

THE STORY

VERSES 1-3

“Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines” (v3)

- Good question because Israel recognizes that God is sovereignly behind this defeat.

* In the trials of our lives, we too should ask this question because God sovereignly works in and through trials.

- But the problem is Israel was not asking to really find out the answer from God. Instead, they presumed to know the answer, and decided to bring the ark into battle.

The ark was a symbol of the presence, power, and glory of God, which in the past, was used to bring about great victory.

- Joshua 6 (battle of Jericho), the ark goes before the army (at the command of God) and brings about the victory.

VERSE 4

- The narrator deliberately mentions the full title of “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim” (v4a) in order to remind us of WHO the ark represented.

- Hophni and Phinehas (v4b) are mentioned, triggering us to remember that these men do not know or care about the Lord. They care only about what the ark would do for them.

VERSES 5-11

- The ark of God with the army led, not to a great victory, but to a greater defeat

- Hophni and Phinehas both die (v11), in fulfillment of God’s word of judgement spoken earlier, and the ark of God is captured.

- The ark being captured was unthinkable and devastating in the mind of the Israelites because it was as if God had been defeated.

VERSES 12-18

- It is the mention of the ark being captured, not the mention of his sons being dead, that causes Eli to fall over and die in utter despair (v18)

VERSES 19-22

- The birth of a son Ichabod (“no glory”) has no effect on the wife of Phinehas, because of the utter devastation of the ark of God being captured.

THE IMPLICATIONS

WHY has this happened?

- On one hand, this happened because God was fulfilling judgment on Eli’s house. But on the other hand, this happened because the people of God were treating him lightly, simply as a means to an end.

* Our obedience to God should be in response to who He is and what He has done, not as a means to try and get what we want.

The end of the story

- Thank God the Bible doesn't end at 1 Samuel 4, with the glory departing because of our sin (Ichabod). But a thousand years later, another child (Immanuel) will be born, who will save us from our sins and reveal the glory of God.

John 1:14 (ESV)- And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV)- For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,
- When you see Christ, you see the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)- And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- If it is beholding the glory of God in Christ that transforms us into his image, what will happen when we see the glory of God face to face. We shall be like Him.

John 17:24 (ESV)- "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

Our response:

1) Thank God that the glory has not departed in light of our sin and rebellion

2) Listen to Jesus

- **Luke 9:35 (ESV)- And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"**

* We must listen to Jesus, not try and get Him to listen to us. Life must revolve around the Son, not the Son around us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The people of God in this story made the mistake of thinking that the ark could bring them victory, without really being concerned about the God of the ark. Have you ever been guilty of this (where you did things for God, not necessarily out of love or reverence for Him, but simply to get Him to do things for you)? What does this show about your understanding of who God is? How can understanding the gospel help you to fight against this mistake?

2. The people of God in this story basically elevated the ark of God, as sort of a "good luck charm" that would grant them success. Are there any "arks" in your life? Things that you have (or do) that make you think, "because I have (done) *this*, God will grant me success!" What makes you do (or not do) this?

3. The story of Immanuel is the story of God's glory, with us forever, never to depart again. Have you been experiencing the glory of Christ by beholding Him in your life? What steps can you take this week, to behold of the glory of Christ more? Are there things that you must repent of, that are preventing you from beholding His glory? In what areas of your life, is God calling you to "listen" to Jesus?