

I Samuel Lesson 06

I Samuel Chapter 6

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 77:11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Samuel this week. In last week's lesson, we studied about the problems that the Philistines faced after they took the ark of God into the presence of their false god Dagon. One problem after another faced the people and many died and many others were afflicted with emerods. The chapter closed with the leaders trying to decide what to do with the ark after moving it several times to no avail.

I. Philistines Send the Ark Away

1 Sam 6:1 And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

1 Sam 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

The ark of the Lord was in the land of the Philistines for seven months. It had caused them so much pain and death that they consult with their priest and diviners as to what they should do about the ark.

1 Sam 6:3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

1 Sam 6:4 Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

1 Sam 6:5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

The priest and diviners determine that they should send the ark back to Israel. However, they felt that they should not send it back without acknowledging that they had transgressed against God. When sending it back, they suggest that

they send a trespass offering of five golden mice and five golden emerods. The priest felt if they did this, that the offering would allow them to be healed. If they did this, perhaps God would take his hand off of them and their land. The five mice were symbolic of the five lords of the Philistines. From what we read in verse five, it is safe to assume that there was a plague of mice in the land of the Philistines. They are instructed to make images of mice and emerods to send away with the ark of God. Also, they were give glory to the God of Israel. The priest felt if they did this, God might peradventure lighten His hand off of them and remove the plagues that beset them. They accurately assessed that the God of Israel had brought judgment upon the gods of the Philistines and their land.

1 Sam 6:6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

The pagan priest chided the lords of the Philistines about having less sense about the God of Israel than had Pharaoh in Egypt. From our earlier study about Hebrew History, you remember how that God brought great plagues upon the Egyptians, and eventually Pharaoh let the people go. But even after all the plagues that the ark had caused them, the Philistines had stubbornly held on to the ark of the great God.

Matthew Henry said the Philistines Knew Some of the History of the Hebrews

Wherefore do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This good use we should make of the remaining records of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned not to harden our hearts as they did. It is much cheaper to learn by other people's experience than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go; therefore let the Philistines yield in time to let the ark go. 2. They advise that, when they sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, v. 3. Whatever the gods of other nations were, they knew the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings and trespass-offerings from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly he resented the affront of holding his ark captive, those with whom he had such a quarrel must in any wise return him a trespass-offering, and they could not expect to be healed upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction. So far natural light instructed men. But when they began to contrive what that satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those who by willful sin have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, as the Philistines did the ark (Rom. 1:18), may conclude that there is no making their peace with him whom they have thus injured but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin .

II. Ark is Sent Away On a New Cart

1 Sam 6:7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which

there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

1 Sam 6:8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.

1 Sam 6:9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.

The Philistines took the ark of God and put it on a new cart. They also put their trespass offering off the golden emerods and gold mice in a coffer beside the ark. To pull the ark, they took two unbroken milk cows and hitched them to the cart. They took the cow's calves and shut them up at home in the stall. Since these cattle had never been broken to pull a cart, they felt that they would know if the hand of the Lord was against them if they took off with the cart towards Bethshemesh. To pull the cart was one thing, but to leave their own calves and do it would mean it was contrary to nature. If they stayed there with their calves, they felt it would mean that all the things that had happened was just by chance. Lots of people want to claim things happen like this, but God has all things in His control and even the bad things can work to our good in life.

1 Sam 6:10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

1 Sam 6:11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

1 Sam 6:12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.

Apparently, the cows did not want to go as they kept lowing as they walked. However, God took control of them and caused them to keep going straight down the highway to the town of Bethshemesh.

III. Effect the Arrival of the Ark Had on the People of God

1 Sam 6:13 And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

1 Sam 6:14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.

The people of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat when the ark arrived. It meant a lot to them to have the presence of the Lord with them, so they rejoiced

to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite and stood there. The men cut the cart up for wood and offered the cows for a burnt offering. The people with Joshua sent for the Levites to come and take down the ark and to take charge of the trespass offering.

1 Sam 6:15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

1 Sam 6:16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

1 Sam 6:17 And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

The Levites come and take down the ark of the Lord, and the men of Bethshemesh offered burn offerings unto the Lord. The Lords of the Philistines were nearby, and they saw what was done and returned unto to Ekron the same day. The trespass offering that the Philistines sent to Israel was for the cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron. The ark had been in several if not all of these towns. The offering was for these cities and also for some of the smaller cities and unwallled cities.

1 Sam 6:18 And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite.

The stone in Joshua's field was known as the stone of Abel, and was considered a boundary marker between the Israelite towns and those of the Philistines. All of the towns and villages unto Abel were represented in the trespass offering of the mice and emerods. It says that when this account was written, that the stone of Abel stood in the field of Joshua.

IV. The Men of Bethshemesh Smitten by the Lord

1 Sam 6:19 And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

1 Sam 6:20 And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

1 Sam 6:21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim,

saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

The men of Bethshemesh opened the ark. This was a serious matter, and it brought the judgment of God upon them. No one but the priest was allowed to handle the ark of God. God smote 50,070 of the people of Bethshemesh. They realize that they could not deal with the ark, and they sent messengers to Kirjathjearim asking that someone come and take the ark. As we mentioned last week, the things of God are holy and need to be looked upon with respect and honor. We need to always do things God's way, and that way is recorded in His book.

J. Vernon McGee said Israel was not yet ready to receive the Ark of God back in the proper way.

It is not that they looked in the ark and saw something that they should not have seen. That is not the point. The ark was a box. That is all it ever was. The point is that it was at the ark in the Holy of Holies that God met with His people. He is not meeting with them now. They have turned from Him. Their rebellion and blasphemy are revealed in their disobedience. Because of this, God brings judgment upon them. Now in a superstitious way they want to get rid of the ark. They send messengers to Kirjathjearim saying, "You come and get it." In other words, Israel is not ready to receive the ark. God's people are not prepared to return to Him.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.