He alone can save, and we finally turn to Him in prayer, do we “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

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C. OUR HELP COMES FROM THE LORD (7:12-14)

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath;

and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.” (1 Samuel 7:12–14, NASB95)

1. Following the defeat of the Philistines, Samuel erected a stone which he named “Ebenezer” which means “stone of help” (v. 12).
2. He explained the significance of the name by stating, “Thus far the Lord has helped us” (v. 12).
3. Naming the stone “Ebenezer” was no doubt intended to offset the other Ebenezer where Israel had been defeated and the ark captured some twenty years earlier (cf. 4:1ff.).
4. It was intended to remind them of all God’s through the years:
 - a. Provision for Abraham, Isaac & Jacob.
 - b. Liberation from Egypt
 - c. Preservation in the wilderness.
 - d. Their success in their conquest of the promised land.
5. How does the capture of the Ark and the deaths of the 34,000 soldiers at Ebenezer all those years ago figure into this?

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6. It was then that God was helping them to know . . .
 - a. Themselves
 - b. Their sins and the bitter fruit of those sins.

“In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the angel of His presence saved them;
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them,
And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.”

(Isaiah 63:9, NASB95)

“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines . . .” (Hebrew 12:6).

“He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness”
(Hebrews 12:10).

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7. Through the Lord's help and Samuel's leadership,
 - a. The Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again (v. 13)

“The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”.
 - b. Several Israelite towns between Ekron and Gath were liberated from Philistine control (v. 14).
 - d. “There was peace between Israel and the Amorites” (v. 14b).

Slide 18**C. SAMUEL'S CONTINUING MINISTRY (7:15-17)**

“Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the Lord.” (1 Samuel 7:15–17, NASB95)

1. Three times in these verses we are told that Samuel “judged Israel” (vv. 15, 16, 17).
2. His work did not consist of merely deciding legal disputes among the Israelites.
3. He also reproved, instructed and counseled the people to live under the Lord's authority.

Conclusion

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1. There are three passages of Scripture I want to leave you with this evening.

“Cease striving and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our stronghold. ”

(Psalm 46:10–11, NASB95)

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“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.”

(Psalm 121:1–2, NASB95)

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“Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the Lord guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.”

(Psalm 127:1, NASB95)

2. Do we truly put the Lord first in our lives and trust in Him for everything?
3. Or do we push Him to the side and only turn to Him when it is convenient or when we find ourselves in dire straits?
4. As I shared with you last week, the God we serve will not accept second place.
5. Please be sure to put Him first in all that you do.