

CONCERNING THE WAY

September 9, 2008

LESSON 29: ISRAEL: 1 SAMUEL



Introduction

This lesson covers 1 Samuel 2-4. Chapter 4 is a very important event in Israel's history, it is one of the most devastating defeats they ever suffered. You'll see in this passage that Israel is defeated, the Ark of the Covenant is captured by the Philistines, and the priests are killed. This is where the theocracy that was set up at Mt. Sinai, with God directly leading Israel, is ended. The Ark is gone, the King is in exile, His throne is gone, and the priesthood is in shambles. There is basically nothing left, and this is a major turning point, the end of God's direct rule over Israel.

- *Dusty Rhodes*

In the next section of Samuel, from 1 Samuel 2:11 to 1 Samuel 4:22, the main theme is that God destroys the old order. But notice before God has thoroughly dismantled it and thoroughly judged the nation, God is a God of love and He always provides ahead of the trial. God has already supplied the means for handling that trial, that national crisis, and this is what 1 Corinthians 10:13 says. *“No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.”*

What is the point here? That God always makes a means of getting through the trials that He throws into our life. In the next several chapters we are going to see one of the greatest catastrophes of all time in a nation's life, but before that catastrophe comes God has made provision by raising up a man who knew what was going on, who was teaching the Word of God. And if judgment comes upon this nation you can never accuse God of not preparing the way. Men have taught the Word of God, so if this nation is brought down, the means by which individuals can roll through the crisis has already been announced and taught.

Each time you see a catastrophe in Israel you are watching the nation give up its theoretical destiny. In other words, the nation could have been much better off, but they always want to take the lesser plan.

Plan A – in the Exodus – God himself living among them, and moving right into the promised land trusting God to clear the way – they didn't like this, so God went with:

Plan B – forty years later – conquer the promised land, destroy all the people there – that was too hard so they accepted: **Plan C** - with Judges chapter 2 and the refusal to conquer the entire land. That didn't work and the nation just slipped further and further into idolatry. Now you're going to see them retreat and accept **Plan D**.

Every time the nation failed their spirituality was lower, and the enjoyment and blessing is lowered. In this lesson we will study this fourth plan. **This plan was a plan whereby God destroyed the entire testimony of the tabernacle.** One of the places of blessing in the original format under Plan A, and this extended through Plan C, was that there was to be a divinely designed tent of meeting, we've looked that in our Exodus study. Remember the Ark of the Covenant stayed in the Holy of Holies behind the veil, and God's glory, His presence stayed on the mercy seat on top of the ark, in the Holy of Holies in that tabernacle.

Now that the nation has rejected the first three plans, they are now going to lose out on this fantastic system that God had for worship. This means that God will be there with the nation but not in the spectacular way that He was. So the nation has given up their land, the entire expanse of the land, and now they have given up that precious presence of God.

So the whole point of these chapters that we're studying is to watch believers, just like ourselves, systematically condemn themselves to lack of blessing by their rejection of God's grace. At every point they

have been offered grace, at every point offered to provide them with total, perfect and complete blessing, and at every point these believers rejected God's plan. And as a result they experience less of God's blessing.

1Samuel 2:11-12 Then Elkanah went back home to Ramah. But the boy was serving the LORD under the supervision of Eli the priest. (12) The sons of Eli were wicked men. They did not recognize the LORD's authority.

Samuel is growing up in the midst of religious corruption, the priesthood of Israel had become apostate, and that is why God will remove himself from this society. The sons of Eli were worthless, they had no moral value whatsoever. Verse 12 shows that they were unbelievers, and you see this even today. Whenever you have an apostate religious organization it starts gradually. Believers start the organization, but then the organization gradually starts denying certain points of the gospel. Then you have people within the organization that are not true born again believers, but they are religious.

Now get ready, I'm going to make some strong statements here, so if you're offended, I'm sorry, but I can only teach what the Bible says. **In this age there is to be no authority higher than the local pastor and the local church, apart from the Word of God.** But what we have so often today are various organizations and denominations hierarchies and that's not authorized by the Word. If you disagree, show me where you find this in the Word of God. The only structure you find authorized in the Word of God is the local church and the pastor-teacher, period. There aren't any references whatever in Scripture to any other kind of organization. Now obviously throughout the ages God has raised up temporary organizations because the local churches weren't doing their job, but the mainstream in our Church Age is always the local church; always! And when you see some sort of a religious movement that is not local church centered you should be wary of it because invariably you will have a top-heavy religious organization and sooner or later you're going to have unbelievers in that organization and then you are in trouble, with power grabs, corruption, or false teaching developing.

So the two sons of Eli were unbelievers and they were in charge of the worship of the nation. In verses 13-16 we have a graphic portrayal of these two sons and the religious organization they headed up. Now it looked like this: Eli was very old and he let his two sons control this organization but under these two sons was a large number of servants. They, the two sons, were the bosses of this. They were the bosses somewhat like Caiaphas' outfit in the time of Jesus Christ. We know now from secular history that Caiaphas and his goon squad that operated in the temple netted about three or four million dollars in bribes and extortion, that was their job. Caiaphas and his family ran a fantastic syndicate in the city of Jerusalem. It was this syndicate that Christ personally crashed into in John 2, "Why have you made My Father's house a den of thieves," and the gentle Jesus walked in and beat them up, and He did that because He was faced with sort of an ancient version of the mafia, headed by Caiaphas, and Christ just single-handedly walked in there and cleaned them out. And the religious organization retaliated, of course, by having Him crucified.

Religious organizations always like strong esthetic large buildings, they always love situations where they can get in power. This is why I prefer independent churches instead of large denominations. If you're looking for power or influence, who wants to take over an independent church? You take over religious organizations where you can influence many churches, and this is why so many denominational hierarchies degenerate into apostasy.

Eli is one of these believers that's involved in an apostate religious organization but he doesn't want to make waves. He doesn't want to speak out for the Word because he might upset the religious peace that they have in their community. And so for the sake of peace the Word of God is always trashed. We will see God's attitude toward believers like that. So Eli is one of these people, let's look at him and his sons.

1Samuel 2:13-15 *Now the priests would always treat the people in the following way: Whenever anyone was making a sacrifice, while the meat was boiling, the priest's attendant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. (14) He would jab it into the basin, kettle, caldron, or pot, and everything that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they used to do to all the Israelites when they came there to Shiloh. (15) Even before they burned the fat, the priest's attendant would come and say to the person who was making the sacrifice, "Hand over some meat for the priest to roast! He won't take boiled meat from you, but only raw."*

To gather what is happening here you have to have some understanding of what God's norm was for the priests, so turn to Deuteronomy 18:3. Here's what they should have done by the Law of Moses.

Deuteronomy 18:3 *This shall be the priests' fair allotment from the people who offer sacrifices, whether bull or sheep — they must give to the priest the shoulder, the jowls, and the stomach.*

Those are parts of the sacrifice for the priest and only those pieces. And furthermore, they were to give these pieces to the priest after they sacrificed. Here's the principle, the people are coming and they are offering a sacrifice to Jehovah; the priests take their sacrifice, kill it, and burn it. After the burning, well, before the burning on some of the offerings, and some of the meal offerings this wasn't the case, but somewhere in this time after it had been officially sacrificed to Jehovah, then a part of it went to the priests. Why? Because these priests were serving Jehovah and they should share in what was given to Jehovah. First you have the person coming to Jehovah, then it goes to the priest.

Now turn back to 1 Samuel 2 and see the order. The attendants here were these hired goons of the two sons of Eli, this was his God-squad that he sent out to milk believers who brought their sacrifices. They took this fork and they'd walk up and they say oh, you're offering today, fine, and they'd just stab it and they'd pull it up and if they pulled the whole thing up all right, this is mine, and they'd walk off with it. But further, in verse 15, not only did they do that, but you see an attempt to bypass Jehovah. The priest would come immediately to the believers and before the sacrifice was ever even offered to God they wanted their grubby little hands on it. What a racket they had going!

But let me show how this principle operates today. We have, say a religious organization A; religious organization A has many local churches. And so believers come to one of these local churches and they give money to one of these local churches. They give it as an act of worship, they give it to God, it is our present day form of sacrifice. In the Old Testament analogy God would take the gift and he would use it. But in an apostate organization, a certain percent is raked off and brought up into the denominational hierarchy so they can finance apostate Sunday School material, new ways to teach why the church has replaced Israel, or how you have to do some kind of work to stay saved, or whatever.

And this is why one of the greatest scholars in the 20th century, J. Gresham Machen had a break with one of these great organizations. Machen was a Greek Scholar, he was a genius; Machen's Greek textbook is still used by beginning students in New Testament Greek. What Machen found as a pastor in this particular organization was that he was accepting money and he began to ask where all this money was going. And lo and behold, after some investigation, he found out that they were sending it to missionaries who denied the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; and the deity of Christ. Machen said just a minute, I am a pastor of this local church, I receive these funds in the name of organization A from my people and you people are turning around and using it for an apostate work, and I'm not going to do it. So Machen started taking the rake-off and financing independent missions with it, to which the denomination said sorry Machen, you're out, and they defrocked him, one of the most humiliating, foul, hours in American 20th century religious history. J, Gresham Machen, one of the great godly men, a man who wrote the standard work on the virgin birth of

Jesus Christ, a work that has never been answered, and a man who was a great New Testament scholar was defrocked by a major denomination because he refused as pastor to send the rake-off up to the higher authorities. So don't get hung up in the meat and the hooks; this principle carries over into financing and religious apostasy today.

1Samuel 2:16 *If the individual said to him, "First let the fat be burned away, and then take for yourself whatever you wish," he would say, "No! Hand it over right now! If you don't, I will take it forcibly!"*

This is another thing that always goes along with religious apostasy. You see, they lose their power when they lose their contact with the Lord. So you've got to have something to replace the power and so they use human power instead of God's power. What are some examples today of this same kind of thing? We have the gimmicks, money raising gimmicks, like raising money for your church by selling trinkets or sending prayer mittens in return for a contribution, or having a rummage sale for God, as though God were in the junk business. So beware of gimmicks, that's one way that religion and unregenerate religion substitutes human power for God's power.

1Samuel 2:17 *The sin of these young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they treated the LORD's offering with contempt.*

Notice why this was very great before the Lord. It is not because believers are getting ripped off; that is wrong but that isn't what most offends God. What most offends God is that they are doing this right in front of the tabernacle; they are doing it right in front of His very presence. This is the buildup for the chapter, why they're going to lose the presence of God. God says you ran a religious con game right under My nose; that's how much you appreciate My presence here. So like a gentleman, He left, you don't stick around if a group of people don't want you around. So this is what God is going to do. Now in verses 18-21 we have a little notice about what Samuel is doing.

1 Samuel 2:18-21 *Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD. The boy was dressed in a linen ephod. (19) His mother used to make him a small robe and bring it up to him at regular intervals when she would go up with her husband to make the annual sacrifice. (20) Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife saying, "May the LORD raise up for you descendants from this woman to replace the one that she dedicated to the LORD." Then they would go to their home. (21) So the LORD graciously attended to Hannah, and she was able to conceive and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. The boy Samuel grew up at the LORD's sanctuary.*

There's the fringe benefits that she gets later on for trusting the Lord; that's a latter day illustration of Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you. When she sought the Lord and turned her first son over to Him, she made a big sacrifice, and here God is providing for her need.

Now we get to a very interesting section on how not to raise your children, verses 22-26, remember that Eli was a believer and he has two sons that are unbelievers. They are running the religious organization but Eli has the right to straighten them out.

1 Samuel 2:22-26 *Now Eli was very old when he heard about everything that his sons used to do to all the people of Israel and how they used to have sex with the women who were stationed at the entrance to the tent of meeting. (23) He said to them, "Why do you behave in this way? For I hear about these evil things from all these people. (24) This ought not to be, my sons! For the report that I hear circulating among the LORD's people is not good. (25) If a man sins against a man, one may*

appeal to God on his behalf. But if a man sins against the LORD, who then will intercede for him?" But Eli's sons would not listen to their father, for the LORD had decided to kill them. (26) Now the boy Samuel was growing up and finding favor both with the LORD and with people.

Eli is trying the "convince them" approach, like they teach you in child development, little Johnny comes up and he spits in your face and you say oh, I see that you have a problem Johnny. You can't spank them, you might hurt their personality or something, as though their personality was located in that place. But we have Eli trying to straighten his sons out, and obviously he does a messed up job and the pathetic thing about this is in that he knows the entirety of his sons sins. It's not a case of an old man just saying boys will be boys. He knows exactly what his sons are doing. Now in verse 27-36 we have the announcement of God's coming judgment, and this is a prophetic announcement. So let's talk about the structure of a prophet's message.

A prophet's message always begins with an appeal to a covenant. The idea here is to show that God has been faithful and has gone beyond the terms of the covenant, that God is a gracious God. In other words, God is totally innocent. The second thing, usually, is the announcement of doom. This is important theologically for you to understand as a believer; once the announcement of doom is made, no amount of confession will ever change it. This is an important principle. As Christians, this can happen to you. God can make an announcement of doom upon you. And from that point forward it means that your life will be run under the restrictions of that doom sentence. In other words, God is going to restrict your freedom, because of your past behavior, and He will put up with it and tolerate it just so long. He will give us ample chances and opportunities to change it. But finally there comes a time when He says NO, you can have blessing within the boundaries of this but you have gotten yourself in a hole and that is it.

And here God's doom is announced and it is irreversible. Sometimes it can be postponed, but from this point forward and the rest of Samuel and in Kings you'll see this principle operate, that when the prophet announces the sentence of doom it is irreversible, it will never be released; it's a very sobering thing.

1 Samuel 2:27-29 A man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not plainly reveal myself to your ancestor's house when they were in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh? (28) I chose your ancestor from all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer sacrifice on my altar, to burn incense, and to bear the ephod before me. I gave to your ancestor's house all the fire offerings made by the Israelites. (29) Why are you scorning my sacrifice and my offering that I commanded for my dwelling place? You have honored your sons more than you have me by having made yourselves fat from the best parts of all the offerings of my people Israel.'

Now this is an appeal to God's loyalty. Since we just came through Exodus, you should immediately know of whom it is that he speaks in verse 27, Aaron and Moses, from the tribe of Levi. When God spoke to Aaron He made a covenant with Aaron. Now there's a lot of lessons to learn in this little section, so let's take one at a time.

I want to show you how eternal security and discipline are put together in the Bible. If you'll keep this balance you won't go off on one hand thinking so much of the discipline you wind up an Armenian who doesn't believe in eternal security, but on the other hand you won't become some person that says well, I'm elect so therefore I can raise hell. Turn back to Exodus 29:9, this is the election of Aaron and his descendants to the priesthood.

Exodus 29:9 and wrap the sashes around Aaron and his sons and put headbands on them, and so the ministry of priesthood will belong to them by a perpetual ordinance. Thus you are to consecrate Aaron and his sons.

Here is a sovereign election by God, and this relates to your election. If you're a believer, God has foreknown you and He has predestinated you. OK, now watch something: If God is immutable then Exodus 29:9 can't be

changed in 1 Samuel 2. Eli is part of Aaron's house, so how is God going to discipline Eli without endangering his election?

...you have honored your sons more than you have Me," that is a somber warning to every parent. Do you know what that is saying to you? **That when you let your kids develop negative learned behavior patterns and you do nothing about it because you're chicken, that means you are allowing your children a higher status than God Himself; you honor your children more than you honor God.** Now there has to come a time sometime when you might as well recognize that children may or may not love you; that's not the point, the point is whether they respect you or not. A child can't love anybody, not until they're an adult do they really know what love means, so don't worry about your children loving you. You have to engender respect for your position as a loving parent, and always remember this passage. Sure it's hard, and sure it's tough to get into some situations. Imagine having Eli have to crack down. He would probably have had to organize a militia to come in and slaughter them. Eli probably knew it, that his sons were beyond his control, the only way he can restore sanctity to this holy place is by killing his own sons, and he's not going to do it. God says all right, then I'm going to do something. So beginning in verse 30 God is going to do something.

1 Samuel 2:30 *Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'I really did say that your house and your ancestor's house would serve me forever.' But now the LORD says, 'May it never be! For I will honor those who honor me, but those who despise me will be cursed!'*

God is saying yes, I elected the whole house to the priesthood but there are portions of that house that are disobedient and those portions I'm eliminating. Now that applies to your soul and to mine; God elects us as individual people in Jesus Christ but that doesn't mean He elects all of the crud that now exists in our souls. He is going to remove obstructions to His work in your life and it may be a very painful removal; some teeth come out easy, others don't, certain negative behavior patterns will be yanked out and it will hurt, and others will come out slowly and less painfully, but they will be removed. Here we have discipline, that is, God has chosen this believer but that doesn't mean that believer can get away with anything and everything they choose. So if we have a believer who begins a pattern of rebellion against God's revealed truth, then he's asking for it, because God will not permit that to go on. He will deal with it graciously. He will never reverse His original declaration but He can make life very, very miserable for believers who insist on rebelling against His Word.

So this is very important for us to remember. God can have a wonderful plan for our lives, we'll call that plan A, but we rebel and say no, I am not going to do what God calls me to do, I don't want it. So God says okay, I'll allow that to go on just so far and then you're going to be scheduled for plan B and it will not mean losing your salvation, but you will experience a less than satisfying type of life compared to what you could have experienced had you been on plan A. So this is the disciplining of believers because of habitual disobedience.

1 Samuel 2:31-36 *In fact, days are coming when I will remove your strength and the strength of your father's house. There will not be an old man in your house! (32) You will see trouble in my dwelling place! Israel will experience blessings, but there will not be an old man in your house for all time. (33) Any one of you that I do not cut off from my altar, I will cause your eyes to fail and will cause you grief. All of those born to your family will die in the prime of life. (34) This will be a confirming sign for you that will be fulfilled through your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: in a single day they both will die! (35) Then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what is in my heart and soul. I will build for him a secure dynasty and he will serve my chosen one for all time. (36) Everyone who remains in your house will come to bow before him for a little money and for a scrap of bread. Each will say, 'Assign me to a priestly task so I can eat a scrap of bread.' "*

This prophecy is saying from this point forward the ark and the tabernacle are going to decline, and that is the home of the priests. You are going to watch the decline of your habitation. The second thing is, verse 33, He says your family is destined forever to watch the slow decline of this. In the next chapter you will see that Eli himself witnesses the fulfillment to some of this. But this prophecy says this will go on and on, every descendant of Eli will watch the decline as it goes on down through history.

And verses 34-36, he's saying just as you used to milk the believers when they came to you to offer sacrifice, now I'm going to turn the tables and your family is going to suffer and the believers are going to be blessed. And so when prosperity hits the nation around 1000 BC with David and Solomon, everybody is going to share in the prosperity, except the priests. And this sets up the fact that they will always exist as a very humble group, for the rest of the history of the nation. They had a fantastic opportunity, they blew it, and God said it's over. You can still go on with Me and have a relationship with Me, but you're never going to have one like you could have had.

And then finally in verse 34, "This will be a confirming sign," now if you understand verse 34 **this will help you understand every sign of prophecy from this point forward in the Bible**, including the prophecy of the virgin birth. You are introduced in verse 34 to how signs were given to a generation; watch this and there is no problem with Isaiah 7 and other passages. This is a rule you can apply for the rest of your Bible study from this point forward, that every prophecy will be indicated by a prophecy that comes true immediately, and God is saying if the sign comes true, then you can rest assured that the part that's going to come true in the future will also come true. That's how God works, He will always give a token fulfillment in the same generation the prophecy was given. So that's what it means here.

Now verse 35 is important for several reasons. This is predicting the rise of a new priesthood, Zadok. Zadok is of the house of Aaron but not of the house of Eli. Turn to 1 Kings 2:27, you'll see that within a century this came to pass.

1 Kings 2:27 Solomon dismissed Abiathar from his position as priest of the LORD, fulfilling the decree of judgment the LORD made in Shiloh against the family of Eli.

At this time in history they had a high priest by the name of Abiathar; Abiathar was a descendant of Eli. Abiathar was the high priest and he had some political intrigue that went the wrong way, and so he is fired. There's the prophecy, there it has come true, part of it. And then later on in this same passage, in verse 35 you see that he put Zadok, the priest, on the high priest throne. Why is this important? Turn to Ezekiel 40, for a look at a prophecy of the millennium, the reign of Christ here on earth.

Ezekiel 40:46 and the chamber which faces north is for the priests who keep charge of the altar. These are the descendants of Zadok, from the descendants of Levi, who may approach the LORD to minister to him."

There evidently will be a temple that will be a memorial to His past work and here you can see the priest that will be there ministering in that millennial temple will be the sons of Zadok. Isn't that amazing? Zadok's physical descendants will serve in the millennial temple! This is solid evidence that there will be a physical reign of Christ on earth. Now back to 1 Samuel 2, "*And he will serve my chosen one.*" This is another reference to the Messiah, the Christ, and is the second time it occurs in 1 Samuel. The first time was in the song of Hannah; the second time is here.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we come to the second great area of the preparation of Samuel. This entire section deals with God calling the first prophet of the new order. Here we see God's love. God is going to chasten the nation

for their sins, but before God disciplines He will always make a way of escape that you may be able to bear whatever it is that He dishes out to you. Samuel was probably three years old when he started ministering before Eli. Now in chapter 3 he's a young man and he's going to give his first prophecy, and so obviously it's been over a decade, at least, maybe two decades, but I want you to see how God the Holy Spirit works, slowly, irresistibly, unhurriedly, never in a rush and He's never late. It's always done on time.

This chapter is important to you for several reasons. First of all, chapter 3 is going to show you what a prophet is like and how a prophet was called, and subsequently every chapter in the Old Testament that deals with a prophet, that man will be called the same way Samuel is. There will be certain tests, there will be certain evidences given, certain characteristics, etc. So chapter 3 is a precedent setting chapter and this will teach us a lot about prophets and about how these men operated.

1 Samuel 3:1-3 Now the boy Samuel continued serving the LORD under Eli's supervision. Word from the LORD was rare in those days; revelatory visions were infrequent. (2) Eli's eyes had begun to fail, so that he was unable to see well. At that time he was lying down in his place, (3) and the lamp of God had not yet been extinguished. Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD as well; the ark of God was also there.

The author is trying to say what kind of a young man Samuel was; he was obedient. It must have been distasteful for him to see all this corruption going on, but he lived up to the light that he knew.

If you can catch the link between the first and the last part of verse 1 you've got the moral of the whole story, all the rest of it is just detail. All the rest of what happens to Samuel in this chapter is built off this verse. We have a young man who is ministering before the Lord. We have the tabernacle and in the tabernacle we have the holy place, and then the Holy of Holies where the ark is. The ark was the throne of Jehovah; it was at the ark where God was supposed to visibly be, and when He gave instructions to the nation it would be through the high priest who ministered before the ark.

Why is this boy in there? Samuel wasn't looking for a warm place to sleep and decided to bring his sleeping bag inside and sack out. Samuel is inside the tabernacle for a very devout reason, and that reason is the key to the passage. You see, Moses was a man whom the Bible says God spoke to face to face; and so Moses filled the role of a prophet. Moses also filled the role of a priest, he was a Levite. So Moses combined the offices of prophet and priest in his one person. But when Moses died, he was succeeded by Joshua. Joshua was not a priest and he was not a prophet, he was simply a commander of the army, that's all. And so where did Joshua get his instructions from?

Numbers 27:21 tells us that Joshua gets his orders from the high priest who is functioning at the tabernacle. So the tabernacle is the place where Jehovah gives His orders. And Joshua, as the commander, must go to that place for his orders. And this is the normal operating thing.

In 1 Samuel 3:1 what the author is saying is that the high priest who ministered there since the days of Joshua has not been getting any orders recently. Orders haven't been coming down, the whole nation is in the dark. While they're waiting for the orders Samuel is constantly ministering before the Lord. He is going to the place where the orders come down and waiting; that's why Samuel is sleeping in the tabernacle. Now the priest is sacked out some place, because the Word of God hasn't come for maybe 20 or 30 years, Eli knows it and he says there's no sense sleeping near the ark, God doesn't talk to us any more. So Eli, being a believer that's out of it, has given up and the young boy Samuel hasn't. He is determined that he is going to stay there, if he has to sleep there the rest of his life he is going to be there when the order comes down.

This happened in the early morning, the lamp went out with sunrise. Of course, Samuel wasn't in the Holy of Holies but he was near it, maybe in the first part of the tent there.

1 Samuel 3:4-8 *The LORD called to Samuel, and he replied, "Here I am!" (5) Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down." So he went back and lay down. (6) The LORD again called, "Samuel!" So Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you, my son. Go back and lie down." (7) Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD; the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. (8) Then the LORD called Samuel a third time. So he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me!" Eli then realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy.*

The Lord calls to Samuel and the author intends us to notice that it sounds just like a normal human voice. It's not some spooky little thing, he would have been scared, he wouldn't have gone to Eli if it had been some spooky thing; it was a normal conversational voice. So the way the boy heard it when he was lying down there was the way you would hear anybody talking to you. That should stop you. The God of the universe comes and talks. This should amaze you, God is not far distant, the Bible says He's a person and He speaks as anybody else would speak.

It sounds like the Lord's playing games here with Samuel but He's not, there's a very definite reason for it. God does this because He wants Samuel, not just that He wants Samuel to do something, and that's a principle of the Christian life. **God wants primarily you first, then He'll deal with the specifics. But He won't deal with the specifics until He has your attention, wholly and totally.** And this is always the rule in Christian growth. Some Christians must not understand this because they will ask about a specific issue of divine guidance, say should I marry this person or that person. The point is why wait until you're involved in a decision on who to marry before you think about what God's will for your life is? That's a heck of a time to wake up to what God's will is. You ought to have decided that a long time ago. The chances are that probably He doesn't want you to marry either of them because He hasn't gotten your attention yet.

You don't start conversing with a person until you're sure you've got their attention, right? So why should God operate any differently when He operates with us? Do you expect Him to talk to you when He hasn't got your attention? That's foolish.

Now we want to explain verse 7. Does that mean Samuel wasn't a believer? No, not knowing the Lord in the Old Testament is a phrase that must be interpreted in the context; sometimes it refers to not being a believer... I think that's the way it refers to in 1 Samuel 2 about Eli's sons, but in this context it's defined for us in the last part of the verse. There are two phrases here used. "Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him." Now what that means is that Samuel had never had an encounter with God. Probably by now he's a teenager, a young man, and he has never experienced this oracle of God before. This is why he makes the wrong interpretation, he hears a voice and he's not even prepared.

Now this shows you Eli's training wasn't very good. Somewhere Samuel had heard that you ought to get near the ark because somewhere near the ark God's order is going to come down. Eli had never bothered to share with Samuel how the orders come down when they do. Finally in verse 8 Eli catches on. So Eli starts to now train Samuel on what to do when God speaks.

1 Samuel 3:9-10 *So Eli said to Samuel, "Go back and lie down. When he calls you, say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." So Samuel went back and lay down in his place. (10) Then the LORD came and stood nearby, calling as he had previously done, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel replied, "Speak, for your servant is listening!"*

The drama of these verses simply shows that God isn't going to tell Samuel another thing until Samuel responds to Him correctly. And when he does, this is a formal declaration of positive volition toward the will of God. It would be like when God calls us and you feel that God is leading you some way, we would simply say, speak, Lord, whatever your will is I am ready to do it, whatever it is, no strings. That's divine guidance, and it is only available on those terms. So God can be calling you personally by your name, over and over, and you wonder, why doesn't he show somehow, through circumstances, through the Word what His plan for my life is? Maybe because you haven't done what Samuel is doing, you haven't stopped and said all right, speak Lord, for your servant is now hearing.

Now verse 10, if you look at it carefully is very startling, because it tells you how the Lord appears. Up to this time you read he hears a voice in the night, and that's all you would have thought. But when you get to verse 10 you begin to get the creeps, because **here the Lord actually is standing there**. This implies that all the other times the Lord was standing there and Samuel didn't even see Him, because he wasn't prepared to see Him. Samuel wasn't looking for the Lord, but now he comes back and now he knows it's the Lord, so he starts looking around, and sure enough, there He is.

So Samuel isn't seeing a ghost, he is actually seeing Jesus Christ in His preincarnate form. When Jesus Christ appears in the Old Testament He appears as the angel of the Lord, the Second Person of the Trinity that is always revealed; the First is always revealed through the Second, but the person of the Trinity that's always the center of revelation is the Second Person. The word "stands" is a word that literally means He takes his position and there's an air of formality about this verb; it's apparent that there was a place where God stood, that when Samuel looked out into the night and he heard the voice, there was a place there where the voice always seemed to come from. And when he looked carefully he could see God was standing there.

Now beginning in verses 11-18 we have the prophet Samuel start his ministry, with his first prophecy. To understand what is happening in verses 11-18 it's necessary that we get a little background. So we have to go back to Deuteronomy 13 and 18. There are two tests for a prophet. Every prophet had to authenticate himself with these tests. And the reason I take you to these two tests is because if I left you with just 1 Samuel 3 you'd walk out of here thinking well, wouldn't it be great to have a supernatural experience like that?

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 Suppose a prophet or one who foretells by dreams should appear among you and show you a sign or wonder, (2) and the sign or wonder should come to pass concerning what he said to you, namely, "Let us follow other gods" – gods whom you have not previously known – "and let us serve them." (3) You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for the LORD your God will be testing you to see if you love him with all your mind and being. (4) You must follow the LORD your God and revere only him; and you must observe his commandments, obey him, serve him, and remain loyal to him.

Now isn't it interesting in verse 2 that even if the prophecy comes true; He says "don't buy it". How many times have we heard this argument in our generation, so and so is a great healer, so and so does miracles, so and so does all these things, so and so must be a great person of God just because they have miracles. How do you tell they're for real? When their teachings fit with the Word, that's how you tell. If you have somebody come to your town and you drop by and you see great miracles done, oh, it must be of God because they're doing great miracles. But you never hear them mention the Lord Jesus Christ, there's a lot of Holy Ghost this and Holy Spirit that, but never the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ; you never hear that made the center of attention. Your ears should perk up, you say wait a minute, the test of Deut. 13 is

working here, where's the Word? The miracles don't matter, the Word of God matters! So there's one test.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 *Now if you say to yourselves, 'How can we tell that a message is not from the LORD?' – (22) whenever a prophet speaks in my name and the prediction is not fulfilled, then I have not spoken it; the prophet has presumed to speak it, so you need not fear him."*

So the second test is an empirical test, that is, does what he says fit actual history; does it happen? The first test is the logical test; does it all hang together with the Scripture. So every prophet has to pass these two tests. Now let's turn back to Samuel and watch how Samuel passes these two exams. Beginning in verse 11 the Lord comes and He gives Samuel a repeat of the prophecy we saw in chapter 2. Now this same prophecy is going to be updated. God is giving Samuel the old prophecy but saying now is the hour; go out and announce it to Israel, now is the time come for the fulfillment.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 *The LORD said to Samuel, "Look! I am about to do something in Israel; when anyone hears about it, both of his ears will tingle. (12) On that day I will carry out against Eli everything that I spoke about his house – from start to finish! (13) You should tell him that I am about to judge his house forever because of the sin that he knew about. For his sons were cursing God, and he did not rebuke them. (14) Therefore I swore an oath to the house of Eli, 'The sin of the house of Eli can never be forgiven by sacrifice or by grain offering.' "*

In other words, there's going to be something so profound come upon the nation, they're going to be afraid. In verses 13-14 we have a great theological problem. Apparently we have here an unpardonable sin and apparently this sin is done by a believer. Let's straighten it out. Notice the word "house", the prophecy wasn't just to Eli, it was to Eli and his descendants. What God is saying is that the damage that Eli has done to the priesthood will never be removed, forever and ever. It has done irreparable damage, it doesn't mean that Eli is never going to be forgiven. It means the effect of his sin will never be erased from history. That's very embarrassing and humiliating. This is serious business. It should show you that in your Christian life you can be capable as a believer of introducing elements into history that will never be erased, they'll go down on a permanent record, but it doesn't mean that God can't use them. God will use them but you'll always have that kind of icky feeling that I was the one that set that thing up.

1 Samuel 3:15-17 *So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the LORD's house. But Samuel was afraid to tell Eli about the vision. (16) However, Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" He replied, "Here I am." (17) Eli said, "What message did he speak to you? Don't conceal it from me. God will judge you severely if you conceal from me anything that he said to you!"*

Samuel knows the prophecy, and now we have a very interesting and touching end to this story. Here we have this young man Samuel, still in training. A prophet has to receive a message from God but then he also has to give it out. In verse 17 Samuel must learn the lesson that when the oracle of God comes down, no matter how close your personal friends may be, no matter how many friendships may be broken, no matter how much the cost is in disseminating the message, to be a prophet you have to say it anyway. Apparently he loved Eli on a personal basis, he probably hated what he stood for, but he had learned much from Eli. It was hard to take this message from God that he had heard and turn around and say you are damned. But that's what God told him to do.

1 Samuel 3:18 *So Samuel told him everything. He did not hold back anything from him. Eli said, "The LORD will do what he pleases."*

At the end of verse 18 you have one of the greatest statements that a believer can ever make. This is made from the lips of an apostate disobedient believer, but in the hour when the discipline is about to strike, Eli submits to it with positive volition. And this is a lesson that Samuel will never forget, that you give your message out, regardless of the cost, because God's Word will never return void, it will always accomplish that which it was ordained to accomplish and here we have it. The very prophecy that Samuel was afraid to give to Eli is the very prophecy that causes Eli to come back and accept God's will.

1 Samuel 3:19-21 *Samuel continued to grow, and the LORD was with him. None of his prophecies fell to the ground unfulfilled. (20) All Israel from Dan to Beer Sheba realized that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. (21) Then the LORD again appeared in Shiloh, for it was in Shiloh that the LORD had revealed himself to Samuel through the word of the LORD.*

Now we have the authentication of Samuel. Verse 19 is a capsule summary of this man for the rest of his life. "the LORD was with him." Let's stop there, let's look at this phrase. That's a phrase that is a spiritual claim. How do you know whether that claim is valid or not? Show me one test that you can run to check that or not. Maybe because somebody walks around and says Jesus, Jesus over and over, oh God must be with him. It doesn't mean a thing. This is a spiritual claim and that has to be checked somehow. How do you check them? Watch the verse. "None of his prophecies fell to the ground unfulfilled." And thus Samuel is authenticated. The next chapter is going to show you where Samuel's first prophecy does come true, detail for detail.

In verse 21, when it says "the LORD again appeared in Shiloh" it means God's orders began to come down again like they hadn't come down in a whole generation. But there's a change, no longer is it doing what Numbers 27 says, no longer are the orders coming down through the high priest any more; those days are over.

The high priest is not the main channel any longer in the history of Israel. From now on the orders will be passed down through the prophets. Samuel is the first one and here you have the founding of the order of the prophets. And the prophets must exist before you can have the king. The king always must be secondary to the prophet. The prophet is the king-maker. And you have to have a clear channel for the oracles of God, it can't come through some corrupt priesthood. If you're going to have a king, with all this power in one man, that man must be controlled by a clear chain of command through a living prophet.

Now here's a little surprise I bet you've never noticed. "*the LORD had revealed himself to Samuel through the word of the LORD*" Remember in verse 7 Samuel did not yet know the Lord because the Word had not been revealed? We said that God appeared to Samuel and this is a technical phase, "the Word of God." But then I said in verse 10 that the Lord was standing there. Do you make the identification? The One who was standing there is called the Word of God. Who was it? The Second Person of the Trinity. Just read the sentence this way, "The LORD," that's the Father, "revealed Himself by the Word of the Lord," that is, the Father revealed Himself by the Son. And here you have the Trinity already functioning in the Old Testament. Just read John 1 if you doubt who the Word is.

Chapter 4

1 Samuel 4:1 *Samuel revealed the word of the LORD to all Israel.*

Now God is going to do away with the traditional use of the tabernacle, it will still remain in historic existence but mainly the tabernacle will be replaced by the prophet.

Let's see what happens here. We have the land of Israel and down along the coast we have a group of

people called the Philistines. Right now the Philistines, at this point in the text, have great control over the southern part of Israel. During the last of the period of the Judges, around 1100-1000 BC Samson was raised up by God as a professional goon to start trouble with the Philistines, and Samson partially fulfilled his ministry. The Philistines had something that we have today, ecumenical religion. The Philistines believed in taking many conflicting theologies, putting them all together into some form of ecumenical religion and they so controlled this coastline that they were able to subdue the southern sections of the nation Israel. To the north Israel had other problems but in the south it was mainly the Philistines.

Then along came a man by the name of Samuel who began to teach the Word at a place called Shiloh. About 25 miles west of Shiloh is a very famous place called Aphek. The battle of Aphek, described in this chapter, is fought in this place. Aphek is one of the great military battles of all time in the Old Testament. It was very unique, yet it was a battle in which a nation lost, and lost their freedom. And they will not regain their freedom until God does a work in the nation through revival, through the man Samuel.

1 Samuel 4:1-2 *Then the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. They camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines camped at Aphek. (2) The Philistines arranged their forces to fight Israel. As the battle spread out, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men in the battle line in the field.*

The Philistines are the tool that God is using to discipline the nation. Israel absorbed ecumenical religion from the Philistines, and so God said since you like the ecumenical religion of the Philistines so much, try their political domination, see how you like that. One of the policies the Philistines had was to move into territories, they probably moved as far north as just south of the Dead Sea and probably even on over to Jordan, and they essentially controlled this whole area of Palestine at that time. In fact, the word "Palestine" comes from the word Philistia. And it's an insult to the Jews to call this nation Palestine because you're naming his land after his enemy. The proper name is Israel.

The Philistines practiced disarmament, sort of like the people who want to register all the firearms so they can take them away from the law-abiding citizens. The Philistines moved into these areas and took away any weapons or tools that could possibly be used for spears and arrows, and then so the Philistines never had too much trouble controlling a disarmed people. One of the great lessons we learn from this era of history is that this kind of disarmament is always promoted by people who want to subjugate a nation. So Israel goes into battle here and they are slaughtered, four thousand dead. But that's nothing compared to what's coming.

1 Samuel 4:3 *When the army came back to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why did the LORD let us be defeated today by the Philistines? Let's take with us the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. When it is with us, it will save us from the hand of our enemies."*

Now that is a fatal error in verse 3 and you cannot understand the rest of the chapter unless you understand why this is a mistake. The nation was free only as they were in submission to their King, Jehovah. Their freedom was dependent upon positive volition towards God. They are now in a disciplinary situation and their freedom is being slowly removed. They disobeyed God's Word, they absorbed ecumenical religion with the result that God is simply administering the covenants of blessing and cursing of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.

But when they say "the LORD let us be defeated today" it's quite obvious that the national leaders recognize the sovereignty of God. So their first step is correct; they have recognized that God was the One who allowed them to be defeated. There's no error so far. The error starts in the next sentence. The error

is that they have rejected confession, they are out of fellowship nationally and they have bypassed God's mode for getting back in fellowship, which is national confession. Remember in the book of Judges God would bring the disciplinarians in, the nation would respond, they'd become sorrowful and then they would repent. They would recognize that they had violated the covenant of Moses, that they had turned against the Word of God and therefore they had to confess before they could do anything else.

Now this is a principle we apply in our Christian life over and over. There are only two points of existence in the Christian life; at any given moment you are in fellowship with the Lord or you are out of it. If you are out of it, the tendency is to do exactly what Israel's going to do. And what is it? Bypass confession and rely on a religious gimmick.

Let me give you some illustrations of these gimmicks in Christian circles. We'll have a Christian organization raised up by God. Maybe a local church that God has blessed. It may be some Christian institution, but somewhere along the line they lose their way, they get out of fellowship as an organization, no longer is God the Lord of that organization. And so what do they do? They begin to experience His discipline and usually the thing that hits first is money. And so they begin to notice, oh-oh, what are we going to do now, our income is sliding. So they begin to say what we've got to do is solve our financial problem, we have to call in bigger and better financial advisors, we have to get on some sort of a fund raising campaign and get all the pledge cards out, etc. What is the trouble? It's just like bringing the ark of the covenant out because the real solution is to get back in fellowship, then the money will take care of itself. But they begin to notice a decline in the number of people so what we need to do is bring more people in by witnessing, so we bring some expert to the church and he develops a program and he tells us how to greet everybody with a smile, etc. and we have all of a sudden an evangelistic witnessing campaign to bring in and increase our numbers. Still haven't dealt with the spiritual problem.

Another gimmick is even Bible study. Some people come to Bible class or listen to Christian radio or tapes just to soothe their own conscience. They don't really listen to what's said, don't really study it, but they go to put in an appearance and impress everyone. They want to appear that they love God. This is a gimmick and it bypasses confession and it's not going to work. We could go on and on and on. So here is the religious gimmick that Israel uses, the Ark of the Covenant. It is going to save us, the magic genie.

1 Samuel 4:4 *So the army sent to Shiloh, and they took from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits between the cherubim. Now the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.*

So the ark is brought out and notice how the author describes the ark. He uses every single title he possibly can to show us that the emphasis should be on the Lord and not on the ark. The ark is just a physical manifestation of God's presence, but it isn't God.

1 Samuel 4:5 *When the ark of the covenant of the LORD arrived at the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the ground shook.*

Now we have the beginning of a very humorous series of events. It's not going to be humorous to the Israelites, they lose 30,000 people because of it. But in one sense it's very humorous and in another sense it's a very tragic lesson for believers to learn. What is happening in verse 5 is a sheer psychological motivation. The ark has lost its spiritual power, there's no power in that ark because they had violated the Word. There is no automatic genie. Since the Word has been violated there can't be any real power, but why do they bring the ark down? They are going to motivate the people psychologically. There's nothing that's spiritually powerful in back of it. It's just a lot of rah, rah, rah. Now look around and see where you

see this in religious circles today. People are too busy to study the Word of God and get the foundation so instead of doing that they revert to this kind of thing, we'll all get together and sing emotional songs, and we'll really feel the power, and we go out and fall flat on our face. That's psychological gimmicks.

1 Samuel 4:6-7 *When the Philistines heard the sound of the shout, they said, "What is this loud shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" Then they realized that the ark of the LORD had arrived at the camp. (7) The Philistines were scared because they thought that gods had come to the camp. They said, "Too bad for us! We've never seen anything like this!"*

We have an interesting thing here. The Philistines have no historic evidence on their side. Now neither side used faith in this battle; both sides were using gimmicks. Let's look at the Philistine side first; first thing was they had no positive historic evidence for their victory, all of the evidence they had was negative.

1 Samuel 4:8-9 *Too bad for us! Who can deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all sorts of plagues in the desert! (9) Be strong and act like men, you Philistines, or else you will wind up serving the Hebrews the way they have served you! Act like men and fight!"*

Notice it's plural, see the Philistines see the ark coming down, they see the two cherubs and they think the cherubs represent God so they're saying these are the mighty gods. You get the feeling here that the opponents also had heard of the historical power of God; it was an international subject of conversation. When God did something it wasn't done in a closet. They had all the historic evidence of what they were up against.

But in verse 9, here comes operation psychological gimmick. In other words, with the lack of any evidence to the contrary, except the survival instinct, go ahead and fight and engage them in battle. There is no faith on the Philistine's part, it's the rah-rah approach. But fortunately for them, we're going to have believers with a gimmick fighting unbelievers with a gimmick. Both of them are operating out of line with the Word of God. And who always wins? The unbelievers.

1 Samuel 4:10-11 *So the Philistines fought. Israel was defeated; they all ran home. The slaughter was very great; thirty thousand foot soldiers fell in battle. (11) The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were killed.*

I'll get into the fulfilled prophecy of that in a moment but I want you to notice something. Whenever you have a gimmick the unbeliever will always be able to use it more and better, more effectively than the believer. God hasn't designed believers to use gimmicks; He has designed us to use grace. When we're trying to use gimmicks where we should be using grace, we will always fall flat on our face, every single time. We aren't built for it and God will not permit it.

We wind up with thirty thousand dead. The ark of God was taken and Eli's two sons were dead. This is the fulfilled prophecy of 1 Samuel 2:34, that was given to Eli. Prophecy is not vague; Biblical prophecy is specific. Any prophecy that comes from the Lord who is omniscient will always be perfect; remember that. I have heard people give so-called prophecies in my life, and they're always so vague. All this prophecy business today is a lot of hogwash. To be a prophet of God everything has to come true or it is a phony thing. People who are claiming to have the gift of prophecy would be stoned to death if they had lived during those days.

1 Samuel 4:12-13 *On that day a Benjaminite ran from the battle lines and came to Shiloh. His*

clothes were torn and dirt was on his head. (13) When he arrived in Shiloh, Eli was sitting in his chair watching by the side of the road, for he was very worried about the ark of God. As the man entered the city to give his report, the whole city cried out.

This shows you that Eli had some spirituality, he had some knowledge of what was going on. Eli is caught, as many believers are in this state. They're caught on the one hand by their disobedience to God, and they're caught on the other hand by their conscience and their conscience says yes, you know what's going on friend, you know what God wants you to do. And so here Eli is, he knows they should never have taken the ark, he is afraid of it, and he has a premonition that something is going to happen. But obviously again, as with his sons, they went to him and he backed down. Typical chicken believer, afraid to stand up for the Word and so here he is, sitting on his seat as usual, afraid.

1 Samuel 4:14-18 *When Eli heard the outcry, he said, "What is this commotion?" The man quickly came and told Eli. (15) Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes looked straight ahead; he was unable to see. (16) The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle lines! Just today I fled from the battle lines!" Eli asked, "How did things go, my son?" (17) The messenger replied, "Israel has fled from the Philistines! The army has suffered a great defeat! Your two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are dead! The ark of God has been captured!" (18) When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward from his chair beside the gate. He broke his neck and died, for he was old and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years.*

There are three things that the messenger reports. First, there's been military defeat. But this doesn't appear to bother Eli so much. Secondly, his two sons are included in the casualties. Even this doesn't bother him. But then, when he learns that the ark is taken, he fell backwards and died. The psychological pressure between the conscience and his mind snapped at that point, he fainted. He went into shock. Why did he do this? Because he had a tremendous pressure on the inside of him that just blew up; he was out of fellowship and he knew he was out of fellowship, he was under tremendous psychological pressure and that was it, right there. Eli is a picture of a lot of carnal believers today who know where the Word is and refuse to come simply because they have something more important on their mind.

1 Samuel 4:19-22 *His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas, was pregnant and close to giving birth. When she heard that the ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she doubled over and gave birth. But her labor pains were too much for her. (20) As she was dying, the women who were there with her said, "Don't be afraid! You have given birth to a son!" But she did not reply or pay any attention. (21) She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," referring to the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. (22) She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God has been captured."*

The phrase "doubled over" here is the way the ancient Near Eastern women assume their birth position to this day. And in the ancient Near East this would be the highest thing for a woman, even if she was dying in childbirth she would rejoice that she had given birth to a son. It comes out of the Messianic tradition. The word "depart" actually means to go into exile.

Let me show you how this is fouled up. We're not given in chapter 4 everything that happened; the historian as he concludes chapter 4 just gives us the quick events, shows us what happened to Eli, shows us what happened to the ark, but there were other things that came. After this scene in chapter 4 the Philistine armies came, and they destroyed Shiloh, the place, and just turned it into a desolation. This is recorded for us in other passages of God's Word. Turn to Psalm 78 where we can have the rest of what

happened in chapter 4.

It's important to get this so that you'll see that 1 Samuel 4 is a picture of catastrophes that God brings on His historical instruments. By "historical instruments" we mean the tabernacle for one, that's at Shiloh, we mean Jerusalem and the temple for another, and we mean, and I'll put it in quotes, "the church." Now I'm going to show you verses that show in all three cases God has brought into historic existence an entity to His glory and in every case when that institution and that instrument becomes sinful, God removes it from history.

Psalms 78:55-64 He drove the nations out from before them; he assigned them their tribal allotments and allowed the tribes of Israel to settle down. (56) Yet they challenged and defied the sovereign God, and did not obey his commands. (57) They were unfaithful and acted as treacherously as their ancestors; they were as unreliable as a malfunctioning bow. (58) They made him angry with their pagan shrines, and made him jealous with their idols. (59) God heard and was angry; he completely rejected Israel. (60) He abandoned the sanctuary at Shiloh, the tent where he lived among men. (61) He allowed the symbol of his strong presence to be captured; he gave the symbol of his splendor into the hand of the enemy. (62) He delivered his people over to the sword, and was angry with his chosen nation. (63) Fire consumed their young men, and their virgins remained unmarried. (64) Their priests fell by the sword, but their widows did not weep.

Turn to Jeremiah 7:12; the shock of 1 Samuel 4 reverberated and echoed again and again down through Israel's history. Here we begin to see its prophetic significance. This isn't just an isolated incident that happened in 1 Samuel 4, it's a model event that pictures something that's going to come in the future.

Jeremiah 7:12-14 So, go to the place in Shiloh where I allowed myself to be worshiped in the early days. See what I did to it because of the wicked things my people Israel did. (13) You also have done all these things, says the LORD, and I have spoken to you over and over again. But you have not listened! You have refused to respond when I called you to repent! (14) So I will destroy this temple which I have claimed as my own, this temple that you are trusting to protect you. I will destroy this place that I gave to you and your ancestors, just like I destroyed Shiloh.

What's Jeremiah saying? He's saying look, we saw that temple get wiped out; you people in around 600 BC were trusting in the temple, He's not going to allow His temple to be crushed. And what does Jeremiah say, just walk down the road and look at that little place where the grass has grown all over it and it's just ruins; remember what happened there, that was Shiloh. Remember what the people said, oh nothing's going to happen, we've got the tabernacle. So Jeremiah is telling the people the same thing is going to happen to Jerusalem. He is using the battle of Aphek as a model of the future disaster in 586 BC. Jeremiah 26:6 says the same thing.

Now let's skip many, many centuries, down past our own era into the future. What is the instrument that God has given to history the last 1900 years? It's been the "Christian church." Prophecy has a startling thing to say about what's going to happen to Christianity. People are going to trust in Christianity like they trusted in the tabernacle, like they trusted in the temple, and there's one more verse I want you to see that predicts the end of Christianity in history. In Revelation 17:16 we have a prophecy that is the death of the Church. In Revelation 17:16 we have Babylon the great, the mother of harlots. This is ecumenical religion that appears to be the future form of what we will call Christendom. By this time in history Christendom will have tremendous economic power, possibly through the World Council of Churches, apparently Catholicism and Protestantism will combine. Don't be surprised if the Catholics come into the World Council of Churches and you have one massive powerful political organization. Catholics and Protestants are getting

very chummy these days.

This organization is predicted in the Bible to grow and grow into a tremendously powerful religious machine that has economic and political power. And all the nations are going to trust in it and then out of all this, along will come Satan incarnate, the antichrist, the beast, and when He comes He will destroy the “Christian Church”:

Revelation 17:16 *The ten horns that you saw, and the beast — these will hate the prostitute and make her desolate and naked. They will consume her flesh and burn her up with fire.*

The ten horns refer to the ten kingdoms, apparently European countries very much analogous to the present day European Common Market. The prostitute is Christendom in that day, she’s spoken of as a whore because she has sold out, the Church is the bride whose job it is to yield herself into the arms of her lover, which is Jesus Christ. So the apostate church is always looked upon as a whore that has left her true lover and has gone and given herself to somebody else. This terminology refers to unfaithful Christendom.

So there’s going to come a revolt, just like in Israel, and the liberals and all the people that have shouted for disarmament and all the people who have protested for world peace, and brotherhood, these people in the final days of the Tribulation will fall themselves, disasters of the antichrist.

Now where does that place the true Church of Christ? Here’s where we see one of those little details that I insist show the inspiration of Scripture. Before Israel was clobbered at Shiloh what had to happen first? The glory had to depart, before the destruction. So also in the future, what is going to happen? The glory is going to depart from Christendom and what is the departure of the glory before the tribulation? It is the rapture of the Church, the snatching away of all true born again believers in Jesus Christ at one moment in time in history, and it could be tomorrow, it could be the next day, could be years from now, but there will come a time in future history when every believer will be removed from history.

That will be the departure of the glory just as at the battle of Aphek, and after that departure, the core of the organization will be used by a tremendous ecumenical machine. The question that we can ask ourselves, is how this applies and is a counterpart to Christmas. Before you can have peace and before you can have any real benefit spiritually, you have to have the presence of the glory. John 1 would be the chapter that would give you the deepest understanding of Christmas. The other gospels give you the straightforward history, John 1 gives you the central core, the philosophic and theological overtones of the Christmas event. There’s one verse to which I want to draw your attention.

John 1:14 *Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory — the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.*

That’s the Christmas event, the glory has returned, the glory that departed with Ichabod, has returned, that glory is the life of Jesus Christ; the glory is still available to men right now. The glory is still here now, but the Bible says it will leave again (temporarily). And that’s the point I want to make, that Christmas is not a perpetual guarantee the glory is always going to be available. Just as the battle Aphek showed, the glory isn’t always going to be available. Don’t trust it, don’t think oh well, we can be comfortable, we’ve got the glory here, God isn’t going to abandon His saints. No He isn’t, **He’s going to remove them and then He’s going to abandon the world.** So be warned. The Christmas story is a nice story because it relates the coming of the glory but the thing you have to remember is the coming departure of the glory.