

ï»¿

back to title page

“FROM ICHABOD TO EBENEZER”

1 Samuel 4:21-22 & 1 Sam. 7:12-13

We find in our texts TRAGEDY and VICTORY.

Here we have a stone symbol set upon this site to show and be seen as a stark reminder of what went wrong and what will make it right!

“Ichabod”. Talk about an "ICKY" name!

When we think of "Ichabod" most people think of the bumbling school teacher Ichabod Crane in Washington Irving's, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". He does reflect a person who has had the glory (of man) removed from him.

When you hear the name “Ebenezer”. , what do you think of? Ebenezer Scrooge, of course, the greedy, mean, miserly villain of Charles Dicken's “A Christmas Carol”.

Scrooge didn't want to burn much coal and was concerned that the human race had a surplus population. He didn't like celebrating holidays nor was he in favor of all that consumer spending.

Ebenezer Scrooge was an environmentalist!

There restaurant in Blowing Rock, NC named Ichabods—fancy Italian cuisine—I have no desire to eat there!

I have known of a few Churches name Ebenezer Baptist Church—better name by far!

The name Ebenezer is part of a lyric in the 2nd stanza of the hymn, “Come, Thou Fount”

Many modern hymnbooks remove the reference

Here I raise (to thee an altar) mine Ebenezer; Hither by Thy help I've come;

And I trust by Thy good pleasure , Safely to arrive at home.

In the Bible, Ebenezer is not a person but a place!; not a miser but a marker; not a verse but a victory; not a song but a stone—~ "A STONE OF HELP"

It was a traumatic time in Hebrew history. Here at Ebenezer - at this same spot... 20 years before, a tragedy took place.

This spot was significant in this story- A place of sin- sorrow, separation and sadness.

1 Samuel 4 Their hearts had played the harlot and they left their love.

In, Israel was beaten—beaten badly by the Philistines.

Thousands lay dead on the battlefield at “Ebenezer” (4:1-2).

WORSE, the Philistines had taken the ark of God !

Hophni & Phinehas (one of the Cartwright boys—one of Eli's) , brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battle field. When the people saw it, they gave a great shout; so loud it was that the Philistines were afraid.

The people had come to believe the God of Heaven was a magic GOOD LUCK charm. 4:1-4, 5

...they were worshipping the Ark and not the God of the Ark---they literally had put God in a box!

But Israel lost the battle; 30,000 were killed, including Hophni & Phinehas.

When old Eli heard the news of Israel's defeat and the death of his sons, he fell over and died, and his daughter in law, the wife of Phinehas, shocked into labor, gave birth to a son. She died in childbirth, but not before she had named her son "Ichabod" which means "The Glory has departed"

The Glory was gone, and for 21 years "Ichabod" was be written over the Nation and its people!

Here In CELEBRATION and APPRECIATION, Samuel sets up a stone on the battlefield.

A memorial, a sign...Pointing the people to Give God GRATITUDE~...Give God GLORY!

I. It was a stone of remembrance

—looking back to the past.

\* I read about a fellow in Rome, New York that erected an unusual marker. Growing tired of the bicentennial celebration in the United States, Eskill Rmgdahl of Rome, New York, displayed a plaque given to him as a joke by a friend eleven years earlier. The plaque reads: "N.O.N. Historical Marker. On this spot February 29, 1776, absolutely nothing happened."

I have noticed that as I get older, I forget things more often!

There have been times when I am looking for something that I have misplaced and then forgot what I was

looking for while I was still looking for that thing. I have found that I need reminders, so sometimes I will jot down little notes to myself. I need to remind myself and refresh my memory over and over again.

The Bible is a book that is filled with reminders.

The people had FORGOTTEN and therefore FORSAKEN the Lord!

A memorial monument was to remind them not to make the same mistake!

A MONUMENTAL MOMENT deserves a MONUMENT a MILESTONE!

i.e. PLYMOUTH ROCK 1620

· Æ Jacob named a rock Mizpeh—"tower of testimony"

· Æ The tribes of Reuben and Gad, built an altar called it Ed. (Josh 22:34)

OVER & OVER again we are REMINDED to REMEMBER God's INTEREST & INTERVENTION!!

Our Christian pathway should be marked with "Ebenezer" stones all along the way—The Lord helped us here... and here... and here! OH how He has HELPED!

It has been said that our blessings can go to either our head or our heart!

If they go to our head they make us haughty - if they go to our heart they make us humble.

\*Think of your hitherto's... places of problems in the past...

The Lord helped me through school.... get a job.....when I was sick.....saving my children..... quit smoking, drinking, taking drugs..... win someone to Christ.....The Lord helped me pay my bills..... The Lord has helped me have victory over my anger, bitterness, lust,

II. It was a SYMBOL of recognition

– a stone for the present

FAITH is ALWAYS in the PRESENT TENSE! Heb 11:1 "NOW faith is...."

Æ "Well once this happens, then I'll trust God" NO! Trust God TODAY! You don't blackmail God!

You oughta look back to this morning's biscuit and say GOD IS GOOD!

As the years passed, each time they saw the Ebenezer stone it would remind them that if God had helped them in the past, He could and would help them in the present.

It is interesting to know where this stone of help was raised. It was between Mizpah and Shen. (12)

Shen means "the tooth". It was a crag that jutted up in the land and was as a hard place to miss.

Ebenezer was literally between "a rock and a hard place."

The Ebenezer stone was placed between these two high points.

That is where victories are won—In the valleys—In those low spots in our Christian experience.

They knew they needed the Lord! He was their only hope!!!!

III. It was a SCENE of revIVAL

—a stone for the future.

HOW? How did it HAPPEN? How did they go from ICHABOD to EBENEZER?

During that 20 years the people began to examine themselves. Defeat should lead to self-examination. It takes humility to ask for help.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble". (James 4:6)

The people of Israel repented and returned. Vs 3 "if ye do return"

\* Robert Robinson was saved under the ministry of George Whitefield after hearing him preach from Matthew 3:7 and the subject, "The Wrath to Come." That day, Sunday, May 24, 1752 was the day Robert Robinson was saved. It was six years later that he wrote his great hymn Come Thou Fount. There are a couple of lines in his hymn that were tragically prophetic:

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; Prone to leave the God I love.

Robinson would preach the gospel and serve as a pastor but there came a time in his life when he would wander and leave the God he had loved. Robinson would find himself away from God for many years.

One day he was traveling by stagecoach and a lady that was a perfect stranger began to talk to him about what a blessing a certain hymn had been to her. She said, "Let me read it to you." It turned out to be his hymn Come Thou Fount. He tried to change the conversation but the lady kept talking about the hymn. Finally in tears he said, "Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that hymn many years ago; and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then!"

Jeremiah 3:22 says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

If you turn away from God then today , return!

God will forgive you and heal your backslidings. There is a wonderful promise in Hosea 14:4: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away."

As he knelt, he knelt upon the graves of those slain 20 yrs before.

Here they'd turned their back on God and He returned the favor, now they are TURNING BACK TO GOD!!!

Here we see the EFFECT & the EVIDENCE of REVIVAL!

Verse 6, The things of God were once again important to the people of God. There was a great interest and intensity in spiritual matters.

Æ They "drew water and poured it out before the Lord." -- they were saying, "We should be praying rivers of tears- but since we cannot physically we will symbolically"

...to illustrate the depths of their sorrow for their backsliding and the depth of their desire to be in fellowship with God!

They also took seriously their commitment to God. verse 6 they that they "fasted on that day." They were putting the spiritual before the physical.

"We have sinned against the Lord." Confession was made!

Verse 8, there was a renewal to prayer and seeking God.

Prayer became an important part of life. There was spiritual renewal of attitude, action, and affection.

Samuel offered the sacrifice of a lamb (v. 9)! We overcome by "the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).

THE PEOPLE OF GOD WERE MOVED.....THE POWER OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED vs. 10-11

"great Thunder" most approx 120 decibels

chainsaw 125 handgun 166 shotgun 170 can effect your equilibrium

God's presence was so real that it sounded like thunder crashing!

His power was so manifested that Philistines became so confused they fled in fear.

God's presence and power is always manifested in an amazing way when revival comes!

Now is not just a TIME TO LOOK BACK , but LOOK OUT for what lies ahead!!

God's been with you in your hitherto. And He will be with you in your hereafter...

\* IN 1740 IT LOOKED TOOLATE

In Enfield Massachusetts there is a stone monument.

If we will return to the Lord, He will return to us!

Restoration is the result of revival. (Psalm 51:12-13)

The Lord will give back what sin and Satan has robbed you of!!!

\* At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, Brandon Slay, a wrestler, lost the gold medal round Alexander Lipold of Germany. Slay had been certain he would win. He was undefeated in every round up until this point. It was a shock to him when Lipold was declared the winner. But his defeat was especially painful due to the fact that Lipold had used improper tactics to win; moves and methods that the judges overlooked.

The next day, Slay was still stinging from his defeat, when he received an e-mail from a fan. In it was a verse from Scripture—Proverbs 16:16, "How much better it is to get wisdom than gold. And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver." As Slay meditated on this portion of Scripture, he realized that he needed to learn a valuable lesson through his defeat. He determined to leave the matter in God's hands, refuse to be bitter, and rejoice in his second-place medal. He returned to his hometown in Texas with a new found confidence and peace.

A few weeks later the Olympic officials announced that Alexander Lipold had tested positive for steroid use.

Lipold was stripped of his gold medal and it was awarded to the second-place finisher, Brandon Slay!

Another awards ceremony took place, this time with Slay receiving not the silver but the gold medal. A reporter asked Slay, "Is this the best thing that has ever happened to you?" Slay answered, "No. the best thing that ever happened to me was winning the silver medal." He went on to explain that it was only through defeat that he had gained wisdom and understanding!

The journey from Ichabod to Ebenzer, from the absence of God's presence to the Help of His hand, can happen today!!

In this very service- you oughta raise an Ebenzer stone- a place where you get back to God!!!!!!

It doesn't have to be a STONE- maybe a DATE on the FLYLEAF of your BIBLE- a MARKER

Maybe even a MEMORY that marks your mind- engraved.

## An EBENZER EXPERIENCE!

\* A visitor at a fishing dock asked an old fisherman who was sitting there, "If I were to fall into this water, would I drown?"

It was a way of asking how deep the water was, but the fisherman had a good answer. "No" he said. "Falling' into the water doesn't drown anybody. It's staying under it that does."

B/C of the HITHERTO we can trust God for the the HERE and NOW and the HEREAFTER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

INVITATION:

The cure for ICHABOD is IMMANUEL!!!

Has the glory seemed to have departed from your life? Will you make today a turning point?