

After a time of stagnation in the story of Israel, Samuel was able to bring spiritual restoration to the people of Israel.

1. The nation's chance for renewal and restoration

1. **God gave the nation a chance for renewal and restoration.** It seems to have been the Philistine oppression of Israel that brought the people to the point where they were lamenting after the LORD¹. This had often happened, as Samuel mentions later². A time of crisis in the nation is likely to be a time of seeking the LORD. But the servants of God have to take action and exploit such a situation for God, as Samuel did. Samuel takes advantage of this movement among the people and seeks to consolidate it into a real forward step in the relationship between God and the nation.

¹ 17:2
² 12:9-11

2. Restoration involved thorough repentance

• Modern nations need to do the same - the principles are the same

2. **This restoration requires thorough repentance.** He says 'If you are returning to the LORD ... remove the foreign gods...' ¹. A superficial repentance will do no good. An emotional repentance will achieve nothing. There must be a true putting away of idols if God is to bless and restore the nation. The people heed him and actually turn from their national sins of idolatry and give themselves to the LORD alone². Modern nations need to do the same. Perhaps the national sins may not be 'Ashtoroth' (statues of a female goddess); the local idols may be the sins of financial greed and spiritual laziness. But the principles are the same.

¹ 7:3

² 7:4

• Restoration involved Samuel's intercession

Restoration involved Samuel's intercession. Samuel summons the people to Mizpah and promises to intercede for them¹. The people repent of their idolatrous ways². The pouring out of water seems to have been a way of expressing the need for cleansing. It was as though the people were saying 'We have sinned and need to be washed clean'. The fasting was an expression of seriousness. The eating of food was given up in order to give time to prayer and concentrating on seeking restoration and God's blessing. After that Samuel 'judges' the people; that is to say, he rules over them, guides them, instructs them in the ways of God and counsels them in situations of perplexity.

¹ 7:5
² 7:6

3. The time of restoration soon tested

• Through faith, the people pass the test

3. **The time of restoration was soon tested.** Soon after this spiritual restoration there comes a time of testing. Once again, as often had happened before, the Philistines attack¹. It was viciously timed. The devil knows how to send 'an evil day', a time when the attack of the enemies of God's people seems to catch them at their weakest. For the Philistines, the chance to invade at the time of an unarmed religious assembly was too great to be missed.

¹ 7:7a

The people pass God's test by responding in faith. The people of Israel are alarmed¹ but put their trust in the intercession of Samuel². He in turn as their intercessor and priest offers a lamb in sacrifice³. It is a sacrifice that speaks of consecration to God. At the same time as he sacrifices the lamb the Philistines attack. It is a spiritual principle fulfilled in Jesus. When attacked by Satan the Christian has an intercessor, someone who prays that they might be kept from the evil one⁴. He does his interceding because he is the Righteous One⁵ and reigns at the right hand of the Father with a perfect righteousness which entitles him to have all his prayers answered

¹ 7:7b
² 7:8
³ 7:9

⁴ John 17:15
⁵ 1 John 2:2

4. God's wonderful deliverance

• But if the situation is desperate God is capable of doing something dramatic

4. **True amendment of life brought God's deliverance in a way that was wonderful in its method and in its timing.** Here are a people newly dedicated to God, yet their dedication does not release them from being attacked by Philistines. Far from it! It might have seemed quite impossible for God to protect Israel. They were defenceless, having been caught in the middle of a meeting for repentance over their idolatrous ways. They would not have come to Mizpah in any way armed for battle against the Philistines. It seemed to be a situation where total slaughter of the Israelites was inevitable. But if the situation was desperate God was capable of doing something dramatic. As the Philistines invaded a terrifying thunderstorm took place^{¶1} which because of its violence and because it took place at the very point the Philistines were attacking, threw them into extreme panic. All the Israelites had to do was to rush down upon them, perhaps even picking up weapons abandoned by the Philistines, and utterly defeat them^{¶2}.

¶1 7:10

¶2 7:11

5. Restoration led to a season of God's blessings

• We too are to make careful note to remember God's rescues

5. **Restoration led to long-term consolidation.** What had happened led into a period of Israel's history where the people were given victory and dominance over their enemies and a time of peace. It did not last indefinitely (as the next chapter of 1 Samuel shows) but while it lasted it was a significant and prosperous time in Israel's history.

At the beginning of this time Samuel marked the occasion when God had rescued the people by putting up a memorial stone and naming the place Ebenezer 'stone of help'^{¶1}. We are meant to learn God's ways. God's rescuings are something he is likely to do again and again. When we have been delivered from a crisis once we must remember that the same God is able to deliver us again. One way of encouraging ourselves to do this is to make careful note of his deliverances and resolve not to forget them.

¶1 7:12

• Samuel's wise rule over Israel

It was a minor turning point in the history of Israel. The Philistines were subdued^{¶1}, cities were restored to Israel^{¶2}. Samuel was established as the ruler of Israel for many years^{¶3}. He diligently watched over the affairs of the nation^{¶4} attending different parts of the country personally^{¶5}, but making his home at Ramah his headquarters^{¶6}. Samuel took practical steps to stay in touch with the entire nation. His circuits around the land gave the people easy access to him and enabled him to truly know the situation of his people. For at least a generation such a ministry led the nation into the blessings of God.

¶1 7:13

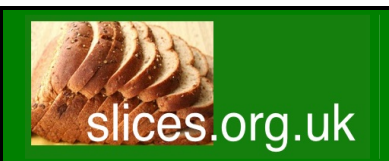
¶2 7:14

¶3 7:15

¶4 7:16

¶5 7:16

¶6 7:17



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