

Who heard of it?
 What danger threatened Israel?
 What did Samuel do?
 How did the Lord answer his prayer?
 What did Samuel set up as a memorial?
 How long did Samuel judge Israel?

Remember—

It is the Lord who saves us from our enemies.
 He wants us to serve him only.
 There ought to be memorial stones in our lives.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

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General Statement.

The ark of God remained for less than a year in the hands of the Philistines, but for many years was in seclusion and separated from the tabernacle. During almost a generation there was no regular service and no organization of the nation; the people were without the emblem of God's presence and crushed under the power of their enemies. Yet there was one strong heart that remained faithful and sustained the faltering hope of Israel. From his home in Ramah Samuel went quietly throughout the land, calling upon the tribes to unite, urging them to cease from the service of the false gods, and promising them God's help if they would become his people as of old. His labors were successful. Everywhere the heart of the nation responded to his appeal, the idols were forsaken and destroyed, and the face of the people was turned toward their fathers' God. The next step in the reformation was to summon a great assembly of the people at Mizpah, a central location in the land of Benjamin. They met to express their sorrow over the past and their vows of consecration to God's service. But the inevitable result followed this awakening of the national and religious life. Their Philistine oppressors marked the gathering, feared its result, and marched to disperse the throng and bind the shackles more securely upon the nation. The terror of the people only made them turn to their God and his prophet in despairing faith. Samuel was just offering a lamb, the token of Israel's consecration, and lifting up his interceding cry when the Philistine host appeared in sight. The Almighty answered with a thunderstorm of hail and lightning upon the faces of the foes. They were seized with a sudden panic and fled, pursued by the rejoicing Israelites. A signal victory was wrought, long kept in mind by the monument raised upon the field, and called "Ebenezer—the stone of help." The vigor of Samuel made the victory a permanent freedom to Israel. Everywhere the Philistines retired, and the Israelites pushed forward their borders. The whole land was now united under the wise rule of the prophet, and Samuel passed from city to city executing justice and imparting instruction. At Ramah arose a new altar, making it the religious capital of the people and gathering all the tribes for worship, while peace and order reigned throughout the land.

Verse 5. Gather all Israel. The next step in the revival and reformation was to hold an assembly. Not all the Israelites were present, but representatives from all parts of the land. The design was to inspire the people with a new enthusiasm in God's service. **To Mizpah.** "The watchtower," a place in the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Jerusalem. **I will pray for you.** There was a general confidence in the power of prayer dwelling in one who lived in such intimate communion with God. (1) *We have an Intercessor nearer the throne than even Samuel.*

6. They gathered. Elders and people from all Israel, the women and children being left at home. **To Mizpah.** This was the religious center of the people after the loss of the ark and the fall of Shiloh. Here the great assemblies were held and here Saul was inaugurated king. **Drew water, and poured it out.** A token either of their sorrow and humiliation before God, or of a vow, which was thus shown as irrevocable as the water spilled upon the ground. **Fasted.** As a sign of their abasement on account of sin. **Said**

there. (2) *The open and audible confession of sin will be a help in renouncing it.* **Samuel judged.** Though he had been looked upon as the national leader and prophet for many years, this was the commencement of his official career. He now assumed authority as God's representative, judged between man and man and between the people and their God, and prepared to undertake the duties of a military leader. (3) *The revival of God's work demands purity and righteousness on the part of his workers.* (4) *God's cause requires organization and leadership for its success.*

7. Philistines heard. Such a gathering could not escape notice, and would forebode danger of insurrection. **The lords of the Philistines.** The Philistines were not yet organized into a monarchy, but were ruled by an aristocracy of their five affiliated cities. **Went up.** From their cities on the lowlands to the seat of the Israelites in the mountain region. **Against Israel.** (5) *The immediate result of a revival of God's work is to arouse the bitter opposition of all its enemies.* **They were afraid.** They were un-