

The Danger of Rabbit-Foot Theology

1 Samuel 4

INTRODUCTION

For this morning, we return to our study of 1 Samuel, specifically 1 Sam 4. Something strange happens in the next few chapters of 1 Samuel. **Samuel** disappears from the story. We see him in verse one of chapter four, but he does not show up again until 7:3. So what's happening? Well, we already know that the priesthood was in rebellion against God at this time, but we find out in chapter 7 that this was a time when the people of Israel were also in rebellion. And so now the story shifts for the next several chapters from Samuel to the ark of God.

Please keep this in **mind: the ark was the visible symbol of God's presence among the Israelites. So, for the Israelites, to lose the ark was tantamount to losing God.**

I. A _____ defeat (4:1b-11)

A. _____ battle at Aphek: Israel's _____ for _____ in human wisdom rather than _____ (4:1b-2)

Here is the picture. The Israelites and the Philistines both set up their respective camps. The troops move out to meet in battle, and Israel is soundly defeated by the Philistines. Four thousand Israelites die on the battlefield. That's a crushing defeat. That night as they sat around their campfires, they did some very deep thinking. **The elders of Israel asked the right questions.** The loss was not seen in terms of military strategy, the loss was not seen in terms of weapons, the loss was not seen in terms of the size of the armies. There was no doubt about the reason for the loss. It was because God had brought the defeat upon them. So, the only question was why? Why did God bring this defeat upon them?

Whenever you depend on human wisdom rather than God's word, you are emphasizing ritual over relationship. A relationship is built on communication and trust. The book of Proverbs **says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."** (Proverbs 3:5-6) But Israel didn't do that. They relied on human wisdom rather than God's word.

B. _____ battle at Aphek: Israel's _____ for trying to _____ God through a _____ on religious objects _____ on God Himself (4:3-11)

1. The _____ of rabbit-foot theology (4:3-5)

Any time you focus on a religious object rather than God you are substituting ritual for relationship.

2. The _____ of misplaced faith (4:6-11)

II. A _____ disappointment (4:12-18)

III. A _____ despair (4:19-22)

Putting faith in buildings, religious objects or even people who we think are more holy than we are, is nothing more than superstition. To know God intimately, to know more of His presence in our lives, to know more of His power all we have to do is find out where we are disobeying and deal with that.

