

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

[1Sa 6:1-21 NKJV] 1 Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines **seven months**. 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it to its place." 3 So they said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but by all means return [it] to Him [with] a **trespass offering**. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." 4 Then they said, "What [is] the trespass offering which

we shall return to Him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden rats, [according to] the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague [was] on all of you and on your lords. 5 "Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and from your land.

In our study last week, we saw how the Ark of the Covenant wreaked havoc on the Philistines after they had captured it from the Israelites.

They captured it and brought it to their cities and treated the Ark of the Covenant as a trophy for their victory.

We saw them bring the Ark of the Covenant into the temple of their god, Dagon, and the very next morning when they showed up at the temple, Dagon had fallen and it couldn't up.

They priests propped up Dagon and the next morning when the priests come into the temple, its head and its hands had fallen off.

God had clearly demonstrated His superiority over their pagan god.

However, the priests still refused to render to God the honor that He deserved.

So God brings a plague against the Philistines.

This time it affects everyone in the city. People develop these painful tumors – these hemorrhoids.

And when they try to move the ark to another Philistine city, they were infected with the tumors.

And they tried moving it to another one of their cities and they were infected by these painful tumors as well.

Now, the rational course of action at this point ought to have been this:

1) The God of Israel is real & powerful; more powerful than the gods the Philistines have been serving.

2) Therefore, Believe in Him & serve Him.

However, that is not what the Philistines do.

In verse one, it tells us that the Philistines held onto the ark for seven months – seven in the number of perfection.

So I guess, we can say that the ark was in the hands of the Philistines, the perfect amount of time.

It took them seven months to realized that they had errored in their response to God.

However, instead of putting their faith in Him, the only thing they can come up with is how to get rid of Him.

Church, unfortunately, this is the mindset of many people today.

They know that God is real,

they can't escape the evidences of His presence and His power –

however, they will do whatever they can to avoid dealing with Him.

And I say this because I was the same way before I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

My friend Ed Pena spent month after month sharing the gospel with me and I didn't want anything to do with it.

I mocked him for it.

Yet, he continued to pray for me and continued to share the gospel with me until that Friday afternoon in October of 2001 where I realized the futility of resisting God.

So here in our text, the Philistines are looking for a way to get rid of the Ark – and they call upon their own religious

gurus who suggest returning the Ark back with a trespass offering.

Now, a trespass offering was a way of making reparation for a wrong that was committed.

You guys can read Leviticus 5 and it will describe the trespass or guilt offering when it came to the Children of Israel.

However, the shedding of blood was still required – whether it was from a pigeon or a goat.

The Philistines only provided these golden images.

Five golden tumors and five golden rats –

The Philistine area was comprised of 5 major cities and from the text here, it implies that all five cities were inflicted

with this plague of rats and tumors – that is why they build five of them.

They are hoping that by including this gift of gold to the God of Israel, things might start to get better for them.

6 "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?"

The Philistines were aware of the history of the Exodus.

They knew that Pharaoh's heart was hardened as he allowed 10 plagues come over Egypt before he allowed the Children of Israel to leave.

The Philistines knew that it was the God of the Hebrews that brought about those plagues yet; they still continued to worship their weak, powerless idols instead of serving the one true God.

7 "Now therefore, make a new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. **8**

"Then take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him [as] a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it away, and let it go. 9 "And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, [then] He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall

know that [it is] not His hand [that] struck us--it happened to us by chance."

What we have here in verse 7-9 is a test.

They are pretty certain that the plagues are from God but just to be certain - they come up with a test – it is stacked against God.

Why do they stack it against God? Because they are reluctant to repent.

The test

- We have **two milk cows**. Now milk cows are only good for one thing – to produce milk. Milk cows are not used to pull carts.

- **They had never been yoked.** If you are going to yoke two animals together, you need to be aware of the strengths of the animals. If one is stronger than the other one or one is much older than the other one, you will never be able to go in a straight line. This is the principal behind the scriptures warning us about being unequally yoked – the nonbeliever will tend to turn you from the things of the Lord.

If these milk cows had never been yoked before – there is no way of determining if they were of equal strength.

- **Take their calves home.** By taking away the calves from the milk cows, the milk cows would be drawn to wherever their calves are taken. If they hear the calves

cry – that is the direction the milk cows are going to go to.

- **Send it away and let it go.** Once the Ark is on the cart and attached to the yoke with the two milk cows, they were to simply let it go free and see if the milk cows can somehow find a way to use GPS and take the ark to Beth Shemesh which is about 7 miles up the road from where they were in Ekron.

If these milk cows are able to do all of this, then we will acknowledge that the plagues did indeed come from God – however, if they don't – then everything happened by chance.

10 Then the men did so; they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at

home. 11 And they set the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors. 12 Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh, [and] went along the highway, **lowing as they went**, and did not turn aside to the right hand or the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh.

So the Philistines did exactly what they were told and we see the milk cows go against all natural instincts and they headed for Beth Shemesh supernaturally being led by the Lord.

Imagine these five lords of the Philistines as they follow the milk cows up the road. Makes you wonder if they tried to get the milk cows to turn back.

I asked you to make a note of the cows lowing as they went -

This means the cows were not especially happy. They

longed for their calves at home, yet they still did the will of

God.

13 Now [the people of] Beth Shemesh [were] reaping their wheat harvest in the valley; and they lifted their eyes and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see [it]. 14 Then the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood there; a large stone [was] there. So they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest that [was] with it, in which [were] the articles of gold, and put [them] on the large stone. Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt

offerings and made sacrifices the same day to the LORD.

So when the Israelites see the milk cows pulling the cart with the Ark of the Covenant – they are naturally happy, as the Ark has been away for seven months.

So they offer a burnt offering???

However, there are two major problems with their offering.

1.[Lev 1:1-4 NKJV] 1 Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock-- of the herd and of the flock. 3 'If his offering [is] a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male

without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD. 4 'Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. **The burnt offerings had to be male!!!**

2.[Deu 12:5-6 NKJV] 5 "But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. 6 "There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

All burnt offerings had to be made where the tabernacle was. The tabernacle was in Shilo.

16 So when the five lords of the Philistines had seen [it], they returned to Ekron the same day. 17 These [are] the golden tumors which the Philistines returned [as] a trespass offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 and the golden rats, [according to] the number of all the cities of the Philistines [belonging] to the five lords, [both] fortified cities and country villages, even as far as the large [stone of] Abel on which they set the ark of the LORD, [which stone remains] to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. 19 Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of

the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter. 20 And the men of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?" 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down [and] take it up with you."

We already went over two things that the people of Beth Shemesh had done wrong when it came to the burnt offering.

However, here they violate another command of God – and that is that they looked into the Ark of the Covenant.

Remember, in order to look into the ark – the cover must be removed. The cover consists of the mercy seat and it was also forbidden to touch the Ark.

So the text tells us that God struck these men.

Now, the number is either 50070 or 70.

There are a few theologians that I read that indicated that Hebrew grammar translated would indicate that out of 50000 - 70 were struck.

However, it also says that it was a great slaughter.

The Ark of the Covenant was also not to be transported on a cart and we saw that the Philistines transported the Ark on a cart – why didn't they get slaughtered like the people here at

the end of chapter 6 – the reason is that the Children of Israel had the law and therefore should have known better.

[1Sa 7:1-17 NKJV] 1 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

The Ark is brought over to Kirjath Jearim – the twenty years that it speaks of here is only the twenty year period from the time it arrives until Samuel steps into his role as a judge over Israel.

The Ark remains in this same spot for almost another 100 years until David becomes king and brings the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:3 – note)

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, [then] put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

The word used for return here in verse three – is the Hebrew word for repent.

And notice the order.

You have repentance which takes care of the inward first and then that leads to taking care of the outward which for the Children of Israel was their worship of other gods.

They didn't abandon the God of Israel – they simply added the other pagan gods to their worship.

And what made these two gods attractive to the Children of Israel was that -

Baal was the god of money/prosperity

Ashtoreth was the goddess of love/sex

The same two gods that the world looks upon to this day.

5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured [it] out

before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

The drawing of water and pouring it out before the Lord signified the pouring out of their hearts before the Lord – meaning that they confessed their sins before the Lord.

7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard [of it], they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered [it as] a

whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

Compare this to last week's study when we saw the Israelites send the Ark into battle without first going to Samuel.

I had mentioned that Samuel had his ears tuned to God and the elders never reach out to him to find out why they lost the first battle against the Philistines,

10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel

went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car.

I find it interesting that Samuel's burnt offering consists of a suckling lamb – and as the Children of Israel pursue the Philistines, they drive them back to Beth Car – “house of the lamb”

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set [it] up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

Here we have Samuel setting up memorial stones –

He wanted future generations to remember the great victory God had given them that day.

Now, this is Ebenezer 2, because last week, the first battle the Israelites lost to the Philistines before they took the ark – that place was also named Ebenezer.

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. 15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. 17 But he always returned to Ramah, for his

home [was] there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Church, here we see an example of what happens when we come to repentance and submit fully to His will.

The same Israelites that were getting slaughtered last week in chapter 4, as they relied upon their own understanding -

God is the one that is bringing them not only victory but also peace.

But repentance is the key.

Not just sorrow –

May we truly experience that inward change in our hearts and may we truly only serve the One worthy of being served.

Amen.

Let's pray...

