

# Ark Sent Back to Israel

Key Verse:

**“Arise, O Lord,  
and come to  
Your resting  
place; You, and  
the ark of Your  
might.”**

Psalm 132:8

Level 5 lesson 13

Extra: What does this event show us about God’s justice and mercy?

**Read: 1 Samuel 6:1-21**

**Further: 1 Samuel 5:1-12**

Having captured the Ark of God, the triumphant Philistines carried it home and displayed it next to their idol god Dagon, in one of their temples. Perhaps, in their superstitious foolishness, they thought another ‘god’ would bring them help and ‘good fortune.’ They soon learnt that God cannot be likened to any other ‘god’ and that He is not to be trifled with!

The first sign came when they awoke the next morning, to find their great ‘god’ Dagon knocked off his perch and bowing before the Ark of God! After hastily standing him back up, the same thing happened the next day - only this time Dagon’s head and hands were broken off! A silent, but powerful testimony, to the identity of the True God and the powerlessness and uselessness of any other ‘gods.’ And more was still to come...

**COUNSEL GIVEN**

God afflicted the Philistine people with terrible tumours and a plague of rats which destroyed their crops. In desperation, the priests and diviners were consulted about sending the Ark back. “If you send away the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty,” they advised. “Send it with a guilt offering.” This would be an acknowledgement of wrong-doing, and then they said, “The God of Israel will heal you, and this will be proof that your keeping of the Ark was the cause of your problems.”

But what kind of guilt offering should they send? The priests suggested five golden tumours and five golden rats - the very things with which the God of Israel had afflicted them. The number five in each case represented the rulers of the Philistines, the ones responsible for the capture and treatment of the Ark of God. By bringing these things as a guilt offering they were honouring the God of Israel, and admitting His justice in punishing them.

**CART DESPATCHED**

So how they should send the Ark back was their next problem! The priests told them to build a new cart on which to put the Ark. But this cart was not to be drawn

by oxen in the usual manner, nor was it to have a driver. Untrained milking cows were to be used, and their calves were to be weaned and left at home. Instinct of course, would have turned the cows back to their calves, but the priests meant this as a test to show clearly whether it was really God who had brought their misfortunes or mere coincidence (v9).

What a clear answer they got! In v12 we read, “And the cows went straight up towards Beth-Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left!” So a wonderful sign was given which showed clearly, that the presence of the Ark in Philistine country was an offence to the God of Israel and had caused Him to punish the Philistines as He had.

**ARK RESTORED**

When the Ark arrived at Beth-Shemesh, just over the border of Judah, the men harvesting their crops nearby looked up at the strange procession coming closer. Recognising the Ark of God, they “rejoiced to see it.” Finally, the cart stopped on the property of a man named Joshua, and was immediately taken possession of by the Levites. They placed the box with the golden ornaments offered as a guilt offering, on a big stone nearby. Then the cart was cut up and the wood used in sacrificing the cows as a burnt-offering to God. Later, perhaps while the priests were occupied with the sacrifice, an unfortunate incident took place which was a stark and solemn reminder of the awesome Holiness of God.

Overcome by curiosity, a group of men from Beth-Shemesh disrespectfully opened the Ark of God and looked inside. The pagan Philistines had handled the Ark of God in ignorant disrespect and suffered terrible consequences for it; for these men of Israel it was a knowing disrespect, and 70 of them died instantly! This should serve as a salutary lesson to us all; we should never underestimate the Holy righteousness of God, nor treat Him with careless, flippant disrespect. It is indeed, “a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!” Hebrews 10:31

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. What advice did the pagan priests give about sending the Ark back? | ..... |
| 2. Why was it important to send it with a guilt offering?             | ..... |
| 3. What would the cows taking the Ark to Beth-Shemesh show?           | ..... |
| 4. What happened to the cart and the cows?                            | ..... |
| 5. Why were so many men of Beth-Shemesh killed?                       | ..... |

My Name is ..... Age .....

# Israel Demands a King

Key Verse:

**“I will destroy you, O Israel, because you are against Me, against your helper.”**

Hosea 13:9

Extra: Explain the saying “God does not have grand-children”.

Level 5 lesson 14

## Read 1 Samuel 8

Further reading: 1 Samuel 10:17-19

### EVIL CONDUCT

Although Samuel had given his two sons Joel and Abijah responsible positions as judges, v3 tells us that they did not walk in his way, but turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes and perverted justice. This must have been terribly sad for Samuel, to see them not following the Lord as he had done.

Sometimes we see this same thing happening today; godly fathers whose children who do not follow or obey the Lord, and bring great sadness to them. Someone has put it this way. “God does not have grand-children – only children!” Christianity does not ‘run in the family.’ Just because our parents are Christians does not mean we are! While it is a tremendous blessing to be brought up in a Christian home, each person must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour - for themselves. Never forget that this alone makes someone a Christian.

### EVIL DESIRE

Samuel’s son’s wicked behaviour had serious consequences. The Elders of Israel could see that Samuel was now an old man and that his sons were not fit to take his place. So they came to Samuel and demanded, “Give us a king to judge us!” However, the real reason they wanted a change was that they wanted to be like the other wicked nations around them. Perhaps the pomp and splendour connected with a king and ‘Royal Family’ attracted them, as it does many today. Maybe it was the permanency of a monarchy, which appealed to them, in contrast to the regular change of judges.

Whatever the reason, Samuel was disappointed with their demand, and no doubt hurt by their dissatisfaction with his leadership. Naturally he prayed about the whole thing with God. The Lord told Samuel, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected as their king - but Me.”

This was more than a rejection of Samuel - it was really a rejection of God and HIS leadership and system of government. Their sin was against God! In reality, all sin is against God - that is what makes it serious. God reminded Samuel that the Elders’ words were just like those of their forefathers who had, “..forsaken Me and served other gods.”

Nevertheless, Samuel was to listen to them, but also show them the error of their ways and the type of King that would reign over them. Of course, God’s purpose for His people DID include a King - Jesus, their Messiah! Their real sin was a lack of faith; not waiting for God’s time and God’s King, as promised.

### EVIL RESULTS

So Samuel told the people everything that God had told him and the kind of king who would reign over them. As you read his words in v11-18 you will notice a certain expression repeated six times; “He will take.” The new King would be a great ‘Taker.’ He would take their sons [v11], he would take their daughters [v13], he would take their fields [v14], he would take their grain [v15], he would take their men, their maid-servants and their livestock - all for his own gratification and service [v16-17].

In contrast, the Lord, their King, whom they were now rejecting, had been a great Giver; He had given them their land, their tabernacle services, and their judges. He had given them many victories, and blessings. Samuel even warned the people, “You shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen - but the Lord will not listen to you in that day!”

However, their response showed clearly the foolishness and blindness of the sinful heart of man, when it is determined to rebel against God. “No!” they cried out to Samuel, “We want a king to reign over us. We want to be like all the other nations, with a king to judge us and fight our battles.”

Despite all that God had done for them, their minds were fully made up - they wanted to change their allegiance from a great ‘Giver’ to a great ‘taker’ - what foolish people! It is sad to think that there are still people today, who reject the goodness of God for the evil pleasures of sin and Satan, which only bring bondage and ultimate destruction.

Faced with the people’s rejection and stubborn demands, Samuel again spoke to the Lord. His reply was, “Listen to them and give them a King.” The Israelites would soon receive the king they had been warned about, but who they had stubbornly demanded. In the meantime, Samuel sent them back to their homes and waited for God’s further instructions and guidance.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. What makes someone a Christian?                     | ..... |
| 2. What was the real reason for Israel wanting a King? | ..... |
| 3. Why was this an evil desire?                        | ..... |
| 4. What kind of King would they get?                   | ..... |
| 5. What had the Lord as their King given them?         | ..... |

# Donkeys Lost – Kingdom Found

Key Verse:

**“Then the people asked for a King, and He (God) gave them Saul the son of Kish.”**

Acts 13:21

Extra: Link all the little ‘coincidences’ that led to Saul and Samuel meeting.

Level 5 lesson 15

## Read 1 Samuel 9

Further reading: Psalm 18

### FINE SPECIMEN

It was certainly no accident or mere coincidence that brought Samuel the man of God, and Saul the king-to-be together. Our lesson today, gives a wonderful insight into the way God leads and directs in even the tiny events of everyday life, to achieve His purposes. Even things such as losing your father’s donkeys!

Saul came from a good family, and must have been a fine specimen of manhood as a young man. Physically, he stood literally ‘head and shoulders’ above any other of the Israelites. He had benefited from a good moral upbringing in his home, and was also responsible for caring for his father’s animals.

One day (no doubt to his great dismay) he realised that his father’s donkeys had escaped in the night and could not be found! This would have been quite a disaster in those days, as they were highly prized. Today, it would be like discovering that your bank account had been emptied out by some scam!

His father, hearing of this, tells him to take one of the servants and “go and find them!” So off Saul went, little realising that his search would lead him not only to finding the donkeys, but a kingdom as well!

### FAR-REACHING SEARCH

What a search it turned out to be! The donkeys had certainly not just strayed into the neighbour’s place! In fact, the two men looked through four different areas; Mt. Ephraim, Shalisha, Shalim and the land of the Benjamites - and couldn’t find any sign of them. They even went on to the land of Zuph, and still could not find them! Saul, thinking that by now his father would be starting to worry about HIM - thought he’d better give up the search. His servant suggests though, that in the city nearby, there was a prophet of God who might be able to help them.

Saul agreed, but by that time, their food was nearly all gone, and he was reluctant to approach him without a suitable gift for his trouble. The servant generously

offered a silver coin he still had and so Saul said, “OK. Let’s go and ask him!” While climbing up the hill to the city they met some girls, and asked them where they might find the prophet. They said he was in the city, at the ‘high place’ of the town, where sacrifices were offered to God.

Thankfully the two men hurried on their way, eager to try and find him. God had everything well under control though! The very first man to meet them was the prophet, coming towards them on his way up to bless the sacrifice! God you see, had told Samuel the day before, “Tomorrow about this time, I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him to be leader over my people Israel.” This was no coincidence!

### FRIENDLY SAMUEL

As Saul approached Samuel, the Lord pointed him out saying, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.” Saul of course, didn’t know about any of this yet. He asked Samuel, “Where is the Prophet’s house?” To his surprise, Samuel told him, “I am the Prophet,” and invited him to stay with him. He told Saul not to worry about the donkeys; they had already been found and were safe. Then he said something which really got Saul thinking! “On whom is all the desire of Israel?” he asked. “Is it not on you, and on all your father’s house?” (v20)

### FEARFUL SAUL

Could this mean what Saul thought? Did all Israel really want him to be their King? Saul was surprised and could hardly believe what he had just heard. He replied, “I belong to the smallest tribe of Israel, the Benjamites - and my family is the least of all them!” This showed real humility from Saul; he was certainly not one to ‘blow his own trumpet!’

Samuel took Saul and his servant to his house and made them a lovely meal. He gave them the chief place among all the guests, and gave Saul the portion of meat normally reserved for himself. In this way, Samuel was publicly preparing Saul to receive the high honour he would soon confer on him. Afterwards, Samuel and Saul had a long discussion alone, where Samuel shared with Saul all that God had revealed to him, regarding His plans and purposes for the young man.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Describe Saul’s attributes which would help him as King.   | ..... |
| 2. What was Samuel doing in the city?                         | ..... |
| 3. How did Samuel know that Saul was to be Israel’s King?     | ..... |
| 4. How did Saul feel and what did he say about becoming King? | ..... |
| 5. How did Samuel honour Saul and his servant?                | ..... |

# God Save the King!

Key Verse:

**“The Spirit of the Lord is on Me (Jesus), because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor.”**

Luke 4:18a

Extra: What caused this great change in Saul?

Level 5 lesson 16

## Read 1 Samuel 10

Further: Psalm 46

### CROWNED

Early next morning, Samuel escorted the two men to the outskirts of the city. Then he told Saul to send the servant on ahead, while he showed Saul something which God had told him. As they stood alone outside the city of Ramah, Samuel took his flask of oil, and poured it over Saul’s bowed head.

Then, with a kiss of homage, he explained, “Has not the Lord anointed you to be leader over His inheritance?” This was really an unofficial ‘crowning’ ceremony to be ratified at a later public occasion, by Samuel, Israel’s Prophet/King.

Following this, Samuel predicted three incidents that would happen to Saul on his way home. These were to show Saul that what Samuel had said was the truth, and that God was really with Saul now. Firstly, two men would bring Saul a message that his father’s donkeys were safe. Secondly, he would meet three men going up to worship God at Bethel who would give him a present of three loaves of bread and thirdly, he would meet a group of prophets who he would join in prophesying as the result of the Spirit of God coming upon him. These three things happened just as Samuel had predicted.

### CHANGED

When Saul began to prophesy along with the prophets, those who knew him previously were surprised. “Is Saul also among the prophets?” they asked. This of course was something entirely new. In fact, the Holy Spirit’s presence upon Saul completely changed him; Scripture describes it as, “God changed Saul’s heart” [v9]. From this point on, Saul was no longer a simple farmer’s son, but a man endowed with all the gifts and abilities required to fill his new role as Israel’s King.

Finally Saul arrived at his uncle’s house. Hearing that Saul had spoken with Samuel, his uncle was curious to know what had been said. However, Saul did not tell him anything about Samuel’s words, nor his anointing of him as future King of Israel; he simply told him that Samuel had assured him the donkeys were safe.

### CHOSEN

Samuel however, was busy arranging for the public declaration of Saul’s kingship to Israel. He called all the tribes together to meet before the Lord at a place called Mizpah. Once assembled, he talked plainly and solemnly to them all. He once again reproved them for rejecting God and resolving to have a king. Then God’s choice of their new king was made clear. The tribe of Benjamin was first picked out; from it, the family of Matri was taken, and lastly out of that family, Samuel declared that Saul, the son of Kish would be King. But where was he? The Lord revealed to Samuel that Saul was hiding among his family’s baggage!

### CHEERED

Saul’s conduct was perhaps a bit strange for a future king, though it did show his humility; he certainly did not take his new role lightly. Once discovered, Saul was brought out before the great crowd of people, and Samuel introduced him with these fine words: “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him amongst all the people!”

As we saw last lesson, Saul was undoubtedly a splendid man to look at, tall, handsome and well-built. When the crowd saw him, they were hugely impressed. They all gave a loud cheer and shouted together, “Long live the King!”

Once the cheers of approval had died down, Samuel told the people how the new kingdom would operate, and wrote all his instructions in a book, (probably similar to a constitution which many countries have today). Then he dismissed them all and told them to return to their homes.

Saul also went home, along with a group of men “whose hearts God had touched.” These would no doubt be Saul’s helpers and trusted advisors. So Saul and the Kingdom were given a good start; certainly neither the Lord nor Samuel could be blamed for any future failure. It is worth noting though, that at this stage, Saul did not have universal approval from the people. Some wicked men treated Saul with complete contempt; they refused to give him any coronation gift and sneered publicly, “How shall this man save us?” Saul wisely ignored them.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did Samuel do to Saul just outside the city?

.....

2. Why did Samuel say certain things would take place on Saul’s homeward journey?

.....

3. How was Saul changed?

.....

4. What was Saul doing when Samuel announced him as King?

.....

5. Why was Saul’s strange behaviour a good sign?

.....

Please complete and return by post to

PSSM, 1-2A (G2) 93 Dominion Rd, Mt Eden, Auckland 1024 or scan & email to [info@biblediscovery.org.nz](mailto:info@biblediscovery.org.nz)