

# God's Reckoning and Retribution: Remove the Idols

## (1 Samuel 4:10-11)

### Remove the Idols (1 John 5:21; 1 Samuel 4:5-7)

Keep/Guard (1 John 5:21): to watch, like an armed military sentinel guarding a base, or of truth (1 Tim. 5:21, 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). It describes the decisiveness of the command without hesitation or wavering; it describes urgency.

Idol: that which engages the attention and affection of the physical eyesight, or mind, that would obscure the use of our spiritual faculties, usefulness, and vision of faith. Idols mar the power and spiritual life which Christ would live out through us. Whatever is to us what the LORD alone should be is an idol; money, success, power, comfort, ease, possessions, career, sports, entertainment, greed, addictions, social media, and technology can all be idols. An idol can be identified as anything that involves excessive time, energy and investment that is independent of the ascribed glory of God.

The idolatry of:

Eli: He honored his sons more than the LORD (1 Sam. 2:30). He would not remove them from office. He also unlawfully took the best of meats for himself (1 Sam. 2:29).

Hophni and Phinehas: They caused their servants to make the unlawful requests and demands of the best of meats and the fat which was reserved for the LORD (2:13-17). They were also involved in lechery with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting (2:22). They also suffered the idolatry of social status and privilege (as priests).

Elders: they suffered from pride and unbelief. They never consulted Samuel when it was national knowledge that Samuel's words never fell to the ground (3:20, 4:1). The elders do not want to know why the LORD has brought defeat (4:1-2).

Soldiers: Idolatry of tradition (4:5).

### The Reckoning (v.10-11)

The verbal tense in verse 10 indicates that it is not the Philistines that defeated Israel; instead, it was the LORD. In our narrative, and in all of history, any attempt to control the LORD merely makes His control even clearer.

The two losses with the Philistines were not the result of a failed military strategy; instead, it was a theological crisis. The loss was due to divine chastening because of moral and ethical failures in Shiloh. Since the LORD was absent from their hearts, God was absent from their midst.

When the ark departed from Shiloh, that was a physical act of a spiritual reality.

After the ark left Shiloh:

Never again was Shiloh mentioned as the religious center in Israel

The ark was never returned to Shiloh after it was reacquired by Israel (7:1-2)

Samuel moved the center of his activities back to his hometown of Ramah (7:17)

References to the Books of Psalms (78:60) and Jeremiah (7:12-14; 26:6, 9) explicitly mention the destruction of Shiloh

The sanctuary, as well as the city, was violently ransacked during this time period

Local excavations confirm that Shiloh was destroyed by fire around the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century BC

The ark was the vehicle that brought Hophni and Phinehas out of Shiloh. God used the loss of the first battle to expose the idolatry of the elders and soldiers who looked to the ark as a god. God had decreed in the Mosaic Law that the Levites were responsible for the transportation of the ark (Deut. 31:9). "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33).

This is the lowest point of the nation of Israel since the ark was constructed. Not much has changed since the time of Judges (Judges 2:12, 17, 19; 3:6; 6:10; 10:6, 13-14; 18:14-24). Both the Philistines and the Israelites think that a god is in their midst.

### The Regret and Ranking of Unbelievers (Luke 13:28)

Regret:

Suppress the Truth: there will some who be eternally sorrowful over their own suppression of the grace of God and promptings of the Holy Spirit. They refuse the offer of forgiveness in Christ alone.

Deceived: there will be many who were convinced that they were regenerated, when in reality, they weren't. They never loved the LORD. They knew about Him, but they never knew Him. They never examined themselves to see whether they were in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5).

Indifference/Apathy: others will be eternally damned because they were lethargic about the faith that they never really possessed.

All three categories under regret (weeping) would, if given another chance, cast themselves on the mercy of God for the forgiveness of sins.

Ranking:

To cause annoyance, hatred, or irritation that pervasively persists; to fester in resentment. Those who rankle at the LORD will be in anger and hatred (Job 16:10; Psalms 35:16, 37:12, 112:10; Lamentations 2:16; Acts 7:54).

It pictures a man who is grinding his teeth in anger.

There will be those who will always and perpetually be "grinding their teeth." They will always have a hatred towards Christ. Despite their condition, their pain and eternity with no hope, they resent Christ. If they could live again, they would still reject him.

The LORD removed the idol from the nation of Israel and punished many for their unbelief. We must be watchful and guard ourselves from idols (1 John 5:21).