

1 Samuel 6-7

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[0 : 00] Yeah, Father, we just want to dedicate this time to you. We just want to ask you to just come and settle our hearts and our minds, because we just want a greater relationship with you.

Please be with us this morning, in Jesus' name. Amen. Right, I've plomped myself right in your way. I've shifted myself slightly out of the way, so hopefully we'll be able to see the screen.

Right, is that all up and running? Ah, my screen is not actually working correctly. Is it going to go into presentation mode? Hello?

Something has happened with the tech. That's what happens when you bring technology to the affair.

You overly complicate it, and then stuff doesn't work. Yes. Unable content. Yes, come on. Let's get moving.

[1 : 25] Right. Word document. Right. So what have we got here?

We have got four lovely pictures that are of different kinds of power. Right? Electricity can be generated in all kinds of ways.

Planning officers organise where these kinds of things are going to be built. They'll deal with simpler things as well, like the extension to your house, if you want to put a conservatory on the back or an extra floor or something like that.

But, you know, more significant construction things like this. Often people like the Secretary of State might get involved. But projects like this, but also things like prisons and power plants, they consult with the local population.

And invariably people will say, we don't want a prison here. I can kind of understand that. We don't want a power plant there either. Because it's a natural response, isn't it?

[2 : 39] The not in my backyard or NIMBY, as Keith so rightly pointed out when he got a glimpse of my slides earlier on. Look, it's understandable. It affects your house prices.

It can bring pollution. It can bring crime to the area. Just thinking about the prison point. In Haiti, last week, 4,000 prisoners escaped. I'm not locking the doors and the windows.

I'm getting on a plane. Although I'm probably going to find myself surrounded by people who just jumped out of the prison. So if we just look for a moment at this slide we've got of the different types of power.

So, I'll use a little laser pointer because it makes me feel better. It makes me feel important, you see. Wind power, right? You've got this. The wind's blowing.

Some of those turbines are turning. It actually doesn't generate an awful lot of power. It uses up a lot of land for the amount of power it generates. Creates noise. It's ugly.

[3 : 43] Some birds can also get chopped up in the rotor blades. Lovely. Yeah. Yeah. Don't like that one. Solar power. It's not particularly pleasant to look at.

Sorry, that's this one over here for the benefit of you. Can't work that one out. But we've also moved to putting those ones on top of all of our houses, all new builds. They're even talking about putting them on the roof of all car parks.

Which is what it is, I guess. In the bottom left-hand corner, we have a nuclear power plant. There's steam coming out of that.

It's supposed to be clean energy. Creates lots of energy, so it can power lots of houses. Okay.

Great. But trouble is, it's seriously bad news when things go wrong.

Just think Chernobyl. Fukushima. Yeah. Don't like that one. You've also got coal or oil-fired power stations.

[4 : 47] There's a big black smoke coming out of it, polluting the local area. Produces lots of power. Disgusting. No one wants that one. Not in my backyard, as they might say. Right.

If you turn to chapter 6 of 1 Samuel, we will get into our scripture. And we will understand why on earth I've bothered to bring some flower power to the affair.

Right. So, the first word we have in front of us is the word now. Is this going to work? No.

The technology is totally going to let me down. Excellent. Anyway, the word now. When is now?

Well, 1 Samuel takes place over a period of 110 years.

Okay. From about 1120 BC. So, that's 1120 years before Christ is born. To around 1011 BC.

[5 : 51] We believe the events that we'll be looking at today take place in 1067 BC. So, kind of in the middle of that kind of range. Now, the Ark of the Lord had been in the territory of the Philistines for seven months.

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners saying, what are we to do with the Ark of the Lord? Tell us how we may send it to its place.

Okay. So, straight away, what are these guys saying? They are saying, nimby, not in my backyard. We need to get rid of this thing.

So, the Philistines are calling for the priests and the diviners. The term for priest is actually a generic term. It doesn't tell you whether these are priests of Yahweh or not.

We know they're not. Because we can infer that from, well, the fact that they're Philistines. And also because of the garbage that comes out of their mouths. The context is that chapter 6 is following chapter 5, unsurprisingly.

[6 : 58] Where they call for the priests of Dagon. It's the same word for priest there as well. And it's probably these priests of Dagon who are coming along here. So, priests and diviners.

Well, diviners. They engage in a thing called divination. Divination comes up in the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis.

And also in the life of Daniel in the self-titled book of Daniel. So, divination can cover things like tarot card reading. Which is using a deck of cards to gain insights into the past, present or future.

Rune casting. Which is throwing little stones which have symbols on them. And interpreting the symbols that come up.

Tea leaf reading. Which is examining patterns formed by tea leaves in a cup. Automatic writing.

Which is kind of following messages which kind of flow from your hand without conscious control.

[8 : 00] And water scrying. Which is gazing into water surfaces to perceive visions or symbols.

Lovely. No. I think the appropriate response is cuckoo.

I'm sorry. But, you know. The scientists in the world will tell you that this is, and perhaps common sense will as well, tell you that this is hokum.

Poppycock. Balderdash. Choose your own words as you'd like. But the Bible implies something else. Deuteronomy chapter 18 verses 10 to 12 says, Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire.

Who practices divination or sorcery. Interprets omens. Engages in witchcraft. Or casts spells. Or who is a medium. Or spiritist.

Or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. Because of these same detestable practices, the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you.

[9 : 09] Now Samuel will write later in this book that when Saul is rejected and is being criticised for not obeying the Lord's instruction.

So 1 Samuel chapter 15 verse 23, he says this, For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

In 1 Samuel chapter 28, Saul uses a medium to summon the spirit of Samuel after he has died.

Now we'll cover those shenanigans when we get to that chapter in detail, But the point that I'm trying to make is, The Bible doesn't tell us that these things aren't real.

The Bible is just telling us not to mess with them. So verse 3, And they said, Guilt offerings are covered in detail in Leviticus chapter 5 and half of chapter 6.

Suffice to say, an offering is not all it says. Leviticus 5.5 says this, So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, That he shall confess that in which he has sinned.

[10 : 43] It's not just an offering. There is confession involved. Just like each Philistine city in Samuel chapter 5, They are saying, Let's get rid, Because we don't like this punishment.

So this is not a guilt offering, As per God's description. This is a bribe, That they're talking about sending. This is like the behaviour of that kind of hapless parent, Who gives their kids some sweets, Because they won't stop fighting.

What? Yeah. Great parent. So carrying on in the verse, Then you will be healed, And it will be revealed to you, Why his hand does not leave you.

So this is the stuff, The priests, The diviners are saying. It's not exactly like what James 5.16 says, Therefore confess your sins to one another, And pray for one another, So that you may be healed. To that you may be healed. So we're going to bribe the God of Israel, So that our problems will go away.

[12:01] Then they said, What is to be the guilt offering, That we shall return to him? And they said, Five gold tumours, And five gold mice, Corresponding to the number of the governors of the Philistines, Since one plague was on all of you, And on your governors.

There's one translation, The KJV, Which calls these tumours, Emerods, Which in modern times, Is called, Hemorrhoids.

Whereas, Most other mainstream translations, Call them, Tumours. Well, What difference does that make, So? Well, In chapter 5, The Ekronites, Say in verse 10, They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around, To kill us, And our people.

They're not saying, Pass the anisole. They're not saying, Ooh, Me grapes! No. In all seriousness, People dying from hemorrhoids, Is extremely rare.

But really, Is God going to judge the Philistines, By giving them hemorrhoids? Sore, Itchy bottoms. Really? Really? I don't think that stacks up.

[13:15] There doesn't appear to be much of a link, Between hemorrhoids and mice. Tumours, On the other hand, Makes a little bit more sense. Because, There was a thing called, The bubonic plague.

The black death. This produced, Severely swollen glands, In the groin, And the armpits. Okay? The bubonic plague, Was spread, By being bitten, By the fleas, Off of rodents.

Hence, The mice. I mean, Either way, It doesn't make a theological difference, Which ones of these translations you prefer. But, The bubonic plague, Killed around 50% of the population of Europe, In the 14th century.

That's between 25 and 50 million people. The population was a lot smaller in those days. But that, I have to say, Is a reason to get rid of the ark.

So, As you will see, As we progress through this chapter, You will see that there is a game of past the bomb going on. I don't want it. No, You can have it.

[14:28] So, Moving on to verse 5. So you shall make likenesses of your tumours, And likenesses of your mice, That are ruining the land. And you shall give glory to the God of Israel.

Perhaps he will lighten his hand from you, Your gods and your land. And, One of the things about the concept of inerrancy in the Bible, Is that it reports accurately the rubbish that some people speak.

These priests don't know our God. Since when has he ever said, Make a likeness of your leprosy, Or make a golden statue of your eyes that don't work.

Now, A preschool teacher might tell you to go and make it out of paper mache, But the Lord certainly isn't. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from you, Your gods and your land.

Yeah, If we bribe him, He'll be nice to us. Yeah, Not my favourite priests. Verse 6, Why then do you harden your hearts, As the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?

[15:40] When he had severely dealt with them, Did they not let the people go, And they left? It's interesting here, That the priests of Dagon, And the diviners, Are now bringing up Pharaoh, And the Egyptians, Hardening their hearts.

There were 10 plagues in Egypt, And God was dismantling their gods, One by one. The first five plagues, As you may recall, You have a situation, Where sometimes it's Pharaoh's heart, So it's Pharaoh, Who is hardening his own heart, And other times, It just says, Pharaoh's heart, It was hardened.

It's not specific as to, How? The final five plagues, However, For four of the five, It says, The Lord hardened his heart. For the other one, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Okay. Verse 7, Now then, Take and prepare a new cart, And two milk cows, On which there's never been a yoke. A yoke being the thing, That helps them to pull the, Um, Uh, The plough.

And hitch the cows to the cart, And take their calves back home, Away from them. Okay. So they devise a plan, To prove whether the affliction, That they have suffered, Was the God of Israel or not.

[17:03] They're going to take, Two female cows, Who are relatively new mothers, Attach them to a cart, And then, Drag their babies away from them. Um, Then, Uh, They're going to let these cows go, And see what happens.

Um, If they go where their babies are, Then it's not of God. This is just an opportunity, To mock the God of Israel. Because, Well, What's your expectation?

The cows have only got one place, They're going to go. They're going to hear, They're going to hear their babies, And they're going to go there, Right? Their calves. Verse 8 says, Then take the ark of the Lord, Place it on a cart, Put the articles of gold, Which you return to him as a guilt offering, In a saddlebag by its side.

Then send it away, That it may go. But, Watch, If it goes up by the way of its own territory, To Beth Shemesh, Then he has done this great evil to us. But if not, Then we will know, That it was not his hand that struck us, It happened to us by chance.

The ark of God, On a cart, With a bribe. Great. Exodus tells us some of the designs of the ark.

[18:16] Chapter 25, verse 11 to 15 says this, You shall overlay it with pure gold, Inside and out, And you shall overlay it, And you shall make a gold moulding around it, And you shall also cast four gold rings for it, And fasten them on its four feet, Two rings shall be on one side of it, And two rings on the other side of it, And you shall make poles of acacia wood, And overlay them with gold, You shall put the poles into the rings on the side of the ark, To carry the ark with them, The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark, They shall not be removed from it.

Numbers chapter 4, verse 15 then says, When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects, And all the furnishings of the sanctuary, When the camp is to set out, After that, The sons of Kohath shall come to carry them by the poles, So that they will not touch the holy objects, And die.

These are the things in the tent of meeting, That the sons of Kohath are to carry. The ark, It's supposed to be carried on poles, By members of the tribe of Levi, Specifically the Kohathites. But the Philistines, Choose to shove it on a cart, With some idols, And let some cows pull it along. The Philistines.

It makes sense, That we use that expression, You Philistine. This is the kind of reason why. Sacrilege behaviour. David is going to copy this, Method of using cows and carts, In 2 Samuel chapter 6.

[20:02] If you recall, That's when the ark's being transported on a cart, And the oxen make it almost fall, And Uzziah tries to steady the ark, And is struck dead, Because he touched it.

So, They are going to establish, Was it God or not? Then the men did so, And took two milk cows, And hitched them to the cart, And shut in their calves at home.

And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart, Put the ark of the Lord on the cart, And the saddlebag with the golden mice, And the likeness of their tumours. So, As I was saying, This is an opportunity to mock God.

The cows are obviously going to head straight, For their own children, Who are moving in the stall. Won't they? Well, Verse 12 tells us this, Now the cows went straight in the direction of Beth Shemesh, And they went on the same road, Bellowing as they went, And did not turn off to the right or to the left, And the governors of the Philistines, Followed them to the border of Beth Shemesh, Beth Shemesh.

Try saying that 12 times quickly. The cows, Kind of make the priests look a bit stupid now, Because the cows have made a beeline, Straight, To Beth Shemesh.

[21:26] Where on earth is Beth Shemesh, I hear you ask. Let's see if we can get this to finally start working. Come on.

Close it. Open it again. As you can tell, I've broken stuff. Here we go.

Got a nice map of Israel here. So, Got Mizpah on here. Mizpah will come up later on in our little, In our little, Story, I suppose.

Just want to show you a few places. So, Up here you've got Ramatham Zophim, Also known as Rama. That's where Samuel was born. You've got Shiloh up here, Which was where the tabernacle, And Eli was.

If you remember then, There was a battle between Israel, And, The Philistines. Israel camped at Ebenezer. Notice there's a question mark at the end.

[22 : 30] And, Next door, I have forgotten the name of that place, And I can't read it. It's a blur. Yeah, That sounds good. Afec. Yeah.

Here you've got the five main cities, Of the Philistines. So, Ekron, Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, And Gaza. Never heard of that place. So, These are the other places that come up, That are relevant. Bethshemesh. So, This is the place where the cows have just gone. Kirith, Jerim. We'll come up in a moment, Because they're going to move the ark again. And this place over here called Jabus. It's where the Jebusites live.

It will be known as Jerusalem. So, They took the ark from Shiloh to the front line. And what happened? Well, They lost.

So, The Philistines took it over here to Ashdod, Which is where Dagon's temple was. And Dagon got his arms ripped off, And his face, And his head knocked off. So, The Philistines decided it would be a great plan to get rid of it.

[23 : 33] Let's send it to Gath. Goliath of Gath, By the way. They didn't like it either. So, They sent it to Ekron. So, In what we've just been reading this morning, The Ekronites are saying, Yeah, We've got to get rid of this.

So, The bomb is being sent to Beth Shemesh. They've gone in a straight line here. In a moment, We will also see that they think it's a good idea to send it to Kirith, Jerim.

And I've put a dotted line in here, Because, That is the journey that will go, That will occur under David's, David's oversight, When Uzziah will get himself killed.

But that's all, All good and well. Let's move on to this next verse.

Now, The people of Beth Shemesh, So, Oh, Okay, Got rid of that. That's fine. Bring it back later. So, The people of Beth Shemesh, They were gathering in the wheat harvest in the valley, And they raised their eyes, And saw the ark, And rejoiced at seeing it.

[24 : 48] Firstly, The people rejoiced. The ark was something they wanted back. This is actually quite interesting, Because, Before, They had wheeled out the ark, And lost in battle.

Maybe they weren't so bothered anymore. I don't know. Let's carry on. So, They were doing the wheat harvest. This lines up with the Feast of Weeks. And that occurs, On the sixth day, On the month of Sivan.

Which, Let's face it, That means nothing to any of us. In English money, That means, Between the middle of June, Sorry, The middle of May, To middle of June. That's when the, This wheat harvest occurs.

And what's their response? So, They were pleased. Verse 14, And the carts came into the feast, The field of Joshua the Bethshemite, And stopped there, Where there was a large stone, And they split the wood of the carts, And offered the cows, As burnt offerings to the Lord.

The burnt offering that is offered, Has been provided by the Lord. That reminds me of the sacrifice that the Lord provided, When Abraham, Didn't have to then sacrifice his son Isaac.

[26 : 09] You've also got a large stone in this picture. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, And the saddlebag that was with it, In which there, In which were the articles of gold, And put them on the large stone.

And the men of Bethshemesh, Offered burnt offerings, And sacrificed sacrifices, That day to the Lord. When the five governors of the Philistines saw it, They returned to Ekron that day.

Now, these are the gold tumors, Which the Philistines returned, As a guilt offering to the Lord. One for Ashdod, One for Gaza, One for Ashkelon, One for Gath, And one for Ekron, Those five cities I mentioned earlier.

And the five golden mice, Corresponding to the number of all the cities, And the Philistines, Belonging to the five governors. Both of the fortified cities, And of country villages. The large stone, On which they placed the ark of the Lord, Is a witness to this day, In the field of Joshua, The Beth Shemite.

Let me go back there. Let's see if this will work. Yeah. Go through that again. What a fuff.

[27 : 27] Short video for you. We are at the northern edge of Timberton, The Beth Shemite. All of this area has been excavated, In the last 15 years or so.

But two years ago, The team decided to excavate, In the back of the sacrificial space, In what was down here. You have to look at this.

That's right. We can't go up the slaves, Just so you know. Thank you for the morning. This is the season, But it looks, It looks good.

And I'm excited, I'm excited, I'm excited each time I come here. Look at the evidence. We are inside a room, That is part of where animals were sacrificed. In fact, You can see here, In the field, The paint layers of dark ants, With repeated fires, And animal bones were found in.

And here in the middle of the back room, You have a big, flat stone. Not folding down, Intentionally put this way, Whose dimension is, A cubit and a half, Over about, Three cubits.

[28 : 35] The size of the arc, Is a cubic and a half, From two and a half cubits. The arc will be cut. Yes, Meaning this is slightly bigger, Than the other. Very flat, So you can hold it, Then it's more or less the same, I mentioned.

A bit bigger, Just to make sure, It holds it inside. Yeah, it's funny, Then you came down, I said, Wow, the ornament was not that big. Yes. Really? Well, it just held, And commanding. There was a lot of power in there.

Of course. And it's hundred times it. Yes. I get it. You cannot rule out the possibility. I don't know the truth, But you cannot rule out the possibility. This is the very best, What you are, On the covenant of the script.

It seems to absolutely fit, The biblical manner that we are. Let's move on. I've put that video on there, Just to kind of highlight the point. We aren't talking about fairy stories here.

If that is actually the stone, Fantastic it's not. I don't think it makes a major amount of difference to me. But the point is, These are real stories. So some of these places you can go and see, This guy's convinced, I'm a pfff, Personal opinion, I have absolutely no idea whether that's it or not.

[29 : 44] But, These things are real. So, verse 19. And he fatally struck some of the men of Beth Shemesh, Because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.

Hmm. What was in the ark? Contents of the ark.

Three things in it. You have, The tablets of the testimony of the Ten Commandments. Copy two, Because someone decided to destroy the first lot, By getting a bit cross and throwing them.

Well played Moses, You humble man. You have here, The staff of Aaron, Which budded, When he was challenged on his authority. And you have a golden jar of manna.

Which, Is actually quite an interesting one. Because, Manna, When they gathered it, The next morning it would be mouldy. It would have deteriorated. Except on the Sabbath, It lasted an extra day.

[30 : 53] Would have turned my stomach at the thought of, Having to trust that, I could eat that stuff. Um, But, You would learn to trust it. After the first time it doesn't go wrong, You kind of, Yeah.

But these were the, These were the things that were inside the, Um, The ark. Um, Thing is though, Uh, They looked inside it. And the Lord struck them.

So, What does that mean? Well, If we move on to our, Next, Yeah, Let's have a look at our next verse. He struck, 50,070 men, Among the people, And the people mourned, Because the Lord had struck the people, With a great slaughter.

So, We've talked about inerrancy, Briefly once already today. Some of your translations will say 70. Some of your translations will say 50,070.

There's only a small difference between those numbers, right? What's, What's 50,000 between friends? Well, It's, It's, It's worth us actually digging into that a little bit. So, So, Which translations say what?

[32 : 08] So, As you can see there, You've got a few in the, 50,070. You've got some of them sat in the 70, Uh, Category. Some commentators have suggested maybe it was 70 of 50,000 men.

So, So, You've got a bit of a problem here, Because Beth Shemesh is a tiny little place, Um, To suggest that they would have had a population of, 50,000 males, 50,000 females, And let's go with a conservative, Three child, Three children by each of those, 150,000, That's 250,000 people in that area.

Mmm, Based on the archaeology that they've looked at, Looks unlikely. Exactly. So, What do we do with that? People have suggested, That it's most likely to be a scribal or transcription error.

What does that mean? Does that mean the Bible is, Has got an error in it? When we say the Bible is inerrant, What we mean is, What the Lord gave us originally, Was perfect.

Man has been in the meantime, Dealing with it. If you only ever had the message, Translation, You would be full of so many errors. Right? Messages and the translation, It's the wrong word really for it.

[33 : 32] It's a, It's a, What's the word I'm looking for? It's a mess. That's a, That's a, That's a good description. Uh, Yeah, It's a paraphrase. Um, Perhaps an over paraphrase in some places.

But yes, You've got this, 50,000, Is it 50,070? Is it 70? Well, When you look at the Hebrew, Then the, The, The structure of the words, Is actually a bit odd.

What you would expect it to say, Is, 50,070 men. What it actually says is, 50,000 men, 70 men.

Sorry, I've got that the wrong way around. Huh, Just like they did. 70 men, 50,000 men. There's no and, And it's, Odd that it repeats itself.

So, We think it's probably, A transcription error, Rather than, The Bible itself is errant. Um, Let's move on.

[34 : 42] So, What is the response? Of the people of Beth Shemesh, To, A number of people dying. Verse 20, And the men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before the Lord, This holy God?

And to whom will he go up from us? So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-Jerim, Saying, The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord.

Come down and take it up to yourselves. They want rid. Nimbi, Not in my backyard. So the fear of the Lord has hit the Beth Shemesh, The Israelites of Beth Shemesh.

So they sent messengers. Notice they kind of omit, Um, A little bit of information when they say to them, You know, Uh, What was the phraseology? The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord.

Come down and take it up to yourselves. Um, A little bit of a waste.

[36 : 06] And going, Let's dig a hole and dump the thing. Or, Let's dump it at sea. I don't want it here. Not in my backyard. You know, You'd pretend it's not your problem.

But anyway, They don't tell the men of Kiriath-Jerim that information. And chapter 7, Verse 1 says, And the men of Kiriath-Jerim came and took the ark of the Lord, And brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill.

And they consecrated his son, Eleazar, To watch over the ark of the Lord. They consecrated Eleazar. Consecrated means to be declared sacred or holy.

The ritual for that is in Leviticus chapter 8. Suffice to say, It involves a number of animal sacrifices, Being anointed with oil, On your head, Blood on the right earlobe, On the right thumb of the right hand, On the right big toe of the right foot.

Then you get a load of more oil sprinkled on your clothes. And then you've got to stay at the entrance to the tent of meeting for seven days. Okay?

[37 : 23] But time consuming and complex. Verse 2 says, So here we find a potentially another tricky passage.

The ark stays for 20 years. In 2 Samuel chapter 6, David moves the ark from the house of Abinadab. But that's when David is king. 2 Samuel 5.5 tells us, In Hebron, he, David, Reigned over Judah seven and a half, Sorry, seven years and six months.

And in Jerusalem, He reigned over all Israel and Judah 33 years. He moves the ark at the beginning of his Jerusalem period. So he's been king seven and a half years by this point.

In the interim, you've also got Saul who's going to be king. And Acts 13.21 will tell us that Saul was king for 40 years. So we've got a minimum of 47 and a half years from this point.

Do you see the problem we've got? Some commentators have suggested that 2 Samuel 6, that to solve this problem, Abinadab has just moved house to another hill.

[38 : 37] I think the 20 years that's mentioned here doesn't refer to how long the ark is there. It's just a reference to the amount of time from verse 2 to verse 3.

So no error in the Bible. Just a sad reflection at the speed at which the Israelites are going to reflect on this series of events and make changes. So verse 3.

Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then remove the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve him alone and he will save you from the hand of the Philistines.

1 Samuel, if you remember, follows on from the book of Judges. In the book of Judges, there's this thing called the sin cycle that's established. So the sin cycle is a recurring cycle of behaviours.

What you have is a period where Israel serves the Lord. Well, what happens after that? Israel falls into idolatry and other sins. They get persecuted because they're now no longer following the Lord.

[39 : 55] But then Israel will cry out to the Lord. In the context of the book of Judges, God raises up a judge. And then Israel is delivered. And then they serve the Lord before they then fall into sin again.

And the cycle continues multiple times throughout the book of Judges. Highs and lows, peaks and troughs, the Israelites continuously shoot themselves in the foot.

Fortunately, we're not that stupid. Verse 3. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you're returning to the Lord with all your heart, then remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you.

Direct your hearts to the Lord. Serve him alone. And he will save you from the hand of the Philistines. So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone. Well, okay.

How do you prioritise which god to serve first when you've got multiple gods?

[41 : 07] When do you serve this god and then that one? Do the gods get jealous of each other? How do you prioritise them?

Do you let the gods battle it out to see which one is best? Well, when it comes to prioritisation, Dwight D. Eisenhower had a philosophy, or he was President of the United States, 34th apparently, from 1953 to 61.

He had a method on how you should prioritise things. When you've got a bunch of tasks that you need to work out what to do with, you split them into are they urgent or are they not urgent?

And then you split them into are they important or are they not important? Things that are both urgent and important, you do those things, get them done.

Things that are important but not urgent, you decide when you'll get round to it. Needs to be done but eventually. Is it urgent?

[42 : 14] Is it not important? Kids are great at coming up with these things for me. In the context of if you're President of the United States, you can delegate, you can ask someone else to do it for you.

But if it's not important and it's not urgent, you ditch it. Okay, fine. But in everything in life, if you put all these things into that matrix, you'll have a bunch of things in each of those categories.

Where does the Lord fit? If you prioritise him appropriately, this would be your response. He would be all the time and he would be the most important.

Right? The Israelites are looking to make this change in their lives. Mark chapter 12, verse 30, says this, And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

If you're doing that all the time and it's the most important. That's what it's saying. Verse 5, Then Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord for you.

[43 : 36] So they gathered to 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 sons of Israel at Mizpah.

We're talking about spiritual revival here. A return to life. A return to worshipping the Lord. Verse 7 then says, Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the governors of the Philistines went up against Israel and when the sons of Israel heard about it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

What do we think? That the fear of the Philistines is the beginning of wisdom? Well, what do they do? So the sons of Israel said to Samuel, Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he will save us from the hands of the Philistines.

Okay, so they need help. Isn't it great that they're calling out to God? I mean, they have to use an intermediary. We can go direct. But in those days, they needed the priest to intercede.

And here they are asking Samuel to intercede on their behalf. Now 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.

[45 : 01] And the Lord answered him. In chapter 3, we had the words that covered, that told us how rare the word of the Lord was in those days.

Samuel got an instant response. Israel's hearts are now in a completely different place. remember that time when they sent the ark of the Lord out into battle?

Treating the Lord like he's a vending machine. Yep, we'll just have victory in battle, please, Lord.

There we go. You've not been that bothered about the sacrifices that the Lord asks for. You've not

been that bothered about your relationship with him.

Your priests have been eating all the fat from the sacrifices. Verse 10, now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering and the Philistines advanced to battle Israel.

But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them so that they were struck down before Israel. And the men of Israel came out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and killed them as far as below, yeah, as far as below Bethkar.

[46 : 17] Mizpah. It's this one here in the middle. Okay. What were those other named places? We've got Mizpah.

They're going to as far as below Bethkar. Yeah. Well, it's not on the map. It's actually one of those places where we've got no idea where it is. But, it's kind of implied that it's inside Philistine territory because, well, why would you stop chasing them if they're still inside your territory?

You're just asking for them to turn around and come back at you. So, then Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen. Shen is spitting distance south of Mizpah so it's not that far from it.

And, Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen and named it Ebenezer. We've already had an Ebenezer that was up north where the Israelites camped before that battle.

This is a different Ebenezer. Named it Ebenezer saying, so far the Lord has helped us. So, Ebenezer actually means stone of help.

[47 : 29] Samuel has set up another memorial, a stone of help. Does that ring any bells with you? A stone, a rock which helps. Jesus is that rock in which we can call for help.

Verse 13, so the Philistines were subdued and they did not come any more within the border of Israel and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

Come on, bring that back up. So the Philistines didn't come back into the territory all the days of Samuel. Samuel dies in chapter 25 of 1 Samuel.

I think it's chapter 17 when David fights Goliath. Why are they fighting? That takes place here in the valley of Elor, I think it's called.

It's between Gath and Azekar, right? So it's not in Israelite territory. The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel from Ekron even to Gath and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines so there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

[48 : 45] Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. Now Saul's going to become king during Samuel's lifetime but Samuel's still the judge despite the presence of the king.

Verse 16 and he used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah and he judged Israel in all these places. Mizpah, Bethel, Gilgal up here.

It's all in a straight line north of Jerusalem. Verse 17 then he would make his return to Ramah because his house was there and there he also judged Israel and there he built an altar to the Lord. Ramah, Ramathane Zothim as we heard earlier on, that's this place here. Yeah, it's where he's born, it's where his family is. You may have noticed that there is no mention of Shiloh.

We actually believe that Shiloh was destroyed when they took the tabernacle in the battle that occurred up here when the Philistines took the ark.

[49 : 53] But yeah, in this location, was it Ramah? He builds an altar to the Lord. Well, it's because he needs one because he hasn't got the tabernacle anymore.

Right. I've put this back up for a moment. I think we just need to wrap up and have a think. What goes on in your backyard?

Well, do you allow the power of the Lord to operate? Or would you rather dump the power of the Lord at sea or send it off to another city and power your prayer life with a solar panel, which works fine when the sun is shining, but when it clouds over or it's nighttime, doesn't do anything.

Have you got idols in your life that need to be torn down and destroyed? things in your life that need to be put in their correct biblical priority? Is it desirable to have spiritual revival in your life?

If it's not, ask yourself why. Why would you leave the ark in Kirith Jirim and forget about it?

[51 : 24] The places I just named, stop talking about Samuel going back to Kirith Jirim on a regular basis. Are you afraid that the Lord will harm you if you bring him inside?

Take him into your most holy place? Have you consecrated yourself, declared yourself to be holy, set apart for a purpose?

What's gone on before doesn't matter because of the consecration. Call out to the Lord and he will deliver you. But I'm not clean enough though. That's the point of the consecration.

The blood goes on the toe, the thumb, the ear, it's not all over but it's implied by it. If you call out to the Lord, he'll deliver you.

You're then declared holy, but keep on returning to the Lord every day. You should make him priority number one, priority number two, priority number three, and he will transform you and this church.

[52 : 34] Let us pray. Yeah, Father, we just want to thank you for this time listening to you and your word. we ask that you would continue to be present in and amongst us.

We ask Father that you would help us to identify false gods and idols in our life. Even if they have some power, help us to remove them and say, not in my backyard.

Consecrate us. Help declare us Lord to be holy. Help us to prioritise you Lord and return to you again and again and again. Let there be spiritual revival in each of us and this church.

May your Holy Spirit bless us as we dwell on these things Lord. In Jesus name. Amen.