

(The Path of the Ark #3) God Rejects Flesh

by Ed Miller

The sermon explores the journey of the Ark of the Covenant as a metaphor for God's relentless pursuit of our hearts and the spiritual battles we face along the way.

Duration: 1:08:01

Scripture: 1 Samuel 6:6-13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the significance of God speaking to the people of Israel after a long period of silence. The chapter being referred to is chapter 4 of a particular book, which is not specified. The speaker emphasizes that before this chapter, God had not been speaking to the people, but now He is. The people of Israel, believing that God is now on their side, decide to go to battle against their number one enemy, the Philistines. However, despite their faith and trust in God, they are defeated and suffer great losses, including the theft of the Ark of the Covenant.

Transcript

...the Lord Jesus Christ than we can ever dream. We pray that we might dare to ask according to the riches in Christ Jesus that we might be daring in our prayer and that you would bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. We think of our dear friends the Myers and we do pray that through this experience they might take forward steps in the knowledge of Christ and we pray that you would meet them in their need and and provide for them and just cause them to be a shining testimony of your great grace.

Now Lord as we come to look in your word we acknowledge right up front our inadequacy. We thank you for the Holy Spirit who unveils Christ and makes the word live. Deliver us this evening from futility, from the dead letter, from human wisdom.

May we see beyond these facts and may we lay hold of the great truths of Christ. Seeing him may we be changed and we thank you Lord that we are learning to lean as you make yourself known to us. Take us forward we pray in our dependence upon Christ we ask in Jesus precious name.

Amen. I'll ask you to open please to 1st Samuel chapter 5 if you would. 1st Samuel chapter 5 let me review it's been a couple of weeks since we've been together.

By the way I thank again I thank all you men that had a part in that that Easter week service that we had and it was a great blessing and I guess Lillian will have tapes for you if you're interested in them. We're starting a little series again I really don't have a title for the series but it's about God coming to rest in his temple. Some time ago more than a year ago now an idea was born in my heart and I trust by the Holy Spirit that if we followed the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord in the Old Testament since that Ark was a representation of the throne of God and King Jesus if we followed the Ark to its destination the Holy Temple that we would also be following the path that the King takes as he comes to his temple.

The very road become the stages of Christian experience that we will certainly experience as Christ comes to rest in us and so this series is about following the Ark marking its starts marking its stops paying close attention to where the Ark went and what the Ark did and how long it remained there and why it moved and so on. Someone asks are you going to follow the Ark from the time God gave the pattern to Moses on Mount Sinai? And the answer is no we're not going to begin that far back. Actually our series picks up at the end of the Ark's history.

The Ark has been alive for about 400 years when we begin our little study. There are really two flurries of inspiration about the Ark. The first lasted about 50 years when God first gave the Ark.

Then there's a lot of scripture about the Ark. And then for about 350 years there's a relative silence and inactivity as far as the Ark is concerned. And then something happened and the Holy Spirit put the light back on the Ark of God.

The Holy Spirit began again to talk about the Ark of the Covenant and we just call this the second flurry of inspiration. It began with Hannah and Samuel and it didn't end until the Ark finally rested in Solomon's Temple. So here's where we begin our study in the second flurry after about 400 years.

Now what is this little series about? We're going to have six lessons and we're now on lesson three. To follow the Ark is to follow the Lord. And to follow the path of the Ark is to follow the path of the Lord.

The Ark was going somewhere. The Ark had a destination. The Ark had a goal.

It wasn't just random. It wasn't just arbitrary. The Ark had a rule of its own.

And the Ark set itself and was moving toward what the Bible calls its place. A place where the Ark could finally rest and a place from which the Ark could rule, could reign. And listen if you would to 2 Chronicles 5.7. I'm just going to quote it for you.

It says, Then the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim. You see it's not accurate to merely say Solomon's Temple was the destination of the Ark. That's true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough.

You see when the Ark went into Solomon's Temple, the Temple wasn't filled with the glory of the Lord. And when the Ark moved through the Temple, the Temple wasn't filled with the glory of the Lord. It wasn't until the Ark came to the heart of the Temple.

See the Temple had a heart. And the heart of the Temple is the holy of holies. And it was when the Ark came to the heart of the Temple, to the holy of holies, that the Temple was filled with the glory of God and the Ark came to rest.

In the words of the Psalmist, God was at rest. God was at home. God could now rest and reign from his holy Temple.

And of course you know the counterpart to that. You're the Lord's Temple. And I'm the Lord's Temple.

And you have a heart and I have a heart. You have a holy of holies in your Temple and I have one in my Temple. And the Lord is determined to get there.

And when he finally gets to that place, in our heart, the holy of holies, there he will rest. From that place he will govern with his glory. And there he will reign and have dominion.

And so it's important to trace out the steps of the Ark and then you'll see exactly the steps God takes in your experience, in your life, before he finally comes to rest. Now following the path of the Ark actually is a humbling study. Some of us have done it together and now we're doing it of course as a class.

We've all done it in our lives. It's an amazing study of the grace and patience of the Lord. Is it possible that the bumpy road that the redeemed people of God, Israel, gave to the Ark, is it possible that that's the kind of a road we give the Lord Jesus before he finally rests in us? And the answer is yes.

The answer is exactly so. Sometime the Ark was forgotten. Sometime the Ark was irreverently handled.

Sometime the Ark was dealt with superstitiously. Sometime the Ark was just abandoned to the enemy. And sometime we treat the Lord like they treated the Ark.

You can't go through a study like this with a heart sensitive to God and not ask the question, how can he put up with us? Why don't we just give up on us? And yet, as you'll see in the history and as you'll see in your life, the Lord is relentless, relentless in his desire to find your holy place and to go right to the heart of his temple. He'll not stop working in your life or my life until he rests, until he reigns, until he governs by the glory of God. Until your whole life is filled with the glory of God.

He's not going to quit on you. He's not going to quit on me. And he's not going to quit on us.

So far in our study, we've asked two questions. Let me review those and that'll at least get us back into the flow. The first question is, what got the Ark of God moving again? After 350 years of the Ark just sitting there.

What moved God to move? What started God moving again? The answer is found in the first three chapters of 1 Samuel. Hannah and Samuel herself. Hannah's deep cry was the cry of the remnant heart.

Follow along as I read these two verses. 1 Samuel 10 and 11. And she greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.

And she made a vow and she said, O Lord of hosts, if thou will indeed look on the affliction of thy maidservant, and remember me and not forget thy maidservant, but will give thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come upon his head. This was the longing of Hannah. This was the burden of Hannah that got the Ark moving after 350 years.

And her cry was a spiritual reality. You see, the book of 1 Samuel opens up with the cry of a dead womb. And that dead womb is a picture of a spiritual womb of God's people.

And spiritually at this time, God's people were born. Spiritually their womb was dead. Spiritually they could not bring forth issue, fruit, life.

Their womb would not produce. And so the book opens up with a dead womb crying out for life. Hannah cries to God, give me life, give me fruit, give me production, give me issue, give me a son.

And not just fruit from God, but fruit from God for God. She said, if you give me fruit, I'll turn that out and give it back to you. That's how the book opens.

With a dead womb crying out for fruit from God that could be returned to God. No wonder God sat up and took notice. He did it then, he does it now, whoever does.

That's the cry that started God moving toward his temple. God always responds to the dead womb. You come to a place in your life and you just say, Lord, I'm tired of playing games.

I'm tired of faking it. I want to bring forth fruit. I want life.

I want reality. I want production. And that's when God begins to move.

And that's when God moves here, and that's when God will always move. Then the heart cries out. Now, of course, Samuel was the first beginning, the answer, to Hannah's prayer.

I'm not going to review all of that, but the Holy Spirit hones in on the great principles of Samuel as the answer to Hannah's prayer. The priesthood, childlikeness, resting before the ark, an ear that listens, speak, Lord, your servant listens, and so on. But that's the first question.

He looked at the ark moving, and the answer was a cry. From the heart of man, a cry. From the heart of God, supply.

So it was that way. And Hannah cries out, and God begins to move. The second question we asked and we looked at last time was, where does God begin, then, to move as he does? His ways are so puzzling.

His ways are so paradoxical. His ways are so far beyond and so hard to understand. It's recorded in 1 Samuel 3, verse 19, through chapter 4, verse 1. And we looked at this last time.

And let me just call attention to several things, and you'll remember the principle, I think. Remember in chapter 3, 1, it says, A word from the Lord was rare in those days. Well, the reality is, for 350 years, with the exception of the judges where God spoke now and then, but it was rare.

God wasn't speaking. God wasn't revealing himself. The heavens were brass.

God wasn't talking. And then we come to chapter 3, 20, and it says, All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed himself to Samuel by Shiloh, by the word of the Lord.

That's why chapter 3, 1 says, Thus, the word of Samuel came to all Israel. All they knew in reality was this. God wasn't speaking.

Now he is. That's all they knew. For a long time, a revelation from God was rare.

No word, no dream, no vision, no prophecy. No word from heaven. And then Samuel came along.

And God began again to talk. And God began to reveal himself. And now they were excited.

It was a great day when God began to move. And when God began to reveal himself. Now, there's a long way to go before God will finally rest in his temple.

But Israel doesn't know that. All they know is, before he wasn't talking, now he's talking. We must be mature.

And so, chapter 4, verse 1. Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle. I understand that was a very spiritual thing to do. With the light they had.

They figured this way. God's pharaohs. He wasn't talking before.

He's talking now. Let's attack the Philistines. They're the number one enemy.

God will help us. God's on our side. And they prayed to the Lord for victory.

And they went against the Philistines. But chapter 4, verse 2. Israel was defeated before the Philistines. In fact, they lost 4,000 men in that first skirmish.

And Israel is puzzled. And they say, wait a minute. God was against us.

Now he's speaking. Now he's for us. Let's go after the number one enemy.

The Philistines. And so they said, we made a mistake. We thought we were looking for our own strength.

Get the ark. And they went and got the ark. And they decided to do it right this time.

Keep their eyes on the ark. And so they mustered courage. Chapter 4, verse 5. It happened as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, that all Israel shouted with a great shout, and the earth resounded.

And all of them went out in faith. They went out believing God. They went out rejoicing.

They went out knowing God would deliver. Don't think that Israel was not trusting the Lord, and that they were using the ark as some kind of a fetish. They were not.

They thought the Philistines were enemy number one. And they were trusting God to get rid of the Philistines. Chapter 4, verse 10 and 11.

A second time they are defeated. This time they lose 30,000 foot soldiers. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed.

The ark is stolen. The entire nation is in retreat. In chapter 4, verse 18, Eli drops over dead.

And the chapter closes with the story of Phinehas' pregnant wife. Chapter 4, verse 19 to 22. She knelt down and gave birth.

For her pains came upon her. Verse 21. She called the boy Ichabod, saying, The glories departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken.

Now is this God moving toward his temple? Toward the heart of his temple, his resting place. The place where he'll rest. The place from which he'll reign.

And the answer is, yes indeed it is. Of course, Israel didn't realize that. Israel just wrote Ichabod over the whole mess.

And they just said, God's left us. They thought public enemy number one was the Philistines. But God was dealing deeper than that.

He doesn't cut weeds off at the surface. He goes down to the root. And public enemy number one was not the Philistines.

Public enemy number one was the corrupt priesthood. And God said, before you ever deal with the Philistines, you got to deal with the priesthood. You got to deal with the spiritual part, not the physical part.

They prayed that God would deal with their enemies. But they had the other enemy in mind. And so it looked like God wasn't answering their prayer.

And the actual fact was that God was doing the most for them when they believed he was doing the least. And God was camouflaging his victory in defeat. And it looked like he was against them, but he was really for them.

And they said, help us, deliver us from your enemy. They thought Philistines. And he said, all right, I will.

And he started purging out the corrupt priesthood, the house of Eli. He took the head of the house of Eli. Eli himself, the aged, fat, blind priest.

He took the branches of the priesthood, Hothme and Phinehas. He took the root of the priesthood, the whole family tree. And that, again, was anybody in that family allowed to become a priest.

One more thing, by way of clarification, and we'll look at our new material. I remind you that this whole history of the path of the ark is telling a spiritual story. The physical illustrates the spiritual.

We're going to follow this ark all over the countryside. We're going to follow this ark all over the lot. You say, well, we're just looking at geography.

Well, physical geography is a reflection of a spiritual geography. The ark's going to move all over the land here because the Lord moved all over the lot here in my life. It's the same thing.

We're going to see the ark in the land of the Philistines. In the city of Ashdod, the city of Gath, in the city of Akron. You've got a Philistine land up in your heart someplace.

We're going to see the ark in Beth-shemesh. We're going to see the ark in Cave Jerem. We're going to see the ark in the house of Abinadab.

We're going to see the ark in the house of Abed-Edom. Because you have that in your life someplace. And I have it in my life.

It's not like I thought at first. Israel is in here. And the Philistines are out there.

They're the enemy out there. The will, the flesh, the devil. Not so.

Israel is in here. The Philistines are in here. Beth-shemesh is in here.

Cave Jerem is in here. Abed-Edom is in here. The temple is in here.

And someplace in that temple, there's a holy place. And God's hidden that way. And eventually God's going to make His way through all this mass.

And He's going to rest. And He's going to reign in the heart of His temple. In the Holy of Holies.

And so we need to understand that as we go through. That God's moving all over the place in the Bible. There's God moving all over the place in my life.

And in your life. That's why He first dealt with the corrupt. The house of Eli in here.

The corrupt priesthood. Everything I thought was spiritual was destroyed when Christ came in. Everything you thought was spiritual was destroyed when Christ came in.

And then He begins to deal. And tonight we'll look at it. Lord help us.

We're going to continue now with the Philistine part of me. And let me just sort of narrow down in a sentence or two. We tried to explain this last time.

And again, I'm not going to spend the whole night reviewing. But what is the Philistine part of me? In a word, it's the natural man. And the Bible has many expressions for it.

It's you. The flesh. Self.

The nature. The old Adam. The old man.

It's Ed Miller acting as Ed Miller. It's me trying to do it or you trying to do it. That's the Philistine part of me.

See, it's the most natural thing in the world. Once God begins to awaken my heart. And begin to speak again.

The most natural thing in the world is to go to war with the Philistines. So while that's the enemy I have, Ed Miller. Now I'm going to go to war.

And declare war on the flesh. Because at that point, you don't know how strong the flesh is. And you don't know how mighty the Philistines are.

And you say, now God's for me. I can do it. I'm going to quit my old sin.

And so you attack temper. And the next thing you know, you come back with a bloody nose. Say, well, I know God's with me.

I'm going to go. I can control my tongue. I can get rid of these old habits.

These dirty habits in my life. This lust of the flesh. Colorlessness.

This old burden to get even. Revenge. You go to war against the Philistines.

Every Christian must feel and will feel the tremendous power of the Philistines over him. And Christians who want to know God in reality. It's part of the path of the Lord to unveil.

He's going to unveil himself. But you're going to learn who the Philistines are too. And you're going to find out how mighty they are.

And you're going to go out puzzled to death. Because you're defeated. And you say, I love Jesus.

I'm looking to Jesus. I'm trusting the Lord. What in the world is happening? And you're going to write over that part of your life.

It's about who's departed from me. God doesn't care. He's left me.

And when you think that, the reality is actually he's working the most for it. Because he doesn't believe what the Philistines say. He's going to get there.

But first he has to deal with that old corrupt priesthood. It's a mighty miracle of God to show us the stupidity of going to war in our own strength against the Philistines. Now behind all this is the mysterious dealing of the Lord.

He's moving. He's on his way to his temple. Way down deep, the heart's still calling out, Lord, I'm a barren womb.

I really want to produce food. I really want life. I want to issue something that can be from you that I can give back to you.

And so now we look at, I don't know what to call it, step three. The next stop on the way to the holy temple. I want us to look at the ark.

It's almost like a parenthesis. Meanwhile, in the land of the Philistines. Let's look at the ark.

In the hand and in the land of the Philistines. Chapter 5, verse 1 through chapter 6, verse 18. Actually there are three parts to this text.

Chapter 5, 1 to 12. Chapter 6, 1 to 12. And then chapter 6, 13 to 18.

And that's as far as we'll go tonight in the continuing story. If you've come this far in your Christian experience, you recognize what I'm going to describe. If you haven't, then you can expect it.

Because this is the way of God. It's his way with all of his children. 1 Samuel chapter 5 describes the ark in the hand and in the land of the Philistines.

Follow along please. In fact, would someone like to read this scripture for me? Why don't you come up? Somebody come up so we're all on the paper. I'm just going to save my voice a little.

Will somebody do that and read this, the whole chapter? Thank you. You'll have to come one at a time. Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashtod.

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. When the Ashtodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again.

But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.

Therefore, neither the prince of Dagon nor all who entered Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon and Ashtod to this day. Now the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Ashtodites, and he ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashtod and its territories. When the men of Ashtod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is severe on us and on Dagon our God.

So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to them and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they said, Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought along to Gath. And they brought the ark of the God of Israel along. And it came about that after they had gathered around, the hand of the Lord was against the city with very great confusion, and he smote the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them.

So they sent the ark of God to Ekron, and it happened as the ark of God came to Ekron that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought the ark of God of Israel along to us to kill us and our people. They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, Send away the ark of God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people. For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city.

The hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who did not die were smitten with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. Take a glance at these verses if you would.

Verse 1 and 2, the Philistines took the ark of God from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Verse 8, Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath. Verse 10, So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

Verse 11, Send away the ark of God of Israel, and let it return to its own place. Now try to get the impact of what is happening here, please. The Philistines, if I understand this correctly, the Philistines are not deliberately desecrating the ark of God.

They are not treating it contemptuously. They are not mocking it, making fun of it, and intentionally dishonoring it. What they are doing is they are trying to make the ark comfortable.

They are trying to give it a home. They are trying to make it happy. In the context of our little series, they are trying to give it a resting place.

There is more evidence that they put the ark into the house of Danon to mock it. Some think so, but I don't think that is true to the text, to the context. They brought it into the temple of Dagon to honor it, not to desecrate it.

They said it went next to their highest God, so that it could be up in the place of the highest honor. That was the national God of the Philistines. When Samson was captured in Judges 16.23, it says, The lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon and to rejoice.

They said, our God has given us victory over their God. They recognized the ark of God to be the God of Israel. A glance, if you would, at chapter 4 again, verse 6, verse 7. This is how the Philistines felt about it.

When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they understood that the ark of God had come into the camp. Verse 7. The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God has come into the camp. They believed the ark represented God, God himself.

But they didn't say, we have no room for the ark. We have no room for Jesus. You read this chapter and you'll see they're trying to give him a room.

They're trying to give him a place. They're trying to make him comfortable in their land. What's pictured by this chapter and by these events can be summarized in this sentence.

There is no resting place for God in the Philistine part of me. There is no resting place for God in the Philistine part of you. Sooner or later, before God will ever rest in your temple, you've got to learn that.

You've got to learn that when God finally settles down, it won't be in the Philistine part of you. It won't be in the Philistine part of me. It's not only futile, as we see here, for the Philistines to try to find a place for God.

It's also tremendously frustrating. Frustrating to the nth degree. No matter what they do, no matter what they offer him, no matter where they bring him, he's unhappy.

He's not pleased. He blasts their treatment of him. One of my sons recently lost his employment because of a decision he made.

A decision that cost his company quite a bit of money. It was just a foolish decision. He called us to tell us about it.

Of course, he was kidding. He said, what happened, son? He said, just because my decision bankrupted the company, they decided to let me go. Picky, picky, picky.

See, that's how the Philistines felt about this ark. Picky, picky, picky. We'll put it in our chief city.

And we'll set it in our highest temple. And we'll put it in the most honored place, right next to our highest God. But the ark's not happy there.

And they said, alright, then let's take it to Gath, the city of giants. The city of renown. Everybody knows Gath, let's put it there.

God's not happy. Alright, let's take it to Ikhon. Run off as far as you can go in the north and stay in the Philistine territory.

Still not happy. Picky, picky, picky. Where are they going to put him? Where will God be happy? God rejects every place they offer him.

That would be one thing if God went in, looked around, and said, no, son, this won't do. Do you have another part that you can show me? And then they showed him another one. He said, no, really, that doesn't suit either.

God, do you have another place you can show me? That's not how he showed his displeasure. God didn't just say, hold on, hold on, I'm sorry, that won't do. Do you have another one? Look at verse 3. Their God, David, was on his face on the ground.

So they set him up. They thought, that's a wind, that's a fluke. Something happened.

Earthquake. Next day, same thing, verse 4. And this time, their God is decapitated, and his hands are cut off. As if that weren't enough, look at verse 6. Now, the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Asterdites.

He ravaged them. Smote them with tumors. Both Ashdown and all the territory.

If you had a King James version, it says, he smote them with amyloids. Davis Bible Dictionary defines that Hebrew word amyloid. A corrupted form of amyloid.

Some think the psalmist had that little incident in mind in Psalm 78, verse 66. In the King James version it says, he smote his enemies on their thimble parts. Well, however you read it, you get this idea, God is not satisfied.

Picky, picky, picky. He's rejecting every place they offer him, and rejecting it with a strong hand. When they move the ark to Gath, they read the same kind of thing.

Look at verse 9. The hand of the Lord was against the city, with a very great confusion. He smote the men of the city, both young and old. So that tumors broke out on them.

Every place the Philistines tried to give God was unsuitable, and rejected by God. The Philistines were slow to catch on. They had this idea, there must be someplace he'll be happy.

We'll find a place. So they bring him as far north as you can go to Ecorah. And as soon as they saw him coming, verse 10, they cried out in fear.

They brought the ark of the God of Israel around to kill us and our people. And sure enough, verse 11, there was a deadly confusion throughout the city. The hand of God was very heavy there.

Verse 12, the men who did not die were smitten with tumors. And the cry of the city went up to heaven. Now go to chapter 6, verse 4, please.

In addition to the hemorrhoids, we learn from chapter 6, verse 4, what shall be the guilt offering that we shall return? And they said five golden tumors, and five golden mice. Well we know why the number five, because there were five cities that were smitten. We have a good guess why the tumors, because that was the kind of a plague that they were smitten with, tumors.

What a golden hemorrhoid looks like, I don't have a clue. I don't even guess at that. But why'd they make golden mice? Look at chapter 6, verse 5. The likeness of your mice which ravaged the land.

Part of the plague was not only hemorrhoids, but mice. Mice ravaged the land. Everything they planted was eaten by mice.

The whole land of the Philistines was ravaged by mice. Don't read this la la la. You know when they finally found the Rosetta Stone and the key to hieroglyphics? The word in the Egyptian hieroglyphic, or rather the symbol, for destruction was a mouse.

And it's very graphic, because they just destroy everything. And if God's going to judge the Philistines, they'll probably say, why don't you give us a man's judgment? Why don't you send lions? Why don't you send lightning? Why don't you send a hurricane? Why don't you send elephants? But give me the hemorrhoids and mice. See this whole thing was designed to humble them.

One would hope that they made these offerings out of gold, because maybe they learned that this terrible devastation was quite a valuable lesson to them. Certainly they spent a lot of money. You know the priests suggested that they give five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice.

Well they took the suggestion on the hemorrhoids. They made five golden hemorrhoids. But they didn't take the suggestion on the mice.

We don't know how many they gave. Might have been five. Might have been fifty.

Might have been five hundred. You say, well where do you get that idea? From chapter six, verse eighteen. It says, And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines, belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and country villages.

So there were a whole bunch of golden mice. Probably because the plague of mice went up and down the countryside. Well certainly the least we can say about it was it was a tremendously expensive lesson that the Philistines needed to learn.

God will not rest in the land of the Philistines. And every offer that's made will be rejected. Now you might say, well now bring this down to my life where I live.

We're just in Samuel and Philistines and Galilee. What does it all mean? How and when does God smash my dagons? And what in the world are these hemorrhoids in the mice and so on? After God begins to work in our life, and I'm just sort of giving this as a testimony as well. As God begins to work in our life, first our heart cries out, I desire fruit.

I want life. I don't want to play games anymore. God then begins to move.

And the first thing we do of course is we attack the Philistine part of us. We think we can have victory. And we end up in defeat.

And so then we begin to believe, since God has rejected the corrupt priesthood, that somehow the flesh, self, the Philistine part of me, the old man, somehow we can make God happy. After all, he did allow himself to be captured by us. And this begins, I don't know what to call it, somewhat of a nightmare in the Christian's experience.

Where self determines to make God comfortable. Where self determines to give him a place. And one of the first things that self does, it takes the Lord Jesus and it enthrones him in the place of the highest priority.

It puts him in the highest place. At that point we have no idea that God means to destroy our Dagon. We thought that he could co-rule with our little idol, our darling.

Now you say, what's Dagon? Well, you fill in the Dagon blank. Whatever that highest thing is in your life or mine. Could be employment, could be our church, could be our family, could be our wife, our husband, our children, our grandchildren.

Could be some bosom son, could be a high ambition, a close friend, a lover. Could be some educational plans, some dream for the future, some physical possession. Could be a wardrobe, could be an automobile, could be a house, anything at all.

Could be Dagon, could be Isaac. We get this idea that we can take that which we love. And now that Christ is in my heart, welcome to my plans, welcome to my family, welcome to this great place.

And we put him in the highest place we know. We have an idea, he'll be happy now. He's enthroned right with the things we love the most.

We bring him into our treasured world, our cherished world. We feel good because we give him such a prominent place. And we say, Lord, here you are now, next to the dearest.

I love my family and you're right up there with them. And I've got this great idea for a future, Lord, and you're enthroned. Now I'm going to use my money for you, use my future for you.

I've got it all planned out, Lord. And then we smile and we go to bed and we wake up and Dagon's on his face. Whoa, what's the Lord doing? Come on, give me a break.

And so we set it all up again. We put the Lord up there. We're getting in a prominent place because at this point we don't know he desires the preeminent place.

We're trying to make him one among many and he wants to be a one and only, but we don't know that. And so we set him near our Isaac. We're hoping sort of that Jesus and Dagon can coexist and get along, be friends.

But then God begins to uproot and Dagon begins to crumble and we don't know what's happening. And so now we have a problem. We have this idea if God doesn't want this honored place in our life, he's not happy there, then we'll find another place.

And so then we go to Gath. And as I suggested, Gath was the city of giants. Gath was the city of renown.

Place of testimony. He's not happy there either. In fact, he became a real pain in their hinder parts when he moved them there.

I can actually remember in my Christian experience moving the Lord Jesus from Ashdod to Gath. Gath was the place of honor. And I thought, well, the only way to make Jesus happy in my life, see I didn't know what to do with Christ.

I wanted him, and I wanted him happy, but he just never seemed to be happy. So I thought, well, I'll bring him to Gath, because I didn't know the word Gath then. But I'll bring him to this place of renown.

I'll make him famous. I'll become his servant. And I'll work my head off for him and I'll bless the socks off the Lord.

And I got involved at that time. That's a nightmare. I'll get involved and I'll become a walking track rack.

And I'll witness every chance I get. And I'll lead Jesus into every conversation. And I'll ramrod the gospel down everybody's throat.

And I'll work my head off for Jesus. And how does he respond? With mice. And hemlock.

And he began to ravage the land and eat up everything. Ate my time. Ate my joy.

Ate my energy. Ate my resources. And I knew he wasn't happy.

I couldn't please him. I didn't know what to do with Jesus. He wasn't happy in my plans.

He wasn't happy in my dreams. He wasn't happy in my ambitions. He wasn't happy in my Christian service.

And all I ended up with is confusion and pain and devastation. Everything's falling apart. And I know he's not happy and I'm not happy.

And I thought, what in the world am I going to do with the Lord? He's not happy with Dagon? He's not happy in death? And so I did finally what the Philistines did. I sort of got frustrated, ready to give up on the Christian life. Didn't know what to do.

And so I finally said, well, I'll just put the Lord as far away as I can. I'll put him way up north someplace. And we'll sort of make this deal.

You stay out of my life. I'll stay out of yours. I still love you.

And we'll just put you up there. And I don't bother you and you don't bother me. Except even when I confined him to the farthest parts in my boundaries, in my life.

Devastated. He's still not happy. And he begins to ravage the land.

And so what I thought would be a blessing, I heard Christ is in my life. Everybody says, oh, Christ comes in, solves all your problems. Be a blessing.

Wonderful happiness. And at first you're so full of joy. And then you go, all of a sudden you see the Philistines and that doesn't work.

And pretty soon you're Christian. I said, what is this Christian life? Why don't I just die and go to heaven? It's a lot better. Because this isn't working.

And God's not happy and I can't make him happy. And I don't know what in the world to do. I thought the Philistines were dumb.

But according to chapter 6, verse 1, they only had seven months of it. I was so stupid, I had seven years of it. Seven years trying to make Christ happy in the Philistine part of me.

Took a long time before it would finally dawn on me, he'll never be happy in the Philistine part of me. No matter what I do, no matter what I offer him, no matter where I bring him. And every place I tried to put him was destroyed.

And everything I tried to give him was eaten by mice. And even when I tried to keep him at an arm's length, it was all destruction. As I said, this is not only a painful part of the Christian life, but it's a very frustrating part of the Christian life.

Because at that point, you don't realize that God has rejected the flesh. And that's all you know is flesh. Because you don't have this whole idea of spiritual life yet.

And so you're trying constantly, you don't realize the futility of continuing to try. You get this idea, if plan A doesn't work, try plan B. And if plan B doesn't work, well try plan C. And by the time you get to X or Y or Z, you're awful tired. And the mice have done an awful job.

And the whole land is devastated. You understand what I'm saying? Don't answer, just think. You ever experienced the confusion of trying to make Jesus happy and He can't settle down anywhere? Hemorrhoids, mice, devastation, confusion.

I tell you brothers and sisters in Christ, it's an awful frustration trying to figure out what to do with Jesus. He comes into your life and you don't know what to do with Him. You don't know where to put Him.

You don't know how to please Him. And I don't mean to play with this, but you just get this idea, picky, picky, picky. He's just not satisfied.

He's never happy. I serve my head off for Him and my whole life's a mess. Everything I try to do, He's just not happy.

God absolutely refuses to dwell in the Philistine part of me. Now wouldn't you think that when you're confused long enough and ravaged long enough and pained long enough, that you'd be willing to let the ark go? And you say, alright, let it go, I'm done, throw in the towel, get rid of Jesus. But you notice something here in chapter 6, if you'll turn there.

The Philistine part of me does not want to let the ark go. Even after all the mice and all the hemorrhoids and all the confusion and all the pain. Even after seeing He's not happy here, He's not happy there, He's not happy in the other place.

There's still just something in the Philistine that wants to hang on to it. And it will take a mighty miracle of God to convince the Philistine part of me. That God has condemned the Philistine part of me.

And they're not going to let the ark go until God does a mighty miracle against nature. That will convince them. And we just sort of read this thing la la la.

In chapter 6, of course the first five verses just tell what offerings to send back. But let's read from verse 7 to 12. Here's a test that they're giving the Lord.

Now therefore take and prepare a new cart, and two milk cows on which there's never been a yoke. And hitch the cows to the cart, and take their calves home, away from them. Take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart.

And put the articles of gold which you returned to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go. And watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Bethshemesh, then He has done us this great evil.

But if not, then we shall know that it was not His hand that struck us. It happened to us by chance. And the men did so, and they took two milk cows, hitched them to the cart, shut up their calves at home.

They put the ark of the Lord on the cart, the box with the golden mice, and the likenesses of their tumors. And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Bethshemesh. They went along the highway, luring as they went.

Did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Bethshemesh. Now the people of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley.

They raised their eyes and saw the ark, and they were glad to see it. The Philistines were not yet quite convinced that God had rejected them, and so they gave them a test. That if God passes this test, we know it's God.

If not, we've just had a bad year, a bad seven months. Now remember, in all this, this ark is not just a piece of furniture. We sort of get the idea that the Philistines are sending the ark away.

They're not sending the ark away. The ark is leaving. The ark is leaving on his own volition.

God's on his way. He has to teach the Philistine part that he will not be happy there. And when the Philistine part has begun to learn that, by a mighty miracle, he will then continue.

And where's he going? He's heading for the temple, folks. He's heading for the Holy of Holies. There's a lot more routes he has to take before he'll rest in his temple.

But that's where he's going. He showed he couldn't rest in the old corrupt priesthood. And now he shows he can't rest in the Philistine part of me.

And so now he says, I'm going to go to Beth Shemesh. What's Beth Shemesh? Beth Shemesh is the city of priests. He's going to move again to the spiritual part.

Now, he says, the corrupt spiritual part has got to be destroyed. That there's a spiritual part of you that I need to show you something about this. So he begins to move again now, by a miracle, to this spiritual part.

I want you to consider this miracle, please. Verse 7. They took two milk cows on which there had never been a yoke. I've got some friends that are dairy farmers up in Vermont.

And I went up there and I studied this with them because I wanted to hear about milk cows. And it was a very interesting study. And this part here, two milk cows on which there has never been a yoke.

Understand the mighty miracle here, folks. An animal needs to be broken in to use the yoke. And here we have a yoke put on the, they were never in a yoke.

That would require somewhat of a miracle. And then their milk cows. That is, they've just calved.

And 2 Tim says, shut up the calves at home. And there's going to have to be now some kind of a miracle because there's going to be some animal instinct here. A natural inclination for the cows to have their calves.

These cows are now separated from their calves. Cows unaccustomed to the yoke are put in a yoke. Cows that have just calved, their calves are taken from them.

Verse 9. And watch it if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth Shemesh. How in the world are these Philistine cows going to know the way to the City of Priests? Cows don't know where the City of Priests are. They're untamed.

They're apt to wander all over the place, not walk in a straight line. I'm not sure whether the Philistines wanted God to pass this test or not. But they sure made it impossible to the flesh.

And many think that they secretly wanted the cows to fail the test so that they could keep the ark. They didn't want to get rid of it. This isn't magic.

This is a mighty miracle of God. God's leaving now the land of the Philistines. And he's going to leave by a mighty miracle.

And he's going to contradict everything natural. The yoked cows will not buck and upset the ark. The milked cows will not return for their calves.

In fact, verse 12 is very moving. It says the cow took the straight way in the direction of Beth Shemesh. They went along the highway, lowering as they went.

You can almost see these cows longing for their calves, lowering as they went. They did not turn from the right or from the left. It was about a 15-mile journey for these cows.

That's an amazing miracle. For a cow to walk in a straight line for 15 miles, no hesitation, no deviation, straight to the city of priests. God's going to do a mighty miracle.

And he's going to show all the Philistines that he is not happy there. And it takes a miracle to show that. May I say this is a wonderful day in the life of a Christian, when the ark finally moves out of the hands and the land of the flesh and begins to make its way toward the city of priests.

It's so hard for me to read this, this miracle of the milked cows, and not remember in my life the precious hand of God. For me, this part took place in 1965. I understand milked cows are not the swiftest animals in the world, constantly feeding on that which is rooted in this earth, an apt picture, I think, of the flesh.

Isn't it a miracle to see this invisible yoke on those beasts of nature? A miracle to see these creatures that were born and stalled and ecked on, the city of the Philistines to suddenly desire to go to the city of priests. A miracle to see them leave their families behind and not turn back. And though they loathed and though they hurt and though they suffered, they didn't turn back.

And when they got there, they became a whole burnt offering. As I said, I can't read that without thinking of what God did to this cattle heart of mine. 1965, when by a miracle he put his yoke on me.

By a miracle he changed my natural instincts and allowed me to carry his ark even unto death. See, this is the kind of a miracle it took to convince the Philistine part of me. And I'll tell you, that needed convincing after those seven years.

And I was so glad in 1965 that God had taught me. I didn't learn a lot, but I learned this. In my flesh, can you finish it? Dwelleth no good thing.

And God's not happy there. And he'll never be happy there. And no matter what I did, I still didn't know what to do with him.

But I knew what not to do with him. And I'll tell you, there was a joy in knowing what not to do with him. God rejected the self-life.

And in 1965, for me, it took a mighty miracle of God, but he finally showed me by a miracle. One more thing I want to get before your hearts. And then we'll continue it next time.

Chapter 6, verse 13. When the ark arrives in Beth-shemesh. Look at it now, when we move from place to place.

This is in your life. This is in your heart. We're describing where Christ is going.

Verse 13, chapter 6. The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. They raised their eyes, saw the ark, and were glad to see it. Oh, indeed they were.

And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and stood there where there was a large stone. And they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone.

And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrifices that day to the Lord. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Echron that day, Philistines now convinced. It's instructive that the next step for the ark was back to the spiritual part.

He condemned the corrupt priesthood, and now he condemned the whole Philistine part, and now he goes back to the spiritual part, to the city of Priests. And I want you to notice the immediate response of the heart to the discovery, to the revelation, to the quickening that Christ has returned. It's hard to imagine the ark had been gone for about seven months, and now suddenly, without warning, unexpectedly, unsolicited, they lift up their eyes and here comes the ark.

They hadn't prayed for it, it's coming to them. Verse 13, they were glad to see it. I remember so well when God convinced me by his grace and miracle that he had rejected my flesh, my legalism, my works, my service, my attempt to make him happy.

Still didn't know what to do with Jesus. I had not a clue where to put him. But I got such a joy out of knowing that he wasn't happy in the Philistine part.

Second thing they did was, it's amazing because it's automatic. You don't have to know the scripture to do it, you do it automatically. The second thing they did was they put an end to that part of their life, that flesh, that self.

Verse 14, they busted the cart that represented all that life, that Philistine part. They broke that up and made it into firewood. They built an altar and they killed a cow and they made that into a sacrifice.

Same as to say, okay Philistines, no more, never again will I ever try to make God happy in the flesh. They were so happy. They began to rejoice and they began to sing.

Hannah's prayer was beginning to be answered. It started with a cry, Lord, fruit, Lord, we want life. And now God's beginning to move and beginning to move.

He goes here, he condemns the corrupt priesthood. He goes here, he condemns all the land of the Philistines. And now he's coming to Beth Shemesh.

He's nowhere near his temple, folks. Got a long way to go. They don't have a clue what's about to happen.

All they know is, praise God, he's back. We are so happy. They were so blessed.

They had thought God had left them. They said Ichabod. But the reality was, in the land of the Philistines there was mice.

They were reaping a harvest. God hadn't left them. They were quite blessed.

And the rest of that day, according to this, verse 15, they offered burnt offerings. Sacrificed sacrifices that day to the Lord. It's a day of thanksgiving.

It's a time of worship. It's a time of praise. God has shown me that he doesn't want the corrupt priesthood.

God has shown me he doesn't want the Philistine part of me. And now he's come back to Beth Shemesh. Praise God.

They worshiped God. They praised God. They sang.

They had a great time. They're about to learn another truth. And we'll touch on that next time.

But this is the path the King always takes. And I don't know where you are in your experience with the Lord. But you'll find that this is the path he takes.

And somewhere or other, if you're trying to make him happy in the land of the Philistines, how long you can take those hemorrhoids and mice and devastation? After a while, you know, wise up, folks. Wise up. And by a miracle, he'll show you that he's not happy there.

And he'll work right against nature. And he'll go against nature. And he'll show you.

And when you see that, then you burn that cart forever. And you burn those cows forever. And you start to rejoice.

Because now there's a Beth Shemesh. There's a city of priests. There's a holy priesthood.

And now God, the Lord, is still moving toward his temple. But now the city of Beth Shemesh must learn something. And it's the path the King always takes.

Well, we'll close there. Comments or questions? Just thank you so that you are doing, as we've sung, making something beautiful out of our lives. And thank you for this object lesson in the Old Testament, showing us exactly what we must know before the Lord Jesus can rest in his temple.

Oh, we long for the end, Lord. We long when the glory of God fills the temple, when Christ rests in his temple, when he reigns and the glory of God governs. We long for that.

We know it's all started when we come with the cry of a barren womb. We just say, Lord, we want fruit. We want reality.

So move in our hearts. Move in our lives. Teach us these lessons.

And teach us your ways. And show us your patience, your grace. Continue to grace us that we would respond.

And rest in your people. Rest in your temple. And now, Lord, we pray that you'd take the fellowship that we commit unto you now and use it.

May it be an honor to Christ, an edification for all of us. Thank you for the refreshments provided. Nourish our bodies, we pray.

We thank you for those that have provided them. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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