



1 Samuel 6-8

Tape #7081
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By Chuck Smith

CHAPTER 6

So we turn now in our Bibles to I Samuel chapter 6, as we continue our journey through the Word of God. Last week we saw how the Israelites sought to use the ark of the covenant as a magical charm. They carried it into the field of battle, hoping that the presence of the ark of the covenant would give them victory over the Philistines. Instead of giving them victory, it gave them an opposite effect. It inspired the Philistines to even greater courage in the battle field. They attacked the Israelites and destroyed them.

They took the ark of the covenant to the cities, where the ark of the covenant became a curse to their gods, land, and people. Every city that they would take it to, the men would break out in boils, and [the] mice would over-run the place. When they placed it in the house of Dagon, the statue of Dagon fell and was broken. The head and the arms broke off. They've come to the conclusion that, "We have to get rid of this thing before it destroys us!" This is where we are in chapter 6.

They've come to the conclusion that they can't keep this ark of the covenant. Its presence with them will wipe them out. So we read in chapter 6-

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

During which time they moved it from city to city. Until the last city they sought to bring it to, the men cried out, "Hey, you *don't bring that thing here. What have you against us?*"

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us how we can send it back to its place.

So they're looking to their own priests. They're looking to their religious leaders, seeking advice from them about how they might get rid of this thing, and how they might send it home.

So they said, [the priests and diviners] If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, don't send it away empty; make sure that you send a trespass offering with it: then you will be healed, then it shall be known to you why his hand has not been removed from you. So they said, What shall our trespass offering be? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

The suggestion made by the priest, is, "Don't send it back empty; you've trespassed against the God of Israel. If you want to be free of these plagues, when you send the ark back, send back a trespassing offering with it; in that, you've trespassed against the God of Israel." They took the symbols of the plagues, the golden emerods and golden mice, then put them in a box and sent it back with the ark of the covenant: '--that you will not send it back empty, in order that you might be relieved from these ongoing plagues that have come upon the land.' Then they encouraged them: --

-- not to harden their hearts, as the Egyptians and the Pharaohs hardened their hearts, when He was walking wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and depart? Now they'll make a new cart, and take a couple of milch cows, on which there has come no yoke, and tie the cows to

the cart, bringing their calves home from them: and take the ark of the LORD, and lay it on the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which you return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side of it; and send it away, that it may go. And see, if it goes up by the way of his own border to Bethshemesh, then he has done this great evil to you: but if not, we will know that [the whole thing just happened] it is not God's hand that smote us; it was a chance, [just coincidence] that it happened to us.

So their advice: first of all, *"don't harden your hearts towards God, because it will only get worse.* Remember what happened to the Egyptians: they were smitten by ten different plagues. Every time they hardened their heart against God, it got worse. So learn from them." It is always wise to learn from history. It is always wise to look back and see how God has worked in the past, learning from the mistakes that others have made. Thus, the priests are encouraging them, *"Don't be like the Egyptians who harden their hearts."*

It is interesting that God said this very same thing to His own people in the Psalms. *"Harden not your hearts, as you did in the day of provocation, in the wilderness."* How the people provoked God by hardening their hearts against God! And so the Pharaoh had hardened his heart, and it only cost him dearly. So the priests are saying, "Hey! Learn. Don't harden your hearts."

Here's the thing: "Let's make sure that this is God who has brought this plague on us. Take a couple of cows who have never been yoked, never been used on the yoke, and remove their calves from them. Hitch up these cows to a new cart, [make a brand new cart]. Then let them go. Don't direct them, just let them go. And if they make a straight line towards Israel, then we'll know that it was God who brought these plagues on us; and we'll understand this. If they don't, and they just roam around, then we'll know that this wasn't of the LORD and it was just coincidental: but with it came all the boils and plagues."

So the men did so; and they took the two milk cows, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: and they laid the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the little coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. And the cows took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, --

Their "lowing" was the expression of their not liking what they were doing. They were being taken away from their calves. They were expressing their own displeasure at being taken away. But: --

--they made this direct line towards Bethshemesh, lowing all the way as they went, and turned not to the right nor to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Bethshemesh. And when those from Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and when they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it.

This means it was probably the end of May, the first part of June, since that's when the harvest there is reaped. Bethshemesh was a city that was given to the Levites. It's set on a knoll above a beautiful valley that stretched on down to their coastal plains. It is in the area of Eshtaol where Samson grew up. This was a glorious, beautiful valley.

And they were harvesting their wheat, when they looked up, hearing, no doubt, the lowing of these cows. They looked up and saw this cart: on it was the ark of the covenant. You could imagine the emotions and reactions of these people when they saw the ark of God coming back to them in this fashion. They rejoiced to see it.

So the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, and there was a great stone: and they clave [broke] the wood of the cart, and offered the a cows as a burnt offering unto

the LORD. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein were the jewels of gold, and they put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

So it was a time of great celebration as the ark of the covenant had been returned unto them. Notice the priests were the ones that took the ark off of the cart. They broke the cart up, made a fire of the wood, burned the cows as a burnt offering unto the Lord, and had a great celebration.

And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to [the Philistine city of] Ekron the same day. And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the Lord; one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Askelon, one for Gath, and one for Ekron; [The five major cities of the Philistines] And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, where upon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remains unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite.

Although the priests suggested to make five golden mice, it seems that the plagues of mice were more wide spread than that of the boils. The boils would strike the major cities, but throughout all of the land of the Philistines, every village was plagued by these mice. There were numerous, as suggested; but none of the cities wanted to be left off. They all wanted to get rid of the plague of mice. All of them made these little golden mice. There's no doubt a great number of these little golden mice were put in this coffer as an offering unto God for their trespass against Him, in the keeping of the ark of the covenant in the land of the Philistines.

Now, the ark of the covenant was made by Moses. The dimensions and the design was given to Moses by God in the book of Exodus. It was probably the most sacred of all of the religious artifacts in Israel. The ark of the covenant was not actually to be seen by the common man. When they would move the ark of the covenant, when the tabernacle was being moved through the wilderness, they would have priests that would go in and cover the ark of the covenant, so that even the men who carried the ark of the covenant would not look upon it.

Within the ark of the covenant, there were the two tables of stone upon which God had inscribed the law. Along with those two tables of stone there was a jar of manna that God had provided in the wilderness. There was also the rod of Aaron that budded. At that time, Korah had gotten together a group of priests and said, "*We are Levites. We have as much right to offer sacrifices as does Aaron.*" And they accused Moses of favoring his own brother. So they put the priest's rod out before the LORD. Aaron's rod budded and blossomed. This was a sign that the priesthood, as far as the offering and sacrifices were concerned, was to come through the family of Aaron. These three important artifacts were within this little golden box, the ark of the covenant.

When they carried it, they weren't to touch it. They had these poles that were covered with gold. And there were these rings attached to the ark of the covenant. They would slide these poles through these rings. The priests would carry the ark of the covenant on these poles. They wouldn't even touch the ark of the covenant. It was not to be touched nor looked upon. It was a religious artifact that was extremely sacred.

The heart of their worship stood in the holy of holies in the tabernacle, and only the high priest could come in. Only the high priest would see it, and he, only one day out of the year.

Later, David decided to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Rather than having the priests

take the golden rods and put it between the rings as God had commanded, David followed the example of the Philistines and made a cart to put the ark of the covenant on. David was leading the procession from Kirjathjearim, where the ark had been, to Jerusalem. As the cows were pulling this cart, they went over a rock, the cart started to tip. These two fellows reached out their hands to steady the ark, and when they touched it, they died. That's when David said, "Just leave it there." He headed back to Jerusalem angry with God. He was really upset with God. In the midst of all this jubilation and celebration, these men were slain when they touched the ark. So then David, after a period of time, decided to bring it again. This time he offered sacrifices and had the priests carry it in the proper way. It was a very sacred object for the people.

Where the ark of the covenant is today is a mystery. There was a man a few years ago, a Tom Krotser from Kansas, who claimed that he discovered the ark of the covenant on Mount Nebo, in Jordan. It seems that he was trying to raise money to go over and get it. He took pictures of this little box in this cave. I wrote to him and asked if he would send me copies of the pictures, which he did. When I examined them, I was personally convinced that what he found was not the ark of the covenant. It didn't match the description in Exodus. However, that is not to say that the ark of the covenant doesn't exist and is not hidden somewhere. I think one of the greatest archeological discoveries that can be made would be to discover the ark of the covenant. I mean, that would be one exciting thing. If they did, I wouldn't want to touch it; even though we are under grace: no longer under the law. Now we have access to God through Jesus Christ.

Really, the ark of the covenant represented the place where man met God. The golden cherubim were carved above the ark of the covenant. It was a representation of a place where man met God. Sinful man couldn't meet God. That's why the ark of the covenant was always to be covered when they carried it. Which is why they weren't to touch it. As a sinful man, under the old covenant, man could not meet God. You had to have the mediator, the priest, who would go in for you. He would offer the sacrifices for you. Even when he went in, there were bells on the hem of his robe and a rope tied onto his foot. They would stay outside and listen. As long as they heard the bells tinkling, they knew that things were okay. If the bells would stop, they would drag the guy out. They wouldn't even go in and retrieve them. They had the ropes to just pull them out under the curtain. One of the high hazard jobs in those days was being the high priest. They couldn't buy insurance.

So this sacred ark brought back to them the tremendous rejoicing. However, verse 19: --

And the LORD smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked unto the ark of the LORD, --

These people were curious as to look inside. Again, it represented the most holy thing where man touched God. Sinful man cannot touch God. We do not, in these days, have a proper concept of the holiness of God. I sometimes shudder the way some people refer to God: "A good buddy," or, "The Man upstairs." These things cause me to shudder when a person talks to God in a light or a flippant way.

If it were not for Jesus Christ making the way through the blood of his cross, none of us could approach God. We approach Him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, only the high priest would approach him, after many sacrifices, and only on one day out of the year. That's the problem I have with the Jews today. They declare they have no need of sacrifice, or Jesus Christ. They do not know their own history. They do not know the holiness of the God that they serve. If they did, they would know that you could not approach Him in their sinful state. They cannot offer to God their good works. They cannot balance the good with the bad. In their covenant with God, He could only be approached through many sacrifices: and by a mediator, not directly by man. That is the whole problem, as far as I am

concerned, with the Jews today in their endeavor to approach God. They have no sacrifice. Thus, no way of approach.

Here are the men of Bethshemesh: it shows the spiritual degeneracy. It is quite possible, in the celebrating of the ark coming back, that they started drinking and got a little curious: "What does it look like?" They looked into the ark of the covenant. *The Lord smote of the people fifty thousand and seventy men.* There is a question among some of the commentators whether or not the word fifty thousand is a correct translation of the Hebrew. Many commentators, in fact most of them, believe that it should read just the seventy men. The fifty thousand is a misinterpretation of the Hebrew. I don't know. It would be unlikely that there would be fifty thousand men in that area. The city of Jerusalem's population at the time of David was only around seventy thousand. It would seem to be unlikely, but yet, I don't know. Those who dare to look were slain. Thus, their rejoicing turned to a period of lamentation because the LORD had smitten of the people with a great slaughter. Whether or not seventy would constitute a great slaughter, I don't know.

And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able --

They came to the concept of the holiness of God. As these guys began to dive, and dare to look at the thing, suddenly there was the awareness of the awesome holiness of God. They said: --

Hey, *who is able to stand before the holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?* [In other words, "We can't handle this thing here, let's get rid of it."] *And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, --*

In the Hebrew there is no 'j' sound. In the Hebrew it's always with the 'y' sound. So it's not, "Joseph," it's "Yo-seph." It's like the Indians. They spell with 'j' but they give it an 'h' sound. You don't go to "O-jai," you go to "O-hai." It isn't "Valego," it's "Valeho." So with the Indians there is an 'h' to a 'j.' They write it with a 'j,' but it actually has an 'h' sound. It's not "jo-jo beans," but it's "ho-ho beans." In the Hebrew they don't have the 'j' sound, but they give it the 'y.' So Kirjathjearim is pronounced, "Kiri-hath-hearim," in the Hebrew.

Kirjathjearim is about seven miles away from Bethshemesh. It is on the way towards Jerusalem. Bethshemesh is pretty much in the plains. But then you start up the mountains towards Jerusalem, in the foothills of the mountains of Jerusalem, then you come to Kirjathjearim.

They sent messengers there saying: --

The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come on down, and fetch it up to you. [Take it home]

They didn't tell them how many men have been slaughtered and why they wanted to get rid of it. They just said, "Hey, why don't you just come get it." "We got a present for you."

CHAPTER 7

And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it to the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar [He was a son of Abinadab. His whole ministry was to take care of it. They suited up in this house] *And it came to pass, that when the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all of the house of Israel begin to lament after the LORD. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If you do return*

unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away these 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 hands of the Philistines.

The Philistines were still mastering over Israel at this time. And it seems that Samuel was going around and encouraging the people. And for twenty years, while the ark of the Lord was at Kirjathjearim in the house of Abinadab, Samuel was going around encouraging the people that, *"God will deliver you from the hands of the Philistines, if you'll turn to the LORD with all of your heart; if you'll really seek God, and put away the false gods."*

Baal and Ashtaroth were two of these false gods. In the concept of the gods, they were husband and wife. They were gods that represented the reproduction capacities. They were worshipped in lewd and vicious kinds of rituals. It is tragic that the children of Israel had taken these as their gods. This was a part of their whole problem, worshipping the false gods.

Today, we don't call it Ashtaroth, we call it Playboy. Pornography was what it was. The worship of sex and the reproduction capacities. These people who were into these things, God's people, were given over to vile sexual rites and practices. God always intended His people to be separate. God said, *"Come ye apart from them, be ye separate, saith the Lord, touch not the unclean thing; I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters."*

They were into the gods of materialism. And we see the gods of materialism ruling people today. We are more sophisticated, but are becoming more pagan.

I am shocked and alarmed. I really cannot believe that people would consciously and deliberately worship Satan. But yet people are. Satanic worship is growing. So many rock bands are advocating it, so many thousands of young people are getting out Satanic symbols and beginning to worship Satan. It is a very strong and powerful movement. Again, the worship of Satan is accompanied with all kinds of unspeakable and horrible things. It is a tremendous concern to our police departments. It is strong and it is powerful. There are human sacrifices that are taking place in the United States today, in these Satanic rituals. Boys and girls are being offered as human sacrifices in these rituals. In this modern and enlightened age, that's unthinkable. I can't conceive that this is so, but it is. We are assured by police officials that such is true.

The children of Israel were falling into the patterns of the people around them. They had idols that represented Baal, Ashtaroth, Molech and Mammon. Their worship was quite obvious because they would worship before these idols and images. These idols were in their homes. Today we feel that we are free from the worship of pagan gods because we don't have any idols of Baal or Ashtaroth in our house. We don't have the idol of Mammon: but he was the god of materialism and pleasure. There are those whose pleasures have become their god. There's nothing wrong with pleasure, nothing wrong with fun, nothing wrong with fun or a good time. As long as it's not your god. If that's what you live for, then that can be a horrible god. Because it can enslave you. And the children of Israel began to worship these gods.

Samuel was saying to get rid of them: 'Let the true and living God become the center of our life again, turn away from these false gods. If you will serve Jehovah, then He will deliver you from the hand of your enemies. God can free you from the Philistines;' and he is going around encouraging a spiritual revival, but it's taking twenty years.

How we need a spiritual awakening in the United States. How we need to turn from Baal, Ashtaroth, Mammon, Molech: the god of pleasure. How we need to turn to the true and living God, getting

rid of these corrupting influences. Talk about sacrificing your children, that's sort of shocking isn't it? How could they take their babies and sacrifice them to their gods? How could they throw their babies into the fire? How could they place their babies in the red hot arms of Baal and watch them burn to death? How could we kill thousand of little babies in the womb? We are just as guilty as they are.

So Samuel is going around speaking to the house of Israel saying, --

If you'll just return to the LORD, put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, [Prepare your heart to worship God and serve Him only! No man can serve two masters] serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel put away the Baalim [the plural of Baal] and the Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. They followed the advice of Samuel. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

"Let's gather together for a great assembly, and I'm going to pray to Jehovah for you." So they gathered together in Mizpeh. Probably the purpose was to throw off the yoke of the Philistines. *"I'm going to pray for you."* He had been promising that God will throw off the yoke of the Philistines, *"if you'll turn to God and serve Him;"* getting rid of other gods: *"then God will deliver you."* So he gathers them together at Mizpeh.

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 Jehovah. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

So it was a time of spiritual renewing. A time for the confession of sins. It seems that spiritual renewal is usually begun with the confession of sins. When you read of some of the great revivals, they sprang out of confession of sin. The people began to confess, "We have sinned against God!" A revival was then prompted and sparked as the result of confession of sins.

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.

Twenty years earlier they had been soundly defeated by the Philistines. The Philistines still had garrisons in the cities of Israel. They were subjected to these people. When the lords of the Philistines heard that they were gathered at Mizpeh, they gathered all of their army and they came up to Mizpeh to battle. When the children of Israel heard that the Philistine army was on its way, they were frightened.

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 hands of the Philistines.

So they turned their fears into prayers. The Bible says, *"to cast all your cares on Him; for He cares for you."* The Bible tells us that we aren't to be worried. We are not to be full of care. How we need to learn to take our fears, our cares, misgivings, and just cast them on the Lord, saying, "Lord, help us!" So they said to Samuel, 'Hey, don't stop praying Samuel.'

So Samuel took a sucking lamb, [a lamb that was still nursing and very young] and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. 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.

So God joined the battle and just confused them. The tremendous thunderstorm and lightning gave chance for the Israelites to come rushing down from Mizpeh, which is on a higher mount, onto the Philistines. They began to really wipe them out.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. [Wherever Bethcar is, we don't know yet. That is a place that is unknown as far as archeology is concerned] Then Samuel took a stone, and he set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Going back a couple of chapters, it was at Ebenezer where the children of Israel twenty years earlier were thoroughly defeated by the Philistines. That's where 30,000 of them got wiped out, and that's where the Philistines gained the supremacy over Israel.

Now in the same place of great defeat, they have great victory. What's the difference between defeat and victory? As you look at the record, when they went out twenty years earlier and were defeated, they went out without prayer. They went out without seeking the guidance of God and without seeking the help of God. They went out in their own strength and in their own power. They were thoroughly defeated. Now, they go out relying upon God. Fearful? Yes. Because they knew their strength was weak, but they were trusting in God. They went with prayer, sacrifice; and now God delivers the enemy into their hands.

How many times, as we are struggling against the flesh and the enemy, do we seek to go out in our own strength? Then finding ourselves defeated and wiped out. I don't have the power to resist to temptations of the flesh. I need the strength of God. I need the help of God. We have to rely upon God if we are going to be victorious. So the vast difference between defeat and victory.

Then the acknowledging of God: the work of God should always lead you to the worship of God. God has wrought great victory and they have raised the stone up. "This is a monument to what God has done!" It is acknowledging that God's hand is in the victory. "*Hitherto has the LORD helped us.*" This is the beginning of God's work. There's still more Philistines to be wiped out. But, 'Hey, God's brought us this far.'

Oh, how we can raise the Ebenezer stones in our own lives. As we look at where we are today, we say, "*Well, hitherto has the LORD helped us.*" 'God has brought me this far.' The encouraging thing about this is that God has not brought me this far to drop me, to let me go, or forsake me. Having brought me this far, God is going to take me all the way. He hasn't brought me this far just to dump me. He hasn't begun a good work in me, just to give it up. "*He who has begun a good work in you shall continue to perform it until He brings it to completion.*" "*Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling.*" Oh yes, He is doing that. I have raised my Ebenezer stone. He is able, and He has helped to keep me from falling. "*Hitherto, has the LORD helped me.*"

But then, Jude went on to say, "*And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory.*" If the LORD has brought me this far, then He is going to take me all the way. All the way into the presence of His glory, and is able to present you faultless. "*Now unto the only God our Savior, [Jesus Christ,] be glory and honor, dominion and power, now and forever. Amen, Amen, and Amen.*" The glorious work that God has begun in our lives, He is going to continue as we yield ourselves unto Him. As we remain surrendered to Him, He's going to take us all the way.

But let's raise the stone and say, "All right! God has brought me this far! Bless God." Look at that

stone whenever you are discouraged, whenever the enemy begins to overwhelm you. Just look back at the Ebenezer stone. God brought you this far, and He is going to take you all the way. Oh, what a glorious confidence we have when we realize the work that God has done. Paul the apostle said, *“Who has delivered me from so great a death, who does now deliver me: and I am confident that He shall yet deliver me.”* And so it’s the past, present and future. The LORD has helped me in the past, and is helping me now. That’s only a prophecy that He’s going to help me in the future. *The LORD will perfect that which concerns you.* That means, completed. God is going to complete His work in your life. And to me, this is all that I need. In God’s help and strength, He’ll see me through.

So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the borders of Israel: for the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all of the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines have taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; [Now, that doesn’t mean Ekron and Gath were restored: but the little villages that had been taken by the Philistines] and all of the borders thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between the Israel and the Amorites. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in a circuit, [he was a circuit riding preacher who went from] Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; --

Ramah is where his home was. Today, on a hill in Ramah you can see a large building that they say is the tomb of Samuel. But there is another church that figured that wasn’t the proper site, so they built another church on another hillside, and they say that’s the tomb of Samuel. So you have a problem, there are two tombs of Samuel. One guide in Israel solved it: he said, “Well, that’s First Samuel, and that’s Second Samuel.” But Ramah: just north of Jerusalem, was the home of Samuel.

--and there he judged Israel; and there he built an alter unto the LORD.

CHAPTER 8

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. [This was a mistake because his sons did not follow in the footsteps of their father] The name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, was Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. [Which was the extreme Southern part of the country] And his sons did not walk in his ways, but they turned aside after money, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. [So, there was corruption in the courts. As the sons of Samuel were judging, they would take bribes; and thus, perverted judgment] Then all of the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel at Ramah, And they said to him, Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

The hard thing here is that the people are now coming to Samuel, there in Ramah, demanding that Samuel would give them a king. Unfortunately, the desire was to be like the nations around them: *“We want a king like the nations around us.”*

It would seem that Samuel, seeing what happened to Eli because he didn’t discipline his sons, would have learned the lesson. Unfortunately, he seemed not to do so. His sons, being set up by Samuel as judges, had corrupted their position. Thus, causing the people to demand a king. They didn’t want Samuel’s sons to succeed him as judges in Israel. Samuel was upset and troubled. He did what you should do when you are troubled, Samuel took it to the LORD in prayer.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say

unto thee: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Samuel was hurt personally. He took it as a personal affront that they were saying, *“Set us up with a king.”* He saw it as their rejection of him. God had him to bring spiritual revival, victory over the Philistines, and security for their cities. And yet, here are the people saying, “Hey, we want you to set up a city for us.” This hurt and crushed him. So he went to the LORD and the LORD said, *“Hearken to the things that they are asking you to do. Don’t feel personally offended. They haven’t rejected you Samuel, they have rejected me from being the King over them!”* You see, once God was wanting for His people a theocracy, people that were ruled by God. But the people were wanting a monarchy. They wanted a man to rule over them. God still desires for His people a theocracy.

God wants you to be ruled by Him. He wants to be the King and LORD of your life. How glorious it is to enter the kingdom of God. What does that mean? It means that God is King and He is reigning. That is why you who have submitted to Jesus Christ. You have entered into the kingdom of God. You have acknowledged Him as King and LORD of your life. Thus, you’ve entered into the kingdom of God and have begun to reap the glory and blessings of God’s kingdom.

Now, there is coming a day when the kingdom of God will rule over the entire earth. God made a promise to His Son in Psalm 2, *“Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.”* The promise of God to His Son that he will reign over the uttermost parts of the earth. This promise will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again. And all kinds of glorious prophecies of the Bible concerning the conditions that will exist upon the earth during the kingdom age, will come to pass. Then, we will have a Theocracy: where God rules over the earth.

Right now Satan rules. Jesus called him the “prince of this world.” The world system, the present world system in rebellion against God is being led by Satan. Jesus is coming to establish the kingdom of God. And that’s why when He gave the disciples the model prayer, He said you should pray, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in this earth, even as it is in heaven.”* Oh, how we should be praying for that glorious kingdom of God to be established.

Now, here was the point where they were rejecting God from being King. *“We want a man.”* Their model was the other nations around them. They have a man that they can look up to as their king: *“We want a king just like the other nations.”* But God said, *“Hearken to them and do what they say: they haven’t rejected you, they have rejected me from being King.”*

I see something here that’s extremely, extremely important. God is giving in to the demands of the people. Because God will not force you against your will to serve Him. If you don’t want to serve God, He’s not going to force you to serve Him. That’s not what the kingdom of God is about. It will be when Jesus comes: He will rule with a rod of iron; and that will be enforced righteousness for one thousand years. People will be forced to serve Him at that time. But at the present time, God doesn’t force a man to serve Him.

God will accommodate your lower standard. If you want to live on a low level, and insist on it, God will accommodate Himself to your lower level. He loves you so much, He’ll do the best that He possibly can for you on that lower level. That is tragic when we bring God down to our level, rather than being elevated and lifted to God’s level. God wants to lift you to the highest level. He will lift you to the highest level that you will allow Him to. On the other hand, He will also accommodate you on the level that you insist upon. With grace and love, He will do the very best He can for you on that level. God help us that we might all ascend to the level where God might have us to be living.

What is that level? *“Seated together with Christ in the heavenly places.”* If you want to know where God wants you to be living, read the book of Ephesians. It’s called the Alps of the New Testament. It’s where God would really have you to be living, the highest level. Don’t make God bend to you, but rather submit to Him: allowing Him to lift you to His heights.

But they’re bringing God down:

-they’ve not rejected you Samuel, they’ve rejected me, that I should not reign over them. So according to all the works that they have done since the day that I’ve brought them out of Egypt even unto this day, where they have forsaken me, and serve other gods, so they are doing to you.

‘Hey man, what’s happening to Me, is happening to you, Samuel. Since they’ve come out of Egypt, they’ve turned to other gods. They haven’t followed Me and now they are doing the same thing to you. They just don’t want to follow you. I’ve experience this for many years. It’s been going around for some four hundred years, since they came out of Egypt. Samuel, you are just getting a little bit of what I’ve had for a long time.’

Now therefore [this is the second time He tells him] hearken unto their voice: yet protest solemnly to them, [give them a message and protest to them solemnly] and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

In other words, show them what man will do. Because man is incapable in handling authority and power without corruption. There is a greed within man that keeps him from exercising authority, power, and government over other men without becoming corrupted. It’s impossible! Man just doesn’t have that kind of self control. So, if you have a king over you, there’s going to be corruption. He’s going to abuse his position, and you will suffer the results of that abuse.

Government always ultimately becomes abusive. He’s going to start taxing you excessively. Thank God we don’t have a government that does that. That is what’s going to happen if you have a king. As far as I am concerned, the trillion dollar budget, and the increasing national debt says one thing; the fact that we can’t afford to pay the bills year by year tells me that we can’t afford government. It’s just too expensive. There are too many hands dipping into the till, too much corruption. So what’s new?

God says that is what’s going to happen. You set up a man to rule over you, and there’s going to be corruption. If only God would rule over us. If only we would be satisfied to have God rule over us. Only then can we have a government without corruption, a truly righteous government.

Show me a nation in the world: ours is probably the best. I don’t care what political persuasion you are. I have a friend that says that you don’t want to get the Democrats in power because they are a bunch of thieves, and they will rob you blind. He also said that the Republicans are thieves too, but they do it with more finesse. So take your choice: how do you want to get robbed?

So Samuel said to the people, “If you have a king, this is what’s going to happen:”

He’s going to take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over thousands, and captain over fifties; [and raise a standing army] he will set them to ear his ground [to till his ground] and to reap his harvest, and he will make instruments of war [He is going to have a war department] and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and bakers. [He’s going to have a draft] And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your

oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

In other words, the government is going to start to take over. By eminent domain, they take away your own property. You won't have the rights to your own property. Have you ever tried to build something, and find out all the hoops you have to jump through just to put something on your own property? You don't really have the rights. You think, "Well, that's my land!" But that's not the way the government looks at it. I imagine most of this tape will have to be erased.

"And then the king will start taxing you."

He's going to take ten percent [which really isn't that bad. I'd be satisfied with that] and of your vineyards, he'll give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your handsomest young men, and your donkeys, and use them for his own work. He will take a tenth of your sheep: and you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of the king which you have chosen; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

"It's going to get tough." And they're going to start crying out to God because of the abuses of government. "If that's what you want, then God is not going to listen." Having been warned, how do they respond?

Nevertheless the people refuse to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; we will have a king to rule over us; --

They were warned, but they said that they would still take it. I am amazed at the bondage that people are willing to live under just because they don't want God to rule over them. Have you noticed that? People will live in bondage to drugs, alcohol, and all other kinds of horrible bondage. When you come to them and say, "Hey, just turn your life over to Jesus Christ: and He can set you free." Immediately they reply, "NO, NO! I don't want that man." Then they will go out and tell you how miserable things are, "I wish I were dead," etc. But when you tell them to turn their life over to Jesus, they say, "No, I can't handle that!"

I had an uncle who was a very wealthy man. He was a chain smoker who had emphysema. I went up to visit him when I was in seminary because I had heard he had a bad emphysema attack. He was talking to me, calling me "Charles." "How wonderful: you're dedicating your life to the ministry, Charles." [Well, that's your family: and you have to take what you have.] He started wheezing and coughing, going into a fit. "I have to jump into a car and rush off to Palm Springs when this happens to me," he said. He had felt that one day he was going to die between Santa Barbara and Palm Springs, not being able to make it in time. I said, "Well, uncle. . ." and I called him by his name. [Well, my family listening will know who he is, but that's all right.] I said, "The Lord can heal you of emphysema. I've seen God heal so many people of asthma and emphysema. The Lord can heal you. I can just pray for you, and God can touch and heal you." "NO, NO, NO." He just about had a heart attack then. He was afraid I was going to lay hands on him and pray for him. What he was afraid of was the obligation that he would have to God. He would rather die of emphysema than submit his life to God. He'd rather live in horrible bondage than let God rule over him.

This was the choice that the Israelites were making. Don't fault them too much, because you may be making the same choice. It may be that you're running from God's reigning over your life. It may be that you are living in a life of bondage just because you don't want to submit your life to be ruled over by Jesus Christ. You see, all of these people aren't dead. We are surrounded by them today. People are living in object misery and in horrible bondage who still don't want God to rule over them.

--we want a king; so that we also may be like other nations; [It's always a bad desire to be like the world around you. We are to be different than the world around us] and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. [We want someone to lead us into battles] And Samuel heard all of the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go home and I'll take care of it.

So three times the LORD said to Samuel, *"Hearken unto their voice and appoint them the king."* Now we get a king that was chosen to rule over Israel. And what God said becomes true.

We begin now a new section of the Bible, as we move out of their area of the judges and into the area of the kings of Israel. We will find that this whole period ended in tragedy. It ended in depression and heavy taxation. It ended in failure.

Shall we pray: Father, we thank you that we can submit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ that He might reign over us. Lord, we want you to be King. 'King of our lives,' we crown You now. Thine shall the glory be. Rule over our hearts and lives. Lord, we will follow you as our Lord and as our God. Help us, Lord; for each one of us to make this commitment, lest we be ruled over by our own flesh, power of sin, or power of darkness. Lord, may we submit ourselves to be ruled over by Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, Amen.

It is quite possible that tonight is your decision. Like the children of Israel, you are going to have to decide if God is going to reign over you, or some other power reigning over you. It is very possible that you are suffering the very ravages and miseries of having another king in your life. You are not really a free moral agent. You are bound by the power of sin. It's destroying you. Do you realize that? God wants to lift you to a higher level. He wants to take you out of the bondage of corruption and bring you into the glorious freedom of the children of God, living under the reign of God.

If you would like enter in to that relationship, submitting to His Lordship and reign in your life, I encourage you to go back into the prayer room. There, ask God to take over and to begin His heart ruling and reigning in your heart. God Bless you. And may you live a life in surrender unto Jesus. This week may He be Lord over your life, ruling in every area. God Bless and keep you.