

## THE CAPTURE OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT TALISMAN RELIGION

### Introduction:

1. So far, we have learned how God has raised up Samuel to be His prophet to Israel.
2. We have seen God's rejection of Eli and his sons due to their wickedness.
3. In this chapter, we will learn of the final demise of Hophni and Phinehas – and of the death of Eli.
4. We will also get to the heart of the problem with the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel.

- I. A Religion of Superstition (4:1-4)
  - A. The first phrase of verse 1 is actually the conclusion to chapter 3.
    1. Notice that the word of the Lord is called the word of Samuel in this verse.
    2. As God's chosen prophet, Samuel was the one through whom the word of God was revealed.
  - B. The heart of this chapter concerns a battle between Israel and the Philistines.
    1. The name Philistine means "migrant."
    2. Early in history, they had invaded and conquered part of the land of Canaan – also known as Palestine (derived from Philistine).
    3. They were an idolatrous people who were displeased with Israel's conquering of Canaan. *{They worshipped the Babylonian gods of Dagon and Ashtaroth [or, Ishtar] (5:2; 31:10).}*
    4. Thus, they became determined enemies of God's people. *{They are mentioned almost 300 times in Scripture.}*
    5. During the time of the Judges, they were a continual threat to Israel.
  - C. This battle took place near Ebenezer.
    1. When this conflict occurred, the name Ebenezer had not been given to the location (cf. 7:12).
    2. It was located in western Judah, near the border of the land of the Philistines.
    3. It was about 20 or 30 miles from Shiloh.
  - D. In the first meeting of the two armies, Israel was defeated by the Philistines and about 4,000 Israelites were killed.
    1. Upon their defeat, the Israelites asked the right question, "Why has the Lord smitten us?"
    2. However, they did not seek to find out the correct answer.
    3. They did not enquire of Samuel.
    4. Though they sent word to Shiloh, they did not ask the priests.
    5. They did not look to God's Word (cf. Deut. 28:14-15, 25; Lev. 26:14ff).
    6. Instead, they acted like the nations around them.
  - E. The Israelites decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant down from Shiloh saying, "**It** may save us out of the hand of our enemies."
    1. This had been done before by Moses and Joshua (Numbers 10:33-36; Joshua 3 – 4; 6).
    2. However, those two men did not trust in the Ark as some kind of magic box that could grant them victory.
    3. Instead, they trusted in God – and sought and obeyed His will.

1 Samuel 4:1-22

- F. Furthermore, they sought victory with repenting of their sins and changing their ways.
    - 1. Notice the awful contrast in verse 4.
    - 2. God dwelt between the cherubim upon the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.
    - 3. Yet, Hophni and Phinehas were there with the Ark of the Covenant!
    - 4. Israel thought they should have victory simply because they possessed the Ark – no matter their sinful practices.
      - a. Idolatry
      - b. Pharisees
      - c. Lucky charms, horoscopes, numerology, etc.
      - d. Some even treat baptism this way!
    - 5. How wrong they were!
  - G. A talisman religion cannot save!
- II. The Failure of False Religion (4:5-11)
- A. There were great shouts of joy when the Ark arrived at the camp of Israel.
  - B. It filled Israel with confidence and the Philistines with fear.
    - 1. Note that the Philistines said that “God is come into the camp.”
    - 2. Israel had the same idolatrous view of Jehovah that the Philistines did!
  - C. In the end, Israel was defeated again – and 30,000 men were killed.
  - D. Eli’s two wicked sons were slain in the battle.
  - E. The Ark of the Covenant was captured and taken by the Philistines.
  - F. God cannot be contained in a box!
    - 1. Or a piece of jewelry or clothing
    - 2. Or a church building
    - 3. Or a preacher or elder
- III. The Glory Is Departed from Israel (4:12-22)
- A. One man escaped from the battle and ran to deliver the news in Shiloh.
  - B. For all of his weaknesses, Eli truly cared for spiritual things.
    - 1. Notice that he was troubled for the Ark of God.
    - 2. There is no mention of his anxiety for his sons.
  - C. When he received the news of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant, Eli fell backwards out of his chair, broke his neck, and died.
  - D. His daughter-in-law went into labor and died giving birth to a son.
  - E. The child was named Ichabod – meaning, “no glory.”
  - F. God’s glory was departed from His people (cf. Psalm 78:58-61), yet, until now, they had not realized it.
  - G. God had been faithful to His word (cf. 2:30, 34).
  - H. Now, Israel must turn to Him in humility and repentance if they want to be restored as His children.
  - I. Thankfully, Samuel was the man chosen by God to lead such a restoration.