

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

THE ARK IS CAPTURED (1 SAMUEL 4:1-11) HISTORY OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

In Exodus, chapter 25, we see the first mention of the ark. God instructed Moses and the Israelites to construct the ark for two main purposes: to contain the tablets of the 10 commandments and as a place for God to meet Moses and speak with him (Exodus 25:10-22).

- The ark represented God's presence with the Israelites and was highly regarded.

SAMUEL'S ABSENCE IN ISRAEL'S DECISION

Following the profound confirmation in Samuel's ordination as a prophet at the end of chapter three, it seems as though he led Israel to their defeat against the Philistines. Further reading and understanding, instead, identifies their selfish motives for going to battle.

- **We do not see Samuel's advisement but instead, Israel's arrogance.**

FULFILLED PROPHECY

Upon defeat, Israel started to question how this could happen and concluded that it had to have been because they did not have the Ark of the Covenant present during the battle.

- Like so many times in our lives, they saw God's presence and power as an opportunity to accomplish their own will. **He should always be the one to lead us into battle.**

HE IS A LEADER, NOT A FOLLOWER

In the book of Joshua, the Ark of the Covenant had been utilized in battle, but the key difference there was that God initiated that encounter (Joshua 6:2-5).

- We must invite the Lord in on the front end. God cannot be manipulated, and He is to be approached with reverence and honor. **God is not a consultant; He is the Lord!**

MISPLACED RESPECT

Israel was not only acting in arrogance, but they also had not consecrated themselves as they had in the past to show proper reverence for God. The Philistines, on the other hand, while not properly understanding who God was, still showed comprehension of His power.

- God's reputation should precede Him. His glory, honor, and power are unmatched.

DEPARTED GLORY (1 SAMUEL 4:12-22) BAD NEWS ARRIVES

Now that the battle had finished, and the results were clear, the news had to be brought to Eli about the loss that occurred. We also read that Eli was, "...anxious about the ark of God."

- He must have known that taking the ark into battle would end in disaster. All of chapter two was now coming to fruition, and Eli's judgeship was at a close.

MORE LOSS

Not only do Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli lose their lives, but in light of the news of Eli's death, his daughter-in-law dies after giving birth. The name Ichabod means *departed glory* or *no glory*.

- It is ironic that this is the chosen name because the glory of God had seemingly departed much earlier.

ICHABOD

Since the Ark of the Covenant was a representation of God with Israel, we can see where they would believe that the glory of God had departed from them. On the contrary, they had not allowed God to lead in the first place.

- **So many times, we may not feel the presence of the Lord because we have not been willing to submit!**

NO OTHER GOD (1 SAMUEL 5:1-5) THE TEMPLE OF DAGON

Now that the Philistines had captured the ark and Israel's God was "defeated," they placed their winnings in the temple of one of their gods. This was done to show the dominance of their god, or gods, over the one true God.

- The Philistines had been so arrogant to think that, considering their recent victory, they would be the ones to have power over God.

THE FALL OF DAGON

The Philistines' victory turned suddenly to confusion upon finding Dagon "bowing" in front of the ark the next morning.

- **Not only was God opposed to sharing space with another god, but in this moment, along with countless others, He was proclaiming that He is the first and the last and there is no God except Him.** (Isaiah 44:6)

GOD'S SUPREMACY

"Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:25).

- Unable himself, Dagon required human restoration and assistance. **God does not require our service and support, but how blessed we are to have the opportunity!**

THE FALL OF DAGON PT. 2

With Dagon having his head and hands removed, not only was Dagon going to bow before the Lord, but he was rendered helpless before Him.

- Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:24 that we cannot serve two masters. We have the ability to construct other gods in our lives, but ultimately, **God will not share space with anyone or anything in our lives.**

AFFLICTION (1 SAMUEL 5:6-12) GOD WILL MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN

Not only had the Philistines in Ashdod experienced the destruction of their god, Dagon, but then they also experienced the wrath of God in the form of physical affliction. Realizing that they could not overcome the power of the Lord, they had the ark sent away.

- We have a choice: **submit to His power and authority or ask Him to leave.**

GAINING A REPUTATION

Now that tumors had broken out, action had to be taken, and a giant game of hot potato ensued.

Eventually, anxiety went before the ark as it passed among all the Philistine communities, and the ark became progressively feared.

- The capture of the ark, which the Philistines thought would represent their victory over Israel, actually meant their destruction

HE IS NOT A TROPHY, BUT OUR LORD

The Philistines were arrogant, but they did see a glimpse of who God is. Even so, **their respect was not driven by admiration but fear.**

- The Philistine's fear of God was driven by selfishness and greed, not respect. A real relationship with Him may begin with **an honest understanding** but must transition into **obedience and love.**

DOES GOD NEED SAVING?

Once again, God does not need us, and in this particular situation, we must not miss that God does not need rescuing (as we will learn in chapter six). The ark is not stolen back by Israel, and God is doing perfectly well on His own.

- **We must invite God to lead from the beginning to prevent pride and selfishness from taking charge and desolating our lives.**

GOD IS ...

- If we understand that God should be leading the charge into battle, are we seeking His authority first?
- We are not to seek the Lord's advice on the back end of a situation or consult Him after the results unfold.
- **He is not manipulated by the will of humanity; we are to submit to His authority.**

ICHABOD AND DAGON

- Could Ichabod be written anywhere in our lives? If the glory of God has left, how does the glory of God return?
- **Who, or what, have we asked to share space with God?**
- **Do we desire to dwell in the presence of the Lord, or are we too caught up in our selfish desires?**

WE MUST SUFFICIENTLY REPRESENT HIM

- Are we living in a manner that accurately represents God and points others to His supremacy?
- People perceive what we portray.
- Those we encounter should marvel at the glimpse of God they see in us, not so that we can boast, but that we should glorify Him. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, you are wise for your own benefit; if you mock, you alone will bear the consequences." (Proverbs 9:10-12)