

## 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Chapter 4

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- The Lord established Samuel as a prophet in Israel, one who would speak for God to the people.

**1 Samuel 3:21** “... for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.”

V: 1-2 Samuel was used of God to speak to the entire nation – just as Israel goes out to battle against the Philistines.

- Another way of looking at it is that as soon as you start to get into God’s word, the battle begins, the enemy is at hand!
- (Map) The Philistines are encamped at Aphek; the Israelites are encamped at Ebenezer.
- The Philistines were victorious over the Israelites, killing about 4,000.

**Joshua Ch. 7**, the sin of one man, Achan; kept the Israelites from being victorious over a small opponent; what should be expected when the priesthood is corrupt and most of the nation with it?

V: 3-5 “Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines?”

- A good question to ask, it acknowledges that God has allowed this to happen to them.
- This question should have led them to a better conclusion: the need to repent and to truly honor God with their lives, and be obedient to His word.
- The reason they were defeated: which they should have known.

**Deuteronomy 28:15; 25** “<sup>15</sup>But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:” – “<sup>25</sup>The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.”

- It was already known that God was speaking to Samuel; had they gone to Samuel and asked him to inquire of God whether they should even be going out to battle against the Philistines there might have been a different outcome – although God was looking to deal with Hophni and Phinehas.

- The elders determined correctly that they needed God's help that much is true. Then they went about it the wrong way – taking the ark out of the Holy of Hollies, bringing it forth like a good luck charm – even trying to force God's hand by introducing it into battle like now God has to act on their behalf.
- They could have secured God's help by humbling themselves and asking for forgiveness and truly seeking His face.

**2 Chronicles 7:14** “If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

- Samuel must not have been in the camp because it seems he would have spoken against this action.
- “**it** cometh among us, “**it**” may save us...” Apart from the presence of God the ark of the covenant is just an ornate box – it is God who saves, not artifacts or relics.
- When we reduce God to an impersonal thing, an “it” as opposed to a “Him”, the True and Living God of the Bible with whom we can engage in a personal relationship, then we've lost sight of who and what God really is.
- As they retrieve the ark and bring it into the camp, Hophni and Phinehas accompany it.
- The people shout with a great shout as they are momentarily encouraged.
- This is an emotional hyper-charismatic response, as opposed to a grounded response.
- God does not care about how high we jump, but He does care about how straight we walk

**Colossians 1:23** “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...”

- Considering what we know of Hophni and Phinehas it would be hard to imagine them teaching the people the word of God.

V: 6-9           The Philistines heard the noise and figured out that the God of the Israelites had just entered the camp – they knew the history which didn't bode well for them.

V: 9           They realized that they were in the fight for their lives and determined to press through their fears.

V: 10-11 The Philistines were ferocious, fighting like mad men – and they slaughtered the Israelites, 30,000 killed and the rest fleeing for their lives.

- The ark is captured and the evil sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas are killed.
- Eventually Shiloh and the Tabernacle were destroyed.

**Psalm 78:60-61** “<sup>60</sup>So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; <sup>61</sup>and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand.”

**Jeremiah 7:12-14** “<sup>12</sup>But go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. <sup>13</sup>And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; <sup>14</sup>therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.”

- How could this happen? They had the ark – they’d done all the stuff.
- They’d read their Bibles, they’d been to church, and they’d tithed more than usual. It always comes down to an issue of the heart, we can’t just go through the motions.

**Mark 7:6** “... well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”

It’s a heart issue with God:

**1 Samuel 2:30** “... for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

**James 4:8** “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

- In 1973, a five line inscription was found on a grain silo in the ruins of Izbet Sarteh (Ebenezer). When translated, it was found to contain a Philistine account of this battle, the capture of the ark, even specifically mentioning the priest Hophni. This is the earliest known extra-biblical reference to an Old Testament event.

V: 12 A man of Benjamin – they were known to be fierce warriors amongst the Israelites, clothes torn, dirt on his head – both signs of grief – this could only be bad news.

V: 13-18 Eli along with everyone else is waiting to hear how it went in the battle.

- Eli is concerned for the ark of the covenant – more so it would appear than his sons. He probably knew that it was wrong to send the ark out into battle.

- Shiloh was a large city; the tabernacle was located just outside the city on the North side. Eli was on the wayside or roadside waiting to hear.
- When the messenger first went into the city and the people began to mourn and cry out. Their fate may have been sealed as well, not just grieving for those who were killed, but knowing that they were now defenseless.
- The messenger then he came to Eli who heard first about the battle, then his sons, then the ark. Eli was blind, but he could hear the cries of the people.
- Upon hearing about the ark, he fell backwards off his chair – breaking his neck, and died in sorrow and grief over all these things.
- This is the fulfillment of the prophesy delivered by the un-named prophet and Samuel when he was younger.

V: 19-22 Phinehas' wife was just about due to have a baby when all of this is taking place.

- The shock and grief of all that bad news at once, the battle lost, her husband killed, father in law dead, and the ark captured throw her into labor, and her own death in child birth.
- Just before dying, still in shock, she names her new born son "Ichabod" – the glory has departed, from her and from Israel.

God's glory was revealed to the nation:

**Exodus 24:16-17** “<sup>16</sup>And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. <sup>17</sup>And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.”

God's glory was revealed in part to Moses:

**Exodus 33:22** God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock as He exposed Moses to the tail end of His glory.

**Exodus 40:34** Dedication / God's glory filled the Tabernacle.

- "Ichabod" - Here, they are just acknowledging what had already happened, that His glory had departed. That was evident from the previous chapter.

**1 Samuel 3:21** “And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.”

- Even though God's people had been un-faithful, God is faithful still.

**2 Timothy 2:13** “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”

**1 Kings 8:10-11** “<sup>10</sup>And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, <sup>11</sup>so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.”

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## *1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Chapter 5*

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V: 1-2        The Philistines took the ark to Ashdod, one of their main cities and they placed it in the house of Dagon, their temple. (Rebuilt / Judges 16 Samson)

- The Philistines worshipped many gods, Dagon was their principal god, they also worshipped Ashtoreth – the goddess of fertility, and they worshipped Beelzebub, the Lord of the flies.
- Dagon was depicted as part man and part fish, kind of like a mer-man. (Not to be confused with a morman...) Dagon was supposed to be the father of Baal.
- In that day there was the belief that as different city states went to war against one another, the victorious city owed their victory to their God – who had defeated the weaker God and city.
- The Philistines assumed that their god Dagon had been victorious over the God of the Israelites – no doubt they placed the ark at the feet of Dagon as an act or symbol of homage.

V: 3-5        The next day the priests go in to find the statue of Dagon humbled before the ark of God – prostrate in homage.

- So the Philistines set their god back up – then the next day the same thing except that Dagon’s lost his head and hands – only the stump was left of him.
- They were stumped; all they knew was that there was something fishy going on... 😊
- Broken apparently upon the threshold – which is bad luck to touch from that point forward.

V: 6-7        The Philistines had 5 major cities, thus the mention about the 5 lords of the Philistines.

- Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron which was probably their capital city.
- The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, many died and the rest were smitten with hemorrhoids.
- God created us; he certainly knows how to get to the bottom of things.

- The men of Ashdod realized they had no power against the God of the Israelites, ironic in light of the fact that Ashdod means “power”.

V: 8-9        Thus begins a game of “hot-potato” with the ark of God. Gath is next, which means “wine press” – they would be hard pressed as well.

- God kills a great many men both small and great, the survivors also get hemorrhoids.

V: 10-12      Next is Ekron, which means “immigration” – and the ark will just be passing through.

- By this time the inhabitants of Ekron have heard what has befallen Ashdod and Gath, and they are terrified.
- This does not prevent the Lord from smiting Ekron, many men died and the rest got the hemorrhoids – and the cry of the city went up to heaven – meaning it was real loud.
- One of the many attributes that I enjoy about my God is that He doesn’t need me to defend him, or his honor – He is more than capable of doing both.
- God always wins in the end...
- To some the ark, the presence of the Lord is a blessing, to others it is a curse.

**2 Corinthians 2:15-16**      “<sup>15</sup>For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: <sup>16</sup>to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life...”

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There are three types of people represented in this story:

1. Those that play at worshipping God, like Hophni and Phinehas – and they get killed.
2. Those that are opposed to God, the Philistines who are either killed outright, or who get really bad hemorrhoids / lead miserable lives, then they die.
3. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> group who aren’t directly mentioned in the story who are like Samuel, hearing the voice of God and walking in His ways – who live fruitful and abundant lives.

**Deuteronomy 30:19**      “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

Ref.1 Samuel.04-05