

Intro

- ~ We know what a centerpiece is. It's something that draws your attention. Its purpose is to get your attention
- ~ The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is mentioned 12 times (v3, 4 (two times), 5, 6, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22)
- ~ The ark was the place where God would meet and commune with his people (Ex 25:22; Num 7:89)
- ~ 1 Samuel 2,3 is the context of this chapter. It shows us the results of fellowship becoming formal – it became forsaken and forgotten.
 - 1 Sam 2 – the chapter of contrasts between the godly family of Eli versus the corrupt family of Eli
 - 1 Sam 3 – the chapter starts with no open preaching and no established prophet and Eli's warning
- ~ The context is the bottom of the iceberg under the water we don't see. Chapter 4 is the top of the iceberg that we do see
- ~ At the end of the chapter we see a child named Ichabod because the glory (the Ark) had departed
- ~ So we have the Ark of the Lord in the midst of an Ichabod situation

BodyTextual Overview

V1 – Samuel's words are going to out to all Israel, Israel goes to war with the Philistine and Israel is camped near Ebenezer. We'll see Ebenezer again in 1 Samuel 7. It's another battle scene and it's a contrary scene to the one we have here. Israel is afraid to go to war and they ask Samuel to pray for them. The Lord gives Israel victory and Samuel sets up a stone and calls it Ebenezer (because it he calls it Ebenezer meaning "hitherto the Lord has helped us.")

V2 – There's a war with the Philistines and Israel is defeated as 4,000 soldiers died

V3 - Several things happen here 1) The Israelites retreated 2) they ask why the Lord has defeated them 3) they get the idea to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to the battle

- The right question but the wrong premise
- The right premise would have attached their loss to their disobedience
- Deut 28 instructs the Israelites that if they obey they'll be blessed but disobedience will be disciplined

V4 – the Ark is brought and notice the detailed description so there's no confusion that this is the Ark of the Covenant. The description of the Ark represents fellowship with the presence of God

V5 – Israel rejoices when the Ark is brought to the battle. They think it's going to guarantee them success

V6-8 – The Philistines panic because they haven't seen anything like this before when they understand that the Ark of the Covenant has been brought into the camp. This shows us that at least in the wars prior with the Philistines it wasn't customary for the Ark of the Covenant to be taken into battle. We saw the ark being utilized at Jericho but we know that Israel had not yet settled into the Promised Land as they are now in Shiloh. We see the Philistines had a healthier respect for the Ark than the Israelites did

V9-11 – The Philistines encourage themselves to fight and they did indeed and gained victory. They capture the Ark and kill 30,000 soldiers. Also the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas are killed. Perhaps they accompanied the Ark of the Covenant. If that be the case, they went with the Ark into battle and they didn't have the proper relationship with God to accompany the presence of God into battle

V12 – A man runs from the battlefield with news of the battle

V13 – Eli was sitting by the gate and asks for an update of the battle. When the runner brings news it brings and outcry throughout the town

V14-15 – We see Eli's condition. Eli is 98 years old and blind and he asks what has happened

V16-18 - The runner tells Eli all that has happened. There's has been a slaughter and the ark has been taken. When Eli hears this he falls off he falls off the back of his chair and breaks his neck. He judged Israel 40 years

V19-22 – Ichabod is the key word here. Phinehas' wife is near her due date. When she hears that the Ark of the Lord was taken, Eli (her father-in-law) and her husband have died she gives birth but dies in childbirth. Before she dies the midwives tell her she's given birth to a boy (which would be a great blessing) but she didn't even pay attention to the news of a baby boy because of what's happened. She's more overcome with the grief that the Ark has been taken than the joy of giving birth to a son. She names the boy "Ichabod" because she says the glory has departed from Israel with the capture of the Ark of the Lord

The signs of Ichabod in this chapter

1 The Ark became a “good luck charm” – the ark superstitious tool or rabbit foot to the Israelite army

2 Asking the wrong questions when things go bad

- Israel should have asked the Lord why they were defeated
- Gideon asked a similar question when the Lord called appeared and called him. Gideon’s response was if the Lord is with us then why is all this bad stuff happening to us (Judges 6:13)
- These were questions asked looking purely at outcomes but asked because they didn’t like their circumstances
- The question should be, “Lord you’re saying your with us so what do we need to do align ourselves with you?”
- They were right on the right track but landed on the wrong one
- The right question but the wrong premise
- The right premise would have attached their loss to their disobedience
- Deut 28 instructs the Israelites that if they obey they’ll be blessed but disobedience will be disciplined
- They were right for asking the question but should have looked to God and then inward
- Many times when there’s a problem it’s very easy to assign the blame somewhere else but our first look should be inward with the light of God’s word to examine ourselves
- We often look at the outcome but don’t look at the source of that outcome – which may be wrong decisions or in both cases broken fellowship with God that brought the outcome

3 Blaming God – Israel blamed God for their defeat

4 The present priesthood has ended

- Eli and his sons die in this chapter
- Their deaths are a result of the Lord’s discipline that was spoken of by the prophet in In 1 Samuel 2:27-36 and the word the Lord spoke to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:15-18

5 Phinehas’s wife said the glory is departed

What had happened to Israel? They are God’s chosen covenant people. Why have they fallen again as they have done time and time again? How can they repeat history so frequently?

The answer is a failure of fellowship. That failure of fellowship was it became formal, forsaken and forgotten

1 Formal – A formal fellowship goes through the motions

~ The Ark of the Covenant had only become a symbol of its intention. The Ark had simply become a good luck charm. They thought it would fix their problem

~ An indicator we’ve been Ichabod is we only call on the Lord to fix our problems

~ It’s great that we call on the Lord in trouble but we don’t want to view the Lord as a “good luck charm”

~ They’re calling on the Lord was from a position of formal fellowship. They were formal with the Ark of God

~ It was viewed as valuable but not important. It was valued enough to take into battle but not important to fellowship with

~ They approached this battle with the Philistines not from a place of calling on the Lord – the result of approaching this battle without fellowship is they got beaten badly. 34,000 Israelites died in this battle

~ This battle with the Philistines was different with the one that takes place in 1 Samuel 7. In this battle they called on the name of the Lord and the Lord prospered them in battle and they defeated the Philistines (something not accomplished in many years). Their battles with the Philistines had gone all the way back to the book of Judges

~ Formality takes place when we serve God but with the wrong motives or our heart just isn’t into it

~ I can read my bible, serve God, listen to a sermon, but if my heart isn’t doing those things with a heart of worship then it’s formality without fellowship

~ Formality is going through the motions

~ Formality is fellowshiping with the things of God without fellowshiping with the God who gave those things

~ Israel had slipped into formality and not fellowship

2 Forsaken – They had forsaken fellowship

~ When fellowship becomes formal it becomes forsaken

~ Israel had forsaken the Lord

~ Israel had forsaken the Lord in:

- *Deut 28:20 (Moses' warning before the Lord takes him to heaven) The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.*
- *Judg 10:10 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.*
- *Judges 10: 9-13 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. 10 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. 11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? 12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.*
- *1 Sam 8:8 (When Israel wanted a king) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.*
- *1 Sam 12:10 (When Samuel addressed Israel for wanting a king to rule over them) And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroath: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.*
- *Neh 13:11 (Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem after a time of leave and found the house of the Lord forsaken) Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.*
- *Jer 2:13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*
- *Jer 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.*

~ The goal isn't to merely be a Christian but fellowship with God

~ We see that in 1 Samuel 2,4 Israel had forsaken the Lord

~ The indicators of forsaken fellowship was

Eli's sons were sons of Belial, Eli didn't remove his sons from the priesthood, the preaching of the word was rare (1 Sam 3:1) and there was no open vision (no established prophet on the scene in 1 Sam 3:1), the situation is so dire God has to use young Samuel to rebuke Eli

~ This forsaken fellowship started with a formal fellowship

3 Forgotten – Fellowship had become forgotten

~ All through the book of Judges Israel forgets to fellowship with God. But they only notice when they get tired of being downtrodden by their enemies. Then they finally remember to fellowship the Lord

~ We'll see that it will take Israel about 20 years to remember fellowship with God. When we get to 1 Samuel 7 it's been 20 years from chapter four until they finally ask Samuel to pray for them for God to restore his favour on them.

~ *Jer 2:32 (In the same chapter where Jeremiah told Israel they had forsaken God in v13) Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.*

~ *Jer 3:21 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.*

~ *Jer 18:15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up*

~ Jer 23:25-27 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

~ Ezek 22:12 Israel has forgotten me says the Lord

~ Fellowship forgotten happens when our fellowship has become formal and forsaken

~ A forgotten fellowship means a person has forgotten the value of fellowship with God

~ This places us in the place of walking away from the Lord – when a person once had a love for God, hunger for God, zeal for the word and for the people of God – they now don't even think about it

~ A fellowship forgotten

Conclusion

~ In the age of grace we don't have a physical Ark of the Covenant of the Lord with us because we were the temple

~ We are the temple of the Lord (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19,20)

- Context of 1 Cor 3:16 is the Bema Seat judgement in which that which is combustible will be burnt up (works of the flesh) and that which will remain and be rewarded (works done through the spirit)
- Context of 1 Cor 6:19,20 is not polluting our temple by joining ourselves to that which is sinful (the examples Paul gives are joining yourself to a harlot (1 Cor 6:15-17) and fleeing fornication (1 Cor 6:18))

~ In Revelation 2:1-7 the church of Ephesus left their first love

- The church in Ephesus did all the right things outwardly
- If we were to interview this church we would look at this church as the model church to pattern ourselves after
- Yet, it's not all about the outward but about the inward – it's about fellowship with God
- It's about fellowship with God – they left their first love – they had a failure in fellowship

~ ! Cor 1:9 We've been called to the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord

~ Fellowship = communion, partnership, communication

~ It's our joy and privilege to be able to fellowship with the creator of the universe who has called us

- Jer 44:9 Israel has forgotten the wickedness of their fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, their wives, their own wickedness, the wickedness of your own wives
- Jer 50:6 Israel has forgotten their resting place

We will not be forgotten by God

This is a chapter that isn't to make us feel good about ourselves. It's a chapter that inspires probing questions our relationship with God. Perhaps were doing well in relationship and fellowship with God, in which case praise the Lord and take this sermon as a warning that we recognize the signs of Ichabod in our life

We don't this with the intent of being super introspective. We don't want to ultra-subjective and go witch hunting for sin in our life – if the HS reveals something to us then great but if not

If we're not where we should be with the Lord (you would know this) then return to fellowship with the Lord