

1Sa 7:1 ¶ "And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."

Because of the fiasco in **1Sa 6:19 ¶ "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter."** the ark is moved to the house of Abinadab in Kirjathjearim, and a priest is sanctified to keep it. This priest was simply a keeper of the ark of God. He would have been more like a guard, watching to see that no one looked into the ark of God as they did in Bethshemesh. They certainly did not want another such disaster.

We have no scriptural evidence that this priest was a Levite. We understand that he was not a Levitical priest doing sacrifices from **1Sa 7:2** and the expression, **"and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD."** We discern this because; had they been using the ark of God, in accordance with thus saith the Lord, they would have seen the return of the presence of God to Israel, and they would not be mourning that God was missing in their lives. Obviously, they have not left off their idolatry and returned to God with their whole heart.

Even though they have possession of the ark of God, Israel finally understands what they really need is the presence of God, whose absence is the source of their lamentations.

Lesson for us: when we are feeling lonely and forsaken, we need to get away from those things, which draw our minds and hearts away from God, and turn to God with our whole heart. We need to get into God's word of truth, the King James bible, and look for Jesus, our Saviour and Lord, which will refresh our minds in Christ.

3 ¶ "And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Here, we see the beginning of Samuel's reign of prophet, and judge, of God in Israel. Samuel begins by reminding Israel: you are still worshipping your idols and strange gods, wherefore, God will not hear you at all. Samuel tells Israel: put away your false idols and gods, return to God with repentant hearts, then God will hear and deliver you from the rule of the Philistines.

Do you see the prophetic picture of the New Testament church? If we turn from God to idolatry, God turns his back to us. Some will immediately say that we do not have idols and worship them. I ask you this question: Is there anything in your life, which causes God to be put in second place, or lower in your life? If so, you are a victim of idolatry. However, when we repent and turn back to God, not only will God forgive us our sins; God will also deliver us from the rule of sin and Satan in our lives.

4 "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. 5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. 6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, 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 children of Israel in Mizpeh."

Baalim and Ashtaroth are idols that are used in the worship of the sun and moon. The rites and rituals of these idolatrous religions were centered in gross immorality, prostitution of both males and females. In some cases, they even sacrificed their children to these Gods. In this nation today, there is a crazed society that is doing the very same things as went on at this time. Abortion is a picture of sacrificing your children to Baalim and Ashtaroth.

Israel listens to Samuel and puts away their idols and false gods. They turn to God with hearts aching for the return of the presence of the Lord. Samuel sets a day for Israel to gather as a nation before God. Israel spends the designated day in fasting and prayer to God. They confess their sins to God, and before Samuel. Samuel, who is now judge over Israel, judges Israel when they are gathered.

The lesson for us today: When church bodies, and individuals, have fallen from grace and have internal troubles, they need to turn back to God, as a unified body "**Gather all Israel to Mizpeh**," with their hearts longing for the return of the presence of God.

"and fasted on that day" Fasted means to do without, in this case, food and water. Understand, we must learn to do without the things which have drawn us away from God into sin. We are to abstain from sinfulness with all our hearts. Confessing to God we are sinners and praying for God's forgiveness, and for the return of the joy of his salvation to us.

Samuel, who is the picture of Jesus Christ for us today, knows the love that God the Father has for his people. He knows; God will deliver Israel from their enemies if they are following him with their whole heart. Jesus has already claimed us as God's people in the new birth. Jesus has already made the eternal sacrifice for the remission of our sins. However, when we sin against God, after the new birth, there will be a consequence for our sin. Just as Israel is God's chosen people and they have sinned against God: Israel has been laboring under the cruel hand of the Philistines ruling over them, which is the consequence of their sin against God. Yet, God has not thrown them away, he has just withdrawn his presence in their lives to bring them to repentance. Praise God! that he does return to us and solace our repenting hearts. Praise God for the gift of eternal life manifested in our lives, which makes us remember who our maker is, and where our blessings come from, and who we need, to be present in our lives, to give us deliverance from our enemies. Thank you, Lord Jesus!

7 ¶ "And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him."

The Philistines hear that Israel is gathered, and the Philistines gather and prepare to war against them. Israel cries unto Samuel to pray unto God for their deliverance. Samuel prepares a lamb for a whole burnt offering to the Lord, makes the sacrifice and calls upon God. God accepts Samuel's sacrifice for Israel, and God hears Samuel's prayer. There is a prophetic picture here in the "**And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD.**" Jesus Christ, our Saviour, offered himself wholly unto God, for the remission of the sins of all of God's people. Just as God accepted Samuel's sacrifice and prayer, God has accepted Jesus's sacrifice and prayer for the salvation Israel, which is all of God's people.

Did you notice: Israel did not say; go fetch the ark of God to deliver us? I believe they now understand that God is their deliverer. Did you notice? Israel is now in defensive mode, not in the attack mode. What a difference from the previous chapters, where they went to war without asking God anything. Knowing that without God on their side they will fall to the Philistines again: they pray to God for deliverance. Since Israel has turned to God and put away their idolatry: God will now hear their prayer and deliver them.

Another great lesson for us: We should not do like Israel did previously, when they were in idolatry, and they had forgotten God. They went to battle under the delusion of their own strength and the strength of their idolatry. We already know the result of that was a great loss. Wherefore, before we act, we need to verify the intent of our hearts. Is God really our God, or are we depending on ourselves, or some idol we have conjured up? Are we seeking God's glory or our own? Are we living by "**thus saith the Lord?**" which will keep us in God's will. We should always pray for God's guidance, and deliverance, before we act.

10 "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel."

God does his wondrous work of saving Israel by thundering, with such loud volume that the Philistines are terrified. They realize God is fighting for Israel, and they run away from the thundering voice of God's wrath. We see that God did two things: first he destroyed the fighting strength of the Philistines by his powerful display, which we know because discomfit means *to put in commotion; to disturb, drive, destroy, break, consume, crush, trouble, vex*. Second, God the strengthened the fighting strength of the Israelites, which enabled them to easily destroy many of the Philistines.

This is a great prophetic picture of how Christ has fought the war, and has already discomfited Satan, allowing God's people to be freed from the bondage of sin, and Satan, in their lives. It also demonstrates to us that if we are faithful in our discipleship to Christ, he will give us power to overcome our enemies, as seen in: **1Jo 4:4 ¶ "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."** Hallelujah! we have the salvation of God, and the victory of Jesus Christ, in our Christian walk, in life. The light of hope found in the belief of the eternal victory we have in Jesus Christ.

11 "And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. 12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

Israel pursues the fleeing Philistines, smiting them as they go, until they are "**under Bethcar**." I can find no information that tells us where Bethcar was located, or what Bethcar was. However, "**until they came under Bethcar**." indicates to us that Israel was "**under**" Bethcar. We believe that this indicates; there was a mountain, and they were under the shadow of this mountain. Do you see the picture of the deliverance we live under today? Jesus is the mountain of God's love, and we are under the shadow of his finished work. As God delivered Israel from the Philistines: Christ has delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan.

Samuel sets up a monumental stone, which he names Ebenezer, which means *stone of the help*, "**Hitherto hath the LORD helped us**." The New Testament church has a monumental stone set up for them by Christ, which is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is our memorial rock of remembrance of Jesus Christ, and his finished work of eternal life and salvation, seen in: **1Co 11:23-26; 23 ¶ "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."**

13 ¶ "So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites."

God frees Israel from bondage to the Philistines. Israel regains the cities that the Philistines had taken possession of. Thus, God once again delivers to Israel the land of promise. This discomfiture was so great that the Philistines no longer crossed into the land of Israel, nor tried to have authority over them. Why? Because the hand of God was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Wherefore, there is peace between Israel and the Amorites, the rest of the days of Samuel.

God has given his people, the church, our land of promised rest here in time. God has freed it from the bondage of Satan and his minions, through the finished work of Jesus Christ. If we are faithful disciples to Christ; we can expect the hand of God to be against our enemies. This does not mean that we will not continue to have trials and tribulations, it only means; our eternal destiny is fixed, and Satan cannot change the eternal destiny of even one person, of those that Christ died for. It does mean that Christ will be with us in our trials, troubles, and tribulations.

Our land of promise, left for us to live in, will be subjected to infiltration by the powers of evil, while there is time, when God's people forget who their God really is. However, we can live day to day, knowing that our eternal salvation is secure in Christ, and the church, all of God's chosen people, will finally be delivered eternally from the clutches of sin and Satan in the eternal resurrection.

15 "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. 17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD."

Samuel is now fully established as Judge over Israel. He sets up a circuit by which he visits various places in Israel as long as he lives, but always returns to his home after each trip.

Have you noticed; the ark of God is not mentioned anymore? Israel finally understands that God is their King and ruler, not the ark of God, which they previously made into an idol. Samuel builds an altar to the Lord at Ramah, where he lives.

This is a reminder to us today: we are not to make our church buildings, rituals of practicing worship, or any other thing into an idol or false god. Turning from God to idolatry will bring us into disfavor with God, and will destroy our fellowship and harmony with God, as has been exemplified by Israel.

As Samuel is established to be judge over Israel: so, Jesus Christ is established to be judge over the Church of Salvation by Grace, which he has provided for us to live in here in time. May we never forget our King and Saviour. May we never forget what he has done for us. Dear Lord! Help us to be faithful disciples of Christ, and to faithfully praise and worship you, all the days of our lives, we pray in Jesus's name, Amen!