



“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 4

We covered a lot of territory in our lesson last week, didn't we? We learned that Samuel was recognized as the new leader in Israel. We also saw the Philistines defeat Israel and capture the Ark of the Lord. Eli and his sons die as a result of their sin, awful plagues struck the Philistines for dishonoring God, the Ark returned to God's people, and the men of Beth Shemesh were judged for failing to give the Lord the honor due His name. (Wow, that's a mouthful!)

This week we will first look at chapter 7, which ends our first major section. Samuel calls the nation of Israel to repentance. Will they respond? Chapter 7 is also the only recorded passage of Samuel fulfilling his office as judge “over all of Israel.” We'll also continue into chapter 8, which marks the turning point in Israel's history.

First Day

- 1. Read I Samuel chapter 7. What is the main subject of this chapter? What would you title it?*
- 2. Are there any repeated words or thoughts? How do verses 13-17 serve as a summary of this section?*
- 3. Samuel is introduced again in 7:3. Can you find the last time he was mentioned?*

For 20 years the Ark remained in Kirjath Jearim while Israel lamented (vs 2). What was happening during these 20 years in Israel? Verse 3 gives us a hint. The spirituality of the people had continued to decay, causing them to worship other gods and construct idols. Samuel now enters the scene, and brings the people a message! Dr. A. F. Kirkpatrick says this about those silent years: “The period here passed over in silence was a dark page in Israel’s history, politically and religiously. They were vassals of the Philistines, reduced apparently to abject submission. The people sank into idolatry. But meanwhile Samuel was growing in strength and influence, and when the right moment came and the desire for better things sprang up as the fruit of his prophetic labors, he was ready to take his place as the leader of the nation.”

4. *What does Samuel call the people to do? Did they do it?*

5. *Notice that it wasn’t good enough for the Israelites to simply repent. What else was needed if they were to be delivered?*

“Baals and Ashtoreths” were the most important male and female gods of Caananite worship. They believed that Baal reigned over the thunder and rain, which decided the fertility of the soil. Ashtoreth was the goddess of war, love, and fertility. Their worship of these gods included many immoral sexual practices, as well as various magical tricks to gain fertility. This was obviously an abomination to God! The “Baals and Ashtoreths” were most likely stone pillars and wooden poles used as images to represent these gods. Samuel was calling the children of Israel to turn away from these dead idols and serve the one, true, Living God! The pagan worship services were alluring and exciting, but extremely immoral.

Sometimes we struggle with the reoccurrence of particular sins. We may continue to repent from them, but if we don’t turn away from them, it is of little good. We, like the nation of Israel, are called to “put away” anything that interferes with our loyalty to God.

6. *What things can be “idols” to us? (We might not make images out of them, but they can still be idols.) Read 1 John 5:21. What does John exhort us to do?*

7. *Is there anything in your life that's interfering with your relationship with the Lord that may be considered an idol? Are you totally committed to the Lord, or is there some other "thing" that you are trying to serve?*

Pagan worship services were exciting and alluring, but extremely sensual and immoral. Sin certainly is fun for a season, but leads to death. Sometimes it's hard for us to "put away" some habits or things we do because they are so enjoyable. "Don't be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that also will he reap" (Galatians 6:7). We are called to "Walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh" Galatians 5:16.

8. *Why does Samuel call the people to Mizpah? (Mizpah is a town about seven miles north of Jerusalem in the tribe of Benjamin. Its elevation is 2,935 feet above sea level and has an incredible view.)*

Samuel is known as a man of prayer. (I Samuel 12:23, 7:5, 8:6, 15:11; Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1). When decisions were to be made, Samuel knew Who had the answers. He knew where to go for help. He knew where to go for wisdom. He knew His God. Someone once called Samuel "God's Emergency Man" because he rose to the occasion with prayer. The office of a prophet not only declared the will of God to the people, but interceded for the people through prayer. Samuel was true to his call.

9. *What do the following Scriptures say about prayer?*

- a. *1 Thessalonians 5:17*
- b. *1 Timothy 2:8*
- c. *Luke 18:1*
- d. *Philippians 4:6*

10. *Would you consider yourself a woman of prayer? Are you "God's Emergency Woman?" Are you quick to pray when a situation arises?*

We'll end here for today. It's great to see Israel turn from their idols to follow the Lord. I pray that we, too, would turn from any idols and serve Him with all of our heart!

Memory Verse of the Week: *“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Revelation 19:16*

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. Who does this speak of?

1. *Read I Samuel chapter 7 again. As the Israelites gathered at Mizpah to repent to the Lord corporately, what did they do? What do you think this was symbolic of?*

Drawing water and pouring it out was not a Levitical Law, so no one is quite sure of its significance. Most scholars think that pouring water symbolized their hearts being poured out in sorrow and repentance over their sins. This might have been a way to express their helplessness and humility before the Lord or to express their desire that their sins might be forgotten “as waters that pass away” (Job 11:16). His sacrifice of a lamb in verse 9, which was offered as a whole burnt offering, symbolized the complete dedication of the nation to the Lord. (Leviticus 6:22-23).

2. *When the Philistines heard that Israel was all together, what did they decide to do?*
3. *What was Israel's response? Compare this to 4:3.*
4. *Why did the Philistines get so confused? Briefly describe what took place.*

The city of Beth Car is never mentioned again in Scripture, and the site is unknown to us today.

5. *The Israelites feared the Lord, yet moved forward confidently, in verse 11. How does fearing the Lord and being confident in the Lord work together?*

6. *Why did Samuel set up a stone in Mizpah?*

7. *What happened to the territory that the Philistines had taken from Israel?*

8. *Where did Samuel make his home? What did he do there?*

Samuel erected a stone monument so the Israelites would remember what the Lord did for them. Every time they saw it, they would be able to remember that God had given them victory over the Philistines. It also probably reminded them of the blessings that come with obeying the Lord. He named it "Ebenezar" which means "stone of help." "It was a stone of remembrance, looking back to the past. It was a stone of recognition, a stone for the present. It was a stone of revelation, a stone for the future." (McGee) Setting up stones and memorials was a common practice in the Old Testament. Joshua set up 12 stones in the middle of the Jordan so the children of Israel would remember how God miraculously opened the Jordan for them to cross. (Joshua 4:9) Joshua also set up a stone in the city of Shechem to remember the covenant the people made with God, promising to serve and obey Him with their whole heart. (Joshua 24:26) These memorials aren't idols, simply things to remind them what God had done in their life.

It's a good thing to have some "stones of remembrances" in our life too. Maybe it's a picture on your wall, or a certain tree you planted. Maybe it's a gift someone gave you. My whole house is full of items that scream

with testimony of God's faithfulness. It's great to have some things that remind your family of God's faithfulness as well.

- 9.** *Do you have any "stones of remembrances" in your home? (They might remind you of a certain circumstance that God worked in, or a commitment that you have made.) How can these stones be used as a teaching tool for our children?*

Samuel traveled from city to city (vs 16), encouraging the people, settling disputes, and exercising the office of a judge. The judge had judicial and military authority over whole tribes or, in this case, the entire nation. Many believe that Samuel established schools for the training of young prophets in Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. He made his home in Ramah, where he was born. He erected an altar there, most likely in the interest of his priestly ministry, offering sacrifices for his people. (The city of Shiloh had most likely been destroyed by this time.) Again, we see Samuel's role as a prophet, judge, and priest.

- 10.** *God miraculously intervened in Israel's favor. Does God always intervene like this, even if you are being obedient? Why or why not?*

- 11.** *Is there any one truth you learned from this chapter that applies to you specifically as a wife? As a mother? As a Christian woman?*

*God was setting the stage for the change of leadership in the kingdom. Remember that the overall theme of the book is that God is in control at every stage, shaping people and events for His purposes. Do you believe He's in control of your life too? See you tomorrow. Until then, look for three "**Reasons to Rejoice**" today!*

Third Day

Work on memorizing your verse. Praise His Holy name!

Things may have gone well for Israel for a time, but soon they forgot that God was the one who should call the shots, not them. The elders of Israel gathered together and decided that it was time they make some changes.

1. *Read I Samuel 8:1-22. List one or two main thoughts of this chapter.*

2. *What would you title it? Did any specific Scripture or point jump out at you?*

3. *What big mistake did Samuel make in verses 1-5? Why do you think he did it?*

4. *What were the sins of Samuel's sons?*

5. *What was the people's request, which soon became a demand?*

6. *What reasons did they give for this request, according to verses 1-5? What seemed to be the real reason? (8:20)*

In a theocracy, God ruled His people through an earthly representative, and there was no need for them to be anxious about matters of leadership. God was their King, and knowledge of this fact should have given His people stability and security. But the Israelites forgot all about that, losing sight of who God was and who they were.

Israel was different than other nations. They were God's chosen people, set apart for His special purpose. But they seemed to be tired of being separate, or "peculiar." They believed an earthly king would bring more security and protection against the other nations. They wanted to be exactly what God didn't want them to be.

7. Read Deuteronomy 7:6-11. What does this passage tell us?

8. We are God's chosen people too! He wants us to be different, sanctified, or "set apart" for His purposes. What do the following verses say about this?

a. Romans 12:1-2

b. 2 Timothy 2:21

c. 2 Corinthians 5:17

d. Psalm 4:3

e. 1 Peter 2:9-11

9. If we are "set apart" for Him, how, then, should we live? Give practical examples, Scriptures, etc.

So often Christians desire to be like the world. We want to look like them, act like them, dress like them, and talk like them. We don't want to "go against the flow." Like the Israelites, we want to be like everyone else. Peer pressure is as strong today as it was then, if not stronger.

10. *How can we be set apart in our:*

- a.** *dress*
- b.** *speech*
- c.** *thoughts*
- d.** *goals*

11. *Okay, now the important question: Are you "set apart" for Christ? In what areas do you struggle? (Following the Lord and His commands is not always the most popular route. Are you willing to choose His path?)*

12. *Why is it so important to teach our kids what it means to be "set apart"? Are you doing that?*

Let's stop here for today. I pray that others would see Christ in us as we travel through life. We don't want to be different for the sake of being different, but for the purpose of bringing honor and glory to Him. Let's represent Him well. I pray that our hearts desire would be to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. God bless you!

Fourth Day

Meditate on your verse today.

1. *Read I Samuel 8:1-22 again. How did Samuel react to the Israelites' request?*

2. *Samuel seemed to take their rejection a bit personal. What does God say about that in verse 7-8?*

Samuel didn't agree with their request and was extremely grieved that they would even ask. But he still took their request to the Lord. He handled his rejection by going to the Lord. That's a good lesson for us, isn't it?

3. *How did the Lord respond? What warnings did He give?*
4. *How would you describe the type of king they were going to get? (Notice the phrase that is repeated in verses 11-17)*
5. *Why would God give them a king when He knew the evil consequences? (Read Psalm 106:15) Can we "make" God act in a certain way?*
6. *Why do you think God allows trouble and trials in our life? Read 1 Peter 1:6-9 and James 1:2-4. List other Scriptures that apply.*
7. *Are you ever guilty of doing what the Israelites did? Has peer pressure ever caused you to ask the Lord for things that are not in your best interest? (Although we think so at the time)*

The people of Israel were definitely warned of what would happen in the future. Sometimes we wish we were warned about the future before we made our decisions. At least I do. But then I remember that God does warn us of many things in His Word. He warns us of the dangers of flirting with the world. He reminds us of the consequence of our sin. He clearly tells us what happens if we choose to follow our own ways. Yes, He does indeed warn us, doesn't He? Perhaps sometimes we just don't listen.

- 8. Are you facing a difficult decision right now? Spend some time in the Word. Ask for direction and heed any warnings the Lord gives you. Don't demand your way; seek His will.*

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory. Have you made Him King in your life?

- 1. We'll review this chapter once more. Read it over, asking the Lord to show you what He has for you today!*

Let's discuss Samuel's sons. We are tempted to think, "Didn't Samuel learn anything from Eli? Did he also fail as a father, paying too much attention to his other responsibilities? Did history repeat itself?" Maybe this isn't the case.

- 2. Is it possible to diligently train your children in the ways of the Lord, and they still refuse to follow the Lord? Explain your answer.*

- 3. Do you see any difference in the story of Eli and his sons versus Samuel and his sons?*

Do you have a son or daughter that has walked away from the Lord? Read Luke 15:11-32 for encouragement. Also note that 1 Chronicles 6:33 suggests that Joel may have repented of his sins, for he established a godly home and his son is mentioned as officiating in the temple. In other words, don't lose heart!

4. *Notice that God didn't answer Samuel's prayer the way he would have liked. Was Samuel in sin because he didn't get his way? Discuss how praying and believing in faith, while accepting His sovereignty, fit together.*

The Israelites wanted God to be their Deliverer, rescuing them from death and releasing them from bondage. Unfortunately, they didn't want Him to be their King and control their lives. Dr. William Blaikie says this about the king they were requesting:

“He is not a king that gives, but a king that takes. What a contrast there is between this exacting king, and the true king, the King that in the fullness of time is to come to His people, meek and having salvation, riding upon the foal of a donkey. If there be anything more than another that makes this King glorious, it is His giving nature. As Prophet, he gave Himself to teach, as Priest to atone and intercede, as King to rule and to defend. Even as He hung helpless on the cross, He exercised His royal prerogative by giving the thief at His right side a right to the Kingdom of God. How different the attributes of this King from him whom Samuel delineated. The one exacting all that is ours; the other giving all that is His!”

5. *Read John 15:12-13. What did King Jesus give for you and me? Write a prayer to the Lord, thanking Him for giving His all for you.*

“And I will give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:28