

ICHABOD

1 Samuel 4:21

by John Sanni

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the very fearful words ever mentioned in the Bible lies the name of an innocent child:

ICHABOD

Imagine this: The shouts of war fade into silence. The once-confident soldiers of Israel return battered and broken.

In the distance, a young lady in labour, hears the news that her husband is dead, brother-in-law is dead, her father-in-law is dead, and the Ark has been captured. With her last breath, she names her child *Ichabod* — “The glory has departed.”

The question today is — could we be wearing the garments of worship while living in the shadow of Ichabod?

GOD CALLING SAMUEL WHILE ELI WAS STILL ALIVE

Eli was a high priest who also served as a judge; providing spiritual leadership to the people.

▪ 1 Samuel 3:1-10

- Eli was still the high priest, but God called Samuel directly.

- The Word of God was rare in those days because of the spiritual decay in leadership.

- Positional authority without spiritual sensitivity can cause one to miss God’s fresh move.

- When leaders stop hearing God, God starts speaking to those who will listen.

- We must remain spiritually sensitive so we don’t become sidelined while still “active” in service.

There are some school of thought who believed that Eli shouldn’t have been punished.

They felt that in **1 Samuel 2:23-25** Eli rebuked his children. But the truth is this, he only mentioned what he hears people complain about them **BUT DID NOTHING ABOUT IT 1 Samuel 3:13.**

Balancing spiritual leadership and family relationship was most difficult for Eli.

He could have enforced a strict discipline by removing them

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from priestly duties or perhaps going to God to inquire of Him.

THE SPECIFIC SIN OF HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS — AND HOW ISRAEL WAS A PART OF IT

Leadership's corruption becomes the congregation's compromise when tolerated.

- **1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25**
 - They treated the Lord's offering with contempt.
 - They committed sexual immorality at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.
 - Israel's complicity: They brought sacrifices knowing the priests were corrupt yet did nothing (*Isaiah 1:13-15*).
 - Silence and tolerance of sin in God's house make us partakers in it (*Ephesians 5:11*).

The sin we excuse today will enslave us tomorrow.

The Child you refuse to tell that hard drugs is dangerous will sell your property to satisfy their addiction tomorrow.

The erring brother you refuse to discipline today will drag the name of the Church in the mud tomorrow.

Purity in God's house is a shared responsibility of leaders and followers.

INSENSITIVITY TO THE ABSENCE OF GOD AFTER THE FIRST BATTLE LOSS

Defeat without repentance is wasted pain.

- **1 Samuel 4:1-3**
 - They asked, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?" but never sought God in humility. Truth be told, they lost the battle long before they went for it
 - The Bible says that In the Presence of God, there is fullness of Joy **BUT** *What happens in the absence of God? ICHABOD!*
- Instead of repentance, they relied on a symbol (the ark) without addressing their sin.
 - God's absence is the greatest tragedy; losing

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without noticing His absence is worse.

▪ *“The greatest calamity is not to lose God’s blessing, but to lose God Himself and not know it.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

▪ When we experience loss or spiritual decline, the first response should be repentance, not ritual.

GOD STILL PRESENT IN THE ARK BUT THE ISRAELITES WERE IMPURE — HENCE THE ARK APPEARED UNRESPONSIVE

God’s presence is holy; impurity hinders its manifestation.

▪ **1 Samuel 4:4–11; Psalm 66:18**

- God’s power was in the ark, but He will not be manipulated by unholy people.

- God’s presence is everywhere. It is we humans that choose to depart.

- The ritual of worship without any form of Godly living is a painted lie

God’s presence is not a lucky charm; it is a consuming fire to the impure.

PROOF OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE ARK — THE FALL OF DAGON

God doesn’t need human help to prove Himself.

▪ **1 Samuel 5:1–4**

- Dagon fell before the ark; his head and hands were cut off.

The presence of God always dethrones idols, visibly or invisibly.

Where God is enthroned, idols cannot stand.

When God truly dwells in our hearts, all false gods must fall.

CONCLUSION

Revelation 3:1 – *“You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*

It is possible to carry God’s Name but not His presence.

It wasn’t just the loss of a battle; it was the loss of God’s manifest presence.

This is not an ancient tragedy alone; it is a warning to every generation.

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Because ***Ichabod*** doesn't happen overnight.

It is the result of careless neglect, tolerated sin, and the slow drifting from intimacy with God until His glory quietly departs and we keep on with business as usual.

Symbols of God's presence cannot replace submission to God's will.

The ark without God is just a box; the cross without Christ is just wood; the Bible without obedience is just a book.

So, what do you carry brethren?

A box, A wood, or A book?