

1/29/23 - 1 Sam. 4:1-7:17 - "Experiencing God's Glory & Restoration"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 January 2023

Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 00] Begin reading in 1 Samuel chapter 4. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim.

And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout so that the earth resounded.

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean? And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, A god has come into the camp.

And they said, Woe to us, for nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.

[1 : 40] Take courage and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men and fight. So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home.

And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road, watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God.

And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, What is this uproar? Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. And the man said to Eli, I am he who has come from the battle. I fled from the battle today.

[2 : 48] And he said, How did it go, my son? He who brought the news answered and said, Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people.

Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured. As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken, and he died.

For the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years. Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth.

And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death, the women attending her said to her, Do not be afraid, for you have born a son.

But she did not answer or pay attention, and she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God had been captured, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

[4 : 00] And she said, The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured. When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face

forward on the ground before the ark of the Lord.

So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold.

Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our God.

[5 : 24] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? They answered, Let the ark of God of Israel be brought around to Gath.

So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. But after they had brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic.

And he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.

They sent, therefore, and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its own place that it may not kill us and our people.

For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there.

The men who did not die were struck with tumors. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

[6 : 39] The ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.

They said, If you send away the ark of God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.

And they said, What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him? They answered, Give five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines.

For the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land and give glory to the God of Israel.

Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?

[7 : 48] Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows, on which there has never come a yoke. And yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.

And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart, and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off, and let it go its way, and watch.

If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth Shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm. But if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us.

It happened to us by coincidence. The men did so, and took two milk cows, and yoked them in the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors.

And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth Shemesh, along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

[8 : 51] Now the people of Beth Shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh and stopped there.

A great stone was there, and they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone.

And the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the Lord. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron. These are

the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the Lord. One for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron. And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines, belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwallled villages, the great stone beside which they set down the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. And he struck some of the men of Beth Shemesh because they looked upon the ark of the Lord. He struck 70 men of them, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great blow.

[10:07] Then the men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us? So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-Jerim, saying, The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord.

Come down and take it up to you. And the men of Kiriath-Jerim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill.

And they consecrated his son, Eliezer, to have charge of the ark of the Lord. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-Jerim, a long time passed, some twenty years.

And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the Lord only. Then Samuel said, Gather all Israel at Mitzpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.

[11:23] So they gathered at Mitzpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mitzpah.

Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mitzpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

And the people of Israel said to Samuel, Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines. So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord.

And Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into a confusion.

And they were defeated before Israel. And the men of Israel went out for Mitzpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them as far as below Bethkar. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mitzpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer.

[12:39] For he said, Till now the Lord has helped us. So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel from Ekron to Gath. And Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines.

There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mitzpah.

And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah for his home was there and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. What a wonderful privilege it is for us to go through such a lengthy passage knowing the weight of that which we read as God's people gathered in a church.

[13:56] And what an honor and a privilege it is to turn to the word this morning. The passage and narrative today is often identified as the arc narrative between all that which was read is a single story just like watching a movie play out from beginning to end.

It has the tension, the rising action, and then the questions that were asked at the beginning of the movie are answered at the end of the movie. And so, for that reason, we will use the entire narrative as the sermon today.

And it's a long transitional narrative that previously focused on the birth and the calling of Samuel. And now, the narrative and where we're at in the series has begun to shift into speaking on the fall

of Eli's house.

So, it's transitional in context. And for many Christians, the Ark of the Covenant is quite fascinating. Is it not? The Ark of the Covenant, a gold-plated box of acacia wood made of acacia wood with the Ten Commandments, the two stones, the two tablets inside.

[15 : 23] Right? That's fascinating to us. It's an object that represented the presence of God within the Holy of Holies inside Israel's temple. And the idea of the Ark of the Covenant has even reached Hollywood.

Right? You know where I'm going with this. With the quest to find the lost Ark. Right? That holds this immense power that in the film Adolf Hitler wanted to get his hands on that power to have this invisible army.

Right? It's even hit Hollywood, secular Hollywood. And while that fictional depiction of the Ark has times of humor and times of tension and countless close calls, especially by a big boulder rolling and almost killing Harrison Ford, many issues were happening in that film.

However, fictional they are. For Eli, non-fictional historic accounts, what we have is a sad humiliation of the ongoing leadership problem in Israel.

The reality of the Ark of the Covenant may seem elusive in our day today. It might seem unclear of what that has to do with our lives today.

[16 : 47] As if this is a distant reality or as if some Hollywood fairy tale makes it to be this whole other storyline.

But what these failures and what's going on in the narrative is that it was the failures in Eli's house that caused this nationwide turmoil, which is relevant in our lives today.

Very relevant in our lives today. The narrative today calls us to a heart check before the Lord. It calls us to a heart check before the Lord.

To have a proper view of the weight of sin. To have a renewed fear of the Lord. And to humble ourselves in reverence for God, the God of the Covenant.

And so just as we read today, their heart checks were severely flawed to say the least. Severely flawed. And leading to nationwide departure of God's glory and by the end of our time, we, just as the nation of Israel, will have the confidence to find our way back to God according to His requirements when we fail Him.

[18 : 07] And we're going to see that today. I'd like to pray as we go into our time and continue our worship through the study of God's Word.

Let's pray. Lord, awaken us this morning to the reality and the weight of the black and white text this morning.

that while what we hold is an inanimate object, we know that it is described as a breathing, living organism in our lives.

It speaks to us today. You speak through Your Word to us today. And so with that, help us to turn to Your Word and heed Your Word with submission to Your authority and reverence for who You are. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I'm going to break it up into a few sections. And the first section is sort of looking at chapter 4.

[19 : 16] And so this chapter, let's back up a minute. The title of the sermon for note-takers and anybody following along in this series is experiencing God's glory and restoration.

Just as I introduced with the narrative. Experiencing God's glory and restoration. And now with that, we'll break it into a few sections. And the first section being God's consummation of His Word to Eli. It's as if chapter 4 paints this picture of the ark being this focal point of power. There's something within this box of wood that holds some spiritual access to power.

And it would be an idolatrous attempt to use something like that for man's benefit. Happens in the world today.

I could probably preach a whole separate sermon about that. But after losing 4,000 men in battle, they needed help. They did need help.

[20 : 32] Who wouldn't need help after 4,000 other men are wiped out? So they call upon the ark to be brought. In verse 3, why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?

It's a question that they pose. So man provides the solution. Let's bring the ark of the covenants of the Lord here from Shiloh that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. In other words, God's people have reduced the power of the almighty God, the one who brought all things into existence.

They've reduced Him to a box. They've reduced Him to a divine rabbit's foot. Maybe our luck will better serve us in battle if we bring the ark with us. And here come, lo and behold, in verse 4, Eli's sons, as reprobate as they get, coming down probably saying, I got the tool, guys.

[21 : 49] We'll get them. Here we go. And bringing these types of relics, bringing these types of carved images into battle is something that pagans did in this time period.

God's people would not be expected to bring things like that for their good fortune into battle because our God is higher than any carved image.

He's in control regardless of where or what we might bring. And the losing side of these battles would essentially take the other nations, the other pagan nations, carved images and idols.

They would capture it and take it back and put it on their shelf as a trophy within the land. And so we see something odd that Israel is doing led by Eli's sons nonetheless.

And this defeat, as all defeats of this nation, had serious consequence and actually ties really well into the multiple patterns of disastrous defeats that we read throughout the book of Judges.

[23 : 04] This is just one of the many, it's almost as if this is like Judges 2.0 as it's coming to a close. And we should sense that.

It's a disasteful defeat. In verse 5 leading all the way to halfway through that half of chapter 4, this was a disastrous defeat.

Not only did their retrieval of the ark lead to an additional 30,000, almost half the population of Youngstown in proportion being wiped out, but the Philistines captured the ark.

And two of the 30,000 of those who were killed in the battlefield were Eli's sons. Church, has God lost or has His people lost God?

this nation reduced God's identity to a golden box. Acacia wood and tablets within.

[24 : 19] You see, church, where does God's power truly reside? For us, it's not brick and mortar. It's not the Constitution of the United States.

It's not all these things that will empower the church to be successful. It's according to His will and His power alone. And that is important to remember.

It's in Himself. That's where His power resides. The reality of how far they have drifted hit like a shockwave in this nation, hadn't it?

You see Eli in verse 13? after all that He's done up to this point, being complacent of disciplining His sons, of removing them from office, sitting at the gate blind, authorizing the sending of this ark. Yeah, go ahead boys. I know you just were profaning the name of the Lord with the sacrifices inside, but it's okay, take the ark. We'll try that one. Good idea, guys. And He sends them off and sitting there shaking at what He's done.

[25 : 36] And do you see Him blind sitting at that gate hearing the cries within the nation, the shouting from the battlefield?

Not only that, the messenger runs back to the city, and the text indicates that He actually passed up Eli. He didn't even see Eli standing there, only to be surrounded by more shouting.

Do you hear the shouting? Do you hear the pain that's surrounding Eli? The author does such a wonderful job at changing our attention to the magnitude of this moment in history.

Church, this is real history. Eli, blind, standing by the gate, surrounded in the cries of God's people because of his failure to lead Israel.

You see, not only has Eli lost God's favor through minimizing sin, but he has now lost the only symbol of redemption that were passed on by his ancestors to their nation.

[26 : 59] What else could he lose now? Well, the text actually continues what he loses. But might the author intend for us, with such illustrations of shouting, of the geography brought within this, might he intend for us today to hear the roar of God's judgment of sin?

Do you hear the shouts that surround Eli, which is shouts of judgment? of God's sin upon this nation. This shock wave hit the public square all around Eli and even private quarters.

Eli, upon hearing the news, what else can he lose? He falls to his death. And Eli's daughter-in-law is induced with contraction at the roaring news of defeat.

I mean, giving birth is one of the most celebratory moments, at least in my personal experience, unless it was a hard and difficult, challenging time of possibly having a stillborn and things like that. But overall, having that birth moment should be a time that is a precious gift as you witness God bringing new life.

[28 : 29] love. And look what it's described as. This woman, she gives birth in emotionless sorrow in which the child is named Ichabod.

That name means no glory. And she states, the glory has departed from Israel. sorrow. And just as this baby was delivered into sorrow, so too this nation has been delivered into sorrow as well.

And looking ahead in a couple pages, looking at exiled Israel into the minor prophets, people looking at this letter would be reminded, this historical account is a miniature snapshot of what the nation would face eventually with the Assyrian opponents.

And then Babylonians, each minor prophet would indicate the glory departing Israel once again. Where is the glory of God?

We see in the second section that we find it. But the enemy finds it first. While the glory of God has left the nation of Israel, the enemy's camp has a close encounter with God's glory.

[30 : 02] Do they not? We see in the second section that God reigns over His enemies and His people. In the progression of the chapters between chapter five and leading into six, the Philistines seem to begin to play this almost comical game of hot potato with the ark.

You ever play hot potato? Maybe I'm dating myself. Is hot potato a thing anymore? Is it still a thing? Okay. Look it up on Google.

Google knows everything. You can look at it later. It's like they're playing this game with the ark called hot potato, passing this ark along. And so, it first is received in Ashdod in verse one all the way to eight.

And their false god, Dagon, he is the highest of all the Philistine gods. And he is utterly humiliated by Yahweh.

And what's their response? Get that thing out of here. Get that box of wood. We are covered in tumors.

[31 : 19] The hand of their god is strong against us. Get that thing out of here. And so, the ark is led to Gath. And again, oppression and tumors, they punt that thing out of there.

It receives an ekron in verse 11. Very heavy oppression and ekron through tumors but also death. And there another shout goes up into the air.

You hear that as well? Another cry of defeat. Now that cry would be in the apparent victors of the battle, the enemies of God.

You see, all the enemies of God find themselves in a realization of His authority, namely His glory, especially, especially the source of His glory.

That He is the God of the ark. And they met the God of the ark. A sinful world, thinking of those who are separated from the ark of the covenant, they were brought the ark of the covenant, but that covenant was actually for Israel.

[32 : 41] Those who are outside of the ark and any symbolic representation of that covenant, of God making a covenant with Israel, the enemies of God were not brought into that, and they realized that very quickly, that they cannot force their hand in the matter.

A sinful world can only defy God for a limited amount of time. It was the defiance of God's enemies that desired Jesus Himself to be crucified and taken captive as well.

Where is God's glory? Well, it's not bound upon earth, and the enemies of God are realizing that very quickly. It's not the wood upon the cross, it's not the wood upon an ark, but God's glory is founded in God's absolute reign over all, and the world experienced that.

The enemies of God experienced that in His resurrection. The cross being an object of humiliation, an object of sorrow, of pain and distress.

The glory was not found upon the wood of the cross, the glory was not found in the wood of the ark, it was found above all things, and at the cross we see Jesus resurrected where God's glory was on full display.

[34 : 03] You see, the glory, the gospel glory is a reminder for us that the enemy loses. That God laughs, He sits in heaven and laughs. The Lord holds the enemies of Himself in derision, Psalm 2, 4.

God is sovereign, He needs no one to defend Him, and His glory will prevail on earth as all knees will bow.

Every time will confess that He is Lord. Amen? Amen? In chapter 6, we see the enemy still encountering the God of the ark.

The enemy gathers their best and their brightest. They bring so-called priests, diviners in, and their advice, send it back.

I know, even the phones declare. Doesn't it make sense? Send it back. It's like a light bulb goes off. [35 : 14] That was perfect. I appreciate that. And look at what they recall in verse 6. They recall the tales of the Egyptians and Pharaoh.

They knew the stories. They had the ark, but they did not know God. And they prepared. They're like, well, we're going to see if this is coincidence or not. We're just going to test the spirits, right? And so, they prepare a guilt offering. They try to figure it out. Well, what makes most sense? Maybe a golden mouse for each of the leaders of the enemy camps, right? For each of the leaders. And you know what? Let's figure out how to make a golden tumor.

How about that? I hope the kids' ministry downstairs are making golden tumors today. Just kidding. But what does a golden tumor even look like?

[36 : 18] God only knows, but these best and the wisest priests and diviners seem to think that it would help. But the ark was sent back to see if this would alleviate God's heavy hand upon them.

And there's no mention of if it actually did or not. Because why, church? God judges sin. And those who are in sin will stay under judgment.

They do not turn to God. And so, the ark was sent back on its way in verse 13. on its way back to the nation of Israel, which led to this celebration.

More shouts filling the heavens. Shout of celebration. When I was preparing the message, I just thought of the shouts of the March for Jesus parade from last year.

Just those shouts, the shofars, the praising, the music, and the excitement. It was a joyful reaction of the people of Beth Shemesh who believed the glory had returned because the ark had returned.

[37 : 38] They equated a box of wood with the glory of God. And the Levite priests came. They honored the Lord.

They offered sacrifices to the Lord. where is the glory of God? Has it returned by way of this box? It would have been great if the narrative ended there. I'm sure some preachers around the world probably ended it there and it was everyone lived happily ever after until they realized they didn't read the following passage coming up.

Right? Well, we remember the spiritual condition of this nation, don't we? very quickly as 70 men were struck dead with a great blow as the text says.

A great blow for mishandling the ark. Their spiritual condition is made sure in our minds. Things remain the same still.

[38 : 47] Still undermining God's power still leaderless. You see, the overarching message of these three chapters that we've studied thus far is that God's power always and inevitably accomplishes its purposes.

it is God who brings low, it is God who exalts, that He is supreme. He's supreme over the enemy, He's supreme over His people, He is supreme and sovereign over all.

And look at this shouting going on. and the death of seventy men laying there out in the field. We should see something here.

That we can fill the heavens full of celebration and roaring praise. But when God's judgment is passed upon us, there His judgment remains.

no amount of praise is pleasing to His ear. No amount of praise can alleviate His judgment.

[40 : 13] You see, God's judgment is louder than man's highest praise. And this, this would lead into two decades, twenty years of disconnection from God, lament, sorrow.

So what can God's people do? They can't praise. They can't offer sacrifices. What can these people do? They're under judgment of God.

Maybe they can try a new church. Maybe they can try reading a new study Bible. Maybe they can try selling their house and move into a different city.

No. God calls His people to deal with it appropriately in chapter seven. And so that we see God's message to lamenting people.

After God has proved to be capable of dealing with Israel's wicked leaders in chapter four power by killing Eli and his sons and also fully competent to deal with Israel's enemies.

[41 : 32] He didn't need anyone to defend Him. He crushes the enemies by His own power. Well, God certainly does not need us, right? But the fact that He did lead the Ark of the covenant back in

verse 10 and 12, the fact that He did lead it back to His people is such a glimpse of His love regardless of the 20 years that have passed.

Not of the good times. They got the Ark back and everything went back and you see the fields of daisies and the sunset coming and they lived happily ever after. No. But don't you see a glimpse of His love?

The nation didn't deserve any of that. They did not deserve to be brought back this box of acacia wood and stone tablets within.

Not of good times, but of laments. Lament is deep pain. Lament is actually really common in the Bible, very uncommon in churches today, to normalize lament.

But it is a season that we should walk through worshipfully as a church, as Bible believing Christians.

[43 : 01] Not everything is rosy and putting a smile upon our faces all the time. Sometimes there's seasons of lament where God is dealing with something in our lives and that's okay.

and so we allow Him to process that according to how He desires, not how we desire. And taking through seasons of deep pain and grief, it is very common.

So maybe the question is less concerning the glory departing Israel and maybe the hearts of His people have departed Him.

The question is less of the glory departing His people, you get that? And more about their hearts departing Yahweh.

You see, Israel's problem was not fundamentally their corrupt and inept leaders. God dealt with them. Nor was it the threat of the Philistines.

[44 : 02] God dealt with them too. So it would seem Israel has a problem with God Himself. And the blow of 70 men lying dead in that field testifies to it.

So what is the only proper response when we defy God? God calls His people through the lips of Samuel to repentance.

He says, if you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, get rid of the foreign gods and the astrophs that are among you.

Dedicate yourselves to the Lord and worship Him only. Then He will rescue you from the hand of the Philistines.

Notice how the narrative progresses to reveal their sin was not only mishandling this box of wood. Their sin wasn't only false worship.

[45 : 17] It was that they had one foot in with God and the other foot into the world. They had other gods that they were worshiping and offering sacrifices to. They had skeletons in their closets, we'll say, that God sees.

They were worshiping other gods as well. But the good news, God's word through Samuel presents a fresh start.

repentance. And so too does God's word provide the same for us today. Repentance is the beginning of God's glory returning to His people.

That is a theological fact. Verse 6, so they gathered at Mizpah, they drew water as like a symbol of them pouring out their cries to the Lord.

They poured it out before the Lord in verse 6, chapter 7, and they fasted on that day. They renounced even their hunger and turned to the Lord.

[46 : 21] And look at what they said. We have sinned against the Lord. The problem all along rested 12 inches below their brains the whole time.

You see, after two decades of lament, they have realized and acknowledged. God is not the problem. We are in verse 6. This repentance leads to the battlefield.

They go back out to battle after repenting. And Samuel in verse 8, he intercedes on behalf of their Philistine enemy. And Samuel cried out and provided a burnt offering and the Lord answered in verse 9.

the nation of Israel defeated the Philistines by God's intervention. This is good news.

You see, after two decades of lament, they have realized and acknowledged God is to be feared, not the enemy. Right? Verse 10 says that the Lord thundered.

[47 : 36] previously it thundered in the cries of sorrowful people. It cried in the defeats of man, and now the Lord in heaven thunders in His glory.

Verse 12, this nation is commemorated, commemorated this day with a stone, set this stone in a place, and all was restored back to them, and even peace between nations.

And Samuel, a man whose birth testifies of God's sovereignty in working out his plans through barren Hannah, is the man God sovereignly uses to call His people back to Himself.

You see, after two decades of lament, they have realized and acknowledged God's glory departed His people because of their defiance. God's glory returned to His people because of their repentance.

Repentance is the beginning of restoration, church. Church, God does not need us to defend Him. He wants His people to fear Him.

[48 : 51] If a proper fear is accomplished, then our lives will ultimately align to His plans, will naturally align to His purposes.

This nation forgot the God of the Ark. Have we too as well? Have we forgotten the God of the Bible? Now, worshiping has actually become an exercise of head knowledge, how to have every perfect refute to any arguments, not heart transformation, not conviction of sin, just having a bunch of puffed up knowledge.

Have we forgotten the God of the church, that we worship our wonderful building? We're idolizing brick and mortar. Have we forgotten the God of our marriage, worshiping our spouses, yielding to them and their needs before God's?

God of us? Have we forgotten the God of our family as we worship our kids, dropping everything for them and being selective with God?

[50 : 12] Have we forgotten the God of our finances as we're worshiping our retirement plans and savings accounts? Have we forgotten God of our employment, worshiping overtime income, working all hours of the night, not to serve others, but to get that deck on the back of your house for yourself?

Have we forgotten the God of our careers? We're worshiping academia, trying to, our lives are encapsulated in just studying so that we can do this or do that, sacrificing time in our lives for our wonderful, promotions?

Have we forgotten the God of our lives as well? Now, obviously, not all these things are necessarily bad, as you know, but they are good gifts, but they're terrible gods, and for that, we can be warned. church, we are to believe that idol worship is reserved to just, we can believe that it's just reserved to carved images. We can think that all these golden calves and things like that is idol worship, as if it's some pagan god long off in Ashdod, somewhere in Ashdod.

If you can find Ashdod, you know, let me know where that's at, right? Like, we don't know where these places are, and we disconnect from the reality of idol worship in the text, because it seems like something so disconnected from our lives.

[52 : 02] But idol worship begins with us and a problem in our hearts, when we put something above God, in our worship of God.

And this can be within the Bible, this can be in our church, this can be in our marriage, this can be in our family, this can be our finances. Our employment and even our careers. The message remains for us.

God's glory will depart from those who lose sight of Him and take Him for granted. While we can blame all the things under the sun for why we might lose sight of Him, until we take responsibility for our defiance, we will be expected to remain in a lamentable state.

That is a hard reality that the text poses to us today. That God is speaking to us today. However, for those who will prepare their hearts to receive the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach it, just as Ezra did, restoration is found.

And where restoration is found, there will His repentant people be. So, as we close, church, if God is mighty to defend Himself, how much more mighty He promises to forgive.

[53 : 31] And in that, church, we run to the cross of Jesus Christ, where we receive pardon for our sins, where we know who to turn to in repentance.

We know who to focus on in our laments. Colossians 1, 19 says, For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, we are made at peace with God. It's not something that our highest praise can do to alleviate our sin, unless we repent and turn to the cross.

So, if maybe you're not a believer, this story definitely warns about playing games with God. We don't know how it turned out for Ashdod, for Gath, for Ekron.

We don't know what happened. But if this was true for the covenant people of God, how much more true for the enemies of God, living in rebellion and rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, living in the weight of sin, living unrepentant lives.

[54 : 56] This brings us hope in the cross of Jesus Christ, that if you are an unbeliever today, all you have to do is turn, repent. You're going this way, go that way.

It's as easy as that, but it is also as hard as that, because that's a different life that is a call to die to this world and to live through Jesus Christ.

We're reminded that Romans 5.10 says, for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by His death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled, reconciled shall we be saved by His life.

This is good news. Come to Jesus Christ today fully, not in a selective spirit, but fully surrendered to the God of the ark.

Trust in God today, and by all means, don't defy Him. May God help us all in this. Let's pray.