

## “Superstition Ain’t The Way!”

### I. INTRO:

- A. In 1972, when **Stevie Wonder** was only 22, he wrote the hit song “*Superstition*”.
1. The song deals with superstitions, & mentions several popular superstitious fables in its lyrics (*Thirteen month old baby, broke the lookin' glass/mirror - Seven years of bad luck, good things in your past*). It's chorus ended in, “*Superstition Ain't The Way!*”
- B. Many **athletes** have their own *superstitions* or *good luck rituals*.
1. **Michael Jordan** (a graduate of North Carolina) used to always wear his blue North Carolina shorts under his Bulls uniform for good luck.
  2. **Wade Boggs** use to eat only chicken the day of a game & drew the Hebrew symbol “*chai*” that means "To Life" in the dirt before every at-bat.
  3. **In baseball** it's bad luck to touch the baselines while running off and onto the field between innings.
  4. **Fishing** some spit on their bait before casting their rod to make fish bite. And no banana's on board! (Dan!)
- C. What might be silly in **sports** crosses a serious line in **religion**.
1. *Superstition* = An unjustified belief in supernatural causation leading to certain consequences of an action or event.
  2. So to borrow from Stevie... “*Superstition Ain't The Way!*”
- D. **OUTLINE:** Defeat; Death; & Departure.

### II. SUPERSTITION AIN'T THE WAY!

- A. **DEFEAT!** (1-11)
- B. **1ST DEFEAT!** (1-9)
- C. (1) The **Philistines** were a *non-semitic people* who had come from other parts of the Mediterranean world (Crete; *Sea Peoples*) to settle in the Promise Land in large numbers in the days of the Judges.
1. They posed the *single greatest military threat* to Israel at the time.
- D. (2) Israel was soundly defeated (4000 soldiers died).
1. To avoid a repeat of this tragedy, the Israelites tried a new approach...they would be led into battle by their God.

2. This tactic had proved successful earlier in Israel's history (Josh 6:6-21; *Jericho*).
  - a) However, this time it failed miserably! (Why? Well, that's what they ask in next verse)

E. (3) Great **question**...if only they had awaited the **answer**!

1. So, **what was the right answer?**

- a) The ark was the visible symbol of the Lord's Glory (or manifested presence).
- b) So, **why did the Israelites' use of it prove ineffective?** [It was used incorrectly!]
  - (1) The leaders had not consulted the Lord to ascertain God's will.
  - (2) They didn't ask as their Commander-in-chief (Yahweh of hosts) what strategy they should use.
    - (a) Did they **repent** and **turn to God** in prayer and confession? **No!** Instead they resorted to superstition.
  - (3) They appeared supremely confident *in themselves*.
  - (4) **Beware of using God to solve your problems if your life is not yielded to Him.**
- c) A high degree of religious excitement is no guarantee of God's favor or blessing.
  - (1) **Beware of a form of belief that confuses the symbol of faith with the real presence of God. It's the natural result of the decay of religion.**
- d) Instead of revering the ark as the symbol of **God's presence**, they turned it into a **religious relic!** [Like in 2 Kings 18:4 where Moses' serpent on pole became just that...*Nehushtan!*]

2. In what ways may **Christians today** make a similar mistake?

- a) Do we have any "*Christian superstitions*"? Oh I think we do!
  - (1) Don't some wear crosses as lucky charms?
  - (2) Don't some recite 3 magic words at the end of prayers to get their wish... "*in Jesus name*" [Yes, I know we are to ask in His name, but NOT as an *Abacadabra*, or an *Alakazam!*]
  - (3) Jn.14:13 **And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**
    - (a) Which means asking according to Jesus' will & mission.
    - (b) God isn't our **cosmic piñata** & **in Jesus name** isn't the magic stick that whacks the piñata & all the goodies fall out of heaven.

- F. (3-5) Eli's 2 sons wanted God's **help** but not God's *holiness*.<sup>1</sup>
1. They wanted God in their **crisis of life** but not for their **daily lives**.
  2. They thought that the *presence of the ark* would assure **victory**, but their *superstitious faith* had **no foundation**.
  3. **Lucky Rabbits foot**: The full superstition regarding the luck of the rabbit's foot is quite complex. Not only must it be a **real** rabbit's foot, but it must be the **left** hind foot! **Also**, rabbits' feet that you can *buy cheaply* may not be considered lucky. The most "lucky" feet are those taken from rabbits that are caught or killed **in a cemetery**. Even *the times* that the rabbit is killed may matter; some sources suggest that only a rabbit captured during a **full moon, new moon**, or on **Friday the 13th** will have a lucky left hind foot. Some suggest the rabbit must be **cross-eyed** and must be killed by shooting it with a **silver bullet**.
    - a) Well, as a *lucky rabbits foot* has **no foundation** neither did their *lucky ark*!
- G. (9) The hearts of the warriors *melted with fear*, but their leaders challenged them to **courage & fortitude**. "*Be men & fight!*"
1. Men what area of your life do you need a leader to come alongside of you & yell, "*put down your purse, pick up a weapon, & be a man!*"
  2. **What are you afraid of? Financials** fears? **Habits** you can't break? **Old friends** that aren't a healthy influence in your life, but don't know what to do?
    - a) *Get on your knees & fight like a man!*
    - b) It's like what *Alexander the Great* replied, when he was told **the Persians** were as the sands on the seashore, "One butcher is not afraid of a whole flock of sheep!"
- H. **2ND DEFEAT!** (10,11)
- I. **30,000** - what a surprise when their *poorly equipped militia* was severely defeated by the well-armed, highly disciplined Philistine army.
  - J. *Thats pretty bad when your good luck charm...gets stolen!!!*
- K. **DEATH!** (12-22)
- L. **OF ELI!** (12-18)
- M. Sitting on a backless seat, beside the highway, awaiting info from the battle field.
1. On the wall the spotter sees a runner speeding toward the city w/news.
- N. In **Eli's** case, his death was judgment from God; in **his daughter-in-law's** it was the result of her burden for the glory of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe: With The Word; 1 Sam.4

- O. (18) From Ps.78 & Jer.7:12 we know that **Shiloh** was totally destroyed.
1. **Read** Ps.78:60-62.
  2. Jer.7:11,12 **Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says the Lord. But go now to My place which was in **Shiloh**, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.**
- P. **OF ELI'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW!** (19-20)
- Q. Phinehas's pregnant wife was so upset by the news that she went into premature labor & died during the birthing process.
- R. **Who can count the trials this woman had already endured?**
1. She had had a troubled life; yet she stayed with her husband, bore his children, cared for him & them.
- S. **What a day of loss!** *Each item like another blow of the hammer, flattening the iron on the anvil.*
1. **They** 1st lost 4000 men; **then** the ark (God's glory); **then** Hophni & Phinehas; **then** 30,000 foot soldiers; **then** their high priest Eli; **then** Phinehas' wife.
- T. **DEPARTURE!** (21,22)
- U. **OF GOD'S GLORY!** (21,22)
- V. Known also as the *Shekinah*! Denoted the presence & the majesty of God.
1. The visible presence of God, forcefully taken away from them, is too great to be described with words.
- W. **Would you want your name to Ichabod?** (אִיכָבוֹד) Inglorious/no glory; or "Where is the glory?"
1. Or Ben-Oni (son of my sorrow); or Jabez (he will cause pain); or Beriah (tragedy).
  2. **Jesus will give us a new name**(Rev.2:17) & write on us **His new name**(Rev.3:12)
- X. **The glory has departed** - The glory of god dwelt in Israel but their sin forced God to depart at an hour when they most needed Him.
1. **Read** Ps.78:56-62
  2. Israel's history is a story of receiving and then losing the glory of God.
- Y. Israel had neither **the ark** nor **the glory** of God; they were naked before their enemies.
1. Had they been concerned about God's glory, they would have **repented** of their sins & **obeyed** Him, **but** it was too late.

Z. What has happened to **the glory** of God?

Where's the glorious **presence** and **power** of God in our lives?

Where is the glory in our **marriages**, in our **families**?

Where has the glory gone in the **church**?

Are our lives filled with the **presence**, and **power** of the Holy Spirit?

1. The **children of Israel** first departed from the Lord, **and then the glory of the Lord** departed from them.
2. When they *should have repented*, and **returned**, **they** stayed the course of **disobedience**, **and** it would cost them dearly!

AA. Do you need to return to the Lord this morning so that you might once again experience **His glory**? [*"Superstition Ain't The Way!"*]

1. What better day to experience His Glory again than today, on **Pentecost!**