

RISE OF THE KING AND THE NEED FOR A GREATER KING

I & 2 SAMUEL



LESSON 7: WHEN GOD WILL NOT BE USED

I SAMUEL 4:1-11

REVIEW

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

THE SETTING

- Word of the Lord was rare
- Israel in spiritual decline
- Eli's house = corrupt leadership
- God's silence = judgement on Israel

CALL OF SAMUEL (3:2-10)

- Call is personal and repeated
- Samuel doesn't recognize God's voice
- Eli instructs Samuel's response
 - "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."

THE MESSAGE (3:11-14)

- God's judgement on Eli's house
 - Persistent sin
 - Failure to address/restrain sin
- Judgment is certain and irreversible
 - "...will never be wiped out by either sacrifice or offering."

SAMUEL'S FAITHFULNESS (3:15-18)

- Samuel is afraid – but obeys
- He gives the complete message
 - Did not water down or soften God's message.

SAMUEL'S ESTABLISHED (3:19-21)

- The LORD is with Samuel
- None of his words fell to the ground
- All of Israel recognized him as a prophet

LESSON 7: WHEN GOD WILL NOT BE USED

I SAMUEL 4:1-11

I SAMUEL 4:1-2

¹ “And Samuel’s words came to all Israel. Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped at Ebenezer while the Philistines camped at Aphek.

I SAMUEL 4:1-2

² “The Philistines lined up in battle formation against Israel, and as the battle intensified, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who struck down about four thousand men on the battlefield.”

WHO WERE THE PHILISTINES?

PHILISTINES?

- People group from southwest coast of Canaan
- “SEA People” who migrated from the Aegean region (modern Greece)





PHILISTINES?

- Not descendants of Abraham
- Not part of God's covenant
- Persistent **ENEMIES** of Israel

AMOS 9:7

⁷ ...God brought “the Philistines from Caphtor.” (likely Crete)

PHILISTINES?

- Controlled FIVE major cities
- Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron
- City-states with a powerful alliance
- Claimed the entire region – Palestine

MILITARY SUPERIORITY

- Advanced in **IRON** weaponry
- Israel was still using bronze tools
- Israel limited access to blacksmiths
- The Philistines controlled the metalworks

I SAMUEL 13:19-22

¹⁹ “No blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel because the Philistines had said, ‘Otherwise, the Hebrews will make swords or spears.’”

I SAMUEL 13:19-22

²⁰ “So all the Israelites went to the Philistines to sharpen their plows, mattocks, axes, and sickles.

I SAMUEL 13:19-22

²¹ “The price was two-thirds of a shekel for plows and mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for pitchforks and axes, and for putting a point on a cattle prod.

I SAMUEL 13:19-22

²² “So on the day of battle, not a sword or spear could be found in the hand of any of the troops who were with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and his son Jonathan had weapons.”

ORGANIZED WARFARE

- Professional army – “Battle formation.”
- Strategic strongholds (Aphek)

APHEK



CONSTANT PRESSURE

- Judges → Ongoing oppression
- Samuel → Continued dominance
- David → Still a major threat (Goliath)
- Not a **ONE-TIME** enemy but a generational problem

RELIGION AND CULTURE

- Polytheistic (many gods)
- Chief god: Dagon
- 1 Samuel 5 – The ark is placed in Dagon's temple
- Confrontation between false gods and one true God

RELIGION AND CULTURE

- Represent **PAGAN** power
- False worship
- Opposition to God's rule

RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

- Often used by God
 - Instruments of discipline
 - Tools of **JUDGMENT**

JUDGES 13:1

¹ “The Israelites again did what was evil in the Lord’s sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines forty years.”

RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

- Their victory is NOT ultimate power
- It is permitted by God

“The Philistines were permitted to prevail, not because their cause was just, but because Israel’s was corrupt.”

- Matthew Henry

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Facing the Philistines is not just a military conflict
- It is a spiritual reckoning
- Problem \neq Philistine strength
- Problem = Israel's **SIN**

BIG PICTURE

- God is sovereign over enemies
 - They rise and fall by His authority
- God may use opposition to correct
 - External pressure reveals internal problems

BIG PICTURE

- Israel's loss is not because of their weakness & Philistine strength
- Israel lost because GOD was disciplining them

ISRAEL BATTLES PHILISTINES

I SAMUEL 4:1-2

SAMUEL'S WORD

“Samuel’s word came to all Israel.”

- Samuel functioning as a recognized prophet
- Authority is nationwide
- God is speaking again after period of

SILENCE

SAMUEL'S WORD

“He fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied.” - 1 Samuel 3:19

- Israel now has true revelation
- Access to God ≠ Guarantee obedience

D.A. CARSON

“Revelation does not ensure transformation; it demands a response.”

I SAMUEL 4:1

¹ “Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped at Ebenezer while the Philistines camped at Aphek.”

ISRAEL WENT TO WAR...

- No mention of **SEEKING** the LORD
- Same dealing with Gibeonites:
 - Tricked into a peace treaty
 - 5 kings attacked Gibeon
 - Israel forced to defend Gibeon
 - God intervenes (hailstones, sun)

ISRAEL WENT TO WAR...

- We aren't told who instigated the war
- No repentance, prayer, or consolation
- “We can handle this by ourselves; we don't need God.”

LOCATION

- Israel at Ebenezer
 - Means: “Stone of help.”
 - Place named “HELP” without seeking God’s help
 - Foreshadowing later battles with the ark of the covenant

I SAMUEL 4:2

¹ “The Philistines lined up in battle formation against Israel, and as the battle intensified, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who struck down about four thousand men on the battlefield.

BATTLE

“Philistines lined up in battle formation.”

- Organized & intentional warfare
- Escalating & intense battle
- God sometimes ALLOWS conflict to expose spiritual reality

BATTLE

- About 4,000 Israelite men were killed
- Not total loss – but close
- “The LORD defeated them.” (4:3)
- Not bad luck – military disadvantage
- Divine discipline

R.C. SPROUL

“When God’s people walk in disobedience, they may find that the Lord Himself stands opposed to them.”

HARD TRUTH

- God sometimes fights **AGAINST** His own people
 - They are in sin
 - They are self-reliant
 - They ignore His word

WARNING

- This loss is a **WARNING** shot
- God is exposing their condition
- This is an opportunity to respond

ALL THE RIGHT TOOLS

- You can have the **WORD** of God...
- The people of God...
- The name of God...
- And still lose!
- We must walk in obedience to God

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

- Repent? No!
- Israel turns to manipulation

RESPONSE TO DEFEAT

I SAMUEL 4:3-4

I SAMUEL 4:3-4

³ “When the troops returned to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord defeat us today before the Philistines? Let’s bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant from Shiloh. Then it will go with us and save us from our enemies.”

I SAMUEL 4:3-4

⁴ “So the people sent men to Shiloh to bring back the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.”

RESPONSE TO DEFEAT

- Asked the **RIGHT** question: “Why did the Lord defeat us?”
- Recognize God’s sovereignty
- Defeat was from God
- That’s a good start...but

RESPONSE TO DEFEAT

- Instead of repentance and prayer
- Israel creates their own plan:
 - Bring the ark of the covenant

NOTICE THE RESPONSE

- They move from God to a method
 - “IT will go with us.”
 - “It will save us.”
- Reduced God to an object (ark)
- Relationship now become ritual
- Perhaps recalling Jericho

NOTICE THE RESPONSE

- They want to **USE** God without submitting to God
- God's power without God's authority

R.C. SPROUL

“The ark had become a [good luck] charm rather than a symbol of God’s holy presence.”

- Cross necklace, Bible, etc.

CORRUPT HANDS

- Eli's sons brought the ark
- Already under God's judgment
- Israel still comfortable with corrupt leadership

JOHN MACARTHUR

“The presence of Hophni and Phinehas should have warned Israel, but instead it exposed how spiritually insensitive they had become.”

ARK OF THE COVENANT

I SAMUEL 4:3-4

The Ark of the Covenant



ARK OF THE COVENANT

- Represents God's covenant relationship with Israel (His Presence)
- TEN Commandments
- Aaron's rod
- A jar of manna

A REMINDER

- God is holy
- God has spoken to His people
- God dwells with His people

“THE LORD OF ARMIES (HOSTS)”

- **LORD** = Yahweh (Covenant name)
- Armies/Hosts
 - Heavenly armies
 - All forces under God's command
- Sovereign warrior-king
- Commander of all creation

“THE LORD OF ARMIES (HOSTS)”

- Invoking the power of heaven
- But put God in a box to control Him

“BETWEEN THE CHERUBIM.”

“Who is enthroned between the Cherubim.”

- Cherubim = Angelic beings (God’s holiness and glory)
- Two on the ark facing each other with wings over the **MERCY** seat.



EXODUS 25:22

²² “I will meet with you there above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony; I will speak with you from there about all that I command you regarding the Israelites.”

“BETWEEN THE CHERUBIM.”

- God’s presence would “dwell” there
- Ark viewed as His earthly **THRONE**
- Not God’s literal presence, but where His presence was manifest
- God is near...but still holy and untouchable.

IRONY

- Israel ignores God's holiness, authority, and covenant
- Israel treated the ark like a weapon or tool, not God's presence
- They wanted God's throne without God's rule

THE ARKS PRESENCE

I SAMUEL 4:5-8

I SAMUEL 4:5

⁵ “When the ark of the covenant of the Lord entered the camp, all the Israelites raised such a loud shout that the ground shook.”

FALSE CONFIDENCE

- Emotional display – Loud celebration
- “God is with us – victory guaranteed.”
- Confidence in the presence of the ark, not in God
- **EMOTION** substitutes for obedience
- Moved but not changed

A.W. TOZER

“It is possible to have a great deal of religious excitement and still not know God.”

I SAMUEL 4:6-8

⁶ “The Philistines heard the sound of the war cry and asked, “What’s this loud shout in the Hebrews’ camp?” When the Philistines discovered that the ark of the Lord had entered the camp, ⁷ they panicked.

I SAMUEL 4:6-8

^{7c} “A god has entered their camp!” they said. “Woe to us! Nothing like this has happened before.”

I SAMUEL 4:6-8

⁸ “Woe to us! Who will rescue us from these magnificent gods? These are the gods that slaughtered the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.”

NOISE GET ATTENTION

- Philistines investigate the shouting
- Israel is making enough noise to be **NOTICED** – not effective
- “This must be connected to Israel’s God.”

FEAR IN THE CAMP

- A god (Elohim) has come into the camp
- General name for god
- “Woe to us.” – Imminent danger
- Philistines fear a god they don’t know
- Israel uses Him as a tool

R.C. SPROUL

“There is a vast difference in knowing about God and being right with God.”

FEAR IN THE CAMP

- Philistines know and remember Israel's **HISTORY** (Egypt, plagues, exodus)
- They know God's reputation & power
- Expect real consequences

FEAR IN THE CAMP

- You can have imperfect theology and still recognize God's power.
- You can have correct theology and ignore God's authority.

FEAR IN THE CAMP

- Familiarity with God without holiness is **DANGEROUS**.
- Sing all the songs, pray all the prayers, say all the right things – Still lack reverence and obedience

THE COLLAPSE

I SAMUEL 4:9-11

9“ ‘Show some courage and be men, Philistines! Otherwise, you’ll serve the Hebrews just as they served you. Now be men and fight!’

I SAMUEL 4:9-11

¹⁰“So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and each man fled to his tent. The slaughter was severe—thirty thousand of the Israelite foot soldiers fell. ¹¹ The ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.”

FEAR INTO RESOLVE

- Fear → now choose courage, action, and determination
- Fight to survive, or be servants of the Hebrews
- Respond better to fear than Israel does **DEFEAT**

ALISTAIR BEGG

“Fear rightly handled can lead to clarity and action.”

OUTCOME

- Israel defeated again
- 30,000 soldiers died
- “Each man fled to his tent.”
- No unity, leadership, or strength
- Judgment intensified – discipline escalated.

OUTCOME

- ARK is captured – Symbol of God's presence in the enemy's hands.
- God is not lost, defeated, or overpowered
- Israel's loss – Not Gods
- Exposes Israel's misunderstanding

ELI'S SONS DIE

- Fulfills prophecy of 2:34, 3:11-14
- Judgment delayed ≠ judgment denied

ISRAEL'S TRUST FAILS

- Ark → Captured
- Army → Destroyed
- Leadership → Dead
- Form without faith

ISRAEL'S TRUST FAILS

- They brought the ark into battle...But God was not with them.
- The presence of religious symbols cannot replace the absence of spiritual obedience.
- God will not be **USED**—but obeyed.

WHAT'S NEXT

- Eli receives the news
- The glory departs Israel
- A child named Ichabod: “The glory has departed.”