



## **“REASONS TO REJOICE”**

*“Your Words were found, and I ate them,  
and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Jeremiah 15:16*

### ***I and II SAMUEL Lesson 3***

*In our study last week we met Hannah, a woman of prayer who was faithful to the Lord. Although she was full of anguish over her barrenness, she knew she should run to the Lord. He was the one she could trust. God heard her prayers and blessed her with Samuel, who not only would be a blessing to her, but to the nation of Israel as well. But God didn't stop there; He gave her five more children to raise in the ways of the Lord.*

*We also met Eli the priest and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were evil boys, taking advantage of their authority and doing abominable things in the eyes of the Lord. Their evil did not go unpunished. Their sin and Eli's lack of leadership and discipline in his home caused judgement on his family, and all of Israel.*

*This week we will see the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Eli's house and get to know the boy Samuel a little better. He is a great example for us today. May God use Samuel's life to teach us how to be more like Christ.*

#### **First Day**

- 1. Read Chapter 3, giving it a title that reflects the main thought of the chapter. List the main facts you find.*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Are there any repeated words, thoughts, or phrases? What would you choose as the key verse?*

3. *What prophecy was repeated from chapter 2?*
4. *How did Eli respond to the prophecy?*
5. *What is your first impression of this chapter?*
6. *Both tradition and the Jewish historian Josephus tell us that Samuel was most likely 12 years old at this time. Do you see any significance in that?*

*Remember that Eli is training Samuel for the priesthood in the Tabernacle, which is the temporary dwelling place of the Lord. It seems that one of his duties may be keeping the golden lamp-stand lit that stood in the Holy Place. According to Leviticus 24:1-4, it was against the law for the priests to allow the lamp to go out before morning. Eli's age and his poor eyesight may be one of the reasons that Samuel was so quick to respond to Eli's call, knowing that he may have needed help. He also responded so quickly because he was an obedient young boy.*

*Verse 1 tells us that there was no "widespread revelation" at the time. This means that God had not been speaking or giving visions in a way that was known to all, like Samuel was being called to do. The priesthood had become corrupt, and God was not using them to communicate to His people. In Samuel, God found a man that He could trust, so the office of "prophet" was instituted. Halley's Bible Handbook says this: "The word 'prophet' occurs occasionally before the time of Samuel, as in Genesis 20:7 and Exodus 7:1. But Samuel, it seems, was founder of a regular order of prophets, with schools, first at Ramah (I Samuel 19:20), and afterward at*

*Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal (II Kings 2:3, 5, 4:38). The priesthood had become quite degenerate. Samuel, it seems, initiated these schools as a sort of moral check on both priests and kings.”*

*“These prophets functioned through a period of some 300 years before the time of the Prophets who wrote the closing 17 books of the Old Testament. They are called ‘**Oral**’ Prophets, to distinguish them from the ‘**Literary**’ Prophets who wrote the books. The leading ‘Oral’ Prophets were: Samuel, organizer of the Kingdom; Nathan, adviser to David; Ahijah, adviser to Jeroboam; Elijah and Elisha, who led in the grand fight against Baalism.”*

*That’s it for today. I’m sure the Lord is already showing you some lessons from Samuel’s life. We’ll look at this chapter more closely tomorrow. God bless you as you rejoice in Him!*

**Memory Verse of the Week:** *“Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; For the Lord our God is holy.” Psalm 99:9*

## **Second Day**

***Practice your memory verse. Soon you’ll see why this verse is so relevant to this lesson!***

*Because we talk a lot about it, it may be helpful for us to discuss the Aaronic Priesthood and how it relates to our story. This explanation is taken from The LifeChange Series on I Samuel (they explain it much better than I can!):*

*“Priests and sacrifices play a major role in I Samuel. While God told His people that they were to be to Him ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exodus 19:5-6), He selected one tribe within Israel to serve as mediators between Him and the rest. That tribe was Levi (Exodus 32:26-29), and from it one family, descended from Aaron, was to perform the priestly functions (Exodus 27:20-28:4). While this was a great privilege, it also exposed those who served as priests to great danger. In fact, no sooner had Aaron and his sons been installed as priests, than two of his offspring were consumed by fire for trying to offer to the Lord something He had not commanded (Leviticus 10:1-3).”*

*“The priests continued to serve throughout Israel’s history, but they seldom provided effective leadership or hindered religious apostasy. (One exception is Jehoiada, 2 Kings 11:1-20.) God wiped out the family of Eli for its failures and transferred the priesthood to the descendants of Aaron through Zadok (1 Kings 2:26-27, 35).”*

1. *Read I Samuel 3 again.*
2. *Why do you think Eli sent Samuel back to bed at first?*
3. *Why is Samuel’s response to Eli and to the Lord so commendable?*
4. *Why was Samuel afraid to deliver the prophecy to Eli?*

*The prophets had the job of delivering God’s message to the people, even if the words wouldn’t be welcomed. Samuel’s willingness to do it proved his worthiness for the job.*

*Although we are not prophets, God still calls us to share His Word with those around us. Whether it is in evangelism, counseling, or with our friends, we are called to be obedient. Sometimes we are called to share a specific truth with someone, even when it’s not fun. We are not called to point out everyone’s faults, but sometimes God calls us to hold each other accountable to the principles in His Word.*

5. *If a friend is being disobedient to God’s Word, what should you do? How would you handle it? Read Proverbs 27:5-6, 9, and 17. When should you say something?*

6. *What kind of servant are you? Are you willing to do whatever God commands? Are you obedient to His Word, whether it is pleasant or not? Are you ready to say, "Speak, your servant hears"? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart on this.*

7. *The Lord warned Eli of his coming judgement twice. Why? What do you think Eli should have done?*

*Verse 20 tells us that all of Israel recognized Samuel as a prophet, from Northern Dan to Southern Beersheba. The entire nation recognized God's call on Samuel's life.*

*Notice that verse 7 says that Samuel did not yet know the Lord. He had grown up in the Temple, learning to serve God, but had not yet had a personal experience with Him. God had not spoken to him like this before. Many of us have grown up in Christian homes, knowing about God, but there comes a time in our life when we have to experience Him in a personal way. Our parents' God has to become "our" God.*

8. *What's the difference between knowing "about" God and knowing God?*

*Have you made a personal decision for Jesus Christ? Do you know Him, not only in your head, but in your heart? Jesus came to this earth, died on the cross, and rose again to make that possible. Jesus bridged the gap between a Holy God and a sinful man. We now have access to the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. No longer do we have to kill animals as a sacrifice to cover our sins. **Hebrews 9:22** says that "according to the*

law almost all things are purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” Jesus shed His blood on the cross “once and for all, obtaining eternal redemption (**Hebrews 9:12**). His blood doesn’t “cover” our sins, but wipes them away. He “blots out” our transgressions as we confess them to Him (**Psalm 51:1**). **1 John 1:9** says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **John 3:16** says that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” **Do you believe in Jesus? Romans 10:9** says, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (**Acts 4:12**)

9. Do you know Jesus? Have you made Him the Lord of your life? If not, today’s the day to do it! If you have any questions or would like to pray with someone to receive Christ, talk to your Group Leader. She would be happy to help you!

10. Back to our story. Samuel was 12 when God called him to service. Can the Lord still use young girls and boys today? Is He? How?

**“God speaks to children and young people, and adults should make it easy for them to hear God’s voice and respond in faith. The training of children in spiritual things is a great responsibility that we must not neglect.”** (Warren Wiersbe, well-known pastor and author of many books and commentaries -- and he’s one of my personal favorites!)

11. Practically speaking, how can we “make it easy” for our kids to hear His voice and respond in faith? (Are you doing that?)

*That's it for today. What a chapter! God revealed Himself to Samuel by the Word of the Lord (vs 21), and He continues to reveal Himself to us today through the Scriptures. Are you getting to know Him?*

### **Third Day**

***What's your memory verse? How does it minister to your heart?***

*We now will be studying 4:1-7:2. Hang in there with the reading. Read through it like you would a story, or a novel, to get a good feel of what's going on. Remember that the theme of the book is that God is in control of everything, and He's shaping people and events for His purpose!*

- 1. Read I Samuel chapter 4:1-7:2. Briefly describe what is happening in chapter 4. Give it a title that reflects the main point.*
- 2. What different names are given for the "ark" in this chapter?*
- 3. What great sin does Israel commit in verses 1-5?*
- 4. Why do you think they did this?*
- 5. Did they ask Samuel, or God, if this was the right thing to do?*
- 6. Do you think the presence of Hophni and Pinehas brought God's blessings to Israel?*

7. *Have you ever moved forward before consulting God? What can happen when we do? Read Proverbs 3:5-7.*

8. *Why did the Philistines get nervous?*

*The Philistines seemed to come from the west, between 1500-1200 BC. They settled on the coastal planes of the Promised Land. Philistine's five major cities were Ashdod, Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, and Ekron. They were very politically strong and technologically advanced (I Samuel 13:19-22).*

*The “**Ark of God**” was the physical manifestation of God's presence in Israel. It was a box made of acacia wood, about 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches high. Four poles were inserted into rings on the side so it could be carried. The lid of the ark was called the “mercy seat” and was made of gold. This was also called the “place of atonement,” because it was where the high priest could sprinkle blood once a year on the Day of Atonement for their sins (Leviticus 16:15). There were two angels resting on the top, facing each other. The Israelites believed that God dwelt among them between their wings. It was from this place that God spoke to Moses during the time of their wanderings in the wilderness (Numbers 7:89). It contained the stone tablets that the 10 Commandments were written on, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, symbolizing God's provision for the needs of the Israelites.*

*The Mercy-Seat represented the meeting place of the law and mercy, thus, a shadow of Christ. The Ark itself was a place of entreaty, a place of atonement, a memorial, a symbol of Heaven, and a symbol of God's Holiness. It was the most sacred item in the Tabernacle and was a visible reminder of God's presence. For a detailed description of the Ark, read Exodus 25:10-22 and 37:1-9.*

*The Israelites seemed to be trying to manipulate God by using this sacred symbol. I'm sure that the Israelites remembered how God had used the Ark in the past and hoped that He would repeat that miracle (Joshua 6:2-21). Unfortunately, they weren't exercising their faith, but using the Ark as a good-luck charm. They put their trust in the symbol of God's presence instead of God Himself.*



9. *How does the same thing happen today? (Trusting in a symbol for God instead of God Himself.)*

10. *Why do you think God allowed Israel to be defeated? Wasn't His reputation at stake? Read Deuteronomy 28:15, 25 and Proverbs 14:34.*

11. *The Israelites didn't consult God. Why is this such a big deal?*

12. *What were the four points in the messenger's report? Which one troubled Eli the most? Why?*

*Eli and his daughter-in-law both died as a result of this news. (Ouch!) How sad that this child's name would always reflect the result of Israel's disobedience. God's glory departed, or "went into exile." When God's glory departed, so did the glory of Israel, for its glory was not in wealth or power, but in God's presence. Colossians 1:27 tells us that "Christ in us is the hope of glory." It is His presence in us that gives our lives meaning and hope! He will never leave us! Do I hear an Amen?*

### **Fourth Day**

***Practice your memory verse. Will you exalt the Lord today?***

1. *Read I Samuel chapters 5-6. How long did the Philistines keep the ark?*
2. *To boast of their victory, what did they do with the ark at first? What happened?*

*Dagon is one of the Philistines' idols, sometimes known as the "fish-god." Some think it may have been the god of the grain and the Philistines' main god. (Judges 16:21, 23, 26, 1 Chronicles 10:10). Caananite mythology called the Dagon the father of Baal.*

3. *What happened to the Philistines as a result of capturing the ark? Why did God deal with them so harshly?*
4. *What should all this have proved to the Philistines?*

*The Philistines treated the ark like a "hot potato," passing it from one city to the next. They were plagued with "tumors." These tumors are thought by many to be boils, or "emerods," which are hemorrhoids. The rat epidemic (6:4) resembled the frog plague in Egypt, causing much destruction to their land and their crops. The number of golden rats was based on the number of cities and princes of the Philistine confederation. Tumors were mentioned among the diseases that God threatened to punish Israel with in Deuteronomy 28:27. God sure was teaching them a painful lesson!*

5. *What lessons do you think God was teaching the Philistines?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. *How did they decide to get rid of the ark? (Why do you think they built a cart? How would they decide if these plagues were from the God of Israel?)*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. *Why did they want to send the ark back with an offering? (6:3)*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. *Did the Philistines believe in the God of Israel? What kind of belief was it? Read James 2:19-20.*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

*The Philistines offered a “trespass” or a “guilt” offering. This was a common practice among heathen nations to appease the gods, asking for mercy. It was almost like bribing the gods and buying their grace.*

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. *Think about that for a minute. Do we ever offer any type of “guilt” offering when we have done something wrong? Do we ever do things out of guilt, to try to make God be happy with us? (What are we supposed to do?)*

**10.** *Which direction did the cows travel? Why was this a miracle? What did it prove to them?*

*These Philistines saw the power of the God of Israel, yet they failed to respond and give Him the place of authority He deserved. At times, God moves in powerful and miraculous ways in our lives, yet we also fail to respond by giving the Lord the glory and honor due His name. May we learn to revere God as the Lord and Creator of all! What a “**Reason to Rejoice!**”*

### **Fifth Day**

***Write your verse by memory.***

*Yesterday the Ark was sent back to Beth Shemesh, the first Israelite town on the border of Judah. Let's see what happens ...*

- 1.** *I Samuel 6-7:2. Were the Israelites happy to see the Ark return?*
  
- 2.** *What did they do with the cows and the golden offering? Did they keep it?*

*Verse 16 is kind of funny to me. We're told that the five lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron after they saw what happened. Do you think they were hiding in the bushes?*

*The city of Beth Shemesh was a priest's city (Joshua 21:13-16) and the Levites used a large stone as an altar to offer sacrifices to God for bringing the Ark back to them. The sacrifices seemed to be a good thing, but what happened next was a catastrophe!*

3. *Why was there a great slaughter in Beth Shemesh? (6:19)*

*Verses 19-20 give us an indication of why this disaster occurred. The Ark of the Lord was supposed to be revered and handled properly. The Ark was not to be "looked upon" by anyone except the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, once a year. When the Ark was transported, it was always to be carefully covered so no one could look upon it. These men not only disobeyed God's Law, they did not give God the reverence He was due. We wonder why the Philistines didn't die for their mishandling of the Ark. Could it be that God didn't judge them because they were ignorant of this practice, whereas the Israelites were held accountable because they knew better? (James 4:17)*

4. *The Ark was a symbol of God's Holiness. What do you think He was trying to teach the Israelites?*

5. *What does the word "holy" mean? Can you find some Scriptures that talk about God's Holiness?*

6. *How did Moses respond to God's Holiness in Exodus 3:1-6? What about John, in Revelation 1:12-17?*

7. *Why is the fact that God is Holy so important?*

*Israel needed to be reminded that no one could stand before a Holy God. It is a serious thing to dishonor God, not only in the way we speak and treat Him, but in our actions as well.*

8. *Read 1 Peter 1:16 and Ephesians 1:4. How can we “be holy”? What does that mean?*

9. *Would you say that your life is “set apart” for the Lord? Are you trying to live a life that is “holy and blameless”? Are there any areas that you are struggling in? (We are not called to be perfect, but are called to pursue holiness. May that be our goal!)*

10. *Do you think the world today recognizes God’s Holiness? Explain your answer.*

**11. Where did the people of Beth Shemesh send the Ark?**

*There is some question on the number of men killed in Beth Shemesh. There were not 50,000 people in that little village. Many scholars think that the word “thousands” has no rightful place in the text, but that “threescore and ten men” (70), is the true reading. Whatever the number of men killed is, the point is well-taken. God is serious about His Word. The rest of the town urgently requested that the men of Kirjath Jearim come and get the Ark. (6:21-7:2) It remained there for about 20 years under the care of Eleazar.*

**12. For our last question, read and meditate on Psalm 93. How does this Psalm minister to your heart?**

*See you next week. I am so thankful that we serve such a Holy and Righteous God! Why would anyone serve another? Have a great week meditating on God’s Holiness, and remember, look for “**Reasons to Rejoice**” everyday!*

*On the next page you’ll find a chart tracing how the Ark traveled.  
Be sure to check it out!*

***“Your testimonies are very sure;  
Holiness adorns Your house, O Lord, forever.”  
Psalm 93:5***

## Capture of the Ark

The ark of the covenant, a sacred portable chest, was the most sacred object in the tabernacle and the temple. It symbolized God's presence and His covenant with Israel. Believing the ark would protect them in battle, the army of Israel carried the sacred chest into conflict with the Philistines. The Philistines captured the ark but were eager to return it when they were visited by a series of plagues.

