

## The Church Meeting at Mizpeh

(1 Samuel 7:3-12)

- I. The ark of the covenant which was the token of God's presence had been taken by the Philistines as a judgment of God on Israel. **1SAM 4:10-11.**
- A. The ark housed the written law of God which was Israel's chief advantage. **HEB 9:4; ROM 3:1-2.**
  - B. Well was it said of that tragedy, "...The glory is departed from Israel..." (**1SAM 4:21-22**).
  - C. The Philistines suffered a plague of emerods for demeaning the ark of God with heathenism (**1SAM 5 c/w PSA 78:66**). So they sent it back to Israel with superstitious golden images. **1SAM 6:4-5.**
  - D. After a short, sorry sojourn at Bethshemesh (**1SAM 6:19-21**), the ark came to Kirjathjearim for twenty years "...and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD" (**1SAM 7:1-2**). Israel's heart was turning, but needed to turn yet more.
- II. Samuel commanded Israel to put away their idol gods and they did so. **1SAM 7:3-4.**
- A. Baalim is the same as Baal, the chief male deity of the Phoenicians and Canaanitish nations whose cult was characterized by gross sensuality. His consort was Ashtaroth (Ashtoreth, Ishtar, Astarte, Eostre, Easter), their respective high days being the winter solstice and the vernal equinox.
    - 1. This "putting away" was NOT putting tinsel and egg-coloring kits into storage.
    - 2. This "putting away" is a putting away in the sense of *separating from, renouncing affiliation with*. c/w **MAT 19:9; 1CO 13:11.**
    - 3. God forbids an amalgam of His religion with false religion. **DEU 12:30-31.**
  - B. Samuel called all Israel to Mizpeh (watchtower) for he was a true witness of Jehovah. **1SAM 7:5-6.**
    - 1. The purpose of the meeting was spiritual: Samuel prayed for and judged Israel.
    - 2. Israel showed their humility by pouring out water before the LORD, fasting, and confession of sin.
      - a. The pouring out of water spoke of their ephemeral, dispensible humanity before a holy God. c/w **2SAM 14:14.**
      - b. Their fasting spoke of their humility through self-affliction.
      - c. Their confession spoke of their brokenheartedness which God honors. **PSA 51:17; PRO 28:13.**
    - 3. They had evidently come to church armed (**vs. 10-11**) for circumstances demanded such prudence. **PRO 22:3.**
      - a. Christ advised his disciples in such prudence. **LUK 22:36.**
      - b. We should in all circumstances be armed with spiritual weaponry (**EPH 6:17**), concealed also in the heart. **PSA 119:11.**
  - C. The Philistines heard about this meeting (who blabbed?) and considered it opportunistic (**v. 7**) for the enemies of God do not see His prayerful assemblies as He does. **ZEC 2:8 c/w ACT 4:31 c/w 1CO 1:27-28; REV 20:9.**
  - D. Israel begged Samuel to "...cry unto the LORD our God for us, that HE will save us..." (**v. 8**).
    - 1. This contrasts what the elders said some twenty years earlier when the Philistines were threatening: "...fetch the ark...IT may save us..." (**1SAM 4:3**). They had attributed saving power to a created thing, a token of God's power.
    - 2. They had learned that *worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator* (**ROM 1:25**) does not motivate the Creator to save His creatures.

3. Those who attribute saving power to created things or to tokens of God's power and presence such as the sinner's faith should take note. The sinner's faith has its place but not God's place in the great salvation. **ROM 3:24-25.**
- E. **v. 9.** Samuel made a burnt offering "...wholly unto the LORD..." (reserving nothing for the offerer) and "...cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him." He was ever such a faithful leader. c/w **1SAM 12:23.**
1. This is an example of "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (**JAM 5:16**). This is possible to all believers.
  2. How important it is to have our concerns taken to the throne of grace by righteous men over us who are alive in the flesh!  
c/w **GEN 20:17; DEU 9:20; JOB 42:8; 2CH 30:18-20.**
  3. The best example of this is our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**LUK 22:32; JOH 17:9-15, 20.**
    - a. He continues to pray for us alive in heaven. **ROM 8:34; HEB 7:25.**
    - b. There is "...ONE mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (**1TI 2:5**).
    - c. His prayers do not just avail *much*, they avail *effectually*, for the Father always hears Him. **JOH 11:42.**
- F. **vs. 10-12.** Sin atoned for and intercession made, the Philistines were overcome and Samuel set up the Ebenezer stone (stone of help) between *Mizpeh* (watchtower) and *Shen* (crag: steep or precipitous rugged rock), between the place of vigilant assembly and the seemingly insurmountable. No matter where saints are on their journey, but especially when they have overcome, they should like Paul note, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great..." (**ACT 26:22**).