

# A Picture of the Faithful Remnant Church to Come

We finished [part 4](#) with Israel finally positioning their hearts properly by deciding to serve the Lord only. It was really the end of this series, because the Western church has not decided to serve the Lord only. All that will proceed in this final part is a picture of what could possibly come.

Let us pick up now with the following verses:

Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines." So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car. (1 Samuel 7:5-11)

Samuel's judgeship began here at Mizpah *after* Israel repented. He would be Israel's last judge.

Mizpah was historically the place for Israel to gather when the people meant business, which was the case this time. The moment Israel declared, "We have sinned against the LORD," the windows of heaven were opened.

We are told that Samuel judged the people at Mizpah which would seem to infer that the assembly there carried on for awhile. It apparently became a time of spiritual renewal for the nation.

If you are expecting Western churches to someday come together and repent before the Lord, then you will die waiting (unless the Lord Jesus removes us first). The next move of serious repentance will lead to the [real church forming apart](#) from the corrupt visible church.

## God Fights for Israel

The Philistines did not want Israel gathering together because it threatened their control of the region so they mobilized their army to clamp down on the situation. Israel was afraid and cried out to Samuel: "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." I

find no fault in their fear as the newly repentant have to start somewhere. I suspect that an aspect of this was simply their lack of weapons, because a few chapters later (1 Samuel 13) we are told that the Philistines removed the blacksmiths from Israel so that they could not make swords or spears. Their response, "that *he* may save us from the hand of the Philistines" shows that they were on the right track.

I love Samuel's military tactics. Standing before a bunch of fearful and outarmed regiments with the enemy fast approaching and what does he do? He looks to *the blood of the lamb* and cries out to God. Here we had Psalm 34 in action:

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. *When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.* The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (15-18)

God responded by sending confounding thunder that put the Philistines on the run and enabled Israel to pick them off on their western retreat to Beth-car. Not only did Israel win the battle, but they subsequently retook all their land from the Philistines and subdued them for the following nineteen years of Samuel's judgeship. Total reliance on God leads to total victory.

## The Ebenezer Difference

It is interesting to contrast this battle with Israel's previous battle against the Philistines, twenty years earlier. The critical difference was where their dependence laid. Examining the Scriptures closely, we discover that Samuel himself noted the key difference.

We are told that Israel camped at Ebenezer before the first battle, however *there was no Ebenezer at that time*. The place was named by Samuel after the second battle when he set up a memorial stone there. As the author of the book, He wrote the account of the first battle (1 Samuel 4) many years after it had happened. Ebenezer means "stone of help" or, as Samuel said, "Till now the LORD has helped us." The point is this: *Samuel put the stone at the place where they were defeated for not relying on the Lord, after they won the battle because they relied on Him, to make the contrast the essence of the memorial.*

## The Hand of the Lord

The formula for Israel to *initiate* a turnaround was simple. All that was required was (1) a real commitment to turn from sin and serve Jehovah, (2) having their sin covered by the blood of the lamb, and (3) a complete reliance on Him. The formula for the faithful remnant church to start a turnaround is the same: humility, righteousness, and faith. Even better, animal sacrifices, which were only a covering for sin, are no

longer required as Jesus Christ paid the price for sin once and for all. The only sacrifice required today is us and that is where the rubber meets the road.

We are told: "And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel" (7:13b). Israel was in a *place* where God was proactively fighting for them. This occurred "all the days of Samuel," which was referring to the period of Samuel's judgeship.

One of the unique aspects of Samuel's judgeship was his establishment of the school of the prophets, which was no doubt instrumental in teaching God's word to the faithful throughout Israel. The subsequent books of 1 and 2 Kings make many references to the "sons of the prophets," which were those who were part of the school of the prophets in latter years. Look closely at these verses and you will notice that the related events were often at or nearby the towns of Samuel's circuit ministry: Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah.

The critical realization we need to make here is this: Israel's turnaround was *initiated* by humility, repentance, and faith, but their righteousness would be *maintained* by a broad-based return to the Word of God—study, application, and teaching. This is the *answer* we should derive from this entire five-part series.

We have learned in this series that God either withdraws His hand from His people or His hand is against their enemies. The choice is up to us. When we consider now, from the luxury of a New Testament perspective, that Jesus Christ was seated *at the right hand of God* after His resurrection, the window is opened to view a sort of Old Testament allusion to living in Christ. In other words, Israel continued in the *will* of God—the hand of God being with them—during Samuel's judgeship because their was a commitment to continuing in the *Word* of God.

When we look at the Biblical history of Israel, we see that they did not really become strong as a nation until the reign of King David. Samuel anointed David near the end of his life. Furthermore, it is my view that Samuel wrote the latter half of the book of judges (if not all of it) and the book of Ruth, because these documents also contained political strategy relevant to his latter years. Look closely at them and see that Gibeah, the home of Saul (the people's choice) is painted in a negative light, while Bethlehem, the home of David (God's choice) is painted in a positive light.

The reign of King David and the subsequent strengthening of Israel coincided with the downstream effects of the nation's return to the Word of God under Samuel. Israel was weak as a nation—tossed to and fro—during the period of the judges *until* an enduring foundation of God's law was established throughout the land. Recall from [part 1](#) that when Samuel was a lad the "word of the Lord was rare in

those days; there was no frequent vision" (3:1b). The teaching ministry of Samuel would change all this.

The Western church now has more Biblical educational material available to them than any other generation in church history, yet the doctrinal foundation continues to erode. For the faithful remnant to come out of this mess there has to be a radical transition in the individual lives of believers. For most Christian families, the study of the Word of God does not take precedence. All other manner of trivialities are given a higher seat at the table. Believers lives are not being transformed because the Word of God is not being eaten. Believers are very malnourished. It is time for the Elis to be removed and the Samuels to come forth.

## The Word of God Breaks The Cycle

Once when Jesus was dining at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, someone said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God! (Luke 14:15b)" Notice the exclamation point at the end. He was portraying excitement for the kingdom of God. This is the same type of excitement a believer might express today over heaven (it should be the kingdom of God too, but this is generally not taught). The reality is that the *actions* of many do not demonstrate such zeal for the kingdom that Jesus is returning to establish. Jesus' response confirms this:

... "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yolk of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ... For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet." (Luke 14:16-21;24)

The way I see this parable is the master giving the banquet is Jesus and the servant is the Holy Spirit.

Notice that those with excuses were only invited to a great banquet. No commitment to anything was required. If someone a person liked was throwing a big party, he would not instead go out and examine some land he had just purchased. (Who buys land before they examine it anyways? Untruthful people with poor excuses, I guess.) He would happily go to the party to enjoy the special time with his friend and socialize with his other like-minded friends. However, *if he did not like that person or what he stood for* he would perhaps make a trivial excuse to not come.

Why would someone be uncomfortable with what Jesus stood for? Because of the deceitfulness of sin.

Notice the three elements for excuse: (1) provision, (2) business, and (3) marriage. For us today, this simply equates to work and family.

When Adam and Eve fell to sin, God told Eve:

"... You desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you" (Genesis 16b).

And He told Adam:

"... cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:17b-19)

Allow me to very succinctly summarize the issues, from the selected text, that men and women now face in this fallen world:

- leadership and control conflict in marriage
- economic struggle for men to provide

The three excuses in the parable for not attending the great banquet were all directly related to the curses laid upon man at the fall. Amazingly, following Jesus is ultimately the way out of the bondage, yet, the deceitfulness of sin is so strong that people make excuses to remain in it. They remain weighed down by the cares of this life, whereas the helpless ("the poor and crippled and blind and lame") will readily attend to Jesus.

*The reason that those invited do not come is because they desire sin over God.* It is that simple.

Sin snares and deceives and causes people to desire that which is harmful to them. It causes them to carve out their own selfish existence with God isolated from their thoughts. It is the Word of God that has the power to break up the hardened ground so that the light of Christ and the watering of the Spirit can cause fruitful transformation.

We have been designed by God as vessels that are shaped by information. We must have the information of God penetrating and illuminating our souls on a daily basis. This information leads to the establishment of foundational, non-negotiable life principles for God's people. Furthermore, the learning is not just an educational process, but a dynamic relationship that develops with the Teacher, the Holy Spirit. Through this growth the Spirit can penetrate our family, civic, occupational, and social lives in ways

never even considered. The reason the church is not producing the latter to the extent that it should is because it does not have the former to the extent that it should.

In the near future, True Vine Life will start to focus more on the essentials of the Word of God that must shape the worldview of the faithful remnant if we are going to succeed in Christ. My heavenly directed goal for this site from the beginning has been to lay the teaching foundation necessary to draw upon for future ministry endeavors. The conclusion of this study of 1 Samuel has reaffirmed the necessity of this approach. Stay tuned ...