

1Samuel 4:1–11

God Regards His Own Glory and Avenges Himself upon False Worship and Religion

**Wednesday, November 2, 2022 ▫ Read 1Samuel 4:1–11**

*Questions from the Scripture text: What did Israel go out to do (v1)? Where did each army encamp? What happened in the battle (v2)? What did the people ask (v3a)? What did they think would change the outcome, and what did they think would save them (v3b)? Who dwelt between the cherubim (v4)? Who else were right there, when they were retrieving it? How did Israel respond when the ark arrived (v5)? What did the Philistines ask in v6? What did they understand? What did they call the ark in v7? Where did they assume that God was not, before? What did the Philistines think of this new development at first (v7–8)? But how did they determine to respond (v9)? How did the outcome of this battle compare to the outcome of the earlier one (v10, cf. v2)? What was captured (v11a)? Who died (v11b)?*

**Who wins in battles between men?** 1Samuel 4:1–11 looks forward to the first reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **battles between men are always won by God in the manner that serves His own glory.**

**God acts for the honor of His own glory.** We do a dreadful thing, when we take God lightly or treat Him as an easily manipulated genie in a bottle. Israel, asks an important question in v3, "Why has Yahweh struck us down"?

The answer (or at least a significant part of it) is buried way down in v11: "and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died." Their death is a sign that we have been expecting for the desecration of God's worship ever since 2:34, and especially after 3:12, 3:19, 4:1a. So, if we have been paying attention, the answer is, "Out of respect for His own honor in His own worship!"

That God cares so much about right worship may be startling to us, if we live in a day of worship chaos, where "everyone does what is right in his own eyes, and there is no king in Israel." If that's true of our worship situation in the churches, then we can see the parallel with Samuel's situation, coming out of the period of the Judges.

Yet, we have seen that this is the answer to the "why" the army of God's people was defeated and slaughtered: "Out of respect for His own honor in His own worship!"

**Worshiping according to our will belongs to a superstitious approach to God.** Israel was treating Yahweh as a deity that could be easily manipulated. His worship was being desecrated, but this was not their answer to why they lost. Instead, they concluded that they had forgotten the magical furniture (v3–4). It was as if the ark had God's power infused in it in such a way that God would have to give them what they wanted. It turns out, from v7, that this was also the Philistine view of how deities work.

The Lord punishes Israel's superstitious, manipulative approach to Him with a defeat more than seven times as bad as before (cp. v4 with v10). He takes from them that symbol of His presence that they had treated as more important than Him Himself (v11a). And He crowns the defeat with the fulfillment of His judgment (v11b).

**We must recognize and refuse those compromises by which we provoke God in His worship.** The question for us, then, is where we might be doing such things.

Are we bowing to God's complete authority over His worship, or do we seek to modify worship to be more pleasing to ourselves or others?

In those things that God has given us as means by which He works, are we trusting in Him and interacting with Him, or are we trusting the means and using them in a way that is not mindful of Him?

If Scripture teaches us that God acts in such a way as to vindicate His glory and honor over against the church's cavalier approach to the means of grace, then let us bow and worship and repent and confess that He is righteous and just and holy to bring upon us whatever judgments that He determines.

What are some manmade additions to God's worship that are widely tolerated and approved in the churches? What are some judgments in which the church has been defeated by the world around it? What does this passage teach us might be the connection between those things?

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for doing in Your worship that which pleases us instead of that which You have prescribed. Truly, You are righteous in the devastating defeats that Your church has been losing to the world around it, just as You were righteous in the slaughter of Israel, the loss of the ark, and the deaths of Eli's sons. Grant repentance to Your church and the purification of her worship we ask, in Christ's Name, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH130A "Lord, from the Depths, to Thee I Cry"**

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First Samuel 4 versus 1 through 11. These are God's words.

And the Word of Samuel came toll Israel. Now, Israel went out to battle against the Philistines and encamped beside Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped in AFIC than the Philistines, put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines who killed about 4,000 men of the army in the field And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said.

Why has Yahweh defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the arc of the Covenant of Yahweh from Shiloh to us that when it comes among us, it may save us from the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh that they might bring from there, the arc of the Covenant of Yahweh of hosts who dwells between the cherubim and the two sons of Eli Hoffney.

And Phineas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God, And when the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh came into the camp, all Israel shouted. So loudly that the earth shook. Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, what does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?

Then they understood that the Ark of Yahweh had come into the camp. So the Philistines were afraid for they said, God has come into the camp and they said, whoa

to us for such a thing has never happened before. Woe to us who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods.

These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues and the wilderness. Be strong and conduct yourselves like men. You've listened that you do not become servants of the Hebrews as they have been to you conduct yourselves like men and fight. So, the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated and every man.

Fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter and their fell of Israel 30,000 foot soldiers. Also, the Ark of God was captured and the two sons of Eli Hoffman and Phineas died. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

Verse 3, Israel asks the right question. They at least have doctrine of God's sovereign providence. They don't think that the Philistines have defeated them. There are theology as it was better than that of the Philistines. The Philistines think God is mighty. But if God is mighty in your fighting against him, then maybe if you fight even harder, you can stop yourself from becoming a slave to the Hebrews.

So they have we would think a lower view of God at least Israel. Understands that it's really always defeated them. They have part of the good theology of Job for whom, it doesn't actually matter. If Satan is involved, doesn't know, but he does know that Satan and everyone and everything else is under the sovereign control of God.

The Lord is the one whose operating in his life. That's what troubled Job so much because he didn't get it and God's great answer. At the end of the book was you don't need to get it. Did you get how I created everything? No, you weren't there. Do you get how I operate everything all over the world?

No, you aren't there and you wouldn't get it if you were. So that was the big problem for Job, even with his great, big view of God. It wasn't big enough. And that's always our problem. Our part of our problem, our view of God is never so big as it should be.

It's one of the great helps of worshiping him day by day of in secret, and in the family, and worshiping in week by week, in the assembly, He keeps pressing home to us, instructing us more and the greatness. And glory of our God, our Creator, our Redeemer and our king.

But they ask the right question. Why has Yahweh defeated us today? Before the Flintstones. And we can see in verse 4 and verse 11, the answer if we will remember. And I know this is a one-off. And so I'll come back and I'll read the verses that lead up to it.

But within our text and the two sons of Eli Hoffman and Phineas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. And then in verse 11 also, the ark of God was captured and the two sons of Eli Hoffman and Phineas died. Now, this is something that we have been expecting since chapter two, and verse 34.

In fact, we should probably come back to verse 30. The Yahweh is talking. He's delivering a message by Samuel to Eli, who is the high priest and it's very similar to a message that a former high priest has received. Therefore you all wait. God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever, but now you always says, far be it for me for those who, honor me.

I will honor and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. You remember when Nadab and Abihu offered the strange fire and Leviticus chapter 10, the message to Aaron the High Priest. At that time about his two sons was by those who come near me. I shall be hallowed.

I shall be treated as holy God. Has divine regard for his own worship that nothing in it would be done differently than he has commanded. Let alone won't Hofni and Phineas have been doing, not only have they been doing it differently but they've been doing it differently in order to get for themselves the best parts of the meat and even committing immorality.

With the women of Israel who are under their power over whom they have great influence as the two sons of the high priest. And so it's God's regard for his own worship in chapter 2 verse 34. Just a couple verses later. He says, now this shall be a sign to you, that will come upon your two sons on Hoffman and Phineas in one day they shall die.

Both of them, Then I will raise up for myself. A faithful priest who shall do. According to what is in my heart. And my mind, I will build him a house, and he shall walk before. My anointed forever is very commonly recognized in first Samuel that you have Saul, the king failure, and then God will provide a king after his own heart.

And most people who read it, think it's David. And yes, David is after God's heart to some extent but you can't finish the David material and still think it's David. We know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ just like the forever king in second. Samuel 7 has to be Jesus Christ.

Well, here we have a forever priest, the faithful priest that has to be raised up that. Hebrews tells us about that doesn't have his own sins, which need atoning for. But does all things righteously imperfectly, and the glory, as we find out as a revelation of God continues to unfold, is that he himself is the one for all sacrifice that he offers as our priest and the sacrifice on the basis of which he consecrates his mediation.

And the worship that we offer through him, the prayers that we offer through him forever and ever. And so, one of the reasons that Jesus comes is one of the many reasons Jesus comes is, because God has this regard for his own worship. That it only ever be done.

The way that God has said, God has a regard for his own worship. And next chapter chapter 3 verse 12, you know, we're already, you know, just 20 verses away from our text in what? We just read. We're coming very close now. Verse 12. In that day, I will perform against Eli all that.

I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end. And then verse 19 says, Samuel grew, and Yahweh was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. Well, Samuel was a great prophet, and prophesied many things. And this is true of all the future things that Samuel will say.

But in the context chapter 3 in verse 19 is especially talking about Samuel's prophetic Review to Eli of what will come upon Hoffman and Phineas. And so when just four verses later from verse or five verses later from the end of verse 19, you have and when the people had come to the camp, the elders of Israel said.

Why has Yahweh defeated us today. Before the Philistines, the answer is to fulfill the words of Samuel and they answer, is because he regards his own worship. That's the answer. The people needed the favor of God through a promised priest, through a promised King through a promised sacrifice. This anointed one that the forever priest would be before and of course Jesus is both the priest and the king but they need God's favor.

Sadly, their view of God isn't that much higher than the Philistines, after all, because they think God can be moved around using the box. They think he can be manipulated using his furniture instead of confessing their sin. And through his promises and through the sacrifices that he has provided obtaining his favor.

What they needed was the blood and righteousness of Jesus. What they decided to use. Instead was a box with cherubim on top of it because the Lord had made his

favor in Christ to be known especially above the ark. You remember the testimony in the ark showing us that Jesus is our Ark of safety, and that he is our prophet.

And that from him is the only way, safe, way to receive God's favor and the lid upon the ark. The mercy seat, which the New Testament actually calls Christ. Our mercy seat, our propitiation, Jesus is our priest, and then of course the Lord does sit and throned upon the cherubim Jesus as our King, but they needed to come to God through Christ.

They did not whereas they thought they could tap into the power of God using his furniture. And so it's a very pagan very superstitious way to approach God. But that's always the case when we worship God. The way that we think God has given us the way to worship and that way comes through Jesus Christ, that way has the seal of God's approval for which we can have the confidence that his spirit will help us.

But what if we invent our own way of worshiping Does that actually come through? Jesus Christ. I mean saying it comes through Jesus Christ. Doesn't make it. So using furniture or actions that remind you of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ doesn't make it. So, You can say you have set apart today as a day of remembrance for the death or the resurrection, or the birth of Jesus Really did Jesus set apart that day, You may be coming through the name of Christ or claiming to remember actions of Christ, but if you don't come the way, God has said, you come without Christ, you come without the confidence of the seal of approval of God, and the help of the Holy Spirit.

You are manipulating God by your own ideas instead of coming to him. The way that he is provided it's the same thing. Isn't it as thinking, you need God's furniture, or what you need is his favor in the Lord. Jesus Christ. It's a superstitious approach to God and so you see what happens.

How many people died? The first time when they weren't superstitiously, manipulating God using the ark 4,000. How many people die when they bring the ark 30,000 and the ark is lost? God signifies the departure of his favorable presence from Israel. He can and will fight his own battles. We're not moving straight through first Samuel right now.

So we don't get to find out what happens to the fullistons and when the ark goes there, But we must remember that God is always acting for his own glory. This is our great hope. Great confidence. Great joy. Because what has God decided to do for his glory? What was his plan from before he made anything for how he would glorify himself?

It was, by making us making us free. We would sin in our first Father and fallen Him, but it was because he planned for that to happen so that he would redeem us. And the last Adam, who would be himself in the person of his son working, all things according to the Council of His will, which will the will in which he predestined us to inherit with Jesus, That which is Jesus's rightful inheritance, which is, of course, God himself to know God and to be known by God to love God.

More than that to be loved by God to enjoy God. And even more than that, to be the object of God's delight. As he considers us in his Son and dwells us by his Spirit, and labels us as His own children as our Father, this is what God has decided to do for his own glory.

And so we should always want to know from Scripture. How does God want us to glorify Him? Because as he acts for his own glory, even when he disciplines his church acting for his own glory, It's part of the display of who he is. And it's part of the plan that he has had for that glory from before time began outside of all creation to glorify himself by redeeming people in Christ.

So let us when we come and we worship here regard to God, as holy regarding God, as holy is more than choosing the right actions for worship, isn't it? It's setting our minds upon him thinking about what we're singing joining our hearts in Scriptural prayer. Listening to his word with a ready.

Heart to be warmed with praise and love to him and grieved over our sin and all the right responses that we should have and ready wills to hear what he says we should do. Either something new that we didn't understand before and be eager to do it or something that we already knew.

But God and His mercy because of our ongoing imperfection keeps telling us. And so we come with a ready, will to be corrected and to resolve again by the grace of our God, who will finish his work. That that we will walk with Him as he says in his word.

That too is part of honoring God, as holy when we come near him, it's not just checking off the right. Boxes of the list of things you're supposed to list of actions, you're supposed to take in worship, It's not just making sure that you don't include the things that are from men.

It is engaging the holy God genuinely and completely as your as a person knowing that he is giving himself to us and knowing that we we commands us to do by those actions is to give ourselves to Him through Christ. In His name we worship and in his name, let us know.

Pray Our Father in heaven. How we thank you for your great. Mercy that you did not destroy all of Israel. Thank you for the way you. Uphold your words and make us to know that it's reliable by fulfilling. Even those prophecies of rebuke and chastening and judgment. Thank you for making yourself present to us, not in of gold.

Covered wood box, but in the Lord, Jesus himself ministered to us by your Holy Spirit that we might have him as our forever prophet and him as our forever priest and Him as our forever. King. We pray that as we have come now and worshiped, you trusting in him and knowing him to be the one who gives this word.

That your spirit, His Spirit whom he gives would help us that he would write the truths of this passage and indeed all your holy Word upon our hearts and that he would bless to us the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of you in him and to the praise of the glory of your grace, until the day that the work is finished and this glorious perfected and the praise will be perfect forever and ever.

All of this, we ask in his name, Amen.