

1 Samuel 7:3 - 8:22 – Samuel as judge, Israel demands a king. March 9

Philistines defeated. 1 Samuel: 7:3-11

In summary: Samuel tells the Israelites to get rid of their foreign gods and serve the Lord only and God would deliver them from the Philistines. The Israelites gather at Mizpah where Samuel judges them. The Philistines get nervous about this and go to war against the Israelites, who then beg Samuel to cry out to the Lord for them, which he does, offering sacrifices. Then when the Philistines attack, God thunders at them, throwing the Philistines into confusion and thus the Israelites were able to route the Philistines.

Last week we discussed whether God caused the plagues. This week God apparently intervenes by thundering at the Philistines. This resulted in the Philistines being routed and many of them dying at the hands of the Israelites.

- 1) Was it God who thundered at the Philistines. (It's okay if you want to say yes or no.)
What does this say about the nature of God.

If we can't blame God when bad things happen, i.e. the plague and the tumours and the rats, can we also then attribute good things to God. Or are they just chance too.

If God doesn't necessarily make bad things happen, i.e. he allows consequences and uses natural processes rather than causing them, what then do we say about miracles. Why are they not just chance as well. Can we say that God specifically blesses us/makes good things happen when we follow God's ways or is it that following God's way simply results in a better outcome without any intervention from God.

- 2) If you had been an Israelite, how would you feel about God after this 'deliverance.'
What if you were a Philistine.
- 3) Does Israel's deliverance promote faithfulness. Do miracles of any kind promote faith. What happens when miracles don't happen.

Samuel as Judge. 1 Samuel 7: 12- 15

In summary: Samuel sets up the Ebenezer stone or "stone of help". Towns were restored to Israel. There was a long period of peace in which Samuel served as Judge and Samuel also builds an altar to the Lord in his hometown.

I looked into the meaning of Judge in the Old Testament and, while it included the role of judging cases in Israel, a Judge was mainly a leader in Israel. Joshua was the first Judge after being appointed by Moses as the leader of Israel. Some judges were warriors and some were prophets. Samuel was a prophet, not a warrior. Several of the judges were warriors, including Gideon, Samson, Ehud, Jephthah and Shamgar. Gideon and Samson take up most of the stories about the judges. Deborah, the only woman who was a judge, was also a prophet. There was forty years of peace under Deborah. Some judges only ruled for as short as seven or eight years. The book of Judges includes 12 Judges. Eli and Samuel are also

described as Judges but are included in I Samuel instead. Apparently, the Judges of the book of Judges rarely ruled over the nation as a whole. That didn't happen until Eli and Samuel. In some places the 12 judges in the book of Judges are described as the 12 heroes of Israel. As judges they displayed all the frailties of being human. Samson was plotted against and lost his power. Gideon, after his amazing interaction with God ended up in idolatry. One, Jephthah, made a foolish vow and sacrificed his daughter. Some seemed to be quite wealthy and that is all we really hear about them. Each Judge was raised up by the Lord in a time of need. But there were times when there was no Judge as well.

- 4) Please comment about the Judges as leaders of Israel (as opposed to a king). Were there positives and negatives?

Samuel was judge of Israel all his life and it describes the circuit he took to judge the people in each of these places. I'm thinking he spent a great deal of time being a judge compared to time spent with his family.

Israel Asks for a King. 1 Samuel 8:1-22

Read also Judges 8:22, 23

When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. Unfortunately, they took bribes and perverted justice. There is an irony in this when you think back to Eli and his son's.

- 5) Was it a mistake for Samuel to appoint his sons as judges. In what way.

The elders of Israel ask Samuel to appoint a king to govern Israel "like other nations". Samuel is displeased but God says to give them a king as they are not rejecting Samuel but God as their king. But – God tells Samuel to 'solemnly' warn them about what having a king would be like.

This was not the first request for a king. They had also wanted to make Gideon king but he refused.

- 6) Why did the Israelites ask Gideon to be their king.

In 1 Samuel, the request for a king came in response to the corruption of Samuel's sons.

- 7) Please comment on the statement by God to Samuel "They are not rejecting you, they are rejecting "Me" as their king.

Given God's warning about what having a king would be like, it doesn't sound like a good bargain.

- 8) What else might have prompted their request for a king?
- 9) Why do people look for a strong human leader (a king) they can follow even if it's not a good bargain, e.g. Trump or dictators like Putin or Hitler, etc.