

The Day of Reckoning

Are we ready for the Day of Reckoning?
¿Estamos listos para el Día del Ajuste de Cuentas?

1. Let's accept God's _____.

Aceptemos la _____ de Dios.

1 Samuel 4:1

1 Samuel 3:12-13

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (2 Timoteo 3:16-17)

2. Let's seek God's _____.

Busquemos la _____ de Dios.

1 Samuel 4:3

1 Samuel 3:20-21

Acts 19:13-16 (Hechos 19:13-16)

2 Thessalonians 3:4-5 (2 Tesalonicenses 3:4-5)

3. Let's honor God's _____.

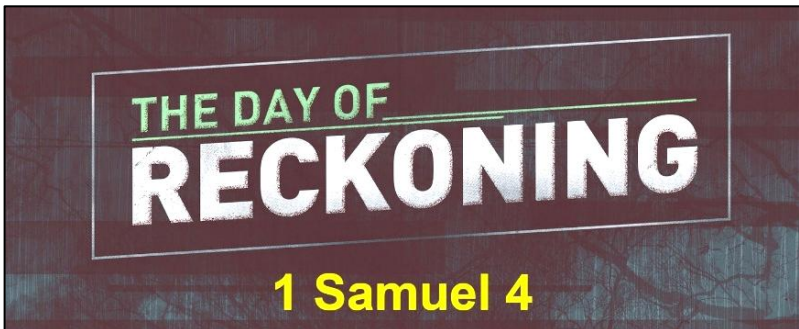
Honremos la _____ de Dios.

1 Samuel 4:4

1 Samuel 3:3-4

1 Samuel 4:20-22

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (2 Corintios 3:17-18)



Discussion Questions and Notes

Week 5: September 13-20

Scripture: 1 Samuel 4

Many people today are just going through the motions of Christianity. They might go to church. They might read their Bibles. They might even pray for God's help whenever they're in trouble. However, their faith is often built on religious symbols and rituals rather than a personal relationship with God. We see a similar problem in 1 Samuel 4. The sons of Eli, the high priest, were leading the religious rituals at the tabernacle, but they were using their position to satisfy their sinful desires (1 Sam. 2:17). All the people knew about the problem (1 Sam. 2:23). God warned Eli about the judgment that was coming, but his sons continued in their sin (1 Sam. 3:13). Then God allowed the Philistines to defeat the Israelites in a devastating battle. But instead of seeking God's direction, the elders of Israel decided to bring the ark of the covenant to the battlefield. They found out the hard way that religious symbols would not save them from the day of reckoning.

Read 1 Samuel 4

1. Who were the Israelites preparing to fight in verse 1?
2. How many Israelites were killed in the first battle? (4:2)

James Smith writes,

The Hebrew term אלף ('eleph) translated "thousand" in English versions may be the technical name for a military unit regardless of its size. The losses then equaled four of these units. Since the size of these units is not known, and in fact may have varied from battle to battle, it is impossible to determine how many casualties the Israelites suffered in the first clash with the Philistines. They did not, however, abandon the field to the enemy. (Smith, 83)

3. Why did the elders of Israel decide to bring the ark of the covenant into battle? (4:3)
4. Who came with the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield? (4:4)

John Woodhouse observes,

The point being made becomes blindingly obvious when the narrator tells us who was carrying the ark: “And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God” (v. 4b). 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. (Woodhouse, 90)

5. How did the army of Israel react when the ark of the covenant arrived? (4:5)

Smith comments,

The Israelites had a superstitious belief that the mere presence of the ark would make them unconquerable. Instead of seeking the face of the Lord through national repentance, they attempted to force God's hand to intervene on their behalf by exposing the ark to danger, probably influenced by heathen neighbors who carried the statues of their gods or their symbols into battle. (Smith, 84)

6. How did the Philistines react when the ark of the covenant arrived? (4:6-7)

7. What historical events caused the Philistines to be afraid of the Israelites? (4:8)

8. How did the Philistine commanders motivate their troops to fight with courage? (4:9)

9. How many Israelites were killed in the second battle? (4:10)

10. What happened to Hophni and Phinehas? (4:11)

11. Who escaped the battle and brought news of the defeat to Eli? (4:12-17)

Jonathan Turner notes,

This incident has been confirmed by archaeology. The Izbet Sarteh Ostrakon refers to the Ark being captured. (An Ostrakon is a piece of pottery with writing on it. In the days before paper became common, people used broken pottery pieces as note-paper. (Turner, 150)

12. How did Eli die? (4:18)

13. What other family member died as a result of hearing the bad news? (4:19-20)

14. Why did the wife of Phinehas name their son Ichabod? (4:21-22)

15. What should the elders have done instead of sending the ark of the covenant into the battle?

16. Why is it wrong to assume that having symbols of God will guarantee the blessings of God?

17. How do people today try to get God to bless their plans even when their plans are not according to God's will?

18. How can we make sure that our plans are in harmony with God's will?

19. How will you seek God's direction when you facing difficult decisions?

20. How will you honor the salvation you have in Christ?

Sources cited:

Smith, James. *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000.

Turner, Jonathan. *Lessons From the Old Testament Books of History: Volume 1*. Portland, OR: Fig Press, 2024.

Woodhouse, John. *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.