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**SERIES: I Samuel, Part 1 (The Heart of a Leader)**

**MONDAY**

**OPEN**

Two words capture 20 years of Israel's history in 1 Samuel. They're from Ichabod to Ebenezer. Ichabod means no glory; the glory has departed from Israel. But Ebenezer means the stone of help; thus far the Lord has helped us. If we were to look at the next 20 years following 9/11 which of these two words would define America's history for the next 20 years?

**PART ONE**

Well Beloved, we are moving from 1 Samuel 4 to 1 Samuel chapter 5. And as we do, as I said in the opening, there are two words that capture the next 20 years of Israel's history. We've seen one of them mentioned in 1 Samuel chapter 4, and that's when the news comes that the ark of the covenant of God has been taken by the Philistines into their camp. And when that news comes, remember Eli dies when he hears that the ark of God has been taken, but also Phinehas' wife is pregnant with a child. And when the news comes

to her about the ark of God then she kneels down and she gives birth to a son, but she's near death. And as she gives birth to that son, she calls the boy Ichabod, saying verse 22: "...The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken." Now God repeats that twice because He wants you to make sure that you understand exactly what was happening in Israel's history. The departure of the ark was a visible picture of Israel's spiritual status. Number 1: The manifest presence of God's glory was gone. What was the manifest presence? It was the Ark of the Covenant, because this is where the shekinah glory, the cloud of His presence and the fire of His presence would hover over that mercy seat of that ark of the covenant. Also, you see that this Ark of the Covenant was used only when they wanted God, only when they needed God. It wasn't something that they in a sense, revered, because it represented God in all of its holiness. But it was like taking the ark into battle was like a national foxhole conversion. It was a human scheme to rescue them from impending death and destruction. And so this had been their habit for 340 years. They only called on God when they were absolutely desperate. They didn't live in an intimate relationship of love manifested by continuous obedience. When the Philistines defeated them the first time, as we read in 1 Samuel, chapter 4, verse 3, the people, the elders of Israel said, "...Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?" And they didn't stop to seek God, to fast, to pray, to cry out to God and say God, what is it in us that caused You to allow us to be taken captive by the enemies? No, instead, immediately they came up with the idea that they would take for themselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies, that it, the ark would deliver them, rather than God. The third thing that it showed us about Israel's spiritual status was that they're defeat could be likened to a 9/11 situation and a consequential 911 call to God. What happened on September 11 in the United States of America? Well, in a sense, the glory of America departed. The glory of America departed.

Nothing had ever happened to us like that on our shores after we were free from the reign of England. And what happened, we were surprised, we were shocked, we were stunned; we were severely, astoundingly wounded by the enemy. Precious lives were lost and families were shattered, and fear overwhelmed us. Churches were filled and Bibles were opened and prayer was freely offered. All of a sudden, because of 9/11 and because fear overwhelmed us, we suddenly turned to God and we opened our Bibles and people were asking is this the end is this the apocalypse? And prayer was freely offered and it was unopposed for the moment by the ACLU and other enemies of God and of His Son and of His Word. And what happened? Well listen, America's idol was toppled. America's Dagon was toppled. Let's look at 1 Samuel chapter 5: "Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod." Now Ebenezer is a city, okay. And they took it from Ebenezer, which was the camp where the children of Israel were and they took it to Ashdod, one of their cities. Now Ashdod, if you'll look at the map in your study guide, Ashdod is a coastal town right along the Mediterranean Sea. And the main cities of the Philistines were Gaza, the same that Gaza is today, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Akron. Okay, so those were the major cities of the Philistines. And so they "...took the ark of God and they brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon." (5:2) Now Dagon is in Ashdod. Verse 3, "And when the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. And when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who entered Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day." (1 Samuel 5:3-5) Now let's go back and make this parallel. On 9/11 what God did in a sense was He toppled our economy. Our Dagon fell face

down and hands and feet were severed. Our nation was traumatized economically. And it was traumatized emotionally. Many who lost loved ones say that they will never recover. And you see that children were born after that time, even as Phinehas' wife gave birth to Ichabod, so children were born after that time. Those children will always be remembered and always be marked by that day on September 11, when the glory of America, in a sense, departed. Let's stop and think about it for just a minute, you know, I may have offended you when I brought God into the picture. I may have offended you when I indicated that God had something to do with September 11. So I want to stop and I want to remember what we have learned about God. One of the names of God is Jehovah-Sabaoth and it means the Lord of hosts. And the Lord of hosts means that He is the One that is ruling in all the armies and in heaven, and all the armies on earth, all the heavenly hosts, and all the earthly hosts are under Him. So when September 11 came it was a stunning shock. I mean it just stunned us. It was like we were hit with a stun gun. We could not believe it. We were just all of a sudden paralyzed and our eyes were wide open and our mouth dropped open and we could not believe what happened to us. And we wondered, you know, where was God? Why did God not protect us? What happened? Is God judging us? Well we have to know that God is sovereign, that His sovereignty rules over all. So while we were in a state of being stunned and shocked and wounded God was not stunned, God was not shocked. God knew it was coming. He was not caught by surprise. But in the process what God showed us was who our God was. It was the economy. And the economy, I mean it took years for the economy to begin to recover. Right after 9/11 I was on planes going overseas and when I got to other countries their economy was affected. It was something that impacted a great part of the world because of what it did to the economy. And countries are still trying to recover, and businesses are trying to recover. So we were traumatized economically and we were traumatized emotionally. And truly

the glory of the Lord had departed. Promising futures, the dream of secure retirements were shattered. Then what comes on the heels of all that? Then the Enron scandal, then the plummeting Stock market and once again the party lines were drawn and we see the Democrats and the Republicans paired off against one another so that even as they were trying to put in a judge like Priscilla Owen of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, for the first time the Democrats rejected solely on the fact that she did not pass their litmus test. And she didn't pass their litmus test because she believed parents had a right to know if their child was getting an abortion. The Senators rejected her and said they would absolutely refuse to allow our President to present such a conservative candidate. What was happening in the United States of America? Well, suddenly attendance at church returned for the most part to normal. All sorts of concepts of God of life, of life after death surfaced and were embraced by a society which rejects absolutes or anything that doesn't seem right to them or doesn't work for them. We became so tolerant that schools made it mandatory for their students to participate in classes on Islam. The glory of the Lord had departed from America. I believe personally that America had its glory depart because we ignored God. We just used God as, so to speak, a holy rabbit's foot, and now we were back to normal.

## **PART TWO**

Welcome back Beloved. What you see next in 1 Samuel is this, the symbol of God's glory departs, but God abides. The Lord of hosts enthroned above the cherubim. Watch what happens. Not only does He topple their god, not only does He chop off his head and the next day chop off his hands, showing that this is an impotent god, but now He is going to bring judgment upon them. So yes, the symbol of God's glory had departed from Israel, but God was not off the scene. God is never off the scene. Now 1 Samuel chapter 5, verse 6: "Now the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He

ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories.” So look at the map again and see that Ashdod is a Mediterranean kind of seaport town, but all of its territories are being affected with tumors, all right, or this is what it says. Now let me read on and then I want to explain something very interesting to you. “When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so they said, ‘The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.’ (5:7) I guess so; he decapitated him and put him flat on his face. So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to them and said what shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they said, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought to Gath.” (5:8b) Now look at Gath because you’re going east toward the Dead Sea, you know, not terribly far. And they brought the ark of God of Israel around. And it came about that “after they had brought the it around...” Now remember you should be marking the Ark of the Covenant. “...The hand of the Lord was against the city with very great confusion; and He smote the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them.” “So they sent the ark of God to Ekron...,” and remember that’s another Philistine city, and now the ark of God is going north. And it happened “...as the ark of God came to Ekron that the Ekronites cried out and said, ‘They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around us, to kill us and our people.’ And they sent therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, ‘Send away the ark of the God of Israel. Let it return to it’s own place, that it may not kill us and our people. For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city. The hand of God was very heavy there and the men who did not die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven.” Now, chapter 6, verse 1: “Now the ark of the Lord had been in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, ‘What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how we shall send it to its place. And they said, ‘If you send away the ark of the God of Israel do not send it empty; for you shall surely return Him a guilt

offering.” In other words, He’s punishing us; we’ve done something wrong. “Then you shall be healed and it shall be known to you why His hand is not removed from you.” “Then they said to him, ‘What will be the guilt offering which we shall return to him?’” Now listen, this gives you an important clue, I believe. “And they said, ‘Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords. “So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land.” not ravaged in the past, but are doing it now. “And you shall give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods and your land.” Now there’s a clue here in the mice. And what I want you to see is, many people believe that these tumors were hemorrhoids and that this was the plague that God gave them. It’s extremely, extremely painful, and so people believe it was hemorrhoids because you can take this word tumors and you come up with emorods an Aramaic word, from which the Greek hemorrhoid, flowing with blood and eventually the English word hemorrhoids derives. And the other texts, some of them says in their secret parts, but that was not found in the original Hebrew. So what is this plague? Well many believe the plague that’s reported in this passage was bubonic plague. It was a raging species that not only terminated the lives of 200 million people in three major outbreaks several hundred years ago, but is with us even today, though in numbers far short of these epidemic proportions. Now all of this is according to the Center of Disease Control. Globally, the world health organization reports one thousand to three thousand of plague every year. All right now, what we find is that when they are making these symbols to put back in the ark as a guilt offering, they’re going to put in likenesses of their tumors, of their hemorrhoids and likenesses of mice. So then you have to ask you know, why the mice that are ravaging the land? You know Beloved, I have to confess that this absolutely fascinates me, because when you stop and you look at the text and you ask the question, why the mice? Why did they make

these golden mice that were representatives of these different cities of the Philistines? Why did they do that? And then you put together what you know about the mice and what you know about tumors and it looks like bubonic plague. The bubonic plague has an intriguing, frightening history in modern times. The disease arrived in Europe in the Fall of 1347, via caravans from the Far East, where it had first reduced China's population by 28%, about 35 million people were killed over the course of the 14th century. Within the next five years the import of these caravans killed another 25 million, one third of Europe's population. This devastating affection is a bacillus, an aerobic rod shaped bacteria. And the two most common transmissions occur when infected rodents bite humans or when fleas draw blood from infected rats or mice and then inject people. They're like a hypodermic needle. Interestingly, both untreated rodents and humans die from these conveyances, but mediating fleas live out their short lives unaffected, while a host of symptoms, high fevers, head and muscle aches, sore throats, nausea and vomiting and sometimes vomiting blood arise, the predominant characteristic, now listen carefully, is swollen lymph nodes in the neck, arm pits and groin. From these buboes swelling primarily in the equinox's glands of the groin, we got the adjective bubonic and from the black color of these protrusions, these, these swelling history gave the disease its alternate name the black death. This Beloved, in all probability is what happened in these Philistines cities. God afflicted them because, although the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel, listen, God was very much alive and God was showing these Philistines you may have captured the ark, but you haven't captured me and He brought them to their knees in fear of Him thru the Bubonic Plague. Oh, Beloved, in all this judgment on the Philistines you can know this that God was going to move Israel from Ichabod to Ebenezer the "stone of help" and that's what we're going to see in the next program.