



*'Honing in on the Heart!' Sermon Series*

**Sermon #8:**

*'The Capture of the Ark of the Covenant!'*

Wednesday, February 21st, 2024

*Last Wednesday Night in 1st Samuel:*

- Just as a heads up, tonight will be the last time that we are in 1st Samuel until April.
  - *Next week, Hannah and I will be away at the Pastor/wife marriage retreat that the Church graciously sends us on for Pastor appreciation.*
    - Pastor Chris will be filling the pulpit in my absence.
  - *Then, during March in the weeks leading up to Easter, we will spend each service going through the 'Cries from the Cross!' Sermon Series as we look at each of the words that Jesus said while He was on the Cross, dying for our sins.*

- *Last Wednesday we looked at 'The Call of God!' from 1st Samuel 3.*

- Last week I asked the question: *How does this passage of scripture show us that the Call of God is strong and Persistent?*

- *Point 1: A Quiet Period. (V. 1)*
- *Point 2: A Quandary Presented. (V. 2-7)*
- *Point 3: A Quivering Pronouncement. (V. 8-14)*
- *Point 4: A Question Proposed. (V. 15-18)*
- *Point 5: A Quest Presents itself. (V. 19-21)*

- Based on last Wednesday's message, how do we see the power of the call of God in our own lives and in the lives of others.

*'The Capture of the Ark of the Covenant!'*

*1st Samuel 4:1-11*

**Sermon in a Sentence:**

*We see the significance in the Capturing of the Ark of the Covenant by looking at the Despair in Losing, Distinct Loudness, Dumbfounded Leaders and Disappointment Lingering.*

**Intro:**

- Tonight, we begin transitioning into the narratives found in Samuel that describe the daily life of Israel as well as the main events.
  - **Specifically tonight, we will dive deeper into the Ark of the Covenant.**
    - The Ark of the Covenant was briefly mentioned in our scripture text last week in 1st Samuel 3:3.
- **The Bible Dictionary Defines the Ark of the Covenant as ‘Original container for the Ten Commandments and the central symbol of God’s presence with the people of Israel.’**
  - The ark of the Covenant was crucial for Israel because it was God’s presence with them.
- **The Ark of the Covenant is also a major theme in 1-2 Samuel.**
  - **Throughout 1-2 Samuel, the Ark of the Covenant takes quite the interesting Journey.**
    - Look at your paper or on the screen to see the journey that the Ark takes throughout 1st and 2nd Samuel:

1st Samuel 3:3	The Lord calls to Samuel who is sleeping in the tent where the Ark of God was.
1st Samuel 4	Philistines capture the ark and have it for 7 months

	according to 1st Samuel 6:1.
1st Samuel 5:1-7	Philistines bring the ark to Ashdod, setting it up beside the idol dagon.
1st Samuel 5:8-9	Philistines bring the ark to Gath.
1st Samuel 5:10-12	Philistines send the ark to Ekron.
1st Samuel 6:10-15	Philistines return the ark with a guilt offering to Beth-shemesh.
1st Samuel 6:19-21	The Lord strikes 70 men dead for looking at the ark.
1st Samuel 7:1-2	Men of Kiriath-Jearim take the ark to the house of Abinadab (stays there 20 years).
1st Samuel 14:18	Saul commands Ahijah to bring the ark to the war camp.
2nd Samuel 6:2-5	David begins to move the ark to Jerusalem on a cart.

2nd Samuel 6:6-7	The Lord strikes Uzzah dead for holding on to the ark.
2nd Samuel 6:10-11	David takes the ark to the house of Obed-edom, where it stays for three months.
2nd Samuel 6:12-17	David brings the ark to Jerusalem, and places it inside a tent.
2nd Samuel 15:24-25	Zadok brings the ark to David, who commands him to carry it back to Jerusalem.
2nd Samuel 15:29	Zadok and Abiathar carry the ark back to Jerusalem.

- **As you can see, the ark is going to take quite the journey in our study of 1-2 Samuel.**
  - Tonight we will begin that study, by looking at 1st Samuel 4:1-11, as we look at ‘The Capturing of the Ark of the Covenant!’

**\*Read 1st Samuel 4:1-11\***

### Question to Ask:

*How does this passage of scripture show us the significance of the Ark of the Covenant being taken by the Philistines?*

### Point 1: **Despair in Losing. (V. 1-4)**

- **Israel was not different from most ancient cultures when it comes to the fact that they fought against other nations and people groups.**
  - All throughout the OT we read of battles that the Israelites were in and different locations where they occurred.
  - **These verses show us the Despair in losing a battle and what happens because of this.**
- **Verse 1:**
  - ‘And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek.’ 1st Samuel 4:1
  - **We are told clearly here in verse 1 that there is a battle, but we do not know why the battle started.**
    - **Geographically, we are given some pretty important information.**
    - In the first half of the 12th century, it is believed that the Philistines migrated to the coastal regions of Southwest Israel in large numbers.
  - **In the book of Judges, we are introduced to the Philistines and that they are a threat to Israel.**
    - Judges 2:14, Judges 3:8, Judges 4:2, and 1st Samuel 12:9 all show

times when the Philistines defeated Israel.

- The geography points that are given in verse 1 show us where each nation was prospectively encamped at.
  - ***The Philistines:***
    - It is believed that the philistines army had their base camp along the banks of the Yarkon River at Aphek.
      - ***This would put them 2 miles to the east of Ebenezer.***
  - ***The Israelites:***
    - The israelites were at Ebenezer which would have been 20 miles west of Shiloh.
- ***Verse 2:***
  - ‘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.’
  - ***We know the two sides were lining up to do battle, but verse 2 explains the depravity that ensued.***
- 4,000 casualties during this battle, which seems like a pretty serious defeat.
  - ***Israel lost the battle, and this leads us to the question that the leaders of Israel proposed in verse 3.***
- ***Verse 3:***
  - ‘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<sup>[a]</sup> may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.”’
  - ***Obviously anytime a nation suffers a defeat in any kind of war, it can be a time of crisis.***
    - Bryan Chappel stated that the circumstances for Israel were high:
      - ***‘This disaster fits into the pattern that had been going on for some 200 years, through the period covered by the book of Judges. Again and again the existence of the young nation of Israel was threatened.’***
  - ***The elders of Israel wanted to know why this defeat happened when they were God’s chosen nation, God’s chosen people, and God had promised many things to them.***

- The way that the elders word this question in verse 3, show that they somewhat had an idea of what was going on.
- ***They knew that their defeat was an act of God, allowing this to happen, instead of viewing it as the Philistines just coming out and defeating them.***
  - I think what I find so interesting here is that the elders of Israel ask God why. Which is different then how they responded in Judges when faced with defeat.
- ***In Judges 3:9, Judges 3:15, Judges 4:3, Judges 6:6, Judges 6:7, Judges 10:10, and Judges 10:12 all show that Israel had cried out to the Lord.***
  - This time, they just asked ***WHY***.
    - All we don't know exactly why God allowed this defeat, I think the simple answer is that Israel was disobedient.
- ***We must not forgot that in 1st Samuel 3 God told Samuel that He would do something to make every ear tingle.***
  - ***1st Samuel 4:3b shows us that wanted to send for the Ark of the Covenant, God's Presence, from Shiloh.***
- Their immediate quick fix/solution to this problem that they faced was to bring the Lord's Covenant into the battle arena.
  - ***This is not the first time this had been done.***
    - ***Numbers 10:33-36, Joshua 3:3-7, Joshua 4:1-18 and Joshua 6:6-21 all show was that the ark was present among Israel's military forces for leadership and protection.***
- I tend to agree with what Robert D. Bergen said: ***'The problem with Israel was not the bad theology of the elders– faith in things rather than faith in God– but the sins of 'Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas,' who 'were there with the ark of the covenant of God.'***
  - We're still seeing the consequences of Hophni & Phineas's actions and how what they did is greatly affecting Israel.
- ***Verse 4:***
  - 'So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.'
  - ***The two men that had disobeyed God and caused most of the problems that Israel was***

*experiencing, were sitting right there with the Ark of the Covenant.*

- Despite Hophni and Phineas, the writer of Samuel makes it clear that ***‘the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim.’***
  - The writer is reminding us that this is the God of Hannah and that this is almighty God!
- *Bryan Chappel said ‘The elders and the people of Israel may not yet have understood, but the answer to their ‘why’ question was not God’s failure to keep the promise of the covenant represented by the ark, but the failure of the two wretches who were carrying the ark down from Shiloh.’*
  - As we can see 4 verses in, there was great depravity in losing.

**Point 2: *Distinct Loudness. (V. 5)***

- *Verse 5 reveals to us that action that comes from the Israelites once the Ark reaches the camp.*
- *Verse 5:*
  - ‘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.’
    - ***The Israelites were excited and they shouted so loud that the Philistines heard them nearly 2 miles away.***
  - *Verse 5 says that the ground literally shook.*

- I think the Israelites felt that now that God was in the camp, that they would be able to win the battle against the Philistines.

- ***While they had the right idea that God is the only one that could allow them to obtain victory, there was still sin in the camp and Israel had still been disobedient!***

- In fact, Hophni and Phineas were the ones who delivered it into camp.
  - ***So how could God bless us a nation that was still being very disobedient?***

- We’ve seen the Despair in losing, Distinct Loudness, next we see...

**Point 3: *Dumbfounded Leaders. (V. 6-9)***

- *The Philistines were able to hear this commotion from over 2 miles away.*
  - So, that shows us how loud this really was.
    - ***The following verses show us that the Philistines were truly dumbfounded when it came to the commotion that heard in Ebenezer.***
- *Verse 6:*
  - ‘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 leaders of the Philistines would obviously be dumbfounded because they just defeated these people and all of a sudden they are shouting?

- ***The fact that the Philistines referred to the Israelites as 'Hebrews', is important.***

- ***Most of the time in the OT foreigners often called the people of Israel 'Hebrews' in a derogatory tone.***

- This is seen in Genesis 39:14, Genesis 31:12, and Exodus 1:19.

- ***Verse 7:***

- 'And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, 7 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.'

- ***To me, the reaction that the Philistines have of hearing the shout and the arrival of the ark is shocking.***

- ***They just defeated their enemy and killed 4,000 of their soldiers.***

- So why would the philistines be afraid of the Israelites?

- ***Verse 8 reveals to us why the Philistines were afraid.***

- ***Verse 8:***

- 'Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.'

- ***I believe the Philistines were dumbfounded in a way because they had heard the news of what God had done years earlier in Egypt.***

- When a move of God occurs, people find out.

- ***Even in the ancient world without mass communication and social media, word had gotten to the Philistines on how amazing their God was.***

- While the Philistines did know some things about God of Israel, they also struggled with some misconceptions.

- ***Verse 8 reveals that the Philistines viewed the Israelites as Polytheistic meaning that they had multiple gods.***

- This is very possible for them to assume when they heard about the plagues that hit Egypt.

- ***It wouldn't be far fetched to see that they may have thought each plague came from a different 'god'.***

- *We know that they must have understood that the ark was the visible throne of God's invisible deity.*
  - Because why else would they be so afraid?
    - *So the Philistines had somewhat of an understanding of the history of Israel.*
- *But, even if they were incorrect on viewing the God of Israel as Polytheistic, they were correct on the fact that Israel had experienced a supernatural deliverance that could only come from God.*
  - Remember, at this time in the ancient world, Egypt was the most powerful nation. And Israel was delivered from them!
- *Verse 9 will go on to show us what the Philistines decide to do.*
- *Verse 9:*
  - 'Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.'
  - *So, the Philistines decide to engage the Israelites in battle again!*
    - *For what we believe was the 2nd time that very day!*
  - Robert D. Bergen said *'Knowledge of these details, compounded by a fear of the*

*consequences of losing to the Hebrews energized the Philistines to battlefield bravery.'*

- *The philistines didn't want to become slaves, so they decide to approach the Hebrews again.*
  - We've seen Despair in Losing, Distinct Loudness, and Dumbfounded Leaders.

**Point 4: *Disappointment Lingering. (V. 10-11)***

- *Not only did Israel lose one battle, they lost two battles with a total of 34,000 people dying.*
  - The disappointment in Israel only got worse and it seemed to linger.
  - *Here's what the scripture says about the disappointment that Israel experienced.*
- *Verse 10:*
  - '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.'
  - The Israelites lost 30,000 men and the Bible says *'they fled, every man to his home.'*
    - *Which essentially means the army has been disbanded either by decision or by defeat.*
      - Here, it seems to be because of the latter.
    - *I believe we see God's judgment begins for Israel.*



- The things that God said through the unnamed messenger and through Samuel, were coming true.
  - *God was judging Israel quite harshly to get their attention.*
- *Robert D. Bergen said ‘The presence of Yahweh, God of the Sinai covenant, in the camp of Israel meant that the covenant’s supreme enforcer had now been forced into a direct confrontation with the two most egregious violaters of the covenant.’*
  - The Israelites expected and assumed that God would be an ally against the Philistines, but the Lord had His own agenda.
    - *One that did include judgment.*
- *While the loss of life was no doubt severe, this was the first time in Israel’s history that their most sacred material possession was gone, as we find out in verse 11.*
- *Verse 11:*
  - ‘And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.’
  - *Two important things are communicated to us in verse 11.*

- *#1: The ark of God was captured and we will see this saga continue later on in 1st Samuel.*
- *#2: the two priests who had brought much destruction on Israel, were dead.*
- *We know that at this time Eli was still living. So, he was able to see part of the prophecy enacted in the fact that his own sons dad.*
- *Such a heavy text of scripture, what can we gain from this as Christians?*
  - Don’t forget God’s Power.
  - Don’t forsake God’s Promises.
  - Don’t fumble God’s Plan.

#### Conclusion:

- This scripture text is truly sad.
  - *God’s people were defeated.*
  - *But sometimes God does allow defeat to occur so that He can come in and change things for the better and for His Glory.*
    - As tough as it is, this was God’s judgment on the years that Israel’s spiritual leadership had decayed immensely.
  - *Don’t forget, there are consequences and God cannot let sin go unpunished.*
    - Tonight we see the capturing of the Ark of the Covenant by:
      - *Point 1: Despair in Losing. (V. 1-4)*

- **Point 2: *Distinct Loudness.*** (V. 5)
  - **Point 3: *Dumbfounded Leaders.*** (V. 6-9)
  - **Point 4: *Disappointment Linging.*** (V. 10-11)
- Who's capturing your heart tonight?
    - The Lord? Or the enemy?