International Bible Study Commentary
Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

1 Samuel 4:12–22 Discussion Questions

Choose 1 or more Questions from each of the five below.

1. A messenger brought news of Israel's defeat, the deaths of Eli's sons, and the capture of the ark of God (1 Samuel 4:12–17).

How did the messenger's appearance and the city's outcry reveal the seriousness of what had happened?

According to the Bible Lesson, why did possessing the ark fail to protect Israel from defeat?

Why must outward acts of religion never take the place of repentance, faith, and obedience to God?

2. Eli's heart trembled for the ark, and he fell and died when he heard that it had been captured (1 Samuel 4:13–18).

What do Eli's concern and his response to the news suggest about the importance of the ark to him?

How did the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas fulfill the warning the LORD had given through Samuel in the previous lesson?

What can we learn about the need to act on God's warnings instead of merely feeling concern about what may happen?

3. The wife of Phinehas went into labor after hearing the news and could not be comforted by the birth of her son (1 Samuel 4:19–20).

What losses did she face, and how does the passage describe her response?

Why might words intended to encourage someone fail to bring immediate comfort during deep grief?

How can we show the compassion of Jesus to someone who is overwhelmed by sorrow?

4. She named her son Ichabod and said that the glory had departed because the ark had been captured (1 Samuel 4:21–22).

What did the name Ichabod express about how she understood Israel's tragedy?

How does the Bible Lesson distinguish the ark as a symbol of God's presence from the LORD Himself?

How might someone begin trusting a religious object to protect or bless them, and how can we guard against this?

5. The Bible Lesson reminds us that the LORD had not abandoned Israel and had prepared Samuel to serve Him.

How did Samuel's presence and ministry give Israel reason for hope even though the ark was gone?

Why should a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ be the foundation of our confidence in Him?

What specific step can you take this week to express your trust in Jesus by loving and obeying Him?