

**Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:2-17 & Matthew 4:1-11)**

**29-July-2018**

So we're continuing our series on the OT book of 1 Samuel.

And we're looking at 1 Samuel chapter 7 from verse 2 to the end of the chapter.

There's a sermon outline in the bulletin if you'd like to take down notes

Let's pray before we take a look at this passage together

## **Intro/God's People (OT & NT)**

So to begin with..

[PowerPoint 1a-Who OT?]

Who are God's people in the Old Testament?

The people of Israel? The Jews

[PowerPoint 1b]

AND - anyone who comes to believe in the God of Israel...

Deuteronomy 7:6 (see also Exodus 19:5-6) says this to the people of Israel

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

[PowerPoint 2a-Who NT?]

Who are God's people in the New Testament?

[PowerPoint 2b-The Church]

The Church (Matthew 16:8)

Christians

See 2 Peter 3:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

### [PowerPoint 3-What happens when?]

So what happens when God's people (Israel in the OT and the Church - whatever denomination in the NT and the Church Today) - What happens when God's people are led by corrupt leaders?

Will God stand for that?

(pause)

### Context

Well - let's remind ourselves what happened to God's people earlier in 1 Samuel chapter 4

### [PowerPoint 4-Ebenezer]

- Israel fought against the Philistines at Ebenezer (1 Sam 4:1)
- Israelites were defeated - 4000 men lost their lives
- So the Israelites brought the Ark of God into battle
- Explain the Ark

### [PowerPoint 5-Ark]

- The presence of the Ark didn't help Israel in their battle with the Philistines
- They lost 30,000 soldiers (1 Sam 4:10) at Ebenezer

### [PowerPoint 6-Ebenezer]

Why the defeat?

Because of the corrupt priesthood of Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas and because the people were not committed to their Lord God either!

So God didn't help Israel in their battles against the Philistines and allowed them to be defeated!

Ebenezer became the place of defeat

But God already had a plan to replace this corrupt leadership and He raised up a new Godly and spiritual leader - Samuel - a priest, a prophet and a judge

We don't hear about Samuel in chapters 5 and 6

As the consequences of Israel's defeat are played out

During Israel's defeat - The Ark of God was stolen by the Philistines

[PowerPoint 6b-Towns]

And placed in the Philistine temple of Dagon (Fish/Man - false God]

God sent tumours (hemorrhoids) on the Philistines as a punishment for thinking their false gods would be any match for Him!

And so they passed the ark around like a hot potato from town to town

Eventually the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel - to the border town of Beth Shemesh

[PowerPoint 7a-Beth Shemesh]

But the people of Beth Shemesh didn't follow God's rules about touching the ark and looking inside it

So God struck down 70 people from Beth Shemesh

## [PowerPoint 7b-Kiriath Jearim]

Again the Ark was moved on to another Israeli town called Kiriath Jearim

No one in Israel was game enough to go anywhere near the ark

And so - as it says in our passage today (chapter 7 - verse 2) - the Ark remained in Kiriath Jearim for 20 years

It's almost like God's people have resigned themselves to the fact that they will always be defeated by their arch enemies - the Philistines - and that God will never be on their side

But here in chapter 7

We are shown how God's people can turn defeat into victory

So let's see how defeat is turned into victory...

## Turning Defeat into Victory

### A. Turn Back to God (vv2-4)

#### [PowerPoint 8-Turn Back]

Look at the end of verse 2

It involves God's people turning back to God

The word we use for *turning back to God* today is *repentance*

[Explain Repentance]

In V3 - Samuel describes what turning back to God looks like:

- a. First -It means having a ***change of heart*** towards God - see v3 - it means having our hearts set on what God wants for our lives and not having our hearts set on what we want for our lives - it's a complete change of heart - almost like having a heart transplant
- b. Second - turning back to God looks like the Israelites ***getting rid of foreign gods and Ashtoreth's*** (goddess of love and war involving ritual prostitution and sacrifice) - you see because the people of Israel didn't have any Godly priests guiding them - they started worshipping other gods as well the one true God - that same problem exists today - with the worship of many things in peoples' lives which take priority over God (things like: money, possessions, sex, sport and so on)
- c. Third - turning back to God looks like, being ***committed to serving God only*** - as Jesus told the Devil in our NT passage from Matthew 4 in v10 - "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' (quoting from Deut 6:13) - In the modern world - a government will not act to help one of its citizens if that person also holds citizenship of the country in which that person has got into trouble. Similarly, God would not deliver the Israelites from the Philistines while they served Philistine gods! Citizenship in God's kingdom cannot be held by anyone who wants to keep a passport that allows them to hold onto "worldly" views. God is not to be our security blanket when our other securities fail. God is not our plan B or plan C - God is supposed to be our only plan! And we serve Him only!

- d. So the Israelites genuinely and sincerely turned back to God - in verse 4 - and they put away their false gods and served the Lord only

[VIDEO: Café Church - Israelites turn back to God as Philistines attack]

## B. Confession (vv5-9)

[PowerPoint 9-Confession]

Having turned back to God - the next step for the Israelites is **confession** in verses 5 to 9

- a. And it was a **public and corporate confession** at Mizpah - see v5 - if God's people in the OT do the wrong thing - then they most corporately confess their sin. If God's people today - the church - do the wrong thing - then the church should make a public statement and admit it - not hide it! *[We've seen that in public cases like the Royal Commission into child abuse. Where there is now a "Redress Scheme" for Churches to compensate victims of abuse. I wonder if the Uniting Church might have to confess their recent un-godly decision to allow same sex marriage?]*
- b. As part of their public confession, the Israelites **confessed that they had sinned against the Lord** in v6 - and water was poured out to symbolizing the washing away of sin - just like baptism would today
- c. When they heard that their arch enemy - the Philistines were about to attack - the Israelites asked Samuel to **cry out to Lord - to rescue them** - this was an urgent and heartfelt prayer

- d. The Israelites finally realized it was their *own unconfessed sin that was the problem*. A lesson for us - that we should constantly be examining our lives for unconfessed sin - and bringing it to the Lord in genuine, heartfelt confession
- e. From the passage here - it's clear they are making their confession, praying and fasting - even as the Philistines are about to attack. Samuel is actually sacrificing to the Lord in v9-10 as the Philistines drew near to the Israelites - talk about last minute repentance!
- f. Confession needs to be genuine and sincere
- g. And the Lord answered their prayers

### C. Deliverance (vv10-17)

#### [PowerPoint 10-Deliverance]

God delivered His people - and turned defeat into victory - in verses 10 to 17

- a. Just as Philistines are about to attack in V10
- b. God thunders - and the Philistines are thrown into panic
- c. God allows the Israelites to win the battle
- d. God defeats the enemy of His people
- e. In the same way, God defeats our enemies - of Satan and sin - only through our Lord Jesus' death on the cross
- f. So let's not forget to say thank you
- g. And that's what Samuel does in v12 - Samuel erects a stone to remember the victory - and say thank you- and He called the place Ebenezer [OT names are important] - it's the same name as the place of Israel's defeat in chapter 4
- h. Ebenezer means stone of help

### [PowerPoint 11-Ebenezer-stone]

- i. God has turned the place of defeat into the place of victory!

(pause)

### Results of Victory

#### [PowerPoint 12-Results]

There are *three great results* of this victory for Israel

#### [PowerPoint 12a-enemy stopped]

1. First - Israel's enemy - the Philistines stopped invading.

In the same way - our enemy of sin can't invade us and win - because Jesus has fixed that - once and for all

#### [PowerPoint 12b-Regained land]

2. Second - Israel regained some of the land they had previously lost - God's people regained the cities allocated to them as part of the Promised Land.

And we have the Promised Land of Heaven guaranteed to us if we follow Jesus

#### [PowerPoint 12c-Peace]

3. Israel had peace with another of their neighbouring enemies - the Amorites (Canaanite people who also worshipped false gods).

And we have peace from our enemy of sin - because of Jesus - the Prince of Peace - and so we have the promise of everlasting peace in Heaven to look forward to

### Applications

#### [PowerPoint 13-Application]

To finish up then I'd like to leave us with 3 applications to take home today:

[PowerPoint 13a]

1. First - *we can't have dual citizenship with God and with the world* -  
When God's people in the OT were not committed to God and tried to have dual citizenship with God and other false gods - God allowed the Israelites to be defeated but He raised up a new Godly leader in Samuel. And it's the same today in God's NT Churches - if we are not committed to God with all our hearts - He will allow some churches to close but will raise up new Godly leaders and new Godly churches.

[PowerPoint 13b-Jesus the Lamb]

2. Second - In 1 Samuel 7 verse 9 - Samuel sacrificed a suckling lamb - it was innocent and pure - and so represented purity and the confession and cleansing of sin. In the same way **JESUS - the Lamb of God - is our suckling lamb** - an unblemished and perfect lamb of sacrifice who takes away our sins once and for all. We need to cling to Jesus our Lamb.
3. Third - Just as God turned the place of defeat Ebenezer - into a place of victory - God turns the place of JESUS' Defeat - the Cross and Calvary - into VICTORY over SIN and over Satan. And that victory is also our victory too - a victory for God's people - IF we believe in Jesus - as 1 John 5:4-5 says - and we'll finish with that:

[PowerPoint 14-1 John 5:4-5]

<sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Let's pray...