

Character Study: Samuel

Part 2 – Samuel’s Prophecy Is Fulfilled

I Samuel 4:1-22

What’s happening?

- Samuel had prophesied that judgment was about to come on Eli and his family. Shortly thereafter, Israel faced the Philistines in battle and lost. Fearing for their lives, the remaining Israelites had the Ark of the Covenant brought to them. They hoped that the ark would bring God’s protection. (4:1-4)
- The Israelites shouted for joy when the ark arrived. The Philistines, on the other hand, were afraid. They had heard of the plagues that Israel’s God had sent to the Egyptians. (4:5-8)
- Courageously the Philistines still fought. They won the battle, killing 30,000 Israelites. Among the many who fought that day, were Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas. As prophesied, they both died. The ark of God was captured and taken by the Philistines. (4:9-11)
- Hearing of the death of his two sons and the capture of the ark, Eli, now 98 years old, fell backwards out of his chair. The fall broke his neck and he died. Judgment had come to Eli’s house, just as Samuel had prophesied. (4:12-18)

What’s God doing?

> God showed how far sin pulls people away from Him and His truth. The Israelites thought God and His power were confined to a “box” (the ark). Eli’s own daughter-in-law named her son Ichabod, meaning “no glory,” after the ark was taken away. The people’s rebellion had blinded their eyes to the fact that God was omnipresent and sovereign.

What’s to learn?

→ This lesson reminds us that God’s holiness requires judgment to be taken out on sin. True holiness cannot ignore the seriousness of sin. Sin is contrary to God’s perfect character (seen in His nature), it goes against how God intends for us to live (seen in the sinful priests), and it leads us into error (seen in the people).

→ It takes a God who truly cares for His people to be willing to discipline in order to keep His children on the right path. We have a God who cares.