

Lesson 11

1 Samuel 4 - 8

In our last lesson, Samuel was born to Hannah. Samuel was a prophet, a priest, and a judge. Samuel was raised in the tabernacle by Eli, the priest. Samuel served God from the time he was a young boy. God spoke to Samuel when he was a boy.

The Philistines were still enemies to the Israelites. The Philistines went again to fight against Israel. The Israelites could not win against the Philistines. The elders of Israel could not understand why God did not help them.

The Israelites thought it might bring them good luck if they brought the Ark of the Covenant into their camp. Maybe they thought the Ark had some kind of special power that would help them. When the Israelites saw the Ark being brought into their camp, they shouted because they were so happy.

The Philistines heard the shout from the Israelite camp. They were afraid. They thought the Ark was going to help the Israelites against them. They said, "God has come into the camp!" (1 Sam. 4:7)

The Philistine army went into the Israelite camp to fight again. They fought as hard as they could. They killed 30,000 Israelites. Then they stole the Ark of the Covenant from the Israelites. And they killed Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli.

There was a man who escaped during the battle. He went back to Shiloh. Eli was very old. He was sitting at the gate of the city hoping to hear from the battle. The messenger told Eli that the Philistines had taken the Ark. He told Eli that both of his sons were dead. Eli was so upset that he fell over backwards where he was sitting. Eli's neck was broken and he died. Eli had been judge over Israel for 40 years.

The Philistines thought they had done a great thing by taking the Ark. But, terrible things happened while they had the Ark of the Covenant. They moved it from town to town because everywhere they moved it, bad things happened.

The Ark was placed in the temple of Dagon. God caused Dagon to fall on the ground. Dagon was put back in place. It fell again and was broken. Everywhere the Ark was taken, terrible things happened. (1 Sam. 5:9) Many people died. The people who did not die got terrible tumors. The Philistines wanted to get rid of the Ark. They wanted to send it back to the Israelites.

The Philistines put the Ark on a cart with two milk cows pulling it. The cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh. The people of Beth Shemesh were working in the fields harvesting wheat. They looked up and saw the ark coming. They were happy to see it. (1 Sam. 6:13) But, bad things continued to happen to those who had the Ark.

God did not help the Israelites because they were worshiping idols. Samuel spoke to the Israelites. He told them to return to the Lord and stop worshipping idols. He told them to serve only God. He told them God would deliver them from the Philistines if they turned back to Him. The Israelites finally repented and stopped worshiping idols.

Samuel was one of the greatest of all the judges. He served for many years as a prophet, judge, and priest. His sons, Joel and Abijah, were also judges. They were not like their father. They were bad men.

The Israelites decided they did not want to be ruled by judges any longer. They wanted to have a king and be like the other nations. Samuel was very sad because the men of Israel asked for a king. God told Samuel, "They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me". (1 Sam. 8:7)