



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Importance of Godly Leadership (I Samuel 6:13—7:17)

22 JUNE 2010

Ron J. Bigalke, PhD / PO Box 244, Rincon, GA 31326-0244 / www.capitolcom.org / ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Ever since the Philistines “took the ark of God” (5:1), they have experienced nothing but difficulty as custodians. The disasters have been intense, and therefore, the Philistines returned the Ark (7:1). Chapter 7 demonstrates a change in the events of the previous chapters. Samuel exhorted the people to “remove the foreign gods” from among them, and to direct their hearts in repentance to the Lord God. The people responded as a nation by confessing their sins at Mizpah, and God delivered them from the Philistines. Samuel took a stone and named it Ebenezer (“stone of help”) as a memorial of God's blessing in response to the national confession and repentance.

GOD'S HOLINESS

(6:13-7:1) The people of Beth-shemesh “raised their eyes” while they were harvesting their wheat, and rejoiced to see the return of the Ark. Beth-shemesh was a priestly (Levitical) city (cf. Josh 21:16; 1 Chron 6:59) and was designated for the Kohathites, whose responsibility was to bear the Ark (Numb

4:15; 7:9). Beth-shemesh was also home for some of Aaron's descendents (Josh 21:13-16). The city was near a powerful Philistine population, and because of the Kohathites it was an appropriate location for returning the Ark of the Lord.

Upon a large stone, the people “split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD” (1 Sam 6:14). Unfortunately, these Levites acted in disobedience, or at least with incompetence. The burnt offering was certainly appropriate as thanks for the return of the Ark. However, all burnt offerings were to be male not heifers (Lev 1:3). The act will certainly result in divine judgment because the people did not reverence God's holiness.

The people offered more burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord (1 Sam 6:15), and “the five lords of the Philistines saw it” (6:16). When the lords returned to Ekron, they would certainly have to communicate that the plague of tumors was the hand of God that struck them (6:9). Perhaps there is a spiritual lesson for God's people here.¹ The Philistines could not deny the Lord's guidance because the cows “did not turn aside to the right or to the left” (6:12). Would it not also be evidence of God's guidance and power for His people not to deviate from the clear teachings of Scripture?

The Israelites erected a silent monument and witness of the Ark's return (6:17-18). However, the rejoicing of the Israelites would soon end. While the Ark and the articles of gold were displayed on the large stone, “some of the men of Beth-shemesh . . . looked into [or gazed at²] the ark” (6:19). According to Numbers 4:5-6, the Ark should have been covered by Aaron's sons, and the Kohathites who carried it were never to touch or look upon the Ark (Exod 25:13-15; 37:5; Numb 4:17-20). The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) adds, “The sons of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the rest of the men of Beth-shemesh when they welcomed the ark of the Lord. . . .” Jeconiah's sons were indifferent toward the Ark, and even despised its significance as a sign of God's presence. God punished the indifference and irreverence by stricken the men (1 Sam 6:19).³

WE MUST REVERENCE GOD'S HOLINESS, AND KNOW AND LIVE HIS WORD SO THAT WE DO NOT REPEAT THE SAME ERROR OF CONFORMING THE HOLY GOD TO OUR EXPECTATIONS.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS AND LOBBYISTS: TUESDAYS @ 7:30AM, 514 CLOB (DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON, 514 CLOB (AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION - CURRENTLY IN TEMPORARY FURLOUGH)

The men of Beth-shemesh responded with two questions (6:20). The first was appropriate: “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?” Rather than humbling themselves before God, the second question reveals the desire to remove the Ark and the power of God from them (6:21-7:1; cf. Mark 5:1-20). The danger for modern readers is to repeat the same error of the Israelites. We must reverence God’s holiness, and know and live His Word so that we do not repeat the same error of conforming the holy God to our expectations.

GOD’S MERCY

[SAMUEL] PRIORITIZED WORSHIP OF GOD FOR THE PURPOSE OF HIS OWN FAMILY AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NATION. THE SPIRITUAL MAN USES HIS ABILITIES, INFLUENCE, AND WEALTH FOR LIVING UNDER GOD’S LORDSHIP.

PREPARING FOR GOD’S MERCY

(7:2-6) The people of Kiriath-jearim were custodians of the Ark for twenty years (and would remain so until David brought the Ark to Jerusalem; 2 Sam 6:2-3, 12). They did not mourn any longer “because the LORD had struck the people” (6:19); rather, “all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD” (7:2). If God was to help the nation, they must repent before the Lord (cf. Gen 35:2-4; Josh 24:14-15).

Israel had been defeated numerous times in battle now, and was discouraged. Their repentance would be difficult because the “foreign gods” had influenced their lives (cf. Judg 2:13). *Truly there is no other means to regain God’s favor than holy and humble repentance.* Israel performed a water libation “before the Lord” (7:6) to signify their present distress. The libation may also suggest Israel’s confession that God’s favor was more important than life-sustaining water, or could signify the cleansing of their guilt. There certainly is application here to our nation. The lost battles do not need to be physical, but can be judicial, legislative, and moral to bring discouragement. The foreign influence to the history of our nation is also present. Only by committing our hearts to the Lord and serving Him alone can we experience true revival.

EXPERIENCING GOD’S MERCY

(7:7-11) The Philistines “heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah” and decided to attack. The Israelites were not prepared. The sincerity of their repentance is evident in verse 8 because now they relied entirely upon the Lord. Genuine repentance is not only being sorrowful over sin but also making a confession of sins, renouncing all that displeases God, and trusting in the will of the Lord alone.

Samuel interceded on behalf of Israel (7:9), and the Lord answered the prayer of repentant Israel. God “thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel” (7:10). The confusion was so great that the Philistines were routed “as far as below Beth-car” (7:11). Based on the expression “below Beth-car,” the location would seem to indicate a height with a road at its base. The idea is an extensive retreat of the Philistines, and mighty victory for Israel (without the Ark!)

REMEMBERING GOD’S MERCY

(7:12-14) Samuel erected a stone memorial, and named it “Ebenezer” (“Thus far the LORD has helped us”). The victory over the Philistines was not complete, but indicated that God was with His people and therefore Israel needed to remember this deliverance. In chapter 6, the Philistines had their distress removed, but it seems they were only relieved that the ordeal had ended. They were not any wiser or humbler as a consequence of their difficulties. God’s people will remember the past and express thanksgiving for the Lord’s help. It is entirely appropriate to remember God’s past deliverance because this will encourage hope for the future. By God’s “good pleasure” we will “safely arrive at home.” Throughout Samuel’s life, the Philistines would be subdued, the cities taken from Israel were restored, and there was peace (7:13-14). *Good and godly leadership makes all the difference!*

LIVING IN GOD’S MERCY

(7:15-17) Samuel traveled an annual circuit in Benjaminite territory, “judging Israel all the days of his life.” The threefold usage of the verb, *shāphat* (שָׁפַט) translated “to judge”, for Samuel’s ministry indicates more than merely administering justice. The prior usage of this verb in 7:6 indicates a spiritual dimension to his judging. The context in verse 6 is the national lament, confession, and repentance. The judging is a responsibly involving the legislative and spiritual direction of the nation. Samuel not only judged legislative issues, but also provided reproof, correction, and instruction. He prioritized worship of God for the purpose of his own family and for the benefit of the nation (7:17). The spiritual man uses his abilities, influence, and wealth for living under God’s lordship.

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) 301.

² Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1906; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005) 908.

³ According to the traditional Hebrew (Masoretic) text and the Septuagint, the number of men stricken was 50,070. The population of Beth-shemesh was not so large; therefore, a copyist error must have occurred and the number should be “seventy men” (which is deemed accurate by the Jewish historian Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, 6.1.4).