

# Israel's Repentance

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Date: 12 September 2010

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in 1 Samuel, chapter 7, and reading in verse 2, it's in page 277, 1 Samuel 7.

From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-Jerim, a long time passed, some twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

And then we read in verse 5, then Samuel said, gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you. Now as we know, this name Mizpah is a name that has worked its way into our own culture, because sometimes we see a home, and that's the name on it, Mizpah.

Now, other times we've seen boats, and that's the name, we've seen fishing boats with the name, or other boats, the name Mizpah on it. And of course, this name Mizpah, we see was an actual place, it was reckoned to be about seven miles or so north of Jerusalem.

And it was the place where Samuel called all Israel to gather together. Now these were dark days in the history of Israel, because the glory of the Lord had departed.

[ 1 : 27 ] Back in chapter 4, we read that very thing. The glory of the Lord has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.

That was when the Philistines had captured the ark. And it brought in upon Israel a time of darkness, a time of gloom, a kind of a despair. And the Philistines, when they had, of course, captured the ark, they thought they really, they thought by their own way of thinking that they'd captured the God of Israel.

But they couldn't keep the ark, because calamity after calamity fell upon the Philistines. And in the end, they couldn't keep the ark.

They had to send the ark of the covenant, the ark, back into the land of Israel. So finally, the ark is brought back, and that's what we read about there, to the house of this man Abinadab.

And this man lived on a hill country, lived on a hill which was at the juncture of the boundaries between Judah and Dan and Benjamin.

[ 2 : 35 ] And in many ways, it was a strange place to keep the ark, but it was there for a long time, in fact, until David made an attempt to bring the ark back to Jerusalem.

Of course, we know what happened then, and then eventually it did, he did eventually bring it back to Jerusalem. One of the very interesting things that we see in Samuel and in this book, 1 Samuel, is that it was a time in the early stages, it was a time of radical change.

It was a time of change of government. And these are always uncertain times, because for a long time, Israel had been ruled by judges.

There was a succession of judges. They were beginning to clamor for a king. All the nations round about had kings. And they were saying, well, why don't we have a king?

They wanted a king to be like the other nations. And so this was quite an uncertain time. And so they were clamoring, as we say, for this king.

- [ 3 : 45 ] And it's in these difficult and uncertain times that Samuel judged. And it was good that there was somebody like Samuel who was a judge, because Samuel brought a stability. He brought this sense of familiarity, so that the people, despite what was happening, Samuel was a man they really trusted. Because as we know, times of change and times of transition can be very difficult.
- It doesn't matter where these times of transition and change are. We know that it can bring out the best, or it can bring out the worst in people. And we've often seen that throughout history.
- And look at it in the Bible, we see it. And so it was good that there was somebody like Samuel who was ruling and judging at this particular time. But Samuel knew that irrespective of whether it was a judge who judged or a king who ruled, unless that judge or that king and the people trusted God, then there would not be success.
- There would not be prosperity. That the land would not enjoy the blessings that God had intended for it. And let us remember this God intended blessings for Israel.
- [ 5 : 07 ] It was the land, they were in the land that he had said to them was a land flowing with milk and honey. And let us remember this God wants the best for his people.
- If you're the Lord's tonight, remember this the Lord wants the best for you. And sometimes because of our own sinful heart and the way that the corruption of sin within us, that somehow we think that God is against us.
- That God does not want us to enjoy. That somehow that God wants us to be down and that kind of browbeaten. Not at all.
- God is the one who has given us the capacity in life to enjoy all the blessings and above all the spiritual blessings that he is bestowing upon us.
- And so God had intended for his people great blessing. But as we know, succession, generation after generation had turned their back upon the Lord.
- [ 6 : 21 ] But one of the wonderful things that we see in the Bible over and over again is God's patience and God's long suffering with his people.
- Can I ask you a question tonight? Do you think often about God's patience and God's long suffering? I think it's a very, very important question to ask.
- Because if it weren't for God's patience and long suffering, we would have been cut off long, long ago.
- And it's one of the features that is highlighted in the Bible so often is God's amazing patience and long suffering. And we see it here.
- We see God's long suffering with his people. There's a 20 year period. Now 20 years is a long time. And yet God is patient with his people and long suffering with his people.
- [ 7 : 21 ] Now as we said, for these 20 years, Israel had been in darkness. It was a very, very difficult period. Israel had slowly crumbled. And it was bit by bit by bit that she had started to lament for the Lord.
- It's amazing how God works with people. Sometimes people say, right, you know, that's where we are as a nation. Where we have turned our back upon the Lord.
- Nationally, the majority of people are not interested in God. Turned it back. And you know, the Lord is liable. And this is what he does.
- He says, well, if you don't want me, I will give you to yourselves. I will withdraw from you. I will withdraw my restraint.
- I will withdraw my help. I will withdraw my grace. And I will leave you more and more and more to yourselves.

[ 8 : 26 ] To your own wisdom. To your own judgment. And see where that will take you. And that's exactly what had been happening in Israel over and over and over again.

You read through Judges and there was this pattern going on time and time and time again. But Israel had begun to lament for the Lord. Because they had come to the place and the point where they realized that unless the Lord was to help them, there was nothing for them.

There was no future. And you know, it's amazing how that is human nature. Because there is something within us.

Some perverse, stubborn, willful, rebellious streak within us. That pushes the Lord away.

There is something natural within us. That will look everywhere but to the Lord. The Lord is the last resort. As long as we can manage on our own.

[ 9 : 34 ] As long as we can struggle on our own. As long as life is going reasonably well. Then people will not look to the Lord.

Unless the Lord will come and intervene in that person's heart and life. You see, God calls us. He calls us in his word. And so often people close their ears and close their eyes to what God is saying.

Can I ask you in here tonight. If you're without the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been closing your ears and your heart to God's call for your soul?

Where the Lord is saying to you, give me your heart. Have you been pushing the Lord away? There might have been times you've been brought low. Times you've struggled.

Times even you've had a brush with death. And yet, somehow, you've still not yielded. And you're keeping, as it were, the Lord away.

[ 10 : 44 ] Yes, you're saying to yourself, I'm quite happy to come to church. I'm quite happy for some of the religious things in life. I'm quite happy to follow along in the visible church to a certain extent.

But, I'm still keeping the Lord away. You're saying, not publicly, not vocally, not outwardly.

But, in the quiet of your heart, you're saying, we will not have this man to rule over us. Are you saying that? I will not have this man to rule over me.

That's the worst thing a patient can say. And, if that is how you are tonight, I plead with you. Don't say that any longer. Because, it comes back to God's long suffering.

God has been speaking to you week after week, month after month, year after year. But, because of his long suffering, he continues with you.

[ 11 : 52 ] Isn't that an amazing thought? If it weren't for his patience and long suffering, he would have cut you off long ago. If it weren't for his patience and long suffering, to us, to his people, he would have given up on us long ago.

There would be no gospel, no salvation, if it wasn't for the long suffering of God. But, the Bible tells us that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come in repentance.

However, we're just going to come back in a moment to look at what we're looking at. But, remember, in what I'm saying just now, that although God is patient and he's a God of long suffering, there's going to come a day when the Lord is going to say, enough is enough.

There's going to come a day of judgment. And, there's going to come a day when he will judge the world in righteousness. And, he will judge you and he will judge me. And, the main area and aspect of judgment, first and foremost, is going to be, what have we done with Jesus?

You know, it's an amazing thought that we are going to stand before Christ. And, Christ is going to say, what did you do with me? Did you love me? Or, did you hate me? Did you accept me?

[ 13 : 12 ] Or, did you reject me? See, there are only the two alternatives. We either embrace Jesus or we put him away. If we embrace him, he embraces us forever.

And, he takes us in to be with himself forever. If we reject him, then he rejects us. He says, depart from me, for I never knew you.

We get what we choose. If we choose him, he has, and we know all the Bible teaches in these things, but at the end of the day, we get what we choose.

And, so it's an amazing thought. So, here we have a great example before us of the Lord dealing with his people, bringing them, allowing them to go down and down and down, until the place where they begin to lament for the Lord.

That's what we're told. Some 20 years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And then Samuel says, gather all Israel at Mishpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.

[ 14 : 21 ] And, as Israel is gathered before the Lord at Mishpah, we find that, as they begin to, they're turning to seek the Lord, that various things were to happen.

We see a couple of these things very clearly. Verse 3, Samuel said to the house of Israel, If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreth from among you, and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only.

Israel's great problem was idolatry. It was a historical problem with them. In fact, if you go all the way back, even as far as the time of Jacob, you find that Jacob's family carried false gods.

The Jews in slavery in Egypt had begun to embrace the gods of the Egyptian. And we find that even after they were taken out of Egypt, it wasn't long until they had lapsed back into idolatry.

And right throughout their history, idolatry was probably their besetting sin. It's what caused them most problem. And remember this, that God is a jealous God, and he will tolerate no other to the throne of your heart, my heart.

[ 15 : 47 ] That's why the very first commandment is, you shall have no other gods before me. Let me ask you a question tonight. One that you alone are able to answer.

Does idolatry have a place in your life? Not worshipping the sun and the moon and bits of wood and things like that. But the list is endless.

It can be our home, our cars, our work, our family, sport. It can be leisure. It can be celebrities. It can be fame. You don't even need to have it. You could be aspiring to it.

Whatever it is, what occupies the main place of your life? What is it that governs your thinking above everything else? What is it that motivates your life? What is on the throne of your heart tonight?

The Lord knows. He can see what's on the throne of my heart, what's on the throne of your heart. Well, God tolerates no rivals.

[ 16 : 51 ] And idolatry is that great sin. And we need to, that's what Samuel is saying to Israel. And he's saying to them, direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only.

And so we need to be on our guard. And we need to be ruthless if we find idolatry there. And then the second thing that we see is that they deal with the idolatry.

So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreth, and they serve the Lord only. But then we find in verse 6, so they gathered at Mishpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said, we have sinned against the Lord.

So there's not only their turning away from their idolatry, there is also, we see, repentance for sin. And so we find Samuel says, gather all Israel at Mishpah and I will pray to the Lord for you.

You know, it's a great thing to have some, first and foremost, we must pray for ourselves. I hope everybody in here is praying for themselves.

[ 18 : 05 ] But you know, a wonderful thing is to have somebody praying for you. Samuel said to Israel, I'm going to pray for you. And maybe you know of people who are praying for you.

Maybe you know of people who did pray for you, and you know when they died, you felt their death powerfully. Because you knew there's a voice that was pleading for me every day, every night at the throne of grace, and it's silenced.

No more will that voice be heard on earth. My friend, if you have someone praying for you, that is one of the most precious, wonderful things you can have.

But don't just lean upon that. Make sure that you pray for yourself. Well, Samuel was praying for Israel. But we notice that this confession that Israel make, along with their turning from idols, there is this confession of their sin.

You see, it's not enough. Simply, that of course is part of repentance, is turning from and turning to. Turning from our sin and turning to the Lord.

[ 19 : 18 ] But repentance isn't simply turning from something. You see, a person can decide to make all the reformation in their life that they possibly could.

A person can decide, right, I'm not going to live in this particular way anymore. I've been living in a wrong way. And they can make vows and reformations, and they can be filled with remorse, and all sorts of things.

But they've never dealt with their sin before God. Maybe, maybe there are people in here tonight, and you are living your life, your way of living, is far better than it used to be.

And those in your home will acknowledge it. The type of life you live is far better. But there's still a problem. Because you've never come to the Lord to repent.

And that is essential. You must come to the Lord as well, and confess your sin. You see, our sins need forgiving. And no amount of penance, no amount of doing deeds, no amount of reformation, no amount of vow-making can cancel out, can forgive us our sin.

[ 20 : 34 ] It's God alone who can forgive sin. And so we must go to Him and ask Him to forgive us our sins.

And you see, there's no point really, well, I shouldn't say there's no point, but when we confess our sin, we have to be sincere before the Lord. You see, if you do something wrong against somebody, you can go to that person and say, look, I'm sorry.

And that person will take your confession at face value. Because they can't read your heart. But God reads your heart. And God knows if your words match up with your heart to say.

It's one thing to say, Lord, I'm sorry for my sin. And yet at the same time, deep down, you're not really sorry for your sin and you're intending to indulge in your sin again.

That's not repentance. That's not true repentance. The Lord sees and knows. So that there is a turning to God and a turning away from God. Now, repentance is positive.

[ 21 : 40 ] It's a positive act. Some people think it's negative because there's sorrow in it. There's tears in it. There's brokenness in it. But it isn't. It's positive because we are.

Why is it positive? Because we're looking to God. We're looking to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. It's a positive action. Yes, there's sorrow.

But we see what God has achieved, what God has done. We see the work of Jesus. And we see that God has given His Son for me, for my sin.

So that Jesus is dealing with my sin. And so we go to Him. And we seek for that forgiveness. And we will receive it. If we go like that.

If we go genuinely, sincerely, realizing that we have offended God. And say, Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner.

[ 22 : 38 ] the Lord will hear and He will answer. But you'll notice the result of Israel turning to the Lord. Because as Israel turned to the Lord, they put away their idols, they turned in repentance to the Lord.

We find that the Lord comes and delivers Israel. It's a lovely moment here. Because the Philistines, being the Philistines with their natural hatred of Israel, they say, Ah, here's all Israel gathered together.

And they're gathered together and they're sacrificing. What an opportunity for attack. Let's hit them when they're not ready. And that's what the Philistines did.

They mustered their troops. They gathered together. They thought that Israel were going to be like lambs to the slaughter. But what the Philistines hadn't realized is that they were actually going to attack God.

God's people. And although Israel were unprepared militarily, unprepared physically, they were never more prepared because they were prepared spiritually.

[ 23 : 54 ] They were right with God. God was on their side. And all God had to do was to thunder against the Philistines.

And he brought them into utter confusion. You see, when God is for a people, everything will work out right. My friend, there are so many lessons there.

There are lessons for us as a nation. There are lessons for us as a community. There are lessons for us as a church. Lessons for us as families.

Lessons for us individually. Put away our idols. Repent before the Lord. God. And we will find, do you know this, if we did this nationally, things would turn because God would turn.

God would turn things. There's no question about it. The Bible gives great and wonderful promises. Jesus. My dear friend, are you right with God tonight?

[ 25 : 06 ] That's the question I want to leave with you. Are you right with God? A, are you right with God in and through Jesus Christ? Are you right with God? One with him in Jesus.

Or are you out on your own? If you're on your own, you're not right with God. And I hope there's nobody in here saying to themselves, oh well, I'm too old. I've had so many opportunities.

I've sat under the gospel 20, 30, 40, 50 years. What can happen? What can be different now than was ever before?

Can God take me now? Yes, he can. In his mercy, in his patience, he hasn't cut you off. He's left you to this point.

And he's saying to you tonight, come, come to me. Come to me. Confess your sin. Repent of your sin. And if you come to the Lord repenting of your sin, what are you doing?

[ 26 : 06 ] You're exercising faith as well. Because that's faith coming to God. Believing that he is. So you're exercising the two things that need to be exercised.

Faith and repentance. And the Lord will hear you. And he will take you into himself. But if you are a believer tonight, are you right with God?

Or are there other things on the throne of your heart? You know how it is. Are you struggling as a Christian? Has the warmth gone?

Has the fellowship gone? Has the thrill gone? Are you finding it tough as a Christian? Could it be that there's an idol on your heart?

Because you see what it says there? Verse 3, put away the other gods and the asters from me and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only.

[ 27 : 11 ] He will deliver you. He will make things right. So if things are not right spiritually, the fault most certainly does not lie with the Lord.

We've always got to look in and say, right, what's wrong? My friend, let us look A to the Lord and look how we are in relation to him.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray then tonight as we have come round the word that the word may challenge us and the word may indeed speak into our hearts that we may be looking to see where we are in relation to this word.

Lord, forgive us if we are complacent before the Lord. Forgive us, Lord, if we've kind of given up. If there are any here tonight who have kind of given up, they cannot give up coming to church.

They cannot give up following week by week like this and yet they feel that they've never gone further and they may be saying to themselves, what can I do?

[ 28 : 23 ] Lord, come into their heart. Reveal thyself as the God who is able to save them even this very night. Lord, bless us and pity us and shine on us with thy face.

Take us all home safely, we pray. Do us good. Take away our sin in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen. Desiree through life Impr inhabitant and George quien sells their clothing them and sono one come into jersey in