

THE PRAYER MEETING AT MIZPEH

BIBLE TEXT : I Samuel 7:1-17

LESSON 202 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE : "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you" (I Samuel 12:24).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Samuel 7:1-17

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.

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.

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.

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Ark of God at Kirjath-jearim

1 The men of Beth-shemesh, a city of priests, were unworthy to keep the Ark, I

1 Samuel 6:19-21

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.

²⁰ And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

²¹ And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.

2 The Tabernacle at Shiloh had been forsaken by the Lord,

Psalms 78:60

⁶⁰ So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men;

Jeremiah 7:14

¹⁴ Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

3 The Ark was welcomed and revered by the men of Kirjath-jearim, I Samuel 7:1

II The Call to Repentance

1 The house of Israel lamented after the Lord, I Samuel 7:2, 3;

Jeremiah 3:21-22

²¹ A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, *and* they have forgotten the LORD their God.

²² Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God.

Zechariah 12:10-11

¹⁰ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

¹¹ In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

Matthew 5:4

⁴ Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

2 The Children of Israel put away their idols, I Samuel 7:4

Hosea 14:8

⁸ Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

Matthew 4:10

¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

3 Samuel interceded for the people, who in turn brought forth fruits meet for repentance, I Samuel 7:5, 6

Job 16:20

²⁰ My friends scorn me: *but* mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God.

Matthew 3:7-9

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

⁹ And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

III Clouds of War

1 The Philistines, hearing of the gathering at Mizpeh, went to war against Israel, I Samuel 7:7;

2 Kings 6:15-17

¹⁵ And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

¹⁶ And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

2 The Children of Israel intreated Samuel to pray for deliverance, I Samuel 7:8

Isaiah 37:4

⁴ It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left.

James 5:16

¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

3 Samuel offered a burnt offering and cried to God for help, I Samuel 7:9;

1 Samuel 10:8

⁸ And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

1 Samuel 16:2

² And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Psalms 50:15

¹⁵ And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

IV Glorious Victory

1 The Lord discomfited the Philistines, and they were smitten before Israel, I Samuel 7:10, 11;

Zechariah 4:6

⁶ Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is

common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

2 Samuel placed a stone for a memorial to the victory, I Samuel 7:12;

Joshua 4:20-24

²⁰ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

²¹ And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones?

²² Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

²³ For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

²⁴ That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

3 The Philistines were subdued all the remaining days of Samuel's tenure of office, I Samuel 7:13-17

NOTES:

The men of Beth-shemesh, though they were priests, were smitten by the Lord when they looked into the Ark of the Covenant. The people who did not die were anxious that the Ark be moved to some other place. When used in the right manner, the Ark, the symbol of God's presence with His children, was a blessing to the Children of Israel; but when they abused the Ark and mistreated the sacred oracle, God was quick to vindicate His honor.

A Welcome Guest at Kirjath-jearim

Though the men of Beth-shemesh seemed glad to have the Ark of God removed from them, the people of Kirjath-jearim seemed just as happy to receive it into their midst. These men were not priests, nor even Levites, so far as the records show; yet they treated the Ark with respect and reverence, and God honored them for their actions. The Ark was taken to the house of Abinadab, probably a man of outstanding piety; and possibly his house was the best that the country afforded. The people sanctified Eleazar, the son of Abinadab, to keep the Ark of God. The Lord seemed willing to allow this man, though just a common Israelite, to take care of this great, holy treasure. God could use the common man who had consecrated his life to God's service much more readily than He could use the priest or Levite who was disqualified by reason of sin or conformity to worldliness.

When Jesus walked among men, He found the so-called religious leaders and Temple ritualists totally unfit to be used in the work of His Kingdom. Jesus called His qualified workers, disciples and Apostles, from among the common people. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Corinthians 1:26). This is true chiefly because the wise, the mighty, and the noble will not humble themselves to heed the call of Christ and of Heaven.

Returning to God

The Ark of God remained in the house of Abinadab for a period of 20 years before the Children of Israel really did much about it. This gives us an insight into the sinful conditions that existed at that time, and the idolatry that was so prevalent among the people. Had the people been serving God as they should have been, they would have soon missed the Ark of God. On the Day of Atonement the high priest should have entered the Holy of Holies

where God intended the Ark to be kept, to make an atonement for the people. During this period of 20 years there must have been no Day of Atonement. The people were so busy serving sin that they did not concern themselves about the Tabernacle or the worship of God.

Little is heard about the Prophet Samuel during this period, but it can be assumed that he was busy in the God-appointed task of turning the hearts of the people back to their true God. It took 20 years of preaching, but suddenly there was a stirring among the people. Not just a few people, but all the house of Israel began to lament after the Lord. It can be said that this was one of the greatest revivals of all time.

Samuel came quickly to the front now, and told the people plainly what they would have to do if they expected the God of Heaven to welcome their return. The false gods of the heathen must be destroyed and forsaken; the hearts of the people must be prepared to serve the Lord, and Him only. Samuel's admonition took effect, for the people did as they were commanded and served the Lord only.

Israel at Mizpeh

When Samuel saw that the people were willingly returning to God, he called for a gathering of all Israel unto himself at Mizpeh. The value of public Christian meetings cannot be overemphasized. Those who willingly absent themselves from association with God's people will suffer great loss. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24, 25). There is courage to be gained from good example, and there is strength in unity. The man who tries to journey to Heaven alone finds many difficulties besetting his way, but the joyful company of fellow Christians proves an asset of inestimable value.

Samuel was a true prophet of God, one who announced the declarations of God. On this occasion Samuel filled the office of intercessor as well, because the priesthood and sacrificial order had been temporarily set aside. The Prophet prayed for the people; the people realized their exceeding sinfulness, and took the necessary measures to correct the condition. They drew water and poured it out before the Lord; they fasted on that day, and said, "We have sinned against the LORD." One minister has summed up the obtaining of salvation with three words, "Come, Call, and Confess." The Children of Israel did just that. The Lord heard the petitions of the people, as can be seen in the events that soon transpired.

Genuine Repentance

The drawing of water and pouring it out before the Lord seems to show the deep repentance and humiliation of the Children of Israel. Perhaps they felt themselves as "water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II Samuel 14:14) unless the Lord would help them. Also, it could portray the prayer coming from their hearts and being poured out before their God. Hannah prayed earnestly in her heart unto the Lord; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Yet in explaining her actions to Eli, she said she had "poured out" her soul before the Lord (I Samuel 1:15).

This is an illustrative lesson on genuine repentance. The first step was an awakening on the part of the sinner that he needed something more than he had. "All the house of Israel lamented after the LORD." The next step was the departure of the sinner from his old ways, and the decision to serve the Lord. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only." Prayer to God and confession of sin follow as the next logical steps. Samuel said, "I will pray for you unto the LORD." The Children of Israel said, "We have sinned against the LORD"; but without doubt their prayers were uttered along with the prayers of Samuel.

Opposition

As soon as a man turns from sin and starts for God and Heaven, the devil will be on hand to fight every inch of progress. The Children of Israel found this to be true when they turned back to the faith of their fathers. The Philistines had not come into the land of Israel with a military invasion for the space of 20 years; but just as soon as the people gathered at Mizpeh for prayer, the enemy was aroused by the action and went to war against Israel.

Let the man who starts out to serve God know that he will have to face the adversary of his soul in combat. The devil falsely accuses every Christian before God; but God knows the hearts of His children, and victory is sure for them through the Blood of the Lamb "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:10, 11). Jesus overcame the devil and temptation by using the Word of God, and so may we. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

Answered Prayers

The Children of Israel were now in a good spiritual condition and they could successfully engage the enemy. Though the Israelites had come to Mizpeh to pray, and possibly they had left their weapons of war at home, still they could successfully combat the enemy. They were able to talk with God, and there is no greater weapon formed than prayer. Prayer, rightly prayed, moves the mighty Arm of God. The Children of Israel prayed; and they petitioned Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samuel could see at once the seriousness of the situation. He possibly detected the fear in the hearts of the people, but he could also detect the faith and willingness of the people to trust in the God of their recently renewed covenant. Samuel realized that an offering should be made to God, therefore he took a lamb and offered it up for a burnt offering. God honored the offering. He honors contrition and trust wherever it is found.

The act of offering the lamb for the burnt offering completed the repentance of the people. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The Lord saw the blood and accepted the prayers of the Children of Israel, and Samuel's prayers. The Lord thundered a great thunder upon the Philistines, thereby discomfiting them before the Children of Israel. The Philistines were so completely routed by the Lord and the Israelites at this time that they came no more into the land of Israel during the days of Samuel.

"Ebenezer"

A memorial was erected as the result of this great victory that God had given. The name Ebenezer, that was given to this memorial, has a very significant meaning, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." This monument was not erected to the praise of man, for man had little to do with the resultant victory. One 'stone' only was lifted on high — the name of Israel's God. This is a stone of help. It takes into consideration all the past blessings, including the lamentations and sorrow that had brought the Children of Israel back to God, as well as their recent joy and triumphing. It seems to be full of faith for the future. That the Lord has helped "hitherto," is a guaranty that He can be depended upon to continue to help, if faith and reliance upon Him are retained.

The Christian finds that similar monuments set up in his heart to the Lord prove to be great blessings. Every experience

from God is a "stone of help." A milestone can be set up each time a blessing is obtained from Heaven; then, when the winds of adversity blow, a man can point back to that time and place, and say, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped." These monuments of help should not be very far apart in any Christian's life.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why was the Ark of God removed from Beth-shemesh?
- 2 How long did it take for the Children of Israel to return unto the Lord?
- 3 What was the first sign of their returning?
- 4 How did Samuel encourage the Children of Israel in their repentance?
- 5 Did the Israelites do vrhat Samuel commanded?
- 6 Why did the Philistines come into the land of Israel at this time?
- 7 What did the Children of Israel do about this invasion?
- 8 Who won the victory?
- 9 Tell what the word "Ebenezer" means.