

I. Introduction and review.

- A. Are you superstitious?
- B. Samuel is absent from the ark narrative. Why? I Sam. 4-6

II. Israel loses two battles and the ark of the covenant. 4:1-12

- A. Israel is soundly defeated by the Philistines. 4:1-2
 - 1. Who are the Philistines? 13:19ff Judges 14
 - 2. Apparently the Philistines wanted to expand their territory.
- B. Israel's leaders plan to harness God's power by bringing the ark of the covenant into the next battle. 4:3-5
 - 1. They ask the right question: Why has the LORD defeated us today? 4:3a
 - 2. Why were they defeated and what should they have done? 7:3-4 Judges 3:9,15 Dt. 28:15,25 Lev. 26:15ff Num. 10:35
 - 3. They should have sought counsel from the LORD's prophet Samuel. 3:19-4:1a
 - 4. Instead they try to manipulate God's power by using the ark of the covenant of the LORD as a good luck charm. 4:3b-4
 - 5. What is the ark of the covenant? Ex. 25:10-22 37:1ff Heb. 9:4-5 Lev. 16
 - 6. Why would they think that the ark would deliver them in battle? Joshua 3,6
 - 7. Why didn't it work?
- C. Both the Israelites and the Philistines are impressed. v. 5-9
 - 1. The Israelites shout with confidence. v. 5
 - 2. The Philistines are terrified. v. 6-9
- D. The Philistines again defeat Israel, this time capturing the ark. v. 10-11 Ps. 78:56-64
 - 1. The slaughter of Israelites is much worse than before. v. 10 Deut. 28:25 Isa. 13:8
 - 2. The ark of God is captured.
 - 3. The prophecy is fulfilled as Hophni and Phinehas both die. 2:34 3:12
 - 4. God always keeps His Word. 3:19
 - 5. God judges sin.
- E. Application: Don't be superstitious.
 - 1. What is wrong with superstition? Deut. 18:9-14
 - 2. How do people try to manipulate God's power today?
 - 3. Your external religious acts will not gain God's favor.
 - 4. God is free and sovereign. Don't put Him to the test. Acts 19:14-16

III. The glory has departed. 4:12-22

- A. This is one of the worst defeats in Israel's history, only matched by the defeat and exile by Babylon in 587 BC.
- B. Eli, upon hearing the bad news, dies. 4:12-18
 - 1. This resembles later scenes in which messengers arrive with news from a battle. II Sam. 1:2ff 18:24ff
 - 2. What was Eli's chief concern? v. 13b,18 2:29-30
 - 3. This marks the end of the prominence of Eli's house.

- C. Eli's daughter-in-law dies as her child, Ichabod (no glory), is born. 4:19-22 Mt. 24:19
1. Like Rachel, she names her son with her dying breath. Gen. 35:16-19
 2. Ichabod's name reflects the darkness of the hour. Ps. 78:56-64
 3. The reality is that the glory of God had departed a long time ago.
 4. The glory never returns to Shiloh. Jer. 7:12,14 26:6,9
 5. This chapter is a miniature of Israel's history, providing a foretaste of the day when they will be driven from the land as the glory departs. Ezek. 10 Mt. 21:33ff
 6. The glory of God will return to His chosen people.
 7. God can take care of His stuff.
- D. Application: Can the glory of the LORD depart from us?
1. God is not tied to any particular nation in this age. John 18:36 I Pe. 2:9
 2. Formerly faithful churches may have their lampstands removed. Rev. 2:5
 - a. In this age God's glory is tied to His church. I Pe. 2:9-10 Eph. 3:21 5:27
 - b. "Ichabod" could be inscribed over many churches. 2:29-30
 3. Do we sometimes experience hardship because of our sins? Prov. 3:11-12
Heb. 12:1ff Ps. 139:23-24
 4. Though it may seem that God has been defeated at a given time, He is working out His glorious plan.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. What is God doing?
- B. Where is God's glory and power manifested today?
1. Is the ark of the covenant still important today?
 2. The glory of the LORD has appeared in Christ. John 1:14 17:24
 3. Jesus has entered the holiest place in heaven and made redemption for our sins once and for all. Heb. 9
 4. When it seemed that God was defeated at the cross, Jesus was raised from the dead. Death could not hold him. Acts 2:24ff
 5. Jesus has conquered our enemies. Col. 2:15ff Luke 10:18
 6. His power is manifest in us through the gospel. I Cor. 1:18ff Rom. 1:16-17
Heb. 4:12 Eph. 1:18ff
 7. He is glorified in His church. Eph. 3:21 5:27

Discussion questions

1. Why was Israel defeated by the Philistines in the first battle? 4:1-2
2. What was wrong with the idea of taking the ark into the next battle? 4:3-4
3. What should the leaders of Israel have done instead? 7:3-4 3:19-4:1a
4. Can you think of other biblical examples of people who tried to manipulate God?
5. How do people today try to manipulate God's power?
6. Why was Israel defeated in the second battle? 4:10-11
7. Why did the Philistines think they had won?
8. What is God doing, in the big picture, through these events?
9. Can God's glory depart from His people in this age?
10. How are God's power and glory manifested in our day?