

# The Glory of God

## 1 Samuel Chapters 4-7

### 1 Samuel 4:2-11: Israel defeated; the ark captured

*Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield.<sup>3</sup> When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the LORD bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD'S covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.”*

*<sup>4</sup> So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.*

*<sup>5</sup> When the ark of the LORD'S covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. <sup>6</sup> Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, “What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?”*

*When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp,<sup>7</sup> the Philistines were afraid. “A god has come into the camp,” they said. “Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup> We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup> Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!”*

*<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup> The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.*

1. When we read the Old Testament, the writers of the narratives, narrate the stories in a way for us to understand the ways of God in contrast to the ways of people. God cannot be controlled, and He will not fit into a man-made agenda. We cannot mess with God.
2. Israel went out to war against the Philistines. They suffered heavy losses and were surprised they were losing (vs 3). So, they sent for the ark of the Lord's covenant, believing that would change the tide of the battle. The Israelite camp shouted with confidence at the arrival of the Ark. Eli's two sons, Phineas and Hopni, accompanied the Ark.
  - What is wrong with this picture?

Israel was presumptuous, they thought they could use God to determine the outcome of the battle. God will not fight for Israel; He will not stand with Israel. Israel must be the one who must decide if she is willing to stand for herself or stand with the Lord.

#### **Exodus 6:7**

*“You will be my people and I will be your God.”*

3. The fact that all of Israel knew about the wickedness of Phineas and Hopni, and were not concerned that they were the ones who accompanied the Ark, tells us that they were confident that the presence of the Ark will make up for Israel's unethical worship. God will not fight for a people who disrespect and misuse His name. He would rather allow the Ark to be captured by the Philistines.

**1 Samuel 4:21-22**

*<sup>21</sup> She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The Glory has departed from Israel"—because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. <sup>22</sup> She said, "The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."*

4. Now the Ark has been captured by the Philistines, and Eli and his sons have fallen. Eli's daughter-in-law lost heart and believed "*The Glory of God has departed from Israel*". God has never left Israel. The Glory of God is revealed in His judgment and chastisement. God will be with His people. In contrast, during the latter days of Eli, the Lord's name was profaned by the sons of Eli, Eli did not do anything about it and the sons of Eli did not repent. They have desecrated and profaned the Glory of God.

**1 Samuel 5:1-8: The Ark in the hands of the Philistines**

*<sup>1</sup> After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. <sup>2</sup> Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. <sup>5</sup> That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.*

*<sup>6</sup> The LORD'S hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors. <sup>7</sup> When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god." <sup>8</sup> So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, "What shall we do with the ark of the god of Israel?" They answered, "Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath." So they moved the ark of the God of Israel.*

1. The Philistines captured the Ark of God and took it to the city of Ashdod and placed it beside the statue of the Philistine god, Dagon as a trophy of war, believing their god has overcome the God of Israel. The next day they found Dagon fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord. "*They took Dagon and put him back in the place*" only to find Dagon fallen face down again, before the Ark of the Lord and this time his head, hands and feet broken off. The message here is very clear: Yahweh, has not been defeated, overcome and humiliated by Dagon. It is Dagon who bows, broken and defeated before Yahweh.

<sup>6</sup> *The LORD'S hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors.*

2. They moved the Ark to the city of Gath and the Lord's hand came down heavily upon them. Then they moved it to the city of Ekron, but its people cried out in fear of what the presence of God will bring upon their city. God brought 3 of the 5 great Philistine cities (Ashdod, Gath, Ekron) to its knees. The Philistines realised they could not handle God.

**1 Samuel 5:12** <sup>12</sup> *Those who did not die were afflicted with tumours, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.*

3. The Philistines, who were the oppressors, are now the oppressed. Now they cry out to the Lord of heaven. God has changed the fortunes of the proud and powerful.

**1 Samuel 2:9-10**

*"It is not by strength that one prevails;  
<sup>10</sup> those who oppose the LORD will be broken.*

**1 Samuel 6:9** *"But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance."*

4. The Philistines decided to send back the Ark of the Lord, but they conducted one more test just to be sure that all of what was happening to them was not mere coincidence and an act of chance. The test results clearly indicated that it is Yahweh, who is responsible. The Lord has confronted the Philistines. Even people of that time had to be sure, and the Lord assured them that it was His presence they are contending with.
  - How about us? Are we discerning? Is everything an act of chance or are there occasions where God is making His presence known to us?

**\* God cannot be conquered nor controlled. Throughout history, many have tried and failed miserably. There is only one God and He shall reign forever. Amen.**

**1 Samuel 7:2-4: God's hand upon Samuel**

*Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD. <sup>3</sup> So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." <sup>4</sup> So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.*

1. Samuel truly understood the spiritual climate of Israel. The people have turned away from God and are now in distress. They have devoted their hearts to foreign gods and these gods oppress them. He calls out to the people to turn away from their idols and return to God; for only God can deliver them from the Philistines. God will not allow us to place Him among other gods. He is the one true God.

- The Lord is the only One who is able to deliver Israel. Salvation is only found in the name of the Lord. Jesus is the only One who can save us.

### 1 Samuel 7:13-17

*So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.<sup>14</sup> The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.*

*<sup>15</sup> Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life.<sup>16</sup> From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places.<sup>17</sup> But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.*

- Through Samuel's leadership, proper worship was restored in Israel. The nation enjoyed God's favour and protection during the leadership of Samuel. The Lord will grant favour to those who truly seek to honour His Name.
- All these narratives tell us much about the Glory of God. He is a Holy God and should be honoured. He cannot be treated as a means to what we want. He cannot be manipulated by any ritual or offering; for He sees the heart and will not stand with those who dishonour Him. Both the Israelites and Philistines treated Him lightly, and in doing so, they despised the Glory of His presence. The lesson here is that we must give careful thought to how we approach worship. Our approach before God is a reflection of our beliefs of God. Wrong beliefs get in the way. We cannot be presumptuous about our beliefs when it comes to God. We must make every effort to know Him and to let His word search our hearts.

### Prayer Item:

#### 1. Psalms 24:3-4

*<sup>3</sup> Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?*

*Who may stand in his holy place?*

*<sup>4</sup> The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.*

#### 2. Psalms 139:23-24

*<sup>23</sup> Search me, God, and know my heart;*

*test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*<sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

3. **Holiness** – A place of full dedication to God and His will for our lives

#### 4. Life Church

- A church dedicated to Prayer, Word and Worship.
- Families – salvation
- Personal encounters
- Open doors – the surrounding community.
- Deepen our love for one another and make us eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit
- Courage to speak the Gospel, stand for truth in our schools, marketplace and in our neighbourhoods

#### 5. Ministries:

- Life Explorers
- Redeeming Roses
- Destiny Kids & Teens
- Sunday School
- Lifeline
- Worship

#### 6. Healing

- Si Yun (colon cancer) & Ee Khai, Jayden
- Francis (neck, arthritis)
- Shoban (slip disc)

#### 7. Covid-19 Pandemic

- Protection
- Vaccine
- Those affected: sick, foreigners, poor & those who have lost their jobs

#### 8. Malaysia

- Churches
- Leaders
- Unity