



A Spiritual Encouragement Message

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The Glory Departed From Israel

By Oscar Velazquez

During the entire period of time that is covered in the book of Judges, we can only find a single time where the ark of the covenant of God is mentioned (Judges 20:27); only one reference to it in twenty one chapters and only one time in four centuries, precisely in the most critical time when they depended on the ark to have God's presence among them. "There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel" (Exodus 25:22). That speaks of their lack of devotion and poor worship to God the Creator (Deut. 12:1-14). The Israelites were busy doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord and doing what was right in their own eyes (Judges 2:11 & 21:25). As one of the many consequences of their sins, the word of the Lord was rare in those days (1 Samuel 3:1). That was when God gave His special double calling to the young boy Samuel (Abraham, Abraham, Gen. 22:11. Jacob, Jacob, Gen. 46:2. Moses, Moses, Ex. 3:4. Samuel, Samuel, 1Sam. 3:10. Martha, Martha, Lk.10:41. Simon, Simon, Lk. 22:31. Saul, Saul, Acts 9:4. Eli, Eli, Mt. 27:46). God talked to the only one who would listen in that time (Psalm 99:6). Samuel ministered to the Lord since he was three years of age (1 Sam.1:24, 2 Maccabees 7:27). It is highly emphasized that Samuel ministered to the Lord (1 Sam. 2:11,18, 21, 26, 3:1), because Eli was just sitting (1 Sam.1:9) while his wicked sons were robbing God of His portions of the sacrifices and blaspheming the name of the Lord (1 Sam. 2:12-17) also imitating the temple prostitution of the pagan nations of Canaan (1 Sam. 2:22). But none of those bad examples influenced Samuel to do the same, none of that stopped him from serving and ministering to the Lord. If you ever see any bad examples within the Lord's church, don't use that as an excuse to do the same, or not to serve God at your maximum capacity. Samuel did not go around publishing the wicked lives of Hophni and Phinehas either. Don't publish things that bother you about the Lord's church either, because He does not appreciate anybody talking bad about His bride. Samuel became the main spokesman of God in a time when God's word was rare (1 Sam. 3:19-21). Samuel became as faithful as Moses (Jer. 15:1). But unfortunately, the Israelites did not consult God through Samuel (1 Sam. 4). Instead, a weak civil militia of Israel went to battle against the powerful armies of the Philistines who had oppressed them for forty years already (Judges 13:1) with their sophisticated iron weapons (1 Sam.13:19-23). To their

loss the Israelites intended to use the ark of the covenant of God as a lucky charm forgetting precisely about the covenant of God without consulting the Lord, in a likely manner many use a cross or a Bible today for good luck, ignoring the will of God for their lives. The outcome of confronting the Philistines while ignoring the God of hosts was that 34,000 Israelites were massacred in battle, their priests got killed, their high priest died and the glory departed from Israel because the ark of God was captured by their enemies. The ark never went back to Shiloh. David took the ark of God to Jerusalem about twenty years later (1 Sam. 7:1-2, 2 Sam 6:1-18). Samuel was not consulted by the stubborn Israelites during those twenty years (1 Sam. 7:1-3). That sad day in which the glory departed from Israel, while marinating in their sins they lost the ark of God was a reminder to them by Jeremiah the Prophet four centuries later, in comparison to when the Jews were going to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (Jer. 7:12-15, 2 Chr. 36:17-21). That shameful story is also remembered in their Psalms (Psalm 78:56-70). Today the Jews still remember that day also compared to the day when the Romans captured the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish temple, killed most of them and took the golden vessels from the temple to Rome in 70 AD.

In his time, Moses and the priests went to battle carrying the ark of the covenant of God against King Shion of the Amorites and against King Og of Bashan (Num. 21:21-35), also later against the Midianites (Num. 31), always obtaining victories from God over the enemies, because Moses consulted God and was faithful to His covenant. Joshua and the priests, carrying the ark of God in a similar manner went to battle against Canaan and against Jericho, also reaping triumphant victories because Joshua consulted the Lord and was faithful to Him. That did not work for Hophni and Phinehas the sons of Eli and the elders of Israel, because they did not consult Jehovah nor were they faithful to Him.

About two thousand years ago the glory of God took on flesh and lived among us (Jn.1:1,14). Jesus' body was the tabernacle and God's holy temple (Jn. 2:21).

Jesus said He and the Father would come and live within us (Jn. 7:37-39, 14:23).

God's glory now lives within us. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV).

Question yourself. Are you living as Hophni and Phinehas, not caring about serving God orderly in His way? Or are you living as Samuel always ministering faithfully to the only living God? Biblical statistics along with Israel's history show that the answer to that question will secure your outcome.