



LESSON TWO

The History Concerning Samuel – His Relationship with the Stale and Waning Priesthood

Scripture Reading:

1 Samuel 2:11-26 (Section 1)

- 2:11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child ministered to Jehovah before Eli the priest.
- 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know Jehovah,
- 2:13 Nor did they regard the priests' rightful due with the people. When any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's attendant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the flesh was boiling,
- 2:14 And he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot; all that the fork brought up, the priest took with it. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.
- 2:15 Indeed before they burned the fat, the priest's attendant would come and say to the man sacrificing, Give some flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not accept boiled flesh from you, but only raw.
- 2:16 And if the man said to him, Let them burn up the fat first, then take as much as your soul desires; he would say, No, but you shall give it now; otherwise, I will take it by force.
- 2:17 And the sin of the young men was very great before Jehovah, for the men despised the offering of Jehovah.
- 2:18 And Samuel ministered before Jehovah, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.
- 2:19 And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it up to him yearly when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.
- 2:20 And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, May Jehovah give you seed by this woman in place of the one she requested of Jehovah; and they would go back to their place.
- 2:21 And Jehovah visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before Jehovah.
- 2:22 Now Eli was very old, and he heard of all that his sons did to all Israel and how they lay with the women who were engaged in service at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.
- 2:23 And he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all this people.
- 2:24 No, my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear Jehovah's people spreading.
- 2:25 If one man sins against another man, God will arbitrate for him; but if a man sins against Jehovah, who will arbitrate for him? But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for Jehovah was pleased to kill them.
- 2:26 And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor both with Jehovah and with men.
- 2:27 And a man of God came to Eli and said to him, Thus says Jehovah, I revealed Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt as slaves to Pharaoh's house.
- 2:28 And I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, and to wear the ephod before Me. And I gave the house of your father all the offerings by fire of the children of Israel.
- 2:29 Why then do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation, and honor your sons more than Me by making yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?
- 2:30 Therefore Jehovah the God of Israel declares, I surely said that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever; but now Jehovah declares, Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who spurn Me will be lightly esteemed.
- 2:31 The days are now coming when I will cut off your arm and the arm of the house of your father, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

- 2:32 And you shall see the distress of My habitation in the midst of all the good that I will do to Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever.
- 2:33 And that man of yours whom I do not cut off from My altar shall be left to consume your eyes and to grieve your soul, and all the increase of your house shall die by the swords of men.
- 2:34 And this will be the sign to you, which will come upon your two sons, upon Hophni and Phinehas: In one day both of them shall die.
- 2:35 And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in My heart and in My mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he will go before My anointed continually.
- 2:36 And everyone who is left of your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and for a loaf of bread, and will say, Please put me in one of the priests' offices that I may eat a morsel of bread..

1 Samuel 3:1-21 (Section 2)

- 3:1 And the boy Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli. Now the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.
- 3:2 And at that time Eli lay in his place, and his eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see.
- 3:3 And the lamp of God had not yet gone out. And Samuel lay in the temple of Jehovah, where the Ark of God was.
- 3:4 Then Jehovah called to Samuel. And he said, Here I am.
- 3:5 And he ran to Eli and said, Here I am, for you called me. And he said, I did not call. Go back and lie down. And he went and lay down.
- 3:6 And Jehovah called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel rose up and went to Eli and said, Here I am, for you called me. And he said, I did not call, my son. Go back and lie down.
- 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, and the word of Jehovah had not yet been revealed to him.
- 3:8 Then Jehovah called Samuel again, the third time. And he rose up and went to Eli and said, Here I am, for you called me. Then Eli perceived that it was Jehovah calling the boy.
- 3:9 And Eli said to Samuel, Go and lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, Speak, O Jehovah; for Your servant is listening. And Samuel went and lay down in his place.
- 3:10 Then Jehovah came and stood by and called as at the other times, Samuel! Samuel! And Samuel said, Speak, for Your servant is listening.
- 3:11 And Jehovah said to Samuel, I am about to do something in Israel which will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.
- 3:12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.
- 3:13 For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever because of the iniquity which he knew; for his sons brought the curse upon themselves, and he did not restrain them.
- 3:14 And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of the house of Eli shall not be expiated by sacrifice or by offering forever.
- 3:15 And Samuel lay down until the morning, when he opened the doors of the house of Jehovah. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.
- 3:16 But Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel my son. And he said, Here I am.
- 3:17 And he said, What was the word that He spoke to you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and even more, if you hide from me any of the word which He spoke to you.
- 3:18 So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything from him. And he said, He is Jehovah; let Him do what is good in His sight.
- 3:19 And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.
- 3:20 And all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of Jehovah.
- 3:21 And Jehovah continued to appear in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.

1 Samuel 4:1-20 (Section 2) & (Section 3)

- 4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. And Israel went forth against the Philistines in battle; and they encamped near Eben-ezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphek.
- 4:2 And the Philistines arrayed themselves against Israel; and when the battle spread, Israel was struck down before the Philistines. And they slew about four thousand men of the array in the field.
- 4:3 And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, Why has Jehovah struck us down today before the Philistines? Let us take for ourselves the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh that it may come into our midst, and thus save us from the hand of our enemies.
- 4:4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they took up from there the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah of hosts who is enthroned between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God.
- 4:5 And when the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, and the earth resounded.
- 4:6 And the Philistines heard the sound of the shout and said, What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean? Then they found out that the Ark of Jehovah had come into their camp.
- 4:7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God has come into their camp. And they said, Woe to us! For there has never been such a thing as this before.
- 4:8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that struck the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness.
- 4:9 Be strong and be men, O Philistines, lest you become servants to the Hebrews as they have been servants to you. Be men then and fight.
- 4:10 And the Philistines fought, and they struck Israel; and every man fled to his tent. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell.
- 4:11 And the Ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.
- 4:12 And a man of Benjamin ran from the array and came to Shiloh on the same day, with his clothes torn and earth upon his head.
- 4:13 And when he came, there was Eli, sitting on his seat by the roadside watching; for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. And when the man came to tell the news to the city, the whole city cried out.
- 4:14 And when Eli heard the sound of the cry, he said, What does this sound of commotion mean? And the man hurried and came and told Eli.
- 4:15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old; and his eyes were set, and he could not see.
- 4:16 And the man said to Eli, I am he who has come from the array, and I fled from the array today. And he said, How did the matter go, my son?
- 4:17 And he who brought the news answered and said, Israel fled before the Philistines, and there was a great slaughter among the people; and even your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the Ark of God has been taken.
- 4:18 And when he mentioned the Ark of God, Eli fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate. And he broke his neck and died, for he was an old man and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.
- 4:19 And his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to deliver; and when she heard the report that the Ark of God had been taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she bowed down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her.
- 4:20 And around the time that she died, the women who stood around her said, Do not fear, for you have borne a son. But she did not answer or pay attention.
- 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, meaning, The glory has departed from Israel, because the Ark of God had been taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband.
- 4:22 And she said, The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God has been taken.

1 Samuel 5:1-12 (Section 3)

- 5:1 When the Philistines took the Ark of God, they brought it from Eben-ezer to Ashdod.
- 5:2 And the Philistines took the Ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and they set it next to Dagon.
- 5:3 And when the Ashdodites arose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground, before the Ark of Jehovah. And they took Dagon and put him back in his place.
- 5:4 And when they arose early in the morning of the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground, before the Ark of Jehovah. And Dagon's head and the palms of his hands were cut off, lying on the threshold; only Dagon's trunk was left to him.
- 5:5 Because of this, neither the priests of Dagon nor any who enter the house of Dagon tread upon Dagon's threshold in Ashdod to this day.
- 5:6 But the hand of Jehovah was heavy upon the Ashdodites, and He devastated them and struck them with tumors, even Ashdod and its borders.
- 5:7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The Ark of the God of Israel cannot stay with us, for His hand is hard on us and on Dagon our god.
- 5:8 Therefore they sent for and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to themselves, and they said, What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? And they said, Let the Ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath. And they brought the Ark of the God of Israel there.
- 5:9 Then after they brought it there, the hand of Jehovah was against the city, causing a very great panic. And He struck the men of the city, from small to great; and they broke out with tumors.
- 5:10 Then they sent the Ark of God to Ekron. But when the Ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people.
- 5:11 And they sent for and gathered all the princes of the Philistines, and they said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel; and let it return to its place, so that it does not kill us and our people. For the panic of death was throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there,
- 5:12 And the men who did not die were stricken with tumors. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

1 Samuel 6:1-21 (Section 4)

- 6:1 Now the Ark of Jehovah was in the country of the Philistines seven months.
- 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, What shall we do with the Ark of Jehovah? Make known to us how we should send it forth to its place.
- 6:3 And they said, If you send away the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but be sure to return Him a trespass offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be made known to you why His hand has not turned away from you.
- 6:4 And they said, What is the trespass offering that we should return to Him? And they said, Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for one plague was upon you all and upon your lords.
- 6:5 Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your mice that devastate the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand on you and your gods and your land.
- 6:6 Why then should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had dealt severely with them, did they not let the people go, and they went?
- 6:7 So now take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which the yoke has never come, and tie the cows to the cart, and bring their calves home, away from them.
- 6:8 And take the Ark of Jehovah and put it on the cart; and in a box by the side of it, place the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a trespass offering; and send it away that it may go.
- 6:9 Then watch: If it goes up toward its own border at Beth-shemesh, it is He who has done us this great harm. But if it does not, we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance.
- 6:10 And the men did so and took two milch cows and tied them to the cart and shut up their calves at home.
- 6:11 And they put the Ark of Jehovah on the cart with the box and the gold mice and the images of their tumors.

6:12 And the cows went straight in the way toward Beth-shemesh; they went on one road, lowing as they went; and they did not turn to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

6:13 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.

6:14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemeshite and stood still there. And there was a great stone there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered up the cows as a burnt offering to Jehovah.

6:15 Then the Levites took down the Ark of Jehovah and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold; and they placed them on the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to Jehovah.

6:16 And when the five lords of the Philistines saw this, they returned to Ekron that day.

6:17 And these are the gold tumors that the Philistines returned to Jehovah as a trespass offering: for Ashdod, one; for Gaza, one; for Ashkelon, one; for Gath, one; for Ekron, one;

6:18 And the gold mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines that belonged to the five lords, both of fortified cities and country villages, as far as the great stone on which they rested the Ark of Jehovah, which is there to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemeshite.

6:19 And He struck the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked into the Ark of Jehovah; and He struck seventy men among the people. And the people mourned because Jehovah struck the people with a great slaughter.

6:20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who can stand before Jehovah, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?

6:21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have returned the Ark of Jehovah; come down and take it up to you.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. How do we see God's wisdom in placing Samuel under Eli's custody?
2. Give four examples to show the priesthood was degraded at that time.
3. What is the result of Samuel's observing the degraded Aaronic priesthood?

Section 2:

1. How was God's judgement on the house of Eli carried out?
2. What was wrong with Israel in trusting God's ordained system?
3. How can Samuel's experience relate to us today?

Section 3:

1. Describe how the elders of Israel were superstitious in their fighting against the Philistines.
2. Explain how the elders were 'usurping God'. How can we be saved from that?
3. If you were the young Samuel at that time, how would the capturing of the ark by the Philistines impact you?

Section 4:

1. How did Jehovah deal with the Philistines after the ark had been captured by them?
2. What was the superstitious way of the Philistines in sending away the ark?
3. How did God keep the holiness of the ark?

----- [INTRODUCTION SECTION 1& 2] -----

We can learn many valuable lessons from the books of history in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we cannot find such fine, detailed lessons concerning the enjoyment of Christ for the fulfilling of God's economy. Samuel's relationship to the stale and waning Aaronic priesthood has some lessons for us today.

----- [SECTION 1] -----

I. UNDER THE CUSTODY OF THE OLD ELI

Samuel grew up under the custody of the old Eli, the last priest of the waning Aaronic priesthood (1:25). This was God's wisdom. Because God intended to replace the waning priesthood with Samuel, it was necessary for him to learn certain lessons while he was under Eli's custody. Samuel could realize that Eli had become a failure in the degraded priesthood. Samuel had the capacity to understand and apprehend what he saw in Eli's situation, and this became a constant warning to Samuel for the future.

II. LEARNING OF ELI TO MINISTER TO JEHOVAH AS A PRIEST

Samuel learned of Eli to minister to Jehovah as a priest (2:11b).

III. OBSERVING THE DETERIORATION OF THE DEGRADED AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

While Samuel was learning he observed the deterioration of the degraded Aaronic priesthood (2:12-17, 22-25). This did not weaken Samuel in his future priesthood. Rather, it became a constant warning to him throughout his priestly service.

A. The Two Sons of Eli Despising the Offerings of Jehovah

The two sons of Eli despised the offerings of Jehovah and took the best flesh of the people's offerings by force (vv. 12-17). I believe that when Samuel saw this, he must have had a deep impression as a warning to him concerning his future as a priest.

B. The Sons of Eli Committing Fornication with the Serving Women

The sons of Eli also committed fornication with the serving women (v. 22). How terrible! History tells us that this kind of thing has happened repeatedly among God's servants. In serving the Lord we cannot avoid having contact with the other sex, but we must learn the lesson to always keep a distance between us and the other sex. We should never stay in a private room with a member of the other sex with the windows covered and the doors closed. That gives the evil one the opportunity to tempt us to fall into sin. The two sons of Eli were caught by this. Concerning this, we should learn from Joseph, who fled from temptation (Gen. 39:7-12), and from Boaz, who was highly appraised for his high standard of morality in his contact with Ruth (Ruth 3:1-14).

C. The Sons of Eli Not Listening to the Exhortation of Their Father

The sons of Eli would not listen to the exhortation of their father (1 Sam. 2:22-25). Eli attempted to say something to his sons, but it seems that he was somewhat loose and that his exhortation was not very strong, faithful, desperate, and absolute.

D. Eli Honoring His Sons More than Jehovah

According to verse 29 a man of God spoke to Eli, saying, "Why then do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation, and honor your sons more than Me by making yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?" In 3:13 we see that Eli's sons brought the curse upon themselves, and Eli did not restrain them.

----- [SECTION 2] -----

IV. REALIZING GOD'S SEVERE JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF ELI

Samuel came to realize that God's severe judgment was on the house of Eli (2:27-36; 3:4-18; 4:1-22). We should not think that God is merely sitting in the heavens and is not doing anything about the situation of His people on earth. God is very busy in dealing with His people.

A. First, Prophesied by a Man of God

First, God's severe judgment on the house of Eli was prophesied by a man of God (2:27-36).

B. Second, Confirmed by the Word of Jehovah through Samuel

Second, this severe judgment was confirmed by the word of Jehovah through Samuel (3:4-18). I believe that God's purpose in letting Eli know through Samuel of the coming judgment was to make an unforgettable impression on this young priestly boy. This was God's wisdom.

C. Third, Executed by God through the Philistines

Third, God's severe judgment was executed through the Philistines (4:1-22).

1. The People of Israel Being Defeated by the Philistines

The people of Israel were defeated by the Philistines, and 30,000 foot soldiers of them were slaughtered (v. 10). At the time of Hezekiah, Judah looked to the Lord for protection, and one night He sent an angel to strike 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35). From this we see that it would have been easy for God to defeat the Philistines. However, at that time He had given up Israel.

2. The Ark of God Being Captured

Israel was foolish in their degradation because they did not trust in God. Rather, they trusted in the systems ordained by God. In their situation they should have repented, made a thorough confession, and returned to God from their idols. Instead, they exercised their superstition to trust in the ark. Their past told them that quite often when the ark of God moved, there was a victory (Num. 10:35; Josh. 6). But this time their situation was not right. In their degradation they offended God to the uttermost, and God left them. Eventually, instead of the ark saving Israel, the ark itself was captured (1 Sam. 4:11a).

3. The Two Sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, Being Killed

The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, who had gone out with the ark, were killed because they had altogether disregarded God (v. 11b). This shows us that we need to learn the lesson of not being loose in the service of God.

4. Eli Dying at the News That the Ark Was Captured

Eli had been sitting on his seat by the roadside watching; "for his heart trembled for the ark of God" (v. 13a). When the news came to him that the ark had been captured, he fell off his seat backward, broke his neck, and died (vv. 17-18).

5. The Glory of God Departing from Israel

When the wife of Phinehas, who was pregnant and about to deliver, learned that the ark had been captured and that her husband and her father-in-law had died, she bowed down and gave birth to a son (vv. 19-20). She named the child Ichabod (v. 21), meaning "No glory," indicating that the glory had departed from Israel. Glory is God Himself. When God departed, the glory departed from Israel.

Samuel observed all these tragedies, and they became lessons to him, warning him and reminding him throughout his service to God. Thus, his being placed by God in His wisdom under the custody of the old Eli was very profitable, for he learned certain things positively and observed other things negatively. This helped Samuel to remain pure in his service to God his entire life. When he was about to die, he could remind the people of Israel that he had never defrauded them, oppressed them, or taken anything from them (12:3-4).

While Samuel was under Eli's custody, God taught him in a very fine way, built him up, and established him as His proper priest. As such a priest, Samuel became a judge to judge Israel, a prophet to prophesy for God, and the one to bring forth the kingship. By this kingship the kingdom of God was established on earth. This is a picture of what our situation should be today. We need to be, first, a Samuel, and then, a David, enjoying Christ to such a degree that what we have enjoyed of Christ will become a kingdom, which is the church.

According to Matthew 16:18-19 the church and the kingdom are identical. The kingdom today is

the church, and within the church there is the intrinsic essence—the Body of Christ. The church is visible, but the Body of Christ, as the intrinsic essence, is invisible. In the visible church there is the kingdom, the reigning, of God. In this visible church there is also the intrinsic essence as the very content, the reality, of the church. Our human body is visible, but the life within the body is invisible. The principle is the same with the church and the Body. The Body is the intrinsic life of the church.

----- [INTRODUCTION SECTION 3 & 4] -----

In reading the Bible we need to have a clear view of God's economy and understand everything in the Bible in relation to God's economy. Why did God create the universe? Why did God create man and choose the people of Israel? God did these things for His economy. As we come now to Samuel's relationship with the stale and waning Aaronic priesthood described in 4:1—7:2, we need to consider the events recorded here in the light of God's economy. It is important for us to see that Israel became degraded because they had no concern for God's economy, for His move on earth, and for His kingdom.

----- [SECTION 3] -----

V. KNOWING THE MISFORTUNE OF THE ARK OF GOD UNDER THE SUPERSTITION OF THE DEGRADED AND ROTTEN AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Samuel observed the misfortune of the ark of God under the superstition of the degraded and rotten Aaronic priesthood. As Samuel observed all these things, he must have received a deep impression, and these things became an education to him.

A. Usurped, in Their Superstition for Their Victory in Their Fighting against the Philistines, by the Elders of the People of Israel, Who Were Degraded from the Line of God's Economy

The ark of God was usurped by the elders of the people of Israel, who were degraded from the line of God's economy (4:1-8). The elders usurped the ark in their superstition for their fighting against the Philistines. Because the children of Israel had

been defeated by the Philistines, the elders of Israel proposed that the people take the ark of God from the tabernacle in Shiloh into battle with them. The elders said, "Let us take unto us the ark of the covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh that it may be in our midst, and thus save us from the hand of our enemies" (v. 3b). When the ark came into the camp, the people were glad and "all Israel shouted with a great shout" (v. 5). They trusted in the system ordained by God, but they did not trust in God directly. They should have repented to God of their failure and inquired of Him as to what He wanted them to do. Before bringing the ark of God out of the tabernacle, they should have checked with God as Joshua did at Jericho (Josh. 6:2-4). The elders knew the history of Jericho, but because they had become degraded, not having any heart for God's desire or His eternal economy, their situation was absolutely different.

The ark was a type of Christ as the embodiment of God. It also signified Christ as the presence of the Triune God to be with His people for the carrying out of His economy to establish His kingdom on earth. To bring out the ark was just to bring out the presence of God. When the children of Israel began to move with the ark from Mount Sinai, Moses offered a prayer to God, saying, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered" (Num. 10:35). The ark took the lead to travel onward. The move of the ark was a picture of God's move on the earth.

In 1 Samuel 4 the elders of Israel were actually usurping God. At that time, God did not intend to move. The children of Israel had no thought of or concern for God's economy, and their bringing out the ark indicated that they were usurping God for their safety, peace, rest, and profit. They were usurping God, even forcing Him, to go out with them.

Today many Christians usurp God by praying for their prosperity, health, or family without any consideration of God's economy. When we ask God for His healing, we must be fully related to His economy. If you are ill, you should not pray for healing in the way of usurping God. On the contrary, from the depths of your spirit you should say, "Lord, I am not here on earth for my health, my prosperity, my children, or my work. I am here for Your economy. Do You still want me to live on earth for Your economy? I have seen Your economy, I realize that You need

Nazarites, and I have a heart to be a Nazarite for You. As one who has been born of God and who has the life and nature of God, I ask You what is on Your heart concerning me." If God intends that you continue living on earth for His economy, you will be healed, either through a physician or through some other way. The point here is that, instead of usurping God, we must pray, live, and be persons according to God's heart and for His economy.

B. Captured by the Winning Philistines, Indicating That the Glory Had Departed from Israel

Eventually, the ark of God, which had been with the children of Israel for at least 400 years, was captured by the winning Philistines, indicating that the glory had departed from Israel (4:9-22). From that time the ark began to have a history within the history of Israel.

A short time after the children of Israel brought out the ark of God, they were defeated, and the ark was captured. Thirty thousand among Israel were killed, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were also killed. Eli probably had a kind of intuition concerning the ark of God. Instead of staying at home, he sat "on his seat by the roadside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God" (v. 13a). When the news came that the ark of God had been captured, Eli fell backward, broke his neck, and died. Also, at that time Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, delivered her child and called him Ichabod, which means "No glory." Then she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been taken" (v. 22). Because the ark of Jehovah had been captured, the glory had departed from Israel.

These events must have made a deep impression upon the young Samuel. During the night he might have thought about them, saying, "Here I am in the tabernacle, and the center of the tabernacle is the ark. Today the elders brought out the ark, but Eli, under whose custody I am, was not at peace. His heart was trembling as he was waiting for news. When the news came about what happened to the ark and to Hophni and Phinehas, Eli fell backward and died. His daughter-in-law also died as she was giving birth to her child. Before she died, she named her boy Ichabod." I believe that Samuel, a very

thoughtful boy, considered the significance of all these things.

----- [SECTION 4] -----

C. The Ark Suffering Removal to Three Places among the Philistines, Consecutively

Having been captured, the ark suffered removal to three places among the Philistines, consecutively; and Jehovah dealt with them heavily for the protection of His ark (5:1-12). For God to protect His ark meant that He was protecting His holiness.

1. By Damaging the Philistine's God Dagon

First, Jehovah dealt with the Philistines by damaging their god Dagon, which means "the fish-god" (vv. 1-5). After the Philistines brought the ark to Ashdod, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it next to Dagon (v. 2). Early the next day, the Ashdodites found Dagon "fallen on his face to the ground, before the ark of Jehovah" (v. 3a). They put Dagon back in his place, but "when they arose early in the morning of the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground, before the ark of Jehovah. And Dagon's head and the palms of his hands were cut off, lying on the threshold; only Dagon's trunk was left to him" (v. 4).

2. By Striking Them with Tumors

Second, Jehovah dealt with the Philistines by striking them with tumors (vv. 6-12). Verse 6 says, "The hand of Jehovah was heavy upon the Ashdodites, and He devastated them and struck them with tumors, even Ashdod and its borders." Eventually, the people of Ashdod said that the ark of the God of Israel could not stay with them, for His hand was hard on them and on Dagon their god (v. 7). The lords of the Philistines brought the ark to Gath, but "after they brought it there, the hand of Jehovah was against the city, causing great panic. And He struck the men of the city, from small to great; and they broke out with tumors" (v. 9). Then the ark was sent to Ekron. However, when the ark of God came there, the Ekronites cried out that the ark of the God of Israel had been brought to them in order to kill them. Thus, they told the princes of the Philistines to send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its place so that it would not kill them. "For the panic of death was

throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there" (v. 11).

D. The Ark Suffering Another Removal, from the Philistines Back to Israel, Arriving at Beth-shemesh

In chapter six we see that the ark suffered another removal, from the Philistines back to Israel, arriving at Beth-shemesh. After the ark of Jehovah had been in the country of the Philistines seven months, the Philistines asked the priests and diviners to make known to them how they should send the ark forth to its place (vv. 1-2).

1. By the Superstitious Way of the Philistines

The ark was removed by the superstitious way of the Philistines, with five golden mice and five golden tumors, as a kind of trespass offering for God's forgiveness and for God's glory (vv. 3-5). The bringing out of the ark by the elders of Israel and the returning of the ark by the Philistines both were superstitious. There is superstition in every kind of religion. In the Lord's recovery we do not have superstition—we have the revelation from God's Word.

The Philistine priests told the men to put the ark of Jehovah on a new cart to which two milch cows were tied, and in a box by the side of the ark to place the articles of gold which they were returning to Jehovah as a trespass offering. Then they told them to send the ark away that it might go and to watch to see if it went toward its own border at Beth-shemesh. If it did so, that would be a sign that it was Jehovah who had done great harm to the Philistines (vv. 7-9). The men did as they were told, and the cows went straight in the way toward Beth-shemesh. "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" (v. 13). The Levites took down the ark of Jehovah and the box that was with it, and "the men of Beth-shemesh offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to Jehovah" (v. 15).

2. By God Keeping the Holiness of His Ark

God kept the holiness of His ark, so that it was taken to Kiriath-jearim and abode there for twenty years until all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah (v. 19—7:2).

Verse 19 tells us that Jehovah "struck the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked into the ark of Jehovah; and He struck seventy men among the people" (v. 19a). Due to their looseness in dealing with the ark, these seventy men were killed. This shows us that we should not be loose in dealing with the ark. As we have pointed out, the ark is the presence of God for the purpose of accomplishing His economy. God had brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and had trained them at Mount Sinai, charging them to build the tabernacle with the ark, so that it would be made known that God was carrying out His economy. The ark was not for their prosperity, protection, safety, or healing—it was for God's economy. However, at Samuel's time the elders of Israel had no regard for this but only for their own profit and protection. They considered that everything was theirs, and they even usurped God. Nevertheless, God protected His holiness, not allowing the Philistines or the people of Beth-shemesh to do whatever they liked with the ark.

Eventually, the people of Beth-shemesh asked the people of Kiriath-jearim to come and take the ark (vv. 20-21), and the ark remained there for twenty years (7:1-2). Although the ark returned to Israel and was under the care of the proper priesthood, the ark still did not go back to the tabernacle at Shiloh. This was an abnormal situation. While Samuel grew up in the tabernacle, the ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for twenty years until all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah (v. 2).