

## 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Ch 5-6

Chapter 4 left the scene on Israel going from bad to worse, you recall that the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. We read that the word of Samuel (who was bringing to them the Word of the Lord) was coming to all of Israel. And just prior to that we understand that the Word of the Lord was rare in that day, because everyman was doing what was right in his own eyes, not walking in the integrity of the scriptures and doing what was right in God's eyes. And because of that God wouldn't confide in anyone, He wouldn't speak to the people, and when He did, it just seemed to be a word of rebuke, &/or judgment. But He was raising up for Himself this man who *would be* true to Him, this man through whom He could show Himself strong on the behalf of, the man's name of course being Samuel.

And when the Word of the Lord began to come to the people, warfare was right around the corner. And I find that that's always the case; nothing seems to bring on the warfare of the enemy like the proclamation of the Word of God. Now God never told them to go to war, and we need to be careful not to assume that, but the warfare came nonetheless, and in the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of the battle we find that Israel went down in defeat, around 4,000 men fell that day (of Israel).

And so they regrouped, and as they were strategizing, and organizing their battle plan, some "bright" individual said, I've got a plan and it will surely work. Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant into battle with us, so that when "it" comes among us "it" may save us from the hand of our enemies.

Now as you know the Ark was that box (Approx, 3' x 2') made of wood, overlaid with gold in which was the jar of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the 10 commandments, the Law of God. And on top of that box was a lid of pure gold on which 2 angels with outstretched wings pointing toward each other had been fashioned, and the lid to the box was known as the Mercy Seat. And the Ark represented the presence of the Lord, and so they thought, "let's bring the box into the battle with us and surely (it) will bring us victory."

Now someone has once defined idolatry as "Trusting people, possessions or positions to do for me what only God can do." And in that Israel had fallen prey to idolatry, and we pointed out the danger, and the fallacy of looking to an "it" to bring us victory rather than looking to "Him". Looking to some type of a procedure, or program, or list of "to do's" to get us where we need to be, rather than simply trusting (not the procedure) but the *person* of Jesus Christ.

And we think, "This is "it", I'll read the bible through in a year, I'll be in church every time the doors are open, I'll pray every morning and every night, I've got "it" all boxed up in a neat little package and surely now I'll have victory." But those things are merely means to an end, they're not ends in themselves, they're not what bring you victory, it's God, it's Jesus Christ that will bring you victory.

And going to church, or reading the bible, or prayer, or whatever it may be, are merely (as significant and essential as they are) vehicles through which we are to come into *His* presence, and look to *Him*, and talk with *Him* and seek *His* direction for my life, rather than just viewing these things as a box that I check off on my spiritual to do list. The point being that these things are all wonderful as long as we don't look to *them* rather than looking to *Him*.

Well, they brought their box into the battle believing it would bring them victory and you know what happened, they went down into defeat in even a worse way, 30,000 foot soldiers were slaughtered, and the Philistines captured the Ark. What's the lesson, don't start checking off boxes thinking they'll bring you victory, check with the Lord personally, fellowship with Him intimately, don't look to other things thinking now you've got it all figured out, boxed up and ready to go. (Ch 5)

Vs1

Now Ashdod was one of the 5 cities, or regions of the Philistines.

Vs 2

Dagon was the foremost god of the Philistines; he was an idol who was fashioned in the form of ½ man and ½ fish. He had the torso of a man, the head of a man, and arms and hands, and the bottom ½ was that of a fish. You recall in 1<sup>st</sup> Chron ch 10 when we see the end of Saul, that the Philistines placed his armor in the temple of their gods, but they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. And Dagon, (in their mythology) was believed to be the father of Baal, now I'm sure that most of you are familiar with Baal, he surfaces quite frequently in the OT, and Dagon was believed to be his father.

And so they took the Ark of the Covenant that they'd captured and they placed it in the temple of Dagon, right next to his idol in essence bringing the God of the Israelites under the superiority of their god whom they believed gave them victory over the Israelites God. They were honoring Dagon in this.

Vs3

So they visit the temple just to glory in their victory, and their prized possession, and when they venture into the temple, there they find their god (Dagon) on its face before the ark. And they're all "Da-gon it what's going on here?" and So they pick their god up, and set him back on his pedestal or whatever. Now, I have to confess, that right then and there, I believe I'd have a problem. They're having to help out their god; they don't realize that apparently he can't take care of himself. It's like the Japanese warlord who ruled over Japan in the late 1500s, he commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took 50,000 men five years to build, but they'd barely finished the work when the earthquake of 1596 brought the roof of the shrine crashing down and wrecked the statue. In a rage this ruler (Hideyoshi) shot an arrow at the fallen colossus. "I put you here at great expense," he shouted, "and you can't even look after your own temple."

If you find yourself serving a god that needs your help, then you're not serving any god at all. You remember when Gideon tore down the altar of Baal, and all the men got upset and decided that they were going to have to kill Gideon for what he'd done. And so they went to Joash, (Gideon's dad) and said, "*Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.*" But Joash said to all who stood against him, "*Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself.*" Now, I like that, I don't want to serve a god who needs me to help him out, because then who's God?

You remember that Med-alert commercial some years ago that had that phrase that everyone began to mock, "Help, I've fallen and I can't get up!" Well, that's the cry of Dagon here, he's fallen and he can't get up on his own, and so they sat him up. Again it's a sad thing that anyone would serve a god who couldn't get up when he fell down, that needed the help of man to re-establish his position.

Vs4

So imagine waking up early the next morning and going into the temple of your god only to find his head and his hands having been broken off as the thing fell prostrate before the Ark. All that was left was the torso and the fish part, and immediately they should've known that something "fishy" was taking place here. These guys just weren't getting it, and the significance of the parts that were dismembered is that the head, the seat of wisdom and direction, and the hands, the instruments of action, were cut off. Dagon just couldn't stand in the presence of the Lord. He couldn't lead his people in victory against the Lord, nor could he take any action towards the Lord, but notice what happened.

Vs 5

Since the threshold of the door is where the head stopped rolling, and the hands were there at the door, instead of saying, "Man, this whole thing is fishy, the god we serve has been broken." They decided to hallow the place where his head and hands were at on the floor. These Philistine priests, like men confronted with the truth today, rejected God *despite* the evidence, not *because* of a lack of evidence. The evidence was all there, their god was nothing, unable to defend himself, unable to take care of himself and you just have to wonder what's the deal here? Why would they continue to justify this false god, and bow to him rather than repenting and falling on their face *willingly* before the true God of Israel?

How could they press on and continue to believe something so ridiculous? Well, you have to realize that the worship of Dagon, much like that of Baal or Ashtoreth involved all types of bizarre rituals and sexual immorality. And the people were attracted to this loose type of lifestyle that was justified by these false gods; in fact these immoralities were an aspect of their worship. And if they were to worship the LORD instead of Dagon, that would mean a huge change in their mentalities and lifestyle. And quite frankly they weren't willing to make those changes. It was just easier to glue Dagon back together and enjoy a life led in the flesh, than to surrender your life to the true God who demands holiness and purity of His people.

And people are the same way today, why do so many people follow these false philosophies and get involved in bizarre religions? Because quite frankly these philosophies and false religions cater to, and justify their indulging of the flesh rather than calling them into accountability with their sin.

And so they honor it, and hallow it even though its so obviously powerless to give them any real victory, instead it brings them into further bondage.

God has shown them their god is powerless, but they haven't listened, and so God isn't finished with them yet, notice vs 6.

Vs 6

They should've listened the 1<sup>st</sup> time, now the consequences of their refusal to repent begin to intensify on a personal level. God showed them their god was nothing, and it meant nothing to them, now God begins to spank them, His hand is heavy on them. There where it says He struck them with tumors, if you have an OKJV you see where it says "emrods" or the literal word there is "hemorrhoids" so God struck them heavily in the backside and gave them a literal pain in the rear to a very severe degree.

Vs 7

This isn't working out, we're going to have to get rid of this thing, something has to go. And instead of allowing it to be their sin, instead of repenting, and calling upon the God of Israel, submitting to Him, believing in Him, instead of turning from their sin, they turn from the Lord, they send the Lord down the road. How unfortunate that is, when push comes to shove, and people are confronted with their sin, and it's decision time, how many opt to choose the world, they choose to send the Lord down the road, rather than repent of their sin. So we'll notice here, the Ark becomes like a hot potato, every where it goes it's the same thing, people are being judged, these "tumors" are breaking out in full force, and the Ark just becomes a pain to have around.

Vs 8-12

But the tragic thing about all of this is that the Ark (representing God's presence) could've been a phenomenal blessing to the people, but because they wouldn't repent, in essence it became a curse. And the same thing is true of the presence of God among people today.

Paul wrote, "*For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.*" 2 Cor 2:15-16 It all just depends on which side of the fence you live, the work of Christ on your behalf can be the greatest blessing you've ever known, or it can become the greatest witness against you regarding God's judgment. And the choice is yours, if you surrender your life to God, it's a blessing, if you harden your heart against Him, it will become a plague, and a curse to you in the end.

## Ch 6

## Vs 1

Pride is such a foolish thing, rather than just relinquishing the Ark back over to the Israelites, they fought and fought and wrestled with these plagues for 7 months. It's so frustrating to watch people sometimes as God is dealing with them, and their life is falling apart, and you wonder, "How long is going to take for them to realize the futility of resisting the Lord?" Things could be getting better instead of worse, but they just keep resisting.

## Vs2

Interesting, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord?" Keeping in mind that the Ark represented the Lord and His presence, that's the same question that Pilate asked. "*What then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?*" (Matt 27:22) That's the most important question any individual will ever be confronted with, what shall I do with the Lord? I'll tell you Pilate; you should fall down on your face and cry out for mercy, repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ

But that's not the answer people are looking for, what they mean is, is "How am I to do away with Him so that everyone is satisfied?" How can we just get rid of this thing?

## Vs3-4

So we probably shouldn't think about this too long because it can turn into a pretty humorous type of event that's taking place here, they have to fashion 5 golden "tumors" and 5 rats to represent the 5 leaders of the Philistines, I guess because they're confessing they've been acting like rats and have been real pains in the backside to the children of Israel.

In actuality most commentators believe that long with smiting the people with hemorrhoids, there was probably an outbreak of the bubonic plague, which as you know is spread via mice and rats. So those whom didn't fall victim to the plague were smitten with these "tumors".

## Vs5-6

In other words you guys should be repenting and should've sent the ark back along time ago instead of acting like the Egyptians who hardened their hearts and didn't let the people go. Now God is doing mighty acts and sending plagues on you just the same. Hos 10:12 says, "*Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*" Again they should've been cultivating their hard and barren hearts and sowing in righteousness in repentance so that they might obtain mercy, but instead they're reaping the rewards of unrighteousness and judgment for their sins.

So now the priests devise a plan to sort of “force” the hand of God to prove that it’s Him doing this, because after all “We wouldn’t want to humble ourselves and repent unnecessarily now would we?” (The stubbornness and hardness of mans heart, when will we ever learn that it’s just best to draw near to God period? Not see how much sin we can get away with.)

Vs 7-12

Now in the natural these cows should’ve resisted the yolks, fought against one another in direction and sought to get back to their calves.

But instead they shot with one accord straight for the Israelite territory 10 miles or so away, and this word “lowing” here in vs 12 according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* means this, it says, “This root indicates an intense aversion which is expressed often in punitive or adverse action.” In other words it was obvious by the way these cows were bellowing out that they didn’t want to be going the direction they were, but that they were being supernaturally driven. They wanted to go back to their calves.

Vs13-19

And in here lies a lesson for us all, #1 The Israelites should’ve immediately covered the ark, it was to be seen only by the high priest and even at that only once a year. And we’re not told why they looked into it, maybe they were just curious, maybe they wanted to make sure that the Philistines didn’t steal the articles that were in it. But either way they were expressly forbidden to even touch the Ark, much less to remove the lid. But listen, here’s the lesson, God had told them to place the Law into the Ark, and to place the lid, or the “mercy seat” over the law. There was always to be mercy, covering the law, and anytime you remove mercy to start poking around in the law, trying to get to the bottom of a situation, and in doing so you remove the covering of mercy, it’ll kill you. *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”* James 2:13

Anytime I seek to get to the bottom of a situation, and in doing so I remove the covering of mercy, I inevitably become critical, cynical, and judgmental and it robs my joy, it kills something in me. The mercy seat was never to be removed, it was never to be lifted off of the law, in 2 Cor 3:5-6 Paul wrote and said, *“our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”* and He goes onto to speak of how the ministry of death was engraved on tablets of stone, and how it demonstrated the righteousness of God (no doubt) but spelled out death to you and me. That’s why it’s so critical that mercy always be covering the law. So when you’re seeking to get to the bottom of something, be careful that you don’t remove mercy from the situation and start digging around in the law lest it kill you. Because there will come a day when you’re on the receiving end and you’ll desire mercy, but you’ll find that Judgment is with out mercy to those who’ve shown no mercy, but blessed are the merciful (Jesus said) for they shall receive mercy. So put a lid on it, let mercy cover it, atonement and reconciliation, forgive, and you’ll be forgiven.

Now there's a bit of a discrepancy here among commentators regarding the number slain. Some say it should read something to the effect of "Of the 50,000 (in regards to the # of men in the city) 70 were struck." and That may be, but being as that the context of ch's 4-6 concerning the ark we've seen 4,000 slain once, and then 30,000 slain, in order for it to be a great slaughter I would believe that it would have to out weigh either of those and so I personally strongly feel that this is a correct translation, though nothing to be dogmatic over.

Vs 20-21

Who is able to stand before this holy, Lord God? We do well to remember that the God that we serve is holy, and He is high and lifted up, and shouldn't be taken for granted, but He's to be revered, honored, adored and worshipped, because He alone is worthy.