

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 2ND-3RD, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

A GRAVE ERROR (1 SAMUEL 4:1-11) A PROPHET WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE, YET...

God was now giving Sam prophecies to share with Israel, but we learn that his words were being ignored because **they decided to go into battle without consulting God first.**

- Samuel actually is not mentioned again until chapter seven, showing us **the nation was ignoring the voice of God.**

A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Whenever we jump into "battle" without consulting and leaning on God first for His plan and provision, we are destined to fail.

- This means that **how we work, where we live, who we marry, and any other important endeavors in life need to be brought to God because He knows best.**

"WHY DID THE LORD DEFEAT US TODAY...?"

The Israelites would lose 4,000 then 30,000 soldiers at the hands of the Philistines because **they went into a battle God didn't condone with sin in their hearts.**

- They asked "why," but never sought an answer! **With our cultural failures, one would think we'd be looking for a solution.**

ALSO, NOTICE THERE WAS NO REPENTANCE

Nowhere in the first four verses do we see any personal responsibility or repentance for living in sin. **Their failure was God's fault, not their selfish and rebellious choices.**

- This goes back to the simple principle: **We cannot expect the blessings of God when we live in opposition to Him.**

THE ARK OF GOD

God made a covenant with Moses that He would protect anyone who upheld the law (10 C's). As a reminder, God told Moses to have a gold box built to contain the 10 C's.

- The most important part was the "mercy seat." This is where blood sacrifices were made to forgive sin. This also foreshadowed the cross.

THEY THOUGHT RELIGION WOULD SAVE THEIR NATION

Though the presence of God was associated with the ark, the Jews began to treat the ark like an idol or "lucky charm." In essence, the people of God put their trust in a religious symbol more than in God.

- Religion without a real relationship with God has no ability to save or change.**

ALL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

The Jews were arrogant behind their religious symbol, but because of unaddressed sin and arrogance, they fell, and the ark was taken.

- The ark symbolized the blessings and favor of God. **When we become arrogant and try to manipulate Him, God's presence and blessings will leave.**

HOPHNI, PHINEHAS, AND 34,000 OTHERS

When we take matters into our own hands instead of consulting God, trusting Him, and living in humility and obedience to Him, we are not only destined to fail, but we will hurt others in the process.

- "...God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7).**

EXITING (1 SAMUEL 4:12-22)

THE OLD PRIEST PROBABLY KNEW

One of the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came into Shiloh and told the town about the epic loss. It seems like Eli expected this because he was "anxious about the ark of God."

- The news of the army and his sons must have been tough, but the capture of the ark led to the death of Eli.

PROPHECIES COMING TO FRUITION

The tragedy didn't end with Eli. Phinehas' pregnant wife also heard the news, and it caused her to go into early labor which killed her. Before she died, she named her son Ichabod, meaning *Where is the glory?*

- She, like many of us, put trust in created things more than the Creator God.**

THE "GLORY" HAD ALREADY DEPARTED

The loss on the battlefield, the deaths of Eli and his family, and the capture of the ark were not the departure of God's presence but the **results of God's Spirit already being gone.**

- God is gracious and patient, but if we live for ourselves, we face the consequences of asking God to not be present.**

TEMPLES (1 SAMUEL 5)

THE PHILISTINES

The Philistines were a pagan people south of Israel known for their brilliance, drunkenness, and aggression. The area where they were from was later called Palestine by the Greeks.

- After defeating the Jews, they took the ark to Ashdod and placed it in the temple of Dagon next to a statue of the god.

THIS WAS VERY INTENTIONAL

They placed a symbol of God in front of their god to show that their god had won, and the Jewish God now submitted to Dagon.

- Oddly enough, the day after the ark was placed before Dagon, the Philistines entered the temple, found Dagon fallen over facing the ark, and put him back in place.

IT WAS WORSE THE NEXT MORNING

The following morning, not only had Dagon fallen over again, but this time his head and hands were broken off with the appearance of being severed.

- This suggested a military-style execution and proved to the Philistines who the dominant "god" was.

WHAT DOES THIS HISTORICAL ACCOUNT TEACH US?

The message is simple and important: **God will not occupy the same space as another god.** To be clear, there are no gods like God (1Chronicles 17:20), but **when things become more important to us than God, we create gods.**

- This also teaches us that created things always come to an end.

WE ARE TEMPLES (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20)

The question is **what gods interfere with the presence of the true God in our lives?**

- It isn't that we can't have passions or pursuits in our life, but **we must make sure God is always at the top of our priorities. Jesus said, "no one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24).**

LET'S GET THIS THING OUT OF HERE!

Not only did the statue of Dagon falling freak out the people of Ashdod, but because the "Lord's hand was heavy" and they began to get tumors, they shipped the ark off to another Philistine territory.

- This didn't stop in Ashdod. Everywhere the ark went, outbreaks occurred.

"GOD'S HAND WAS OPPRESSING THEM"

It isn't that God didn't want the Philistines to know him, but they were aggressive and destructive people. Therefore, God had to go to extreme measures to address them.

- God applies pressure on us to get our attention and turn us from evil because living in sin inevitably destroys us.**

CONSULTING GOD AND ADDRESSING SIN

- We experience failures in life because we don't seek God's will before we engage in a situation or make major decisions.
- Maybe many of us fail to grow and experience the things of God because we have unaddressed sin in our lives. **Are we consulting God and repenting of sin?**

RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP

- Another reason we may not experience the deeper things of God is because we have **trusted more in religion and religious objects than a daily relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- Have we become more superstitious and less biblical?

GOD VS. GODS

- Maybe there is a deeper issue of priorities. **Even though we may claim to be Christians, are we placing other things above God?**
- We reap what we sow (Galatians 6).** If we sow into the temporary, our reward will fade. But, if we invest in the true God, we receive eternal rewards.

TEMPLES

- We are now the temples that house the Spirit of God (1Corinthians 6:19), and **He will not occupy or share space with another "god."**
- In practical terms, this means there is no such thing as "riding the fence" or partial Christianity. **We are either in, or we are out (Matthew 12:30).**

IS GOD TRYING TO GET OUR ATTENTION?

- Whether circumstances are a result of our poor choices, people's maliciousness, or something God has allowed, we must ask, **"What is God trying to tell or teach me in this situation?"**
- Prayer and the Word** will help us decipher how God is trying to speak to us.
- Are our "gods" being broken down by Jesus because He is trying to get us on the path to eternal life?**
- Even if life is easy now, do we love Jesus enough to ask if our priorities are misaligned?** Do we truly understand that if we don't, we will eventually face collapse?