

Ichabod

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[0 : 0 0] we're going to look at that passage we read earlier so if we can with the Lord's help turn back to 1st Samuel chapter 4 1st Samuel chapter 4 and if you read again at verse 21 1st Samuel chapter 4 and verse 21 and she that is Phinehas' wife who was giving birth she named the child Ichabod saying the glory has departed from Israel because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband she named the child Ichabod she named the child Ichabod now as a parent

I found that one of the most difficult things about having a child is giving that child a name because once you give them a name well they have it for life unless of course they really want to change their name when David our eldest was born we were so sure that it was going to be a girl that we didn't even have a boy's name in mind we only had a girl's name we didn't know it was going to be we didn't know that David was going to be a boy we didn't find out beforehand and so when David was born he was such a surprise it took us nearly 10 days to give him a name and we settled on the name David which means beloved something similar happened with Matthew you would have thought we would have learned our lesson by then but something happened something similar happened with Matthew because this time we knew that Matthew was going to be a boy and yet throughout Alison's pregnancy we kept calling him Murder John all the way through the pregnancy and then when he was born well he didn't look like a Murder John so we thought we can't call him Murder John and again it took us a few days to come up with another name to come up with the name Matthew which means gift of God and that's a thing we give a child a name either because we like the name or we like the meaning of the name or the child is named after someone in our family whether it's a parent or a grandparent or a sibling

I was named after the Melbos Bard many of you will know this I was named after the Melbos Bard Murder McFarlane because Murder was very close to my father and now I'm Murder McFarlane Campbell but in name only I don't have the gift of Gaelic as you all know and I certainly don't have the gift of writing poetry or songs but as you know names are important and that's certainly true in the Bible because when we come to the Bible we see the first man was Adam and he was named Adam because the name Adam means man and that's what Adam was he was the first man the name Eve means mother of all living because she was the first woman the name Samuel we're focusing in the book of Samuel the name Samuel means asked of God because Hannah asked God for a son and she gave him a son called Samuel and as you know the name Jesus a name we're all familiar with the name Jesus means salvation or saviour because the angel said to Mary call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins but all these names that we've mentioned they're all well popular names or well known names but as you know there are lots of peculiar names nowadays they're very peculiar names nowadays especially with all the celebrities

I'm not going to name or mention any names just in case I offend someone but when Isaiah had a son I don't know if you know the name of Isaiah's son he gave him a very peculiar name Maher Shalal Hashbaz that was his name Maher Shalal Hashbaz should be very hard to call him in for dinner at night Hosea also had three children Hosea had three children who had peculiar names the eldest son was called Jezreel which means God sows judgment he had a daughter she was called Loruchamah which means not loved and then the other son he had a third son called Loamih which means not my people so you had three children one called God sows judgment not loved and not my people not very nice names to give to your children but these names all had a meaning and they all had a message and that's what we see with this child here named at the end of 1 Samuel chapter 4 this child was given a name that will be remembered for generations to come and the child we're told there in verse 21 she named the child

Ichabod very unusual name she named the child Ichabod which means the glory has departed the glory of God has departed it has left us Ichabod the glory has departed in fact the name Ichabod you could say it actually describes and defines all that happens in this chapter the glory is departing all that happens in this chapter can be defined by the name Ichabod because what we see in this chapter in 1 Samuel chapter 4 what we see is first of all an imaginary God and an Ichabod glory an imaginary God and an Ichabod glory there are two headings this morning an imaginary God that's a first heading an imaginary God look at verse 1 of chapter 4 so the word of Samuel came to all Israel now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines they encamped at Ebenezer and the Philistines encamped at Aphek the Philistines threw up in line against Israel and when the battle spread Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about 4,000 men on the field of battle and when the people came to the camp the elders of Israel said why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies now as you'd expect the narrative of chapter 4 it just picks up where we left off because as we saw last week in chapter 3

[6 : 38] Samuel was called to be a prophet he was called to be a prophet during some of the darkest days in Israel's history and it was a tough and it was a turbulent transition period in Israel because it was a transition from the period of the judges where every man did what's right in his own eyes and it was a transition from the period of the judges now into the period of the prophets and in many ways Samuel was the last judge and the first prophet in Israel he had a two-fold role he was the last judge and the first prophet in Israel but as you can see that wasn't without its challenges because as a young prophet a very young prophet in fact Samuel's role and his responsibility was to preach and to proclaim the Lord's message that was his role that was his responsibility he was to tell the people what God had to say he had to proclaim the Lord's message and what a message it was because if you go to the previous chapter you remember last week we read there chapter 3 verse 11 the Lord said to Samuel behold I'm about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle on that day

I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end and I declare to him that I'm about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew because his sons were blaspheming God and he did not restrain them therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever so when the Lord called Samuel to be a prophet the first challenge Samuel had was to tell the truth and to tell the truth about sin and about judgment and it's that prophecy which is now fulfilled here in this chapter because as you know Eli Eli is the old priest and he had two sons he has two sons called Hophni and Phinehas but Eli's sons even though they were sons of the manse they had grown up in the manse you could say they were set apart and sanctified to the holy office of the priesthood just like their dad and yet Hophni and Phinehas as we've discovered they were wolves in shepherds clothing they wore all the clerical clothing they served at the sanctuary but they were corrupt clergy they used and abused their position and their power as priests in order to gain more and more possessions

Hophni and Phinehas you could say they were men that misrepresented God and they misled the people they misled the people they misrepresented the God they were meant to serve and they misled the people to worship what was an imaginary God and that's what we should see in the first half of this chapter not that God is imaginary but that the God that they worshipped or that Israel were led to worship was a God of their own making it was a God of their own imagination not the God of the Bible not the God who had revealed himself to his people throughout history because as we read the Israelites went to battle with the Philistines and the Philistines we read there they were a fearful and a formidable force in fact during the period of the judges the Israelites were under the force of the Philistines for 40 years they were oppressed by the Philistines for 40 years until the Lord raised up you remember that strong man

Samson and Samson he freed Israel from the Philistines and so since the time of Samson which is generations from after this point Israel had been free they had been free from the formidable and the fearful force of the Philistines until one day this one day where Israel foolishly decides to fight against the Philistines and you know I have no doubt reading this passage that it was probably Hophni and Phinehas who put them up to it because as priests of the people as the clergy in their community and in their congregation of Israel Hophni and Phinehas you would expect these priests Hophni and Phinehas would have been seen as trustworthy men they would have been seen as truthful men just because of the office they held and the position that they had so much so that whatever these men taught and whatever they told the people of Israel the people would have just believed it they're men of God they would never lie to us so the people just did exactly what they wanted they would have taken Hophni and Phinehas at their word and done whatever they wished and so if Hophni and Phinehas had encouraged the Israelites to fight against the Philistines by telling them that the Lord will be with you the Lord will be with you on the battlefield the Israelites would have thought well they're telling the truth they're God's men so let's go and let's fight but as we read

Israel was defeated by the fearful and formidable force of the Philistines and 4,000 4,000 men died on the field of battle then you read the response the response of the elders the elders in Israel is remarkable because we see that instead of realizing that their defeat was because of their disobedience against the Lord because the Lord had promised his people he had said to them in both the books of Exodus and the book of Deuteronomy the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy that disobedience against the Lord will end in defeat it will end in disaster it will end in death but instead of clocking God's word the elders concluded that their defeat was because they didn't do something they thought we didn't take the Ark of the Covenant with us into battle that's why we lost and so they think we need the Ark of the Covenant to come with us so we need to take revenge let's not hold back let's go straight back to the battlefield and take the Ark of the Covenant with us let's respond by seeking revenge look at verse 3 when the people came to the camp the elders of Israel they said why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies so the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts who is enthroned in the cherubim and the two sons of Eli

[13 : 32] Hophni and Phinehas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God and you know you read this and it ought to remind us I suppose straight away the responsibility the role and responsibility of every elder because as elders just like it was for the elders of Israel as elders we're to lead by our life we're to lead by our life and we're to teach the truth of God's word by our life we're to tell people what they need to hear not always what they want to hear that's what these elders remind me they didn't take their role and responsibility seriously but we do we need to take our role and responsibility seriously we need to tell people what they need to hear not always what they want to hear but for the ministers and the elders in Israel they had misinformed the people they had misled the people they had misled them so far into the battlefield and now they have a view of God like a genie in a bottle and they treat all the things of God like lucky charms because you look at it and you see that they think well if we if we do this

God will give us what we want when we want and how we want if we take the ark of the covenant into the battlefield God will make us win he will do what we want when we want and how we want and God will do it for us because we have the ark of the covenant we have this lucky charm we have the symbol of God's presence and God's power therefore God has to do what we want because his name is at stake God has to preserve us on the field of battle he has to protect us from hurt or harm because if he doesn't no one will believe in him no one will trust him no one will follow him he will look like a little God that nobody would want to trust him and you know my friend you look at it and you read this passage and maybe you think well what does this have to do with us in the 21st century but I look at this passage and all I see is what Solomon says to us there is nothing new under the sun because many people today sad to say it they still treat God like the genie in the bottle and they treat the things of God like lucky charms thinking that well if I do certain things

God will always be there for me and God will give me what I want when I want and even how I want so if I carry my Bible in my work bag for going offshore and or if I read my Bible every night or if I repeat a prayer that I learned as a child or if I attend church once a week or if I wear Christian jewelry around my neck then the Lord is obligated there's nothing wrong with doing any of these things by the way but we might think that the Lord is obligated to protect me and to preserve me from hurt or from harm and he has to do it because if God doesn't do it for me then I won't believe in him I won't trust him I won't follow him no no I don't want him if he doesn't do what I want I don't want him and you know my friend if that's the way you think then you worship an imaginary God you worship an imaginary God as Dale Ralph Davis said in his commentary that is not faith it is all superstition and when we operate in this way our concern is not to seek God but to control him not to submit to God but to use him we prefer religious magic to spiritual holiness we are interested in success but not repentance and you know so many people say to me and they probably say to me because I'm the minister they say to me

I believe in God more do I believe in God I believe that God exists I think Jesus is real the Bible is true Christianity well it must be genuine and yet despite all that they live their life like an atheist they live their life like an atheist and I say that because their belief in God it actually has no impact upon them it has no influence upon their life it has no bearing upon everything around them it doesn't change the way they live their life because they continue to live their life as if God didn't exist they continue to make decisions without God they continue to think without God they continue to go through struggles without God and that's because their belief in God is not genuine he's a God of their imagination he's an imaginary God you know it was R.C. Sproul I love R.C. Sproul he's a lovely Presbyterian man he said a God who is all love all grace all mercy but no sovereignty no justice no holiness and no wrath that God he says is an idol a God who is all love all grace all mercy but no sovereignty no justice no holiness and no wrath is an idol he's an imaginary God he's the God of our imagination

I was reading someone and it's so applied to this passage because in our casual and consumeristic you could call it cafe Christianity where we pick and choose the bits we like and we leave the rest out so many people view God as like a waiter in a restaurant so many people view God like a waiter in a restaurant where you don't really know the waiter that well you only met him on the way in or maybe you've been to the restaurant a couple of times and you've seen him there you've got to know him a wee bit but you don't know much about him that's as far as it goes you don't know him enough to invite him to sit at your table with you you don't know him enough to eat a meal with him or even to take part in all your personal conversations about life and work and friends and family this waiter he's not involved in your day to day life because as the waiter he's just there in the background he's in the background waiting on you to see if you need something and so that he can serve you when you want him and when you need him and when you do call on him whether it's something you want or it's a mess that's in your life there's something that's spilled all over the table you call on him and he comes running over or whether you call on him and you ask for success and health and healing and wisdom to be handed to you on the plate whatever it is he's meant to go out of his way to get for you and to give to you because you pay him you pay him you pay him with your tithe and you pay him with your time in church on Sunday therefore you own him and he owes you he's the God of our imagination he's an imaginary God because when it comes to sin when it comes to honesty when it comes to purity when it comes to obedience when it comes to submission when it comes to worship when it comes to judgment that's not the God we want find me another waiter

[21 : 40] I don't want him we don't want a God that makes demands on our life we want a God that will follow our demands and that's what Israel was doing here let's bring the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield because God will be on our side we can demand that God will be on our side and that's the God we want we want to make demands on God we don't want God to make demands on us but you know my good friend J.C. Ryle he always has a word for everything he says beware of manufacturing a God of your own beware of manufacturing a God of your own a God who is all mercy but not just a God who is all love but not holy a God who has a heaven for everyone but a hell for no one such a God he says is an idol of your own making he's not the God of the Bible because other than the God of the Bible there is no God at all and that's what we'll see as we come to the next chapter other than the God of the Bible there is no God at all you know my friend beware of worshipping the God of your own imagination because it will only end one way it will only end one way how did it end for Israel defeat disaster and death that's how it ended verse 10 so the Philistines fought

Israel was defeated they fled every man to his home there was a very great slaughter for 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel fell and the ark of God was captured and the two sons of Eli Hophni and Phinehas died 34,000 men died in these opening verses of chapter 4 and they all died because they made an imaginary God they worshipped the God of their imagination and not the God of the Bible and so in the first half of the chapter we see an imaginary God but then in the second half of the chapter we see an Ichabod glory an Ichabod glory look at verse 12 a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn with dirt on his head when he arrived Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching for his heart trembled for the ark of God and when the man came into the city and told the news all the city cried out when Eli heard the sound of the outcry he said what is this uproar then the man hurried and came and told Eli now Eli was 98 years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see and the man said to Eli

I am he who has come from the battle I fled from the battle today and he said how did it go my son he who brought the news answered and said Israel has fled before the Philistines and there is also a great defeat among the people your two sons also Hophni and Phinehas are dead and the ark of God has been captured and we read there that as soon as he mentioned the ark of God Eli fell over backwards from his seat by the side of the gate and his neck was broken and he died for the man was old and heavy he had judged Israel for 40 years you know on the day that Israel was defeated by the fearful and formidable force of the Philistines Eli the priest this man who was 98 years old although he was blind now he had seen a lot in his life and he had seen the demise and even the degeneration of the spiritual state of his own nation and even though Eli would have claimed that his sons they were to blame they were the ones in charge they were the ones leading the church and the congregation they were to blame even though Eli would have claimed that his sons were to blame if you look at the previous chapter the prophecy

God put the blame squarely at Eli's feet because as a priest for 40 years Eli knew that it was wrong for Hophni and Phinehas to get involved in the battle with the Philistines even more so Eli knew there was blasphemy to ever think of taking the Ark of the Covenant this box this holy box that defined and described God's presence and God's power even the thought of it to take it into the battlefield with them but sadly you look at Eli and Eli was a a parent who stayed silent he didn't say anything to his sons he didn't stop his sons he didn't teach or tell his children what to do he didn't restrain or restrict his children or even those who were in office with him he didn't say anything he was silent and instead Eli let his sons live lawless lives before the Lord

Eli let his sons live lawless lives before the Lord and I look at it and it really challenges me because the Lord is reminding Eli you failed as a father you failed as a father because what we see is that Eli's failure to teach his children in private it had consequences in public Eli's failure to teach his children in private had consequences in public now that's not to say that every child that disobeys their parents is because the parent is wrong but what the Lord is saying to Eli in this passage is that Eli was wrong and he's reminding him of his covenant responsibility as a covenant parent with covenant children Eli has been reminded that he has failed to teach his children at home and that has had consequences not only in the congregation but also for the whole country and you know even with all his years of experience as a priest and a pastor in Israel you come to this chapter and you realize none of it mattered none of his experience mattered because what

[27 : 58] Eli was in his public life among the congregation and among the community it was never and it was nowhere near as important as what he was in his private life among his family and you know I find it so challenging for me even as a minister in his public life among the congregation among the community it never mattered wasn't as important as what he was in his private life among his family and if it reminds me it ought to remind you and affirm to us as parents and as Christians that what we are in public must also be what we are in private what we are in public must also be what we are in private because we have a massive role and a massive responsibility to not only have a relationship with our children which is so important but also to teach them and to tell them and to train them as our children to train them about the truth of the

Lord and about how to live lives before the Lord you know our Bible has such an emphasis on this massive emphasis it exhorts us to train up a child the way that they should go so that when they're old they will not depart from it train up a child in the way that they should go so that when they are old they will not depart from it now I know we all fail and we all faint as parents I'm not getting at you I'm reminding myself of our responsibility of what we are in public we must also be in private and you look at this and it was a sad end for Eli it was a sad end for his sons because it shows us that you know it shows us we never sin in isolation because our sins always impact other people we never sin in isolation our sins always impact other people and we see that because towards the end of the chapter

Phinehas his wife she's heavily pregnant at the time when she hears the news that her husband has died on the battlefield her brother in law Hophni and Phinehas they've both died on the battlefield and her father in law has now fallen over and broken his neck there's so much sorrow there's so much stress of the situation and it sends her into early labor and as we read through the passage towards the end of the chapter this morning mother who gives birth to a son her dying words her dying words describe the whole chapter call his name Ichabod the glory has departed call his name Ichabod because the glory has departed Dale Ralph Davis he says Phinehas his wife taught more theology in her death than Phinehas had taught in his whole life as a priest call his name

Ichabod because the glory has departed the people have forsaken the Lord they've turned their back on the Lord they viewed they worship an imaginary God and they view God as a lucky charm Ichabod the glory has departed and as we said it was a name that would be remembered for generations because the name Ichabod it describes what happens in this chapter and the impact of this chapter we see it in the following chapters as we'll go through them in the coming weeks but you know what I love about our Bible and I hope you all love the Bible what I love about the Bible is even though we see in this chapter that a son was born they called his name Ichabod because the glory has departed when you read through the Bible you follow the narrative the story of salvation through this Bible and it's leading us one way it's leading us to a manger in Bethlehem and it's reminding us that when Jesus was born the angel said call his name

Jesus call him salvation call him saviour because he shall save his people from their sins and as the apostle John explains to us in his gospel the opening verses of his gospel the birth of Jesus was the occasion not when the glory of God departed from us no no no the birth of Jesus was when the glory of God dwelt among us the glory of God dwelt among us John tells us the word became flesh and dwelt among us why so that we would behold his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth so even though we see here glory departing it should point us forward to when glory dwells among his people call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins and you know the wonder of who

[33 : 16] Jesus is and his name we're talking about the importance of names earlier on the Bible tells us there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved other than the name of Jesus because it will be at the name of Jesus every knee will bow every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father therefore whosoever calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved that's the beauty of the gospel even in the Old Testament whosoever calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved but may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray our Father in heaven we give thanks to thee for thy word that speaks to us so powerfully a word that is living and active a word that reminds us that we are not to worship the God of our imagination but the

God who has revealed himself to us on the pages of the Bible a God who has made himself known through creation and through scripture and help us Lord we pray to worship him aright to follow him with all our heart to seek him even while he is to be found and Lord that we would see that the glory of God has dwelt among us in the person of Jesus and that whosoever calls upon his name they will be saved help us to see then that the name of Jesus it endures forever it lasts like the sun itself keep us then we pray bless thy truth to us we ask and forgive us we plead for Jesus sake amen we're going to bring our service to our conclusion today by singing the words of psalm 72 psalm 72 in the Scottish Psalter page 314 psalm 72 we're singing from verse 17 down to the end of the psalm familiar words but our familiarity of them should never bring contempt should make us love them more and more because they are words that remind us all about Jesus and his name his name it says forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call now blessed be the

Lord our God the God of Israel for he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel down to the end of the psalm so psalm 72 from verse 17 to the end of the psalm we'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him unblest all nations shall him call now blessed be the Lord our God the

God of Israel for the phoneme Another word blessed Blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let His glory fill. Amen, so let it be.

[38 : 09] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.