

## Hallelujah

### Part 3 – Remembering Hallelujah

#### I Samuel 4 & 7

##### Intro

The word **hallelujah** is the joining of two Hebrew words – *hallelu* and *yah*.

**Hallelu means to praise.**

**Yah is short for Yahweh.**

**Praise Yahweh.**

Yahweh is the name of God given by Himself. This name *Yahweh* is connected to the Hebrew verb which means *I am*.

In this moment, God was declaring Himself simply to be – to have existed forever. Not a creation, but an infinite being. But God has never desired to stay distant and proper. He took His *being*, his *am-ness* [greatness] and wrapped it into a personal name – *Yahweh*. *I Am. And you can know Me, personally.*

##### Review

Throughout this series, we have been looking at how the idea and concept of *hallelujah* [praising God] shapes and informs our lives as believers.

In our opening week, we looked at a moment in the life of Jehoshaphat, one of the good kings of Judah.

Last week, we saw a time in King David's life where he experienced the presence of God and learned what it meant to *raise his hallelujah* once again.

Today, we will see a man named Samuel call the people of God to a place of remembering all that God had done for them – encouraging them to *remember their hallelujah*.

##### I Samuel

The Israelite people, as we have seen in the previous weeks, struggled with fidelity to God. As we saw with David last week, they would frequently send away or walk away from the presence of God. During their history, the ark of the covenant was that symbol of His presence and power among His people. Unfortunately, they treated the ark of God more as a good luck charm than the actual presence of their great God.

They treated Him with irreverence and disrespect. The people expected Him to simply perform acts for them, even when they did not honor or respect Him. It shows up most apparently when they first lost the ark to the Philistines in I Samuel 4.

#### **4:1-3**

**Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.”**

During their first battle, Israel was routed. As they debriefed the details of their defeat, the leaders came to the conclusion that God had caused the loss. Perhaps, they felt as though God defeated them because they forgot to bring the ark of the covenant into battle with them. So, they decided having the ark would provide them victory.

As we mentioned last week, the ark of the covenant was more than merely a symbol of God’s presence with His people – it was the place where God came to meet with His people. The ark contained power and might, not because of its design or makeup, but because God Himself chose to be present there.

The leaders and the people determine that having the ark of the covenant on the battlefield will surely earn them victory against their enemy. So, they send for the ark and rejoin the fight once again.

#### **4:5-7**

**As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.”**

The people starting shouting and rejoicing, because they ark had joined them – [in their minds] a definite sign that victory would soon be theirs. The people shouted so loud the earth shook. It sent shockwaves across the earth so the Philistines heard and felt their roar.

However, the Philistines mustered up their courage and went to battle against the Israelites.

#### **4:10-11a**

**So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured**

The Israelite people had to be wondering – *wait, what just went wrong...this wasn’t supposed to happen like this?!?* The first defeat without the ark cost them 4,000 soldiers. Now with the ark on the battlefield with them, they lost 35,000.

What just happened?

***Instead of praising Yahweh, they were playing God.***

Hoping to get him to answer their request for success. They treated Him like a *thing* and the ark like a *trinket*. Instead of worshipping Him for His presence among them. The people worshipped His might to bring them the victory. They wanted the benefits without the relationship, the rewards without the worship.

Instead of winning the fight against their enemy, they lost the presence of their God.

## Our Fight

There are times in our lives where similar things have happened. We thought we were *raising our hallelujah*, but we really just wanted God to fix our problem. We shouted loudly, but we trusted little. Our hope was not in Him, but in ourselves.

We shook our fists, we raised our voices, and we stomped our feet. We gave the enemy everything we had, and we came up short. Then we begged God for His help. We felt confidently that with Him on our side our circumstances would surely change. And then they got worse. And we became baffled. *How could God be defeated??*

In those moments, we forgot that our greatest battle is never really against the enemy coming at us; rather, the one that lives within us. Our battle is spiritual – between us and our God, centered around our faith and lack thereof. Not in the things that God can do *for* us, but the things He wants to do *in* us.

## Philistines & The Ark

Over the next 7 months, the Philistine people have possession of the ark. Over the course of those months, they discover the greatness of the God of Israel. Having their ark in their camp causes great concern and fear among their people. They simply do not know how to contain the power of Yahweh. He had caused the statue of their god Dagon to physically bow down before the ark 2 nights in a row.

At that point, the Philistines began making plans to return it back to the Israelite people.

Remember, the Israelites had lost 2 battles, 39,000 soldiers, the ark, and the presence of their God – so this should have caused great excitement and a renewed focus for the people of God.

## 7:2

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

Twenty years later. Two full decades after receiving the ark back in their midst, the Israelite people still misunderstood its purpose and design. It took 20 years for them to realize the most important thing in their life was not a book, not even holy artifacts, but a relationship with the God who chose to love them first, so many years before.

Can you imagine what the people must have thought as they passed by it day after day? *Worthless piece of junk??* Until they finally felt the weight of their mistake.

## 7:3

**And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”**

The prophet Samuel heard their cries and called them to full repentance. *If you really want God, then you MUST repent. You must run from everything else you’ve put your hope in. Everything you thought would provide.*

Samuel gathered all of the people and called them to fasting and praying. As the people prayed, they cried out to God.

***We have sinned against the Lord. I Samuel 7:6***

And Samuel judged the people for their sin. Confession brings about repentance which provides the opportunity for forgiveness.

### **7:7-9**

**Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” So 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, and the Lord answered him.**

The Israelite people, instead of relying on God as a gimmick or magic genie, sought Him for His presence and His protection. They honored Him properly, instead of attempting to use Him for their own personal gain.

The people cried out to the Lord for salvation. Their circumstance had not changed. The enemy was still attacking. However, the Israelites were no longer relying on their own strength and they no longer had a wrong view of their God. They understood Yahweh, alone, was their only hope.

To atone for the people’s sin, Samuel sacrificed a young lamb. The spilled blood of the lamb was an offering to God as a sacrifice for their wrong. It was a sign of the coming Messiah who would be called the Lamb of God – who also would be sacrificed, as the way to pay/atone for the sin of anyone who would confess and repent as well.

### **7:10**

**As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.**

Similar scenario as in chapter 4. However, this time the people praised God for who He is instead of using Him for what He could do. This time, instead of the people shouting in their own strength, the Lord himself thundered a mighty sound against the enemy.

Your *hallelujah* is not necessarily about how loud you shout, but more about how much you praise. Sometimes we forget. We forget that the greatest thing we could ever do is praise God for who He is. But our hearts are so prone to wander.

### **7:12-13**

**Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, “Till now the Lord has helped us.” So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.**

Samuel took a stone that day and called it *Ebenezer*, which means *till now the Lord has helped us*. It was to serve as a symbol for all of the people to *remember their hallelujah* – that above all else we are called to praise and worship our God simply because He is!

**[Communion Explanation]**