

Life Group Study - 1 Samuel 5-7 God Upholds His Own Glory

Background

1 Samuel begins at the end of the period of the judges. The people were indulging in sin as, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes”. Even the priests of Israel were corrupt, led by Eli and his sons. Samuel, the final Judge, was chosen from his birth to be a priest for the Lord as a result of his mother’s petition to God. God’s blessing on the family of Elkanah and Hannah is a stark contrast to the judgment of God on the house of Eli. The events depicted in 1 Samuel run from approximately 1140 B.C. to around 1015 B.C. In 1 Samuel 4, the ark of God is captured by the Philistines in the battle between Aphek and Ebenezer and moved to Ashdod (West side of the map, bordering the Mediterranean Sea).



Weekly Reading: Read 1 Samuel 5-7 in its entirety.

Group Study:

Read 1 Samuel 5:1-5 - Will the real God please stand up...

The Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines and taken to the Philistine capitol of Ashdod. There, they placed the ark in their temple next to the idol of their god, Dagon. Dagon had the appearance of a human from the waist up and the appearance of a fish from the waist down (Merman).

What happened to the idol of Dagon when it encountered the Ark of the Covenant?

Why do you think this happened twice?

What happened differently the second time Dagon fell?

What did this signify to the Philistines?

How did this change the future practice by the Philistines in their temple?

What does this say about God's holiness?

Read 1 Samuel 5:6-12 - Terror and confusion in the camp of the Philistines

What happened as a result of the Philistines keeping the Ark of the Covenant as a spoil of war?

Did the Philistines recognize the cause of their problems?

What did the God of Israel teach the people of Ashdod during this encounter with the Ark?

What does this teach us about reverence for God?

Read 1 Samuel 6:1-7:2 - The return of the Ark

How long was the ark in the Philistine territory?

During that time, what did the Philistines realize about the ark and the God of Israel?

The practice of giving items resembling the ills which plagued people as a guilt offering to the god whom they believed they had offended was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East. The Philistines sent golden rats and tumors back to Israel with the ark as a gift to God, acknowledging that they had angered him and had been wrong to take the Ark of the Covenant away from Israel.

How did the Philistines return the Ark of God to the people of Israel?
Why did the Philistines use cows who had just calved to pull the cart?
What did the result prove to the Philistines?
What does this say about God's desire to save?
What does this tell you about God being a missional God?

The ark was found next by the people of Beth-shemesh who were harvesting their wheat. How do the people of Beth-shemesh react to finding the cart and ark?
Why were 70 people from Beth-shemesh struck down?
What did the Israelites realize about God and his holiness?
How can we revere God and his holiness?

Read 1 Samuel 7:3-7:17 - Repentance, prayer, fasting, and results

What does Samuel instruct the people to do in 1 Samuel 7:3?
How did the Israelites respond?
How are we to approach God when we sin?
What does Samuel do on behalf of the people in response to their repentance?
How does God respond to their repentance?
How does acknowledging our sins improve our relationship with God?
How do the Philistines act differently toward Israel after this encounter with the true God of Israel?
What things do you need to confess before God in repentance?

Take a few minutes to quietly reflect (individually) in the group on God's faithfulness in response to humbling ourselves, seeking Him through prayer and fasting, and true repentance. Seek out God and ask Him for forgiveness and a restored relationship.

Close in Prayer as a Group