

GOD'S GLORY RESTORED

INTRODUCTION

When I was a child of around 10, I received a birthday or Christmas gift from my parents. In fact, there were two, they were either aeroplanes or space rockets, but they worked with batteries and also had the little friction engines if I can remember correctly. In a little boy's eyes, these were glorious toys. I enjoyed these toys. We didn't have much, so they probably came at a price to my parents. Then one day, as happens with many little boys, my curiosity got the better of me, so I got some tools and took them apart to see what was inside. Needless to say, I never got them properly together again. Those toys were never the same, they had lost their former glory!

That's a bit like what happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. Everything changed, God still loved them, He still had a plan for them, but the glory was just not the same! The initial glory was lost. What was once eternal, became carnal.

God always had a plan to restore the glory of man. Jesus Christ, the second Adam is God's plan for that restoration through His work on the Cross. That's the ultimate glory, but today I want to speak about the seasons of the glory of God that we do experience on this earth. The seasons, when God manifests His presence in powerful ways. The Bible is full of accounts of God's visitation with man, His impartation of Glory, then man going into a slide, rejecting God and losing that Glory. God in His love and faithfulness always comes back and restores that glory.

I want to raise these three points this morning:

- God is currently busy with Christian Heritage Church, restoring His glory.
- There is a right and a wrong way to react when God restores His glory.
- We need to embrace what God is doing and respond in obedience so that we can participate in this fresh outpouring of God's glory.

MESSAGE

GOD'S PRESENCE IS HIS GLORY

When we speak about the Glory of God, we speak about His manifest presence. The Glory is not the anointing. The Glory is the magnificence, beauty and over-aweing splendour of God.

Throughout the Israelites time in the wilderness, God's presence was indicated by the pillar of fire at night and the cloud by day. His presence was so great that when Moses came out of the Tabernacle after spending time with God, His face reflected the Shekinah glory of God.

The Tabernacle and its furnishings were a symbolic picture of the worship in heaven, and the ark of the covenant was the most sacred object in Israel. When the Tabernacle was erected, the Ark would be placed in the Holy of Holies, the place where God would meet with the priest once a year. The place where the Mercy Seat was. God instructed it to be made as a symbol of His covenant with Israel.

The Ark went with Israel as Moses led them through the wilderness, when they crossed the river Jordan to enter the Promised Land and as they fought to gain possession of that country. Then Joshua set up the Tabernacle, in Shiloh, and from that time, it seems that the ark remained there.

A TRAGIC SLIDE

But like the slide that took place in the Garden of Eden, God's people kept backsliding. They would worship foreign gods instead of the one true God and when that happened, God would withdraw His glory!

In 1 Samuel we read of a tragic slide. Eli was the priest, he was getting along in years and his sons had not followed in his footsteps. In fact we read this in 1 Samuel: **1 Samuel 2:12-14 & 17** Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord 13 or for their duties as priests. ... 17 So the sin of these young men was very serious in the Lord's sight, for they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt.

God warned Eli about it, but he couldn't get his sons to change so God brought judgement on the whole nation.

During Israel's many battles with foreign armies in the Book of Judges, there is no mention of the Ark, but God's Glory was with the people, and when they called on Him and trusted in Him, He would give them victory in battle over their enemies and oppressors.

It happened that the Philistines attacked and defeated Israel, killing about 4000 men. Then the Israelites did the inconceivable, they decided to carry the Ark into battle: **1 Samuel 4:4-5** (NLT) So they sent men to Shiloh to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were also there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. 5 When all the Israelites saw the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord coming into the camp, their shout of joy was so loud it made the ground shake!

This was a bad decision! The leaders who made that decision were not, like Moses and Joshua, holy men. God did not guide those leaders to make that decision; and Israel's people were not even loyal to God. Israel's soldiers were not humble in front of God. In fact, they even shouted proudly when the ark entered their camp.

Their army leaders thought that they could force God to fight on their side. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, came with the Ark. Both men died that day and the Ark was captured by the Philistines.

Then we read this: **1 Samuel 4:19-21** Now his (Eli's) daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it. 21 Then 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. 22 And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

God gives us a stern warning in **Isaiah 42:8** (NKJV) I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

We cannot force God to manifest His glory, we can only experience it through His grace! Apostasy, wickedness, compromise, a lack of reverence for God and pride will cause Him to withdraw His glory and will result in judgement. What a terrible dark hour that is.

This weekend we have been challenged to live out the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit on a continual basis. It speaks of true relationship with God.

Can I be so bold as to ask whether we may have possibly been guilty of any of these offenses. Have we been carrying God's name around, throwing it into situations and expecting Him to move while all the time we are found lacking in our own lives?

- ***Do we have a genuine relationship with Jesus, or are we pretending?***
- ***Do we respect and revere Him the way we should?***
- ***Or do we just see Him as a way to get what we want?***

GOD IS GOD

God may have given the victory to the Philistines because Israel had tried to rely on the ark as though it was a lucky charm – in essence, they tried to win using man's ways.

But then God showed Himself to be God! The Philistines put the ark in the temple of their own god called Dagon. The next morning the statue of Dagon was found laying on the floor face down before the ark. The men had to pick the lifeless, man-made idol up again and set it on its place. The following morning, Dagon was again lying face down, its head and hands all broken off.

Then God struck the Philistines with plagues and tumors and many died. Wherever they sent the ark, the people suffered. God was showing that He was the true victory of Israel!

Finally, the Philistines placed the ark on a cart with two milk cows that were separated from their calves and set them off on the road. Instead of returning to look for their calves, the cows took the ark down the road back to Israel.

Our God does not require rescuing! Who is there like Him!

THE GLORY RETURNS

1 Samuel 6:13-15 (NLT) The people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley, and when they saw the Ark, they were overjoyed! 14 The cart came into the field of a man named Joshua and stopped beside a large rock. So the people broke up the wood of the cart for a fire and killed the cows and sacrificed them to the Lord as a burnt offering. 15 Several men of the tribe of Levi lifted the Ark of the Lord and the chest containing the gold rats and gold tumors from the cart and placed them on the large rock. Many sacrifices and burnt offerings were offered to the Lord that day by the people of Beth-shemesh.

God Himself brought the Ark back to Israel. It was their reminder of His covenant with them... **and do you know when He did it? At Pentecost! The Hebrew name is "Shavuot".**

The word Shavuot (or Shavuos) means "weeks." It celebrates the completion of the seven-week Omer counting period between Passover and Shavuot. It begins with the barley harvest and ends with the wheat harvest. Shavuot was the celebration by the Jews of receiving the Tora (Law) from God.

The day of Pentecost took place at the exact same time. The Jews and proselytes were in Jerusalem celebrating Shavuot when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

This I believe is incredibly significant! God is restoring His Glory to us once-again during the Christian feast of Pentecost!

Would you like to see it return of God's glory into your life during this 2019 FIRE conference as we celebrate Pentecost Sunday today?

WE HAVE TO RESPECT THE GLORY

1 Samuel 6:19-20 (NLT) 19 But the Lord killed seventy men from Beth-shemesh because they looked into the Ark of the Lord. And the people mourned greatly because of what the Lord had done. 20 "Who is able to stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" they cried out.

In the New Testament there is a similar example. While God was pouring out His Spirit on the new church, Ananias and Saphira lied about money they donated for a field that they had sold. They died.

If we want the manifest glory of God, we need to be willing to respect it! The Glory of God is dangerous!

WE NEED TO PREPARE FOR THIS NEW VISITATION OF GOD'S GLORY BY SANCTIFYING OURSELVES:

1 Samuel 7:3-6 Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you want to return to the Lord with all your hearts, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Turn your hearts to the Lord and obey him alone; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." 4 So the Israelites got rid of their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the Lord. 5 Then Samuel told them, "Gather all of Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you." 6 So they gathered at Mizpah and, in a great ceremony, drew water from a well and poured it out before the Lord. They also went without food all day and confessed that they had sinned against the Lord. (It was at Mizpah that Samuel became Israel's judge

Then the Lord's Glory returned and He gave them victory over the Philistines. This was the place that Samuel called "Ebenezer" **1 Samuel 7:12-13** Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!" 13 So the Philistines were subdued and didn't invade Israel again for some time. And throughout Samuel's lifetime, the Lord's powerful hand was raised against the Philistines.

We can also say like Samuel, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!", but we should desperately want more, we should be hungry for the manifest presence of God.

CONCLUSION

Through the ages, God has manifest His glory to man. Man has backslidden and sinned resulting in God removing His glory, but God in His mercy, kindness and grace is always looking for an opportunity to restore His Glory.

In Samuel's time, God did it during the feast of Shavuot, our feast of Pentecost.

I believe that this year, this Pentecost, God wants to restore His glory to Christian Heritage Church. We are on the verge of a glory visitation from God such as has not been seen by many generations. It may even be the end-time move of the Holy Spirit. But we must be ready: **1 Samuel 7:3** Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you want to return to the Lord with all your hearts, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Turn your hearts to the Lord and obey him alone;

- We must return to the Lord with all our heart.
- We must revere and respect God's Glory.
- We must desire His glory visitation.
- We must be in one place, in one accord, with hearts ready for God's outpouring.

Will you please join me today in asking God to restore His glory during this season of Pentecost. May we experience His presence like no one in our generation before has done so and may the world see in us the great glory of God.

I believe this is God's promise for Christian Heritage Church in this hour:

Isaiah 60:1-3 (NLT) "Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all to see. For the glory of the Lord rises to shine on you. 2 Darkness as black as night covers all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the Lord rises and appears over you. 3 All nations will come to your light; mighty kings will come to see your radiance.