

VIII. ICHABOD! THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED: 1 Samuel 4

INTRODUCTION: **Q.** What if the Word of God was taken from us? Imagine if the Law of God was ignored. Think with me, what would it be like if the Gospel of God was not faithfully proclaimed? What would it be like if the worship of God together with His saints was not offered up to God in the ways He prescribed in His Word, and therefore the sweet communion we enjoy with God in worship were gone?

If those things were true, the only thing left to say would be, "Ichabod! The glory has departed."

That actually brings us to our text of Scripture today in 1 Samuel 4.

DOCTRINE: God may judge a people for their contempt of Him, and for a time remove His presence and gospel ordinances from them, so that all that is left to say is, "Ichabod! The glory has departed."

CONTEXT: **1 Samuel chapters 1-7 are focussed on Samuel, who God raised up to be a Prophet, speaking God's word to His people.** This is after the Exodus, after the Conquest of Canaan, toward the end of the period of the Judges, and before there is a King in Israel, about the year 1120 B.C.. God used Samuel to lead His people and even anoint the first two Kings.

However, Samuel is not mentioned from Chapter 4 verse 1 until chapter 7 verse 3. Instead the Ark of the Covenant takes center stage in chapters 4-6. Why? Because God is showing us how badly we need a faithful Prophet and how badly we need to listen to Him! He is also showing how miserable of a condition the people were in at this time.

EXPOSITION. Walk through this text with me.

1st, consider:

I. WHAT IT WOULD MEAN FOR THE ARK TO BE CAPTURED, AND ICHABOD PRONOUNCED.

- **I)** The Word of God would be gone (God spoke from the mercy-seat),
- II)** The Law would be gone (the tablets of stone were contained within),
- III)** The Gospel of God would be gone (The Day of Atonement could not be observed),
- IV)** Communion with God in worship would be gone (God communed with His people from the mercy-seat, and the chief means of their ceremonial worship was tied up with the Ark).
- **Q. Can you see what it would mean for us today if,** so to speak, the Ark of God were captured and Ichabod pronounced?

- **BOYS AND GIRLS AND MEN AND WOMEN: Christ is that ship on which we sail to heaven.** Each one of these—the Word, the Law, the Gospel, the preaching of Christ crucified, the Lord’s Supper, communion with God in worship—is like a rope that secures you to the mast of the ship in the everyday storms of the Christian life.

2nd, consider:

II. FOR WHAT GROSS SINS GOD ALLOWED THE ARK TO BE CAPTURED, AND ICHABOD PRONOUNCED.

- What we can learn negatively from 1 Samuel 2-4. from all the grievous sins listed concerning Eli and his sons, as well as the people in general.

I) 1st, consider the grievous sins of Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas, who were the spiritual leaders of God’s people.

(i) The spiritual leaders knew about the Lord but did not know the Lord in a saving way (1 Samuel 2:12).

- **George Whitefield:** “The greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world, is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm, and unskilled guides.”

(ii) The leaders ignored the Law of God and set up man-made customs in its place (1 Samuel 2:13-14; Jeremiah 6:19).

- **Jeremiah 6:19** “Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.”

(iii) The spiritual leaders disrespected the Lord’s Sacrifice (1 Samuel 2:13-14).

- Eli’s sons showed contempt for the Lord’s sacrifice.

(iv) The spiritual leaders insisted on their own way and hated reproof (1 Samuel 2:15-16).

- When Eli’s sons were offered correction they insisted on their own way and hated the reproof of faithful men.

(v) The leaders were guilty of sexual immorality, which went unchecked and unrepented of (1 Samuel 2:22).

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(vi) The spiritual leaders left sin alone without serious rebuke or necessary discipline (1 Samuel 2:22-25).

- Eli and his sons.

II) 2nd, consider the grievous sins of the people in general.

(i) The people gave themselves to superstition and mere formality, rather than trusting in the Lord their God (1 Samuel 4:3).

- They thought merely bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the midst of the army would, as it were, twist God's arm into saving them.

(ii) The people looked to God not as glorious and worthy of worship, but rather they looked to God as useful and convenient to their lives (1 Samuel 4:3).

- **RQ.** Is this not why they brought the Ark into the camp? The people, and their leaders (*elders*) wanted not to worship God, nor hear from God, nor obey God; they wanted to use God to fulfill their own desires.
- **BOYS AND GIRLS: God is not useful; God is glorious!**

(iii) The people disregarded the Word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:30, 4:1, 3).

- The Lord put His words into the mouth of Samuel (3:20) and the word of Samuel came to all Israel (4:1), yet the people did not inquire of the Word of the Lord even when the Philistines defeated them in battle (4:3). Instead, they called for the Ark of the Covenant.

(iv) The people did not cry out to the Lord in prayer (1 Samuel 4:3).

- **Q.** What did Joshua do when God's people were defeated at Ai, in Joshua 7?
 - **Joshua 7:6-7** "6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, why...?"

APPLY THIS TO LOCAL CHURCHES. What can be said of a Church that only gives lip service to the Word of God? What can be said of a Church who disregards God's Law? What can be said of a Church that does not faithfully proclaim Christ crucified in preaching and the Lord's Supper? What can be said of a Church who does not worship the Lord in the ways He has prescribed and thereby enjoy sweet communion with Him in worship? Some church buildings would do better to have ICHABOD! written on the entrance than the name of their assembly.

Q. What would Phinehas' wife say about our Church?

APPLY THIS TO YOUR HOMES. What can be said of a home that only gives lip service to the Word of God? What can be said of a home who disregards God's Law? What can be said of a home that does not faithfully proclaim Christ crucified in teaching? What can be said of a Home that does not worship the Lord in the

ways He has prescribed and thereby enjoy sweet communion with Him in Family Worship? I think many Christian homes would have ICHABOD! written on them. May it not be so with yours.

APPLY THIS TO YOUR OWN SOUL. What can be said of a soul that only gives lip service to the Word of God? What can be said of a soul who disregards God's Law? What can be said of a soul that does not faithfully delight in Christ crucified in preaching and the Lord's Supper? What can be said of a soul that does not worship the Lord in the ways He has prescribed and thereby enjoy sweet communion with Him in Worship? I fear to think how many Christian deserve to have ICHABOD! written on their foreheads, because of their gross negligence of the ordinary means of grace. May it not be so with yours, beloved.

3rd, consider:

III. HOW SHOULD THE PEOPLE OF GOD FEEL WHEN IT IS THREATENED THAT THE ARK OF GOD MAY BE CAPTURED, AND ICHABOD PRONOUNCED.

- Eli's trembling in 1 Samuel 4:13.

4th, consider:

IV. WHAT WOULD IT MEAN FOR US IF GOD ALLOWED HIS ARK TO BE CAPTURED, AND ICHABOD PRONOUNCED ON THE CHURCH.

- Death. Shown forth in both Eli and Phinehas' wife's death.