

## THE BOOK OF FIRST SAMUEL

### "The Travelling Ark"

1 Samuel 5, 6, 7:1

#### Introduction

1. The presence of God in the life of Israel or an individual believer is one of the most important experiences. The ark of the covenant illustrates His presence (Ex. 25:10-22; Josh. 3:1-17; 1 Sam. 4:22).

2. Following the defeat of Israel by the Philistines, the ark was moved about from one place to another. Some of these are named in the Word: Ashdod (5:1), Gath (5:8), Ekron (5:10), Bethshemesh (6:13), and Kirjath-jearim (7:1).

3. As the ark was moved about, certain remarks were made by the people and certain circumstances developed which teach great spiritual lessons. These lessons instruct the believer in spiritual truths which are guidelines for godly living. Here are some of them:—

#### 1. The POSITION of God.

To show that the God of Israel, Who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the omnipotent and infinite God, a most unusual set of circumstances is recorded. Before the ark, the god Dagon a) fell to his face, b) fell to his face **breaking** both his head and hands off on the threshold.

The lesson to be learned is that there is but one God and there is none else. This truth is inherent in both the Old and New Testaments (cf. Isa. 44:8; 1 Tim. 2:5). Let no one ever fail to get hold of this blessed truth— "our Lord is above all gods" (Psa. 135:5).

fore which one stands in awe. Be careful about treating God as some common relation! To disturb His ordained pattern of approach is to invite disaster (6:19, cf. Josh. 3:4). Here is a lesson to remind us all that no matter who we are, it is high time we walk softly before our God and bow low in His holy and infinite presence. May the Lord help us to learn carefully the lessons set forth in these texts for our growth and blessing. Amen.

Notes: 1. Dagon was the national god of the Philistines. It is supposed that he had the upper parts of human form and the lower tapered away into the tail of a fish.

2. Emerods have been taken by many to refer to hemorrhoids. Others feel the reference, by virtue of the mention of mice, is the bubonic plague.

## 2. The REJECTION of God.

It is interesting to note in the reading of these chapters that the Philistines tried with every effort to get rid of the ark. From one city to another they removed the ark--the visible presence of God. Hear their cries of complaint:--

- a. The ark of God shall not abide with us.
- b. His hand is sore upon us.
- c. His hand is sore upon Dagon our god.
- d. Let the ark of God be carried . . . .
- e. Send the ark away.

Rather than prostrating themselves in His holy presence, the Philistines merely compounded their problem.

In view of this sad situation, it is noted that God judged them both in their persons (emerods) and their lands (mice). There is a great lesson here for all who will hear. To reject God and to put Him out of the life only ends in despair, and judgment from the very One Who is rejected! Oh, to be at peace with HIM!

## 3. The LOCATION of God.

Throughout these sections one's heart is drawn to the truth that God would not rest until the ark was back where it belonged. What a thrilling lesson this is: He seeks His place amongst His own! Oh glory to God for this. ~~Though~~ the heart strays from Him and although there are problems of sinfulness, yet He yearns to dwell in the midst of His own.

The Lord's presence has no place in the Philistine land. This is a great truth and urges upon the believer the blessed thought that God's heart moves out toward him even in times of backsliding (read Hosea or 1 John).

## 4. The PERVERSION of God.

Votive offerings were presented to deities in prayer or gratitude for some kind of deliverance by the heathen. Such was the case here. With small images of the emerods and mice, they sought to return the ark to Israel. Added to this, they demonstrated their latent unbelief by sending the cart with the ark drawn by two kine "on which there hath come no yoke." To accentuate the problem, they removed their calves from them! All nature was against the ark ever getting to Israel --BUT GOD!

The truth of the matter here is that a marvelous miracle took place. God proved without any doubt that He is God! This was not chance (6:9). How sad that the Philistines had His holy presence in their land, rejected Him, and failed to take cognizance that He was indeed the one true and only God! The lesson to be learned is that heathen approaches to God are inadequate. Furthermore, unbelief will always be brought to light. One cannot forever hide his rebelliousness from God.

## 5. The GLORIFICATION of God.

There is a wonderful sidelight to all of the travels which the ark had in the territory of the Philistines. One of the cities of the Philistines provided David with men for his service (cf. 2 Sam. 15:18).

This is a precious lesson to note. Even in times of backsliding, the presence of God yields results. God works with or without His people in a sovereign way.

Conclusion The movements of the ark amongst the Philistines is one item, but its activity in Israel is also important to note. His presence is that be-