

Sunday Night Message

May 12, 2019

Get Out God!

Topics – Philistines; the Ark;

Series – *1 Samuel*

Text – 1 Samuel 6

Introduction

When we last looked into 1 Samuel, we saw the Philistines had carried the ark of God back into their land, and had even placed it inside their pagan temple of Dagon. God was not at all happy about this arrangement, and began to judge the Philistines. He knocked over their image of Dagon and cut off his hands and head. He also plagued the Philistines with “emerods.” The Philistines finally determine after seven months of getting beat up by God that they must get the ark of God out of their country. In chapter six, we will observe how they do it.

However, we will also see that the Israelites in Bethshemesh are no better off than the Philistines. In fact, you could argue that they are judged far more severely than the Philistines were. They make the fatal mistake of looking into the ark, and God kills over 50,000 of them as a result.

The problems that the Philistines and the Israelites faced regarding the ark were the direct result of their ignorance of ark itself, but also of the God that is represented by the ark. The Philistines might have been excused as they were never taught better, but there were really no excuse for God’s people. They should have known better.

The Philistines Expel the Ark from Their Land (vs. 1 – 12)

v. 1 – the ark was in Philistia for quite a while (seven months). They endured the judgment of God probably much longer than they needed to. They could have removed the ark months earlier, but they stubbornly held on to their sin.

The Egyptians were willing to wait until “to morrow” to have the plague of frogs removed from Egypt.

*"Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, **To morrow**. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only." (Exodus 8:8-11)*

Why is it that people will wait until nothing is left before they get things right with God and repent.

V. 2 – The Lords of the Philistines call for their “priests and diviners,” which were their pseudo-religious leaders. According to Isaiah, they had a reputation:

"Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers." (Isaiah 2:6)

The Israelites were forbidden to fool with these people at all:

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." (Deuteronomy 18:10-14)

God's people should have nothing to do with any kind of false religion or astrology.

Vs. 3 – 5 – The priests and diviners come up with a plan to return the ark along with an offering. Five golden emerods, and five golden mice.

V. 6 - Notice that these diviners had some knowledge of God (v. 6). Satan always mixes a little bit of truth with his falsehood; just enough to make it look like it is safe.

Vs. 7 – 9 – Notice that they suggest that the ark and the offering go on a new cart. God specified that the ark be transported by the Levites. God does not judge the Philistines for this, perhaps because they did not know better. However, when the Israelites later try to do the same thing, God will send them a strong message (See 1 Chronicles 13:5 – 10). God's work and worship must be done God's way.

The reasoning of the Philistines is that if these "milch kine" move away from their calves, which is unnatural, and travel into Israel, then they would know that this was a supernatural act of God.

Vs. 10 – 12 – The milch kine do move away from their calves, but it seems as if they are compelled to do so by an unseen hand.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

They are "lowing," possibly because they long for their calves.

Illustrate – There is a picture here. Sometimes the child of God will be called upon to do something that goes against human nature. A couple might be called by God to go to the mission field, and leave behind family and friends.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:37-39)

The People of Bethshemesh Are Excited to See the Ark (vs. 13 – 18)

V. 13 – Bethshemesh was a Levitical city (Joshua 21:13 – 16). These Levites were out in the fields because there obviously was no service for the Lord going on. It was during the wheat harvest, which takes place around the end of May or the beginning of June. They see the ark coming on the cart, and they rejoice.

V. 14 – 18 – The Levites at Bethshemesh kill the oxen and burn the wood upon the stone that was there, and even offer the mice and the golden emerods up as a sacrifice. Everything that they did up until this point was good, but what happens next gets them in deep trouble with the Lord.

The Survivors of Bethshemesh Entreat the People of Kirjathjearim (vs. 19 – 21)

The people look into the ark. The only people that were supposed to even see the ark was the family of Aaron, and even the high priest could not enter into the Holy of Holies except for once in the year at the Day of Atonement. If the ark was being transported, it was covered with the veil by the priests (Numbers 4:5), and then only after it was covered could it be transported by the Kohathites, a family of the Levites who carried it with rods that were inserted into rings. However, the Kohathites were not permitted to look at it when it was being covered:

"But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die." (Numbers 4:20)

Practical Point – It is dangerous when people become too flippant about the things of God. The ark was just a box made out of shittim wood overlaid with gold, but it was sanctified for a holy use. It was consecrated for the service of God. This church building is just a building, but it, too, is consecrated for the service of God.

Christians are also consecrated for the service of God:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

The people who were not killed for looking into the ark wanted the ark out of their land, and they begged the people of Kirjathjearim to come and get it. They thought they wanted God, but maybe God was a little too much for them. People want God, but not too much God.

You will recall that Shiloh was the place where the Tabernacle was, but there is no attempt at this point to bring the ark back to Shiloh. It is probable that Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines after the Battle of Aphek referred to in chapter four.

