

## 1 Samuel Chapter 06 Commentary

**1Sa 6:1 ¶ "And 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 to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. 3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you."**

**"And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months."** We are told here that the ark of God abode in the country for seven months. We believe, as several commentators point out, that the ark was removed from the city of Ekron into the fields away from the town. Why? Because, when the ark of God was in the cities of the Philistines the people died. Also, this is indicated to us by the words; **"and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you."** Which indicates that they did remove the ark of God from the city; but God's hand of destruction was still at work. Why? Not only were the people smitten with the emerods, but their fields were also being destroyed by mice, seen in: **1Sa 6:5 "Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land."** These plagues were to convince the Philistines to return the ark of God to Israel.

Since the hand of God is not removed from the Philistines; the Philistines call their priest and diviners; to find out how they can send the ark of God back to its rightful place. It only took seven months of death and destruction in the land of the Philistines for them to be ready to get rid of the ark of God, which they knew was not rightfully theirs, even though they won it in war. The Philistines know that they have offended the true God.

These priest and diviners knew there should be a trespass offering, from the Philistines, with the return of the ark of God. They believed, that by doing this; the hand of God would be removed from them, and his judicial wrath against them would be removed, and they would be healed.

**4 "Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords. 5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land."**

The priests and diviners tell the Philistines to make images of the emerods with which they were all plagued, and images of the mice with which the land was plagued. This is the first mention of the mice, which we believe is the result of moving the ark of God into the fields. When the Philistines moved the ark of God out of the city into the fields; God caused these devouring mice to destroy the crops in the fields. This was the goad to get the Philistines to return the ark of God to its rightful place. It was a reminder, to the Philistines, of the great destruction of Egypt, when they refused to free Israel from bondage.

There is a lesson for us here. The Philistines had taken the representation of God from Israel, thought they never took God from Israel. God had withdrawn from Israel because of their idolatry. This is like the unsaved world taking the word of God to themselves, upon which if they read very much, they will be conflicted in their hearts and minds. They are wearied by the word of truth, and have no desire to keep it for themselves, because there is no glory for them in having the word of truth, which condemns them to an eternal death, in the eternal lake of fire.

The King James bible teaches that eternal salvation is a gift of God. God being the sole author of eternal salvation, defies man's image of himself as a god, and destroys the belief that a man can save himself eternally. The unsaved, like these Philistines, know that there is a God in heaven, however, they have no desire to turn to God. Therefore, they are willing to totally relinquish any resemblance of godliness, to remove the hand of God from working against them. This is why you see so many different versions of the bible. They take God's word of truth and change it to something they like to believe. This is why we hold fast the King James Bible, believing it to be the true translation of the word of God.

**6 "Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 7 Now therefore**

make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: 8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. 9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us. 10 ¶ And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: 11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. 12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh."

The diviners remind, the five lords of the Philistines, what God did to Pharoah and Egypt. They admonish them for the hardness of their hearts. A reminder to them; this is not one of our gods. This God is the LORD, and we, and the Philistines, know that after Israel left Egypt; God's hand of judgment was removed from Pharoah and Egypt.

They tell them to make a new cart, and to put the ark of God, and the images of the emerods and mice, on the cart. Hitch the cart with two milch kine, who had calves shut up at home, and who had never been under a yoke before. They tell them; let the milch kine go, and if they go to Israel, instead of returning to their calves, then the Philistines would know that God has brought these plagues upon them. They also tell the five lords of the Philistines, if the kine do not carry the ark of God back to Israel; then you will know it was a coincidence, and not the hand of God.

We see the providential hand of God at work, for the kine went the way that would bring the ark of God back to Israel. They went lowing because their calves were shut up at home. This affirmed to the Philistines that it was God that brought the plagues of the emerods, and mice, upon them, and the land.

**13 "And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. 14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD. 15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD."**

The men of Bethshemesh hear the lowing kine, and they see the ark of God coming home to Israel, and they rejoice. The lowing of the kine is a reminder, to the saved, of the approaching of God's presence, which is the voice of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To the unsaved, the lowing of the kine is the announcement of the withdrawal of God's judicial judgment and the presence of God; just as it was to the Philistines. The lowing of the kine is picturesque of the things of nature proclaiming that there is a God, who is LORD.

The kine come to the great stone named Abel, in the field of Joshua, and stop. God has brought the ark home and their work is completed. The Israelites sacrifice the kine unto the Lord. This is a picture of the saved sinner coming forward and proclaiming we have left those that we love, and we are here present to sacrifice our flesh and yield ourselves completely to God. It is representative of the born-again, children of God, becoming disciples of Christ, making their public profession of faith, following Jesus in baptism by immersion, and living the Christian life, doing all things to the glory of God.

Notice, the Levites removed the ark of God, which was according to God's commandments. They place the ark of God and the coffer of golden images upon the stone. They offer the two kine as an offering of thanksgiving unto God. They offered up other sacrifices to God, in their joy of the ark of God returning to Israel.

We see a prophetic picture here in this great stone, upon which they offered sacrifices, and placed the ark of God there. The ark of God, being the representation of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, was the one who brought the representation of God to a lost and ruined world of sinners. Jesus founded the church of Salvation by Grace upon himself, the great, and sure, foundation stone. He was the one who brought salvation by grace to earth, and he was sacrificed, buried, and resurrected, to reveal the joy, that we should have in the gift of God for our eternal salvation and eternal life.

16 "And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day. 17 And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one; 18 And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite."

We are reminded here, the Philistines are still in power over Israel, wherefore, they follow the ark of God until they witness all that is done, and then they returned to Ekron. We are told that the trespass offering that the Philistines returned unto the Lord, was five golden emerods, one for each lord of the Philistines. They also offered the five golden mice, desiring to bring appeasement to the whole land occupied by the Philistines.

19 ¶ "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. 20 And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? 21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you."

Notice, Israel acted rightly in the Levites handling the ark of God. However, we have an old saying "*curiosity killed the cat*" we find the men of Bethshemesh "**looked into the ark of God**," and God smote them with a great slaughter for this offence. A reminder to them that none but the Levites were to touch the ark of God, and they were to handle it only in the way prescribed by God. Being rebuked by the hand of God for their trespass; they send messengers to Kirjathjearim to come get the ark of God.

The Philistines did not, and could not, follow God's protocol for the handling of the ark of God. The Philistines did not have the Levitical priesthood. We know that at the return of the ark of God to Israel, the Philistines put the ark of God upon a cart. We know that King David tried to move the ark of God to Jerusalem, one time, by placing it upon a cart. God judged Israel for not using his prescribed methods of moving the ark of God, and this effort of King David was hindered. Later, King David did move the ark of God according to God's commandments. So, we learn the lesson: the unsaved are not charged to follow the commandments of God, but we, the saved children of God, are charged to obey the commandments of God and to live by: "**thus saith the Lord.**"

Considering all these events, what life application can we draw from this chapter? The first thing we should see is that God's church is for God's people, only. The name of God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, is not to be represented in places of idolatry. This would be an abomination to God.

We see a warning to God's people who are a part of the visible church on earth. We are not to go into the world warring against it; unless God specifically directs us to do so. Israel went to war against the Philistines of their own accord, and they lost their most precious possession, which was the representation of their God.

We have heard of people, who claim to have started a ministry for God, by attending bars and other places of illicit actions. We find, in all cases we have heard of, they ended up being taken in by the very actions they were supposed to be crying against. This is a reminder that God has told us in scripture in: **Mt 7:6 "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."** Jesus set the example for us by visiting homes and synagogues, which are a picture of our church buildings, during his ministry. He did teach on the way as he was going from place to place, by the seas and in the mountains. However, we do not find in scripture, where Jesus visited any place that bore the name of immorality, such as a temple of idolatry, a barroom, or a house of prostitution.

Praise the Lord that Jesus established a land of promise for us, the church of salvation by grace, and has given us residence in a place that bears the name of God, in which we are to believe and worship our God, and our Saviour. May God prevent us from making our buildings of worship into idols, (as Israel did with the ark of God) and keep us from trusting in people, rather than trusting in God and Christ. We see plainly, where this got the Israelites. Israel brought destruction and suffering upon themselves, by what scripture testifies of Israel in:

- **Jg 17:6 "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."**

- ***Jg 21:25 "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."***

From these two texts, we know that Israel had forgotten that God was their King. They simply tossed him aside and turned to idolatry, which brought them continual sorrow, and it will do the same for the child of God who turns from God to idolatry.

Scripture teaches us; if we do not yield ourselves to our King, Jesus Christ, we too will have continual sorrow here in time. Scripture clearly teaches this same principle, seen in this chapter, in: ***Pr 12:15 "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."*** As we can see; Israel did not profit from doing that which was right in their own eyes. Thus, we understand if we do not believe in Christ, we are fools.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving us in our new birth, eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that understand. We pray, in the name of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, that you do not allow us to forget it is thy salvation, which we enjoy here in time, and which we will enjoy in eternity. Hallelujah! Amen!