

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

If we were to go out and ask people in Santa Cruz County if they believe in God, I am pretty sure that the majority of them would make the proclamation that “yes” they do believe in God.

However, their answers may vary greatly if the same individuals are asked to define the role that God plays in our daily lives.

Because there are a percentage of people that believe that God plays the role of a waiter in our lives.

The waiter doesn't sit down and partake of the meal with you at the restaurant, their role is to come along and attend your needs; you are sitting down at a table and you realize that something is missing in your meal – and you ask the waiter, “can I get a bottle of tabasco or can I get some ranch for my kid.”

Some people believe that is God's role and they will only call upon Him if they have a need.

Others believe that God is more like a cheerleader.

A cheerleader is not there to play in the game. You are not going to call the cheerleader to kick a field goal or throw a touchdown pass.

The cheerleader is just there to cheer you on. You can do it!!!

Others will see God as just a therapist – to make them feel good.

Others, as just a doctor – to heal them from any ailments.

And we can go on and on.

You see, the scriptures tell us from the beginning of creation that God created man in His image.

But from the beginning of time man has been trying to recreate God according to man's needs - instead of recognizing and revering Him for who He truly is.

That is what we saw in Eli and his two sons the last few weeks – they believed in God but they didn't hold Him in reverence anymore.

How do we know? Through their conduct.

If they did revere a holy, all powerful sovereign God – they wouldn't have done what they did.

Instead of recognizing God for who He truly is – they only saw God as a lucky charm.

And we will see here in chapter four – the consequences of trying to recreate God for who He truly is.

Let's pray...

[1Sa 4:1-11 NKJV] 1 And the word of **Samuel came to all Israel.**

Now Israel went out to battle against **the Philistines**, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. 2 Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array

against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field. 3 And when the people had come into 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 from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells [between] the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, [were] there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. 6 Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What [does] the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews [mean]?" Then they understood that the ark of the

LORD had come into the camp. 7 So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. 8 "Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These [are] the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9 "Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!" 10 So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. 11 Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

The chapter begins with the announcement of Samuel's ministry.

Samuel is now a prophet of God.

He speaks from God and he speaks for God and we saw last week that everything that Samuel prophesied, it became true.

This was a very good thing for the nation of Israel – especially after the period of judges where everyone did what was right in their eyes.

We can say that things are moving in the right direction for the nation of Israel in regards to their spiritual health.

And whenever people draw closer to the Lord – the enemy awaits.

As believers, we will have these mountain top moments, moments where we achieved a spiritual victory –

And we can be assured that after these mountain top moments, as we come down from the mountain – into the valley, the enemy will be waiting to attack.

The Philistines become one of Israel's biggest enemies.

When we read the book of Judges, the Philistines were the ones that Samson was always fighting.

Now, the Philistines were not originally from Canaan.

They came from the island of Crete during the four hundred years that Israel was in Egypt. (Amos 9:7).

So they were Greek and they were also the first people in Canaan that were able to process iron – so they had shields and helmets and swords that were superior to the weapons of the Israelites – that is why the Israelites struggled with them much longer.

So the Israelites and Philistines are engaged in battle and the Philistines beat them.

Not only do the Philistines beat them, we find out in verse two that they lose 4000 men.

So what do the Israelites do???

Do they do a self-examination of where they stood before the Lord?

On Sunday we saw Joshua command the Children of Israel to sanctify themselves before crossing the Jordan.

Do they get on their knees and repent of their sins?

Of course not.

They blame God for their loss.

“Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?”

Remember – these are the elders of Israel that make this statement.

However, it doesn't appear that they were very interested in finding out what the reason is behind their loss because you will notice that they never go to the one person that had his ears tune to the voice of God – Samuel.

The don't seek the council of God – instead they say, “Go get the ark – go get our lucky charm”

Now, on Sunday, I told you that the ark of the covenant was designed by God and was built by the Israelites and it was supposed to be a token of the covenant that God made with the Israelites.

The ark was there to demonstrate God's presence within the Children of Israel.

Pop quiz – what were the three items that were placed in the ark?

The tablets holding the ten commandments, manna and Aaron's rod.

You see, the problem was that the Israelites began to revere the ark instead of God.

The ark became their idol.

They placed their trust in the ark instead of in God.

And by bringing the ark to the fight – they felt that they could manipulate God to fight for them – to do what they wanted.

Church, there are times when we do the same thing.

How???

Every time we expect God to do something on our behalf, as a result of something that we have done.

Ok God – I have gone to church 6 Sundays in a row – you owe me a blessing.

Church that is not how God works.

However, as we read in verse 6-11, the only thing that was accomplished by bringing the ark into the battle field was that it caused the Philistines to be even more courageous and determined in defeating the Israelites.

The Philistines were victorious and this time, they take the ark with them.

Because they worshipped the ark – God takes away their idol.

Thirty thousand soldiers die in battle against the Philistine along with the two sons of Eli – just like it was prophesized in chapter two as they both died the same day.

12 Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. 13 Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told [it], all the city cried out.

This man is bringing bad news to Shiloh. Whenever a Hebrew mourned he would tear his clothes and place ashes over his head.

So they people knew as he approached the message that he was about to deliver.

14 When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What [does] the sound of this tumult [mean]?" And the man came quickly and told Eli. 15 Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. 16 Then the man said to Eli, "I [am] he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line." And he said, "What happened, my son?" 17 So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." 18 Then it happened, **when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.**

Eli was old and could barely see. He couldn't see what everyone else saw when the man came in with the news.

So they had to tell him.

However, notice that he doesn't fall and break his neck until the man of Benjamin reveals to him that the ark has been taken away.

It didn't happen when they told him about the casualties suffered by the Israelites or when they told him about his sons.

Eli knew that his sons were going to die because of the judgment that the man of God pronounced upon them because of their wickedness.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, [due] to be delivered; 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 herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death

the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard [it]. 21 Then 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. 22 And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."**

So one of the sons of Eli, Phinehas – his wife was pregnant during this time and when she hears about what has happened to the ark and her husband, her father-in-law and her brother-in-law, she goes into labor.

And the woman helping her with the delivery of her baby, seeing that Phinehas' wife is anguished by what has happened, she tries to reassure her by telling her that it is a son.

However, she was so heartbroken that she dies and before she dies, she names her son Ichabod.

Turn with me to Exodus 24

[Exo 24:16-17 NKJV] 16 Now the **glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.**

17 The sight of the **glory of the LORD [was] like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.**

I asked you to underline the word glory here because the Hebrew word for glory is *kabowd*

So Ichabod or Iykabowd in the Hebrew means no glory.

Now she mistakenly says in verse 22 - that "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

The glory of God had indeed departed Israel – but it was not because the Philistines took the ark.

It was because Israel had stopped repenting and had stopped trusting in Him.

You see, the ark was captured because the glory of God had already departed Israel.

[1Sa 5:1-12 NKJV] 1 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. 4 And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and

both the palms of its hands [were] broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's [torso] was left of it. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

The Philistines upon defeating the Israelites, they take the ark of the covenant to the temple of one of their pagan gods.

They attribute their victory to their god Dagon who is personified as being half man/half fish.

The Philistines believed that Dagon controlled the weather and the fertility of their soil.

And they lay the ark of the covenant at his feet.

It was supposed to be a trophy for him because Dagon brought victory over the Israelites.

The next morning, when the pagan priests come into the temple, God had made the statue Dagon bow down before Him.

What kind of god did these Philistine people have that they had to pick him up,

because he fell before the ark of the Israel God?

They had to do something for him, because he could not do anything for his people.

The priests think it is a coincidence that their god has fallen over and they prop it up again and then the morning after that, the priests come into the temple and Dagon's head and hands have fallen off.

You would think that these priests would immediately abandon their god despite seeing the evidence of what has just happened.

But they don't –

Why???

Because worshipping the Lord instead of Dagon would have meant a huge change in their thinking and their living.

And because they were unwilling to change – they choose not to worship the one true God.

[Jhn 3:19 NKJV] 19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

What keeps people from accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior??? The love of darkness. They love it more than the light – so they refuse to be rescued by Him.

6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, [both] Ashdod and its territory. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw how [it was], they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon

our god." 8 Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away.

It is not bad enough that God has defeated their god Dagon, He brings these tumors upon the people.

I asked you to make a note of the word tumor – because these were not your ordinary tumor.

Believe it or not, the Hebrew word for tumors that is used here (techor)

It is associated exclusively with hemorrhoids.

9 So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and

tumors broke out on them. 10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!" 11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12 And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The Philistines resort to a game of hot potato with the Ark of the Covenant. Every place that they sent it to – people were stricken with these hemorrhoids.

Maybe it was because they failed to stand before the one true God – the God of the Israelites - that God made sure that they wouldn't be able to sit down before Dagon.

Their rejection of God resulted in a curse and judgment upon themselves.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 2

[2Co 2:15-16 NKJV] 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one [we are] the aroma of death [leading] to death, and to the other the aroma of life [leading] to life. And who [is] sufficient for these things?

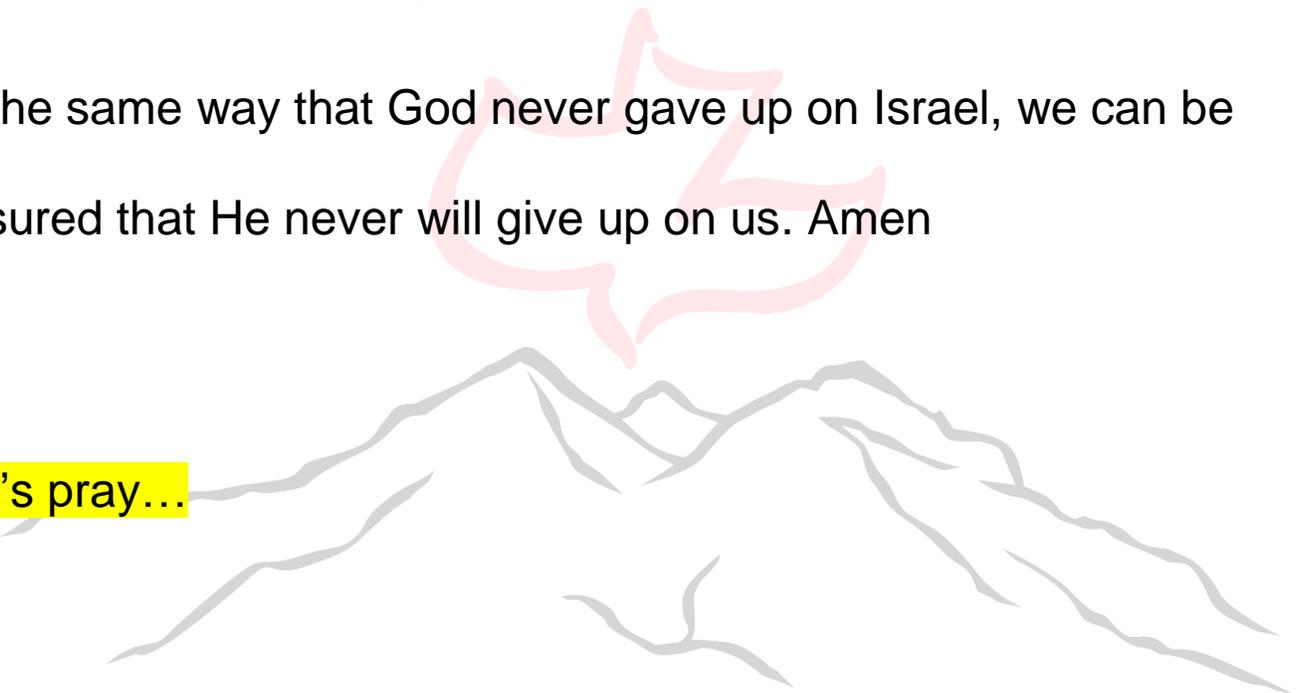
Church, the message of the gospel is a message of life to those who receive it and a message of condemnation to those who reject it.

To receive it brings salvation and to reject it brings destruction.

The amazing thing about God's glory departing from Israel is that despite their unfaithfulness toward Him, God remained faithful and when Solomon builds the temple in 1 Kings - God's glory and His presence filled the temple.

In the same way that God never gave up on Israel, we can be assured that He never will give up on us. Amen

Let's pray...



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