

Samuel – God’s Kingdom and its King. (5b) When the glory departs.  
refs for Bible study 5/12/19: 1 Samuel 4v1-22

A sobering chapter with much to teach us. Defeat turns to disaster, and ends with a child whose name signifies the departure of God’s glory. ‘Ichabod’ could be written over much of so-called Christianity in C21<sup>st</sup>. The storyline centres on the Ark, the God-given symbol of God’s presence amongst his people. (See previous study, 7/11/19).

**A calamity tinged with mercy:** Eli’s dynasty was corrupt, the priests immoral and out of control, 1Sam.2v12, v17, v22-25. God clears the ground ready for Samuel’s ministry. But would they (and do we) learn the lesson?

**Defeat: lessons not learned, and ignoring God’s warnings:** Philistines are the aggressors. Part of the spiritual warfare that started in Gen.3v15. Good Q, bad answer, v3-4. They had God’s warnings 2v27-36, 3v11-14, and did not seek God nor repent, but sent for the Ark. How the carnal mind loves excitement v5! God prefers quiet obedience. Turn up for the books v6-9. Second battle is a disaster v10-11. God’s word come true, 2v24.

**Disaster: why did God allow it?** Eli hears the news v17. If the shock doesn’t kill him, the fall does v18. A great tragedy, but worst of all the Ark is captured! Presumption: *‘if we’ve got the Ark, we’ve got the Lord, so we’re OK’*.

**Superstition instead of saving faith, religion instead of reality:** Capture of the Ark mentioned 5x. This precious symbol was only a symbol, not the reality. “Lucky charm theology.” How many 1000’s are still superstitious, putting their trust in religion! Without the reality that lies behind them these things are worthless.

**Superstitious religion:** No Ark or ‘lucky charm’ guarantees the Lord’s presence. He promises to be present with the repentant Is.57v15. **Superstitious religion tries to manipulate God:** *‘If we get the Ark, God has to save us!’* Don’t imagine we can control God! **It stresses religion not repentance:** Instead of repenting, they put their trust in a piece of religious furniture. Only penitent faith can receive God’s salvation. **It has little time for God’s Word:** God had spoken, Deut.28v15, 25. But they paid no attention. May we always heed his Word! **It has a powerful grip on men’s minds:** Hear the excitement in v5! Why did Eli tremble v13? Not for fear of the Lord, but for loss of the Ark. **It cannot save:** It’s an empty shell, and when it fails the collapse is total. The glory had already departed. Immorality and idolatry allowed to flourish. Warning: do not grieve the Holy Spirit, Eph.4v30.

Beware the subtle pull of a superstitious religion that cannot save! Don’t tell yourself *‘he’s bound to bless me if I do this’*. The best safeguard is to nurture our relationship with the Lord, in humble repentance and obedient faith.