

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 3

1 Samuel 3-4

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This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 3, 1 Samuel 3, the Lord Chooses a Prophet, and 1 Samuel 4, Defeat, Death, and Departure.

In this next lesson we're going to be looking at 1 Samuel chapter 3 and then chapter 4. We're going to do two chapters in this particular lesson.

1 Samuel 3 I've entitled the Lord chooses a prophet. That prophet of course is going to be Samuel, and I think the main theme of chapter 3 could be expressed this way. The Lord is willing to revive his broken relationship with his people through those who honor him.

As we said in an earlier lesson, the Lord is rejecting Eli and his sons, but that doesn't mean that he's rejecting Israel. He's rejecting the leadership. He's going to raise Samuel up as a prophet, and through Samuel, he's going to do some positive things for his people, Israel.

And so, in chapter 3 we're going to see the boy Samuel called by God to be a prophet. And so, we begin with verse 1, the boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. And by the way, before ministering before the Lord or with the Lord, he in contrast to Eli's sons who were doing all kinds of horrible things in the presence of the Lord, as it were, Samuel is ministering to the Lord under Eli.

And in those days, though, the word of the Lord was rare. There were not many visions. In this time and place, the Lord would sometimes reveal himself to his prophets through visions.

They would get a prophetic word, sometimes even pictures, word pictures, and that was rare at this point in time. The Lord was not doing this very often. He was not revealing himself to his people.

And so, in this chapter, we're going to see that change. The Lord is choosing Samuel, and Samuel will now be his prophetic instrument. And so this negative situation we see in verse 1, which is not surprising given what is going on at the sanctuary with Eli and his sons, is going to change.

And here's how. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out,

so there was a lamp in the tabernacle that is supposed to be kept on during the night until morning, and it was burning.

And Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the Ark of God was. Now that doesn't mean that he was in there with the Ark, obviously, but he was nearby. He was nearby.

And then the Lord called Samuel. Sometimes when we're reading the Old Testament narrative, the setting can be very important. It's always important dramatically and literarily because it helps us visualize the scene, just like the props on a stage in a play are important.

But sometimes the setting is very, very significant. It has symbolic significance, maybe even theological significance. Now you've got to be careful with this.

You don't want to see symbolism in every rock and tree that's mentioned in the setting because that gets into allegory. So, you really have to validate this carefully from the context. An example I like to use is in 2 Kings 1, where the king is ill and he sends messengers down to Philistine territory to find out if he's going to die.

He wants to inquire about a Philistine god who was associated with healing. Well, the prophet Elijah hears about this and he goes down and he intercepts the messengers and he says, why are you going? Why is the king sending you to a pagan god? You go back and tell the king he's going to die. Well, they go back and the king says, tell me what this fellow looked like.

And they describe him and he says, I know him. You go get him. Bring him here.

And so, you immediately see there's this conflict between king and prophet, and we're going to see that in the books of Samuel as we go forward, especially with Saul. And so, the conflict between king and prophet. And so, the king sends a, actually sends a general out, an officer in his army with 50 individuals, and that officer goes and as he arrives on the scene, Elijah is sitting on a hill.

He's not down in a valley, he's up on a hill. And the officer says, you, come down here. The king wants to talk to you.

And Elijah says, I'm not coming down, but I'll tell you what is. Fire. He calls fire down upon the officer and his 50 men and they're incinerated.

Well, the king sends another officer out with 50 men and this officer is even more insulting. He says, the king says, you come down and you come down now. I'm paraphrasing a little bit, but you can find it there in 2 Kings 1. And once again, Elijah says, I'm not coming down, but I'm going to call fire down upon you.

He calls the fire down and that officer and his men are incinerated. Well, we got a third panel in the story. I call these panels.

When you have a story that's got repeated elements and then comes to a climax in the final panel, a lot of them are three-paneled stories in the Bible, like the story of the Good Samaritan. You have the two Jewish guys who pass by and then the Samaritan comes along. In this three-paneled story, the third officer comes on hands and knees.

I mean, he is begging for his life. He is finally showing the prophet of God the proper respect and he's finally showing God the proper respect. And so, the Lord tells Elijah to go down with him and back to the king and Elijah delivers his message.

So it's king versus prophet and the prophet has authority over the king and the king needs to learn that. And the fact that Elijah is sitting up on the hill, I don't think is coincidental. He's up there, the officer's down here.

His position of prominence mirrors his prominence as a prophet. The king and his men are down here. Elijah's up here because he represents God.

There's a case where I think the setting is very, very important. Like when Jesus goes across the Lake of Galilee and arrives in the tombs death is all around and uncleanness and he casts out these demons, legion, from this man. And then they go into the pigs.

Ah, pigs! Wouldn't you know? Pigs would be there. Unclean animals. And the spirits go into the pigs and then they rush into the sea.

And the sea in the Bible, of course, symbolizes evil and so they head for home. They go back to the sea where they belong. And so, setting can be very important and I think it is here.

It's at night and Eli's eyes are becoming weak and he's lying down in his usual place. And I think Eli represents the old Israel that is passing away, that is going to experience God's judgment in chapter 4. Eli is a flawed leader and he represents a flawed nation that God is going to transform. And the lamp of God near where Samuel is sleeping, there's a light.

So even though it's night and it's dark, there's a light shining. And I think that symbolizes Samuel and the Lord's intentions to restore his people to a proper relationship with him through Samuel. But things are going to get worse before they get better.

As we see in chapter 4, they're going to lose the ark, the symbol of God's presence. But then in chapter 7, Samuel is going to lead them back to the Lord and they're going to repent and win a great victory over the Philistines after losing a battle to them in chapter 4. But that's getting ahead of the game. The Lord called Samuel and Samuel answered, here I am.

And those words are interesting because some pretty famous people in Old Testament history have responded to the Lord's call. Samuel doesn't know it's the Lord's calling yet, but Abraham said, hinne, here I am, in Hebrew. Moses said this, and Joshua and others have responded this way.

So, Samuel is in a good place here. He's in a long line of people who have responded to the Lord when they called him. But he's just young, as we're going to find out, and he's not really sure what's going on here.

Eli's going to have to help him out, although even Eli, it's going to take him a little while to figure out what's going on. And that's not unexpected, given the characterization of Eli. And he ran to Eli and he said, here I am, you called me.

So, Samuel thinks Eli called, but he's characterized as one who responds immediately and properly to his master. And in this case, Eli is his master. So, he's depicted as an obedient servant.

But Eli said I did not call, go back and lie down. So, he went and lay down. And this is a paneled story, by the way.

We mentioned paneled stories with the king's example this is a paneled story. It's going to have four panels. We're familiar with this more from jokes.

You know, there was a rabbi and a priest and a minister and they went to a party, you know, and then they, you know, whatever. I can't think of a specific one right now, but you know how these work. Children's stories.

Three little pigs. The three billy goats grew up. We're familiar with paneled stories from jokes and children's stories.

But that doesn't mean that paneled stories are necessarily fictional or made up. It's where we're familiar with them. By the way, when these paneled stories get out of control, they call that a rigmarole, like the gingerbread man.

By panel 19, you're ready for the gingerbread man to be eaten and out of the way. And that happens. But sometimes in real life, there's repetition like this.

It's just the nature of things. And the biblical narrator, who is not just a theologian, is a storyteller. He's telling the story.

He's trying to make it interesting. And so, he reflects on the repetition that was really there. And so that's what's going on here.

We have this first panel. Samuel gets the call, goes to Eli, and Eli says, I didn't call you. Verse 6, again the Lord called.

Samuel. And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, here I am, you called me. My son, Eli said, I did not call.

Go back and lie down. You're going to see some slight differences if you compare the panels, but they're relatively insignificant. And you may be wondering, well, is this story trying to portray Samuel as one who is insensitive to the Lord? The Lord calls him.

He says, here I am, and then he goes to Eli. No. Verse 7 is there to help us out a little bit.

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. He had not had an experience. And it's not using know the Lord in the sense that it was used earlier with Eli's sons.

He has not had a personal encounter with the Lord. He's not had an experience with the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

So, he was not yet a prophet. He had not had this kind of visionary experience with the Lord, and he'd not yet moved into his prophetic office. He was just a youngster at this time.

So, the Lord called Samuel a third time. And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, here I am, you called me. Then Eli realized.

It takes Eli a little while here because remember, the word of the Lord was rare. This wasn't a common experience for Eli either. So, Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boys.

So, Eli told Samuel, to go and lie down. And if he calls you, say, speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. So, Samuel went and lay down in his place.

That's the third panel. Now in the fourth panel, we're going to have some significant changes. And the Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, Samuel, Samuel.

And then Samuel said, speak, for your servant is listening. I think it's also very interesting here that there seems to be a shift in authority for Samuel. Heretofore, he's been under the authority of Eli, and that's why he immediately goes to Eli when he hears this voice when he hears his name.

But from this point on, Eli's not going to really be the authority in Samuel's life. It's going to be the Lord. The Lord is calling him to be a prophet.

And so, the Lord is his master from this point on. And the Lord said to Samuel, see, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time, I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family from beginning to end.

So, notice what the Lord is doing. He's revealing the same truth through to and then through Samuel that he had revealed through the man of God. So, Samuel is on a par with that man of God who spoke in chapter 2. For I told him, back in chapter 2, that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about.

His sons, the NIV at this point says, made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. I don't think that's the best reading. There are other textual witnesses that have a different reading here, and in fact, if we go, I'm reading from NIV 1984, if we go to NIV 11, let's see what it says there.

It says that his sons blasphemed God, and the ESV says pretty much the same thing. And so what we have here is a textual, text critical issue, where we have two different readings that are represented in the history of textual transmission, and so you have to decide which one is the more likely. I think that NIV 84 is probably wrong.

His sons made themselves contemptible, and the reason I say that is the particular Hebrew construction that is used here would be unique. And so I think what happened is, oddly enough, they cursed for themselves is what the text says. We're very similar to the name for God, Elohim.

It's got some of the same letters, so it's possible there was some confusion here, but some commentators and I tend to agree with them, they just couldn't bring themselves to keep cursing God in the text. It seemed profane, and so what they did, they altered it. You may think they did that.

Yeah, they did that sometimes. But thanks to some other textual witnesses that we have that retain the original reading, I think that what they did, it was even stronger. They cursed God.

Now normally, cursing is something verbal that you do. There's no indication in the story that they actually pronounced a curse against God, but there's a sense in which they, for all intents and purposes, cursed God by their actions, and their behavior. It was as if they were treating God as contemptible and cursing him, and you just don't do that and get away with it.

And therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, that the guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering. And that is very, very appropriate here because if you go back to chapter 2, verse 29, which we read in our prior lesson, remember what was said. Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel? You steal the meat.

You take way more than you should have. And so, they were scorned in God's sacrifice and offering. So, as we said, sometimes the punishment fits the crime.

So how appropriate then that the sin of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering. You insisted on scorning my sacrifice and offering, it won't be available to you. If you ever try to seek reconciliation with God, you won't be able to do that, because I won't accept sacrifices and offerings from you, the family that scorned them.

So, Samuel laid down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision. So that's understandable.

His first message that he has to deliver as a prophet is a message of judgment. But Eli called him and said, Samuel, my son. And Samuel answered, Here I am, ever the obedient servant.

What was it he said to you? Eli asked. Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.

He basically pronounces a curse over Samuel. May you experience divine judgment if you don't tell me what God told you. So, Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him.

Then Eli said, He is the Lord. Let him do what is good in his eyes. So, Eli doesn't attempt to change the Lord's mind.

In fact, he had said to his sons, If a man sins against a man, God may serve as mediator. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will mediate? And I think Eli realizes, I can't. I can't intercede for myself, and there's no one else I can appeal to.

And so, it's the Lord's decision. We're just going to have to live with it. He realizes it's too late.

It's very, very tragic. Here's this old man who has served the Lord, can barely see, and he realizes that the Lord has given him and his family over. And the Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground.

Because remember, Deuteronomy had certain rules about prophecies. Now I think they did have room for, in their thinking, a contingent prophecy that where the Lord might relent. But when Samuel made a pronouncement that was marked as unconditional, those words did not fall to the ground.

Those kinds of prophecies were fulfilled. And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, remember Dan way up in the north. Originally Dan was down south, but then those Danites migrated to the north, and so Dan is sometimes used for the northernmost part of Israel, all the way down to Beersheba in the far south.

The whole land from north to south recognized that Samuel was attested, or maybe confirmed, validated as a prophet of the Lord. So, the Lord is with him. None of his words are falling to the ground.

His prophecies are being fulfilled, and all Israel is recognizing that he is confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. So, see how the situation has changed from the beginning of the chapter.

In those days the word of the Lord was rare. There were very few visions. By the end of the chapter, the Lord has chosen Samuel, who is going to be a significant leader for the new, restored Israel.

And the Lord is continuing to appear to him there, and revealing his word through him. So, Israel has a prophet again. The Lord is revealing himself to his people.

This is a positive thing. But as I said before, things are going to get worse before they get better. Chapter 4, verse 1, Samuel's word came to all Israel.

And then there's going to be a significant shift in focus, and that will bring us to chapter 4. And I have entitled this chapter, Defeat, Death, and Departure. Israel is going to experience a defeat. Eli and his sons are going to die, and the ark is going to depart.

It's going to be taken away by the Philistines. So, I think the main theme of chapter 4, which is kind of a companion with chapter 3, if we're following this contrast between Samuel and Eli and his sons, the Lord's decree of judgment, given back in chapter 2

and then repeated through Samuel, is certain of fulfillment, bringing tragedy in its path. We talked earlier about contingent prophecies in the prior lesson, contingent prophecies that were implicitly conditional.

Not in this case. The prophecy that was pronounced against Eli and his sons and then repeated and reiterated through Samuel, was a decree of judgment. It was an irrevocable pronouncement of judgment, and it's going to be fulfilled.

We're going to see the beginning of the fulfillment in this chapter, that sign that was mentioned earlier, and this is just a chapter that's filled with a great deal of tragedy. So now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, Ebenezer means Stone of Help, and the Philistines at Aphek.

The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about 4,000 of them on the battlefield. So, the Israelites experience a great defeat here. So, when the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? The answer to that, by the way, would seem to be obvious, because of what's going on down at Shiloh with Eli and his sons, but that's not the way they're thinking.

They're not thinking in terms of, well, maybe we sinned, maybe our relationship with the Lord is strained, maybe we're alienated from him, maybe that's why we didn't win the victory. No, they're not thinking that way. Let us bring the Ark of the Lord's Covenant from Shiloh so that it may go with us and save us from the hands of our enemies.

So, they decide, we're going to haul the Ark out here. Maybe in their memory, they're remembering what happened at Jericho when the people marched the Ark around the city and experienced a great miraculous victory. Maybe they recall one battle in Numbers where they lost and the Ark was absent.

Maybe they think that the Ark is some kind of good luck charm. They're almost treating it like an idol. And so, they're thinking, well, we're going to take the Ark out into battle with us because the Ark represents the presence of the Lord.

But maybe they were thinking about it a little bit differently. Maybe they were beginning to think of it as the Lord. It is almost like an idol.

And if the Lord is with us in this tangible kind of way, if we take God, if we cart God into the battle with us, how can we lose? That's their way of thinking. So, the people sent men to Shiloh, verse 4, and they brought back the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. So, when the Lord made himself known in the most holy place above the Ark, he's enthroned there.

He's the king. So, we're going to take King Yahweh into battle with us. But then this is real important.

Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. This is not good in light of what we've seen already. The Israelites may think that the Ark guarantees victory, but we know better.

Because standing right there with the Ark are Hophni and Phinehas, and they've been targeted by the Lord. The Lord has decided they are going to die, and he told Eli they're going to die in one day. They're going to die together.

And so, the fact that they are there with the Ark does not bode well. I do not expect this story to end well, to have a happy ending. When the Ark of the Lord's Covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook.

So, get the picture. They see the Ark come into the camp, they yell so loud that the ground is shaking. Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, what's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp? Foreigners will sometimes refer to Israelites as Hebrews, by the way.

When they learned that the Ark of the Lord had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid. A god has come into the camp, they said. Notice how they're thinking about the Ark? They're not making a distinction between the Ark as a symbol of God's presence.

It's as if the Ark is the god. It's a very pagan way of thinking, and I believe it's the way the Israelites are thinking. A god has come into the camp, they said.

We're in trouble. Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! 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 desert.

Be strong, Philistines. Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men and fight.

Hey, you've got to give them an A for courage here, because they do believe that they are at a disadvantage here, fighting against this God. But they man up, and they're ready to go into battle. You notice in the verse here, they said initially, a god had come into the camp, and then they mentioned the hand of these mighty gods.

They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues. They start talking about plural deities. Is that a contradiction in the text? Not really, because if you go to the Ancient Near East, you'll see that sometimes in battle accounts, there is

a primary God who will be leading the battle for his people, but that doesn't mean he's the only God.

There will be other gods that participate in many cases, and so I've collected some examples of this just to kind of illustrate in the Epic of Gilgamesh, where it's the Babylonian flood story. Adad is the primary judge. Adad is the god of the storm.

He's kind of the Baal equivalent. He comes as the primary judge, but he's accompanied by other divine figures. When Adad comes in judgment, there are other deities that accompany him.

The pharaoh Ramses II fought the Hittites at a pretty famous battle at Kadesh, and he attributes his success to the god Amun. The god Amun was the one who enabled him to defeat the Hittites. By the way, it was at best a draw, but in the propaganda of the Ancient Near East, they talk about victory in the battle.

But he also praises the goddess Sakhmet for her role in the victory. Fire came out from her crown and incinerated his enemies. So, there's two gods who are actually fighting, even though Amun is the major one.

In the Assyrian annals, kings would sometimes praise more than one deity for help in battle. A king by the name of Tukulti Ninurta I, boasted that Ashur and Enlil sent fire and flaming arrows against his enemies, but there are other gods that are fighting as well. Anu, Sin, Adad, Shamash, Ninurta, Ishtar, they're all involved in the battle. So, you can have one primary deity, but there are other gods who are involved as well.

Assyrian kings speak of and picture Ashur aiding them in battle. There's one relief that shows Ashur as a kind of winged figure above the army. But Sargon II and Ashurbanipal, two Assyrian kings, both said that Adad fought for them as well.

Even in the Bible, in Judges 5, the Lord comes in the storm to defeat the Canaanites in Judges 5, but it also says that the stars fought for Israel, and in their prescientific thinking, the stars would be associated with the Lord's heavenly assembly, entities that we would perhaps refer to as angels, so the Lord's angelic army, as it were. So, what we see with the Philistines is right at home in the ancient Near Eastern world. A god has come into the camp.

They brought this one god in here in the form of this ark, but there are other gods in their thinking. There are other gods who are involved in all of this, and so we're in big trouble because this god won't be fighting alone. He'll have allies from the divine realm.

So, the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated, and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great, and by the way, there's an echo. Lots of times in

the Hebrew narrative, you'll have these echoes, a word or a phrase that has shown up earlier that is kind of repeated, and the tendency is to just kind of overlook it, but ask yourself here, okay, earlier, what was referred to as very great in Hebrew? What was very great? It was the sin of Eli's sons, and now, because of that, and they're mentioned right here in the context, so I don't think I'm straining it too much, there's an echo.

The slaughter of Israel is, the same thing, very great, and Israel lost 30,000-foot soldiers, and the ark of God was captured, and if you're wondering how could the Lord allow his ark to be captured, how could this happen? Notice, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died. That's the narrator's way of telling you why this happened. This tragedy took place because the Lord, his agenda was to take out Eli's sons.

He told Eli, this will be the sign. They will die on the same day. The Lord is determined to take them off the playing field, and if that means the ark is going to be captured, so be it, because we know, as loyal followers of the Lord who are not idolaters, that yes, the Lord, his presence is represented by the ark, but the ark is not a god, and so even though the Philistines take the ark, that has no impact on God.

They can't control him, and we're going to discover that in chapters 5 and 6, as the so-called ark narrative unfolds. This is the beginning of it, where the ark is taken captive by the Philistines, but by the end of the ark narrative, the Philistines are doing what? They're sending it back. They don't want it.

They're sending it back to Israelite territory, so just because you have control of the ark doesn't mean you control God. That's a pagan way of thinking, that you can manipulate God and control him. You can't do that.

That same day, a Benjamite ran from the battle line, so he's a messenger, and he went to Shiloh, his clothes torn and dust on his head. Now, these are outward indications that we lost. The minute they saw his clothes torn and dust on his head, anybody who saw him, they wouldn't need to hear the message.

They would say, we lost. He's in mourning. These are mourning gestures.

When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair. That's what he was doing when we first saw him. He's passive.

He's sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God. So, we see a little bit into Eli. I think he wanted to be a faithful servant of the Lord.

He's concerned about the ark that symbolizes God's presence, but unfortunately, the actions of his own family are what caused this, so it's kind of tragic. He didn't reprimand his sons early enough. When the man entered the town, the translation says, and told.

The Hebrew text actually says he entered the town in order to tell. The people don't need to hear what they immediately know. So, when the man entered the town in order to tell what had happened, the whole town set up a cry because they saw him with dust on his head and his torn clothes.

So, they knew the story before they even heard one word from him. Eli heard the outcry and asked, what is the meaning of this uproar? Once again, he just doesn't, he's not quite tuned in to what is going on in his context. I would think that the uproar, if it was mourning, oh no, I mean you can tell the difference between celebration and mourning, one would think.

But he says, what is the meaning of this uproar? Maybe he just, doesn't want to, he kind of senses it's not good, but he just can't bring himself to there yet. The man hurried over to Eli, who was 98 years old and whose eyes were set so that he could not see. He can't see the dust in the torn clothes.

All he can ascertain is what he hears. He told Eli, I've just come from the battle line. I fled from it this very day.

Eli asked, what happened, my son? And the man who brought the news replied, Israel fled before the Philistines and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also, your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead. So, the sign has been fulfilled.

Remember, the man of God said, this will be the sign that the Lord's words are going to be realized. Hophni and Phinehas are going to die in the same day that's happened. And the ark of God has been captured.

And notice Eli's response. When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. It was just a shock to him and he got off balance.

And his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel 40 years. So, it's his concern for the ark.

And you might initially think, that's a good thing. He's so concerned about, he's more concerned about the ark of God than he is about his sons. And you could view that as a good thing, but if you think about it, isn't that the problem? He thought he could serve God while his sons were getting away with murder, as it were.

He should have been concerned about his sons and kept them from doing what they were doing. And if they refused, just fired them. But he didn't do that.

And so, yeah, he's concerned about the ark of God, but he wasn't concerned about his own sons and what they were, how they were violating the sanctuary. Did he really care that much about God if he let his sons get away with all of this? Very tragic, very sad. There's kind of an epilogue that we see here.

His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas, one of his sons, was pregnant. So, we discover that these sons who were cavorting with women in the tabernacle, one of them at least, was married. Probably the other one as well.

The wife of Phineas was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor. It's too much for her, she just has to deliver, and gave birth, but was overcome by her labor pains.

As she was dying, the women attending her said, don't despair, you've given birth to a son. That's a good thing, but she did not respond or pay attention to that, I think is the idea. I think she heard them, but she didn't respond or pay attention in any kind of positive way, and she gave the boy a name.

She named the boy, Ichabod in Hebrew, Ichabod, or Ichabod. We know that name from Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod Crane. This is where it originates.

She named the boy Ichabod, or qabod, which probably means no glory or where is the glory, with the implication where is the glory gone? Saying the glory has departed from Israel. See that part of the name Ichabod, that's the word for glory in Hebrew.

The E is a prefix to it. So, the glory has departed from Israel. So, she gives her son a name that is a reminder that the glory of the Lord, represented by the ark, his presence among his people, is gone because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband.

She said the glory has departed from Israel for the ark of God has been captured. She associates the glory with the ark. There's a sense in which her father-in-law and her husband were also associated with it because they were the caretakers of the ark.

So, it's very, very sad, but let's think back here. There's a correlation between this passage and the very first passage that we looked at in First Samuel in the first lesson. Once again, we have the birth of a child and a mother speaking.

So, let's go back. Hannah prayed for a son. She wanted to be delivered from oppression.

The Lord gave her that son and she burst out in celebration. We have her song in First Samuel chapter 2 where she's celebrating what the Lord has done for her and she anticipates what he will do for Israel. So, a very positive kind of thing.

But here in this particular case, over on Eli and his son's side, and there's been this contrast all the way through, we have another mother giving birth to a child and she dies giving birth to him. And this child is not going to be a reminder that the mother asked the Lord for a child as Hannah did. No, this child's going to be a reminder of a very great tragedy that the glory of the Lord has departed from Israel as the ark has been taken.

And so, this particular story is all about death, whereas Hannah's story was all about new life and restoration. So, it seems as if Israel has hit rock bottom here and we're wondering, okay, what's going to happen at this point if you're reading the story for the first time? We're going to read in the next few chapters about how the ark goes down to Philistine territory, but the Philistines have not defeated Yahweh. They may have defeated the armies of Israel.

The leadership in Israel may have died, but the Lord has not been defeated and he's going to demonstrate his power in Philistine territory in chapter 5, so much so that the Philistines decide we want to have nothing to do with this, and so they send the ark off and back to its home territory. Samuel is going to kind of disappear from the story through these chapters. He's not going to be around, but then all of a sudden he's going to burst on the scene again in chapter 7, and what we're going to see in chapter 7, Israel's way down here.

They've lost the ark. The ark comes back and we're going to see them turn back to God in chapter 7. Samuel is going to lead that. So that's what lies ahead in the next lessons.

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 3, 1 Samuel 3, the Lord Chooses a Prophet, and 1 Samuel 4, Defeat, Death, and Departure.