

God Cannot Be Mocked (1 Samuel 4:12-22 & Galatians 6:1-10)

08-July-2018

G'Day church family

We're continuing our series on the OT book of 1 Samuel.

And we're looking at 1 Samuel chapter 4 - starting at verse 12

We'll briefly look at Galatians chapter 6 too.

There's a sermon outline in the bulletin if you'd like to take down notes

Let's pray before we take a look at this passage together

Intro

True story to begin with:

*When I was at high school, I thought it would be a good idea to skip school and hang out with a couple of mates - who also skipped school... Mum found my note
Consequences: Grounded for the week-end; missed out on going to watch my favourite football team - and also had to regain the trust of my parents.*

There are always consequences for the choices we make!

That brings us to our passage today

But let's do a quick recap where we got up to last week

Recap

[Powerpoint 1-Recap]

- The Spiritual leadership of Israel is corrupt - which leads to the spiritual decline of the nation of Israel
- Eli - and his 2 sons -Hophni and Phinehas are accountable before God because they are supposed to be spiritual leaders for the people - but

they've treated God's sacrificial system with dishonour - and they're leading the people astray

- God says that Eli's family will be cut off from the priesthood - they won't live to an old age - and his 2 sons will die on the same day
- Then we learnt that Israel went into battle against the Philistines and were defeated - so they called up the Ark of God/Covenant - to be like a lucky charm for them when they fought the Philistines again

[Powerpoint 2-Ark]

And we learnt what the Ark was: A symbol of the agreement made between God and His people. The people were to obey God's commands. The commandments were inside the chest. The top of the ark/chest was two cherubim and a lid called the mercy seat = symbol of God's presence - and the place where annual sacrifice was made

[Powerpoint 3-Recap continued]

- But God and His Ark of the Covenant can't be used like a lucky charm
- So in chapter 4 verse 10-11 - Israel was defeated by the Philistines - 30000 Israeli men died - the Ark of the Covenant was captured and Eli's two sons were killed as God said they would be

There are always consequences for the choices we make!

Eli's Inglorious End (vv12-18)

Meanwhile as we continue the story this week...

[Powerpoint 4a-Eli's inglorious End]

Eli is back in Shiloh wondering what has happened in the battle

And we read in v12 - that a man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battle field at Aphek to Shiloh - about 20 miles (32Km) - mainly uphill - to break the news about this dreadful defeat

The man's clothes are torn and he's covered in dust -

In Jewish culture - torn clothes and ashes (dust) are signs of grieving and mourning - it's a dreadful & tragic event!

Jewish Tradition says that this young Benjamin man was Saul - who will one day become the 1st king of Israel - but this is only tradition

When the Benjamin man told the town what had happened in the battle - the town sent up a cry - literally they shrieked like you would when you're suffering in agony

This is a stark contrast to the celebrations when they brought the ark into battle - back in v5

Eli was waiting anxiously at the tabernacle for news

He was more concerned about the fate of the Ark than his sons

Why was he so anxious?

Because - as it says in verse 13 - his heart feared for the ark of God - he knew to let the Ark go into battle as some sort of superstitious lucky charm was foolish and unwise - and his conscience feared it would end in disaster

And he was right!

[Powerpoint 4b-Eli's death]

Unfortunately Eli - at age 98 and virtually blind - this terrible news literally killed him

It wasn't the news of Israel's defeat, nor the death of his sons, it was the capture of the Ark of God that killed him

[Powerpoint 5-Consequences]

There were several consequences for the choices that Eli and his sons - Hophni and Phinehas - made in making a mockery of God's sacrificial system - and the choice the elders of Israel made in bringing the ark into battle

- a. Eli's two sons were killed on the same day - as God said
- b. Rather than celebrating a victory due to the presence of God's glory in the ark - 30000 Israeli soldiers lost their lives
- c. The Ark of the Covenant was captured because it's not meant to be a weapon of war - it's meant for sacrifice to God and as a sign of His presence in a holy place. Many times in history - God's name has been wrongly used to validate wars and conflicts - For example - The Crusades - and the conflict in Northern Ireland between RCs and Protestants - always with dreadful consequences
- d. Also note - it says in verse 18 that Eli was heavy - likely due to his over-indulging in the choice meats of the sacrifice! (back in 2:29)
- e. So Eli's sons and Eli himself - all come to an inglorious end

Application: Should we be surprised at these events?

NO! God said in 2:30 - those who honour me I will honour – but those who despise me will be distained

As our NT passage - says in Galatians 6:7: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows!

There are consequences for our disobedience towards God

In fact there are consequences for all the choices we make

God's Power is not dependent on anything or anybody or any circumstance (vv19-22)

The tragic events don't stop there

From v19

[Powerpoint 6-God's Power]

Eli's daughter in-law, Phinehas' wife - who was pregnant - goes into labour when she hears the tragic news that the Ark of the Covenant has been captured and that her father in-law Eli has died and her husband has also died.

She dies giving birth to a son whom she names "Ichabod" which means "inglorious" or "no glory"

She gives this name to her son - because - as it says in v22 says - as she reflects theologically that the Ark has been captured - she believes - **God's glory** has left Israel.

Let's just reflect what that means to Israel

If God's glory has departed as Phinehas' wife thinks

Then there's no hope at all for the people of Israel

But Phinehas' wife's assumption is wrong

God has not been captured by the Philistines - just because the ark has been captured

God's presence and power is not dependent on the existence or possession of the ark - God cannot be domesticated and placed in a particular location

Yet there are consequences because the ark has been captured...

What will happen to the sacrifices now - the mercy seat on top of the ark - was where the annual sacrifice was made?

And with the priest Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas gone - it's a new era - Which we'll see in the coming weeks - as young Samuel becomes the new priest and spiritual leader of Israel - in fact a priest, a prophet and a judge

These are tragic events

And it's worth asking questions about God's power and authority over tragic events

Throughout history people have commonly drawn the conclusion that a particular tragic event must mean that God is no longer powerful or probably has disappeared from the scene [e.g. Sept 11th, Mass shootings, tragic death of a loved one]

Sometimes people refuse to believe in God any longer - because of some specific tragedy in their lives

It's easy to blame God - when tragedy strikes

People say - how could God let this happen?

Why didn't God stop this happening?

Or - I can't believe in a God who let's this happen - He can't be a loving God?

How are we to handle this conundrum?

Well - we have to go back to the beginning of the Bible

When God created the Heavens and the Earth and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden - he declared everything to be very good

Everything was perfect! As God intended

God's greatest loving gift was to give human beings a choice - a choice to obey God and follow His rules for living - or a choice not obey Him

God loves us and wants us to love Him and obey Him

But He doesn't force us to love Him - He doesn't want robots

Just like a parent wants their children to love them because they are their Mum and Dad

God wants us to love Him because He's our God - our creator - our Heavenly Father - but He won't force us to love Him

The first human beings - Adam and Eve - chose not to obey God -

They brought sin into the world

And the punishment for sin is death - spiritual and physical death

Spiritual death = separation from God

Physical death = our hearts stop beating

Sin and death are consequences of wrong choices - as our NT reading says Gal 6:7

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

The consequences of Adam and Eve's original sin - was a broken and fallen world!

As the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans 8:20-22:

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Adam and Eve's original sin has led to a broken and fallen world.

Which is why we have floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, famine, sickness and disease - and so on.

God's creation is broken and groaning as Paul says.

And on top of that humans haven't cared for creation either - nor the creatures - that we were supposed to look after

And on top of that relationships are broken - husband and wives, parents and children, siblings, friendships, nations, - which leads to hatred and wars and terrorism

Is all that God's fault?

(pause)

No!

It's consequences of the choices humans have made from the time of Adam and Eve onwards?

[e.g. friend & petrol tank - friend bungee jumping]

God is in Control

Regardless of the choices people make

Regardless of the consequences of these choices

[Powerpoint 7-God is in Control]

God is in control

The Israelites confined God's power to the ark/chest - they were wrong!

The Philistines thought by capturing the ark - they had captured God's power - and disarmed Him - they were wrong too!

In the same way - The Jews & Romans in Jesus' time thought they had got rid of Jesus' power - by having Him crucified!

They were wrong also!

The Jews and Romans - didn't realize this was all part of God's plan

God's plan for Jesus to die on the cross for the forgiveness of people's sins

God's plan to raise him to life on the 3rd day to give the hope and promise of eternal life

God is control!

Responses

[Powerpoint 8-Responses]

So what should our response be this morning [evening] to God's Word?

Well - it amounts to good choices and realizing consequences

So here's three responses we can make today:

[Powerpoint 8a-Don't mock God]

1. Don't mock God (as our NT passage - Gal 6:7 says - **Don't mock God** by flaunting ourselves before God and provoking His anger - by breaking His rules thinking He is powerless - we're just kidding ourselves

[Powerpoint 8b-reap what we sow]

2. Realize that as Galatians 6:8 says - **we reap what we sow** - if we sow to please our sinful flesh we will reap destruction - if we sow to please God's Spirit we will reap eternal life. There will always be consequences when we disobey God- we can't hide from God - ask Jonah? Ask Eli? Ask Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas? In fact ask Israel - they got exiled to Babylon for

constant disobedience and wrong choices. Instead Paul tell us to sow things in our lives which are in line with God's Spirit - Paul says sowing good choices - like following and believing in Jesus - which leads to eternal life - living with God forever

[Powerpoint 8c-good]

3. Our response must be as in Galatians 6:9 - 10

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. This amounts to us showing the love of Jesus to all people. In doing so - we are sowing seeds of Jesus' love in people's lives - and Paul says that God promises a splendid harvest of love - if we persevere and don't give up - That's a good choice and it has good consequences!

Let's pray...