

1 Samuel Lesson 8 Responding to a Holy God

Key Themes in 1 Samuel :

- The connection between our obedience and our relationship to God
- God opposes the proud and exalts the humble
- Despite human evil, God is working out His purposes in history
- Kingship in Israel and God's plan to one day raise up an anointed divine king

Background:

Pagan priests and diviners: Pagan priests were considered experts in holy things and the pagan diviners were skilled in magical procedures, such as incantations, and omens.

The pagan approach to the appeasement of an angry God: Pagans reacted to what they perceived to be anger from a god by appeasing that god. This appeasement would involve very specific gifts and rituals. It usually took place within the realm of magic.

Pagan guilt offering: a sacrificial offering to a pagan god. It was offered for various reasons, and one of those was to appease a god for "sacrilege" the desecration of the sacred. By sending a guilt offering with the ark the Philistines were admitting that they had desecrated it.

Golden mice and tumors: Besides being a guilt offering, the sending of the golden mice and tumors was an act of "sympathetic magic" in which the representation stands for the reality. By sending them back with the ark, they were hoping to get rid of the plague.

Divination and Omens: The diviners used the reading of signs or omens to make decisions or tell the future.

Key Phrase: "The Ark of the Lord"

In last week's lesson we learned that Yahweh's "heavy hand of judgment" came upon the men in whatever Philistine city the "ark of the Lord" was sent to. It has been 7 months of suffering and the Philistines have had enough.

Read 1 Samuel 6:1-21

1. In 6:1-2 we see that the Philistines have called for their priests and diviners. What were the questions the Philistines asked them? What do these questions reveal about the Philistines regard for Yahweh? How has their regard for Yahweh changed since they captured the ark and put it in the temple next to their god Dagon?

2. What evidences do you see in 6:3-12 of a changed attitude on the part of the Philistines towards Yahweh? Besides Yahweh's judgments, what statement in 6:6 likely contributed to that changed attitude? Instead of sending Yahweh away, what should their changed attitude have led them to do ?

3. How did Yahweh reveal His deity to them in the return of the ark and the use of the cows? How does this show God's grace to them?

Application: How we regard God is evidenced by how we treat Him. Give examples of the ways we treat God that show we "fear" Him. Give examples of ways we treat God that reveal our disregard for who He is.

4. According to 6:13 how did the Israelites initially react to the return of the ark?

5. We read in 6:19 that soon after the return of the ark, the Lord struck down some of the men of Bethshemesh. What had they done to deserve that? Refer to Exodus 19:21, Leviticus 10:1-3, and Numbers 4:20. Knowing what we know about the spiritual state of Israel at that time why might they have been ignorant of the law?

Application: The Israelites apparent ignorance of the law caused them to treat God and His presence (the ark) in a casual manner, and disobey His specific instructions concerning the ark. How can neglect of the word of God in a Christian's life cause him or her to stumble and dishonor God?

6. What similarities do you notice between the Philistines experience with the ark and the Israelites' experience with the ark? How is that a warning for Christians?

