



Lesson 64 – The Ark Taken by the Philistines

based on 1 Samuel 3-7.

- 1) Where does our lesson begin today?

1 Samuel 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no _____ vision.

Another warning was to be given to Eli's house. God could not communicate with the high priest and his sons; their sins, like a thick cloud, had shut out the presence of His Holy Spirit. But in the midst of evil, the child Samuel remained true to Heaven, and the message of condemnation to the house of Eli was Samuel's commission as a prophet of the Most High.

- 2) How did that warning come?

1 Samuel 3:2-4 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not _____; And ere the lamp of God went out in the _____ of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called _____: and he answered, Here am I.

- 3) How did Samuel respond?

1 Samuel 3:5-6 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for _____ calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I _____, my son; lie down again.

- 4) This happened again, what happened the third time?

1 Samuel 3:8-9 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli _____ that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant _____. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

- 5) What did the LORD have to say to Samuel?

1 Samuel 3:10-11 And the LORD came, and stood, and _____ as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall _____.

1 Samuel 3:12-14 In that day I will perform _____ Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves _____, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

- 6) Was Samuel familiar with such things as this?

1 Samuel 3:7 Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet _____ unto him

He was not acquainted with such direct manifestations of God's presence as were granted to the prophets. It was the Lord's purpose to reveal Himself in an unexpected manner, that Eli might hear of it through the surprise and inquiry of the youth.

- 7) Was Samuel excited to share what he was told?

1 Samuel 3:15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel _____ to shew Eli the vision.

In the morning he went about his duties as usual, but with a heavy burden upon his young heart. The Lord had not commanded him to reveal the fearful denunciation, hence he remained silent, avoiding, as far as possible, the presence of Eli. He trembled, lest some question should compel him to declare the divine judgments against one whom he loved and revered. Eli was confident that the message foretold some great calamity to him and his house.



8) When asked, what did he tell Eli?

1 Samuel 3:18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid _____ from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Yet Eli did not manifest the fruits of true repentance. He confessed his guilt, but failed to renounce the sin. Year after year the Lord delayed His threatened judgments. Much might have been done in those years to redeem the failures of the past, but the aged priest took no effective measures to correct the evils that were polluting the sanctuary of the Lord and leading thousands in Israel to ruin.

A day of retribution was approaching. God's authority had been set aside, and His worship neglected and despised, and it became necessary for Him to interpose, that the honor of His name might be maintained.

9) What event came about?

1 Samuel 4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the _____ pitched in Aphek.

Two things are happening in this Scripture, 1st - Samuel was recognized as a prophet across the land and 2nd - This expedition was undertaken by the Israelites without counsel from God, without the concurrence of high priest or prophet.

10) How'd that go?

1 Samuel 4:2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was _____ before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

11) How did Israel make things worse?

1 Samuel 4:3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the _____ of the _____ of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

The Lord had given no command or permission that the ark should come into the army; yet the Israelites felt confident that victory would be theirs, and uttered a great shout when it was borne into the camp by the sons of Eli.

12) What transpired?

1 Samuel 4:5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth _____ again.

1 Samuel 4:7, 9 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, _____ is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore... .. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not _____ unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The Philistines looked upon the ark as the god of Israel. All the mighty works that Jehovah had wrought for His people were attributed to its power.

13) What happened?

1 Samuel 4:10-11 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was _____, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were _____.

The Philistines made a fierce assault, which resulted in the defeat of Israel, with great slaughter. Thirty thousand men lay dead upon the field, and the ark of God was taken, the two sons of Eli having fallen while fighting to defend it. Thus, again was left upon the page of history a testimony for all future ages, that the iniquity of God's professed people will not go unpunished. The greater the knowledge of God's will, the greater the sin of those who disregard it.



The most terrifying calamity that could occur had befallen Israel. The ark of God had been captured and was in the possession of the enemy. The glory had indeed departed from Israel when the symbol of the abiding presence and power of Jehovah was removed from the midst of them. With this sacred chest were associated the most wonderful revelations of God's truth and power.

They had not realized that their faith was only a nominal faith and had lost its power to prevail with God. The law of God, contained in the ark, was also a symbol of His presence; but they had cast contempt upon the commandments, had despised their requirements, and had grieved the Spirit of the Lord from among them. When the people obeyed the holy precepts, the Lord was with them to work for them by His infinite power; but when they looked upon the ark, and did not associate it with God, nor honor His revealed will by obedience to His law, it could avail them little more than a common box.

14) Does God hear those who cherish iniquity?

Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be _____.

15) What news came back to Shiloh?

1 Samuel 4:13-14 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart _____ for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this _____? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

16) What did they tell him?

1 Samuel 4:17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is _____.

A look of unutterable anguish passed over his countenance. The thought that his sin had thus dishonored God and caused Him to withdraw His presence from Israel was more than he could bear; his strength was gone.

17) What happened?

1 Samuel 4:18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his _____ brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

18) About that time Eli's grandson was being born, what did his mother name him?

1 Samuel 4:21-22 And she named the child _____, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The _____ is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

The wife of Phinehas, notwithstanding the impiety of her husband, was a woman who feared the Lord. The death of her father-in-law and her husband, and above all, the terrible tidings that the ark of God was taken, caused her death. She felt that the last hope of Israel was gone; and she named the child born in this hour of adversity, Ichabod, or "inglorious;" with her dying breath.

He had used the Philistines as the instrument to punish Israel, and He employed the ark to punish the Philistines. In time past the divine Presence had attended it, to be the strength and glory of His obedient people. That invisible Presence would still attend it, to bring terror and destruction to the transgressors of His holy law. The Lord often employs His bitterest enemies to punish the unfaithfulness of His professed people. The wicked may triumph for a time as they see Israel suffering chastisement, but the time will come when they, too, must meet the sentence of a holy, sin-hating God.

19) Where did the Ark of the Covenant end up?

1 Samuel 5:1-2 And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto _____. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of _____, and set it by Dagon.

The Philistines removed the ark in triumph to Ashdod, one of their five principal cities, and placed it in the house of their god Dagon. They imagined that the power which had hitherto attended the ark would be theirs, and that this, united with the power of Dagon, would render them invincible.



20) How'd that go?

1 Samuel 5:3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was _____ upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

21) And the next day?

1 Samuel 5:4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon 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 upon the threshold; only the _____ of Dagon was left to him.

The upper part of this idol was like that of a man, and the lower part was in the likeness of a fish. Now every part that resembled the human form had been cut off, and only the body of the fish remained. Priests and people were horror-struck; they looked upon this mysterious event as an evil omen, foreboding destruction to themselves and their idols before the God of the Hebrews. They now removed the ark from their temple and placed it in a building by itself.

22) Was God done with them?

1 Samuel 5:6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he _____ them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

Emerods is an archaic English word in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible that means hemorrhoids, piles, or painful swellings/tumors.

The inhabitants of Ashdod were smitten with a distressing and fatal disease. Remembering the plagues that were inflicted upon Egypt by the God of Israel, the people attributed their afflictions to the presence of the ark among them. It was decided to convey it to Gath. But the plague followed close upon its removal, and the men of that city sent it to Ekron.

23) What happened at Ekron?

1 Samuel 5:10-12 ...And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to _____ us and our people. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly _____ throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

24) How long was the Ark in Philistia?

1 Samuel 6:1 And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines _____ months.

For seven months the ark remained in Philistia, and during all this time **the Israelites made no effort for its recovery**. But the Philistines were now as anxious to free themselves from its presence as they had been to obtain it. Instead of being a source of strength to them, it was a great burden and a heavy curse.

25) What did they decide to do?

1 Samuel 6:3 And they said, If ye _____ 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 _____, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

To ward off or to remove a plague, it was anciently the custom among the heathen to make an image in gold, silver, or other material, of that which caused the destruction, or of the object or part of the body specially affected. This was set up on a pillar or in some conspicuous place and was supposed to be an effectual protection against the evils thus represented. A similar practice still exists among some heathen peoples. When a person suffering from disease goes for cure to the temple of his idol, he carries with him a figure of the part affected, which he presents as an offering to his god.

26) What did they do?

1 Samuel 6:4-5 Then said they, What shall be the _____ 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. Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give _____ unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.



These wise men acknowledged a mysterious power accompanying the ark, a power which they had no wisdom to meet. Yet they did not counsel the people to turn from their idolatry to serve the Lord. They still hated the God of Israel, though compelled by overwhelming judgments to submit to His authority. Thus, sinners may be convinced by the judgments of God that it is in vain to contend against Him. They may be compelled to submit to His power, while at heart they rebel against His control. Such submission cannot save the sinner. The heart must be yielded to God, must be subdued by divine grace, before man's repentance can be accepted.

The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand. They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus He was forced to speak to them through judgments.

27) How did they verify YHWH was indeed behind their troubles?

1 Samuel 6:7-8 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two _____, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their _____ home from them: 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.

On being set free, the kine (cows) turned from their young and, lowing as they went, took the direct road to Beth-shemesh. Guided by no human hand, the patient animals kept on their way. The divine Presence accompanied the ark, and it passed on safely to the very place designated.

28) Where did they go?

1 Samuel 6:13-14 And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and _____ to see it. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great _____: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.

The lords of the Philistines, who had followed the ark ***“unto the border of Beth-shemesh,”*** and had witnessed its reception, now returned to Ekron. The plague had ceased, and they were convinced that their calamities had been a judgment from the God of Israel.

Had the worshipers in Israel who witnessed the Ark's return repented of their sins, God's blessing would have attended them. But they were not faithfully obeying His law; and while they rejoiced at the return of the ark as a harbinger of good, they had no true sense of its sacredness. Instead of preparing a suitable place for its reception, they permitted it to remain in the harvest field. As they continued to gaze upon the sacred chest and to talk of the wonderful manner in which it had been restored, they began to conjecture wherein lay its peculiar power. At last, overcome by curiosity, they removed the coverings and ventured to open it.

29) What happened?

1 Samuel 6:19 And he _____ 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.

All Israel had been taught to regard the ark with awe and reverence. When required to remove it from place to place the Levites were not so much as to look upon it. Only once a year was the high priest permitted to behold the ark of God. Even the heathen Philistines had not dared to remove its coverings. Angels of heaven, unseen, ever attended it in all its journeyings. The irreverent daring of the people at Beth-shemesh was speedily punished. Many were smitten with sudden death.

30) What did Samuel say to Israel when he stepped in?

1 Samuel 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do _____ unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him _____: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

That the occasion might never be forgotten, Samuel set up, between Mizpeh and Shen, a great stone as a memorial. He called the name of it Ebenezer, “the stone of help,” saying to the people, ***“hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.”***

Can you see God is not a good luck charm?

Would you like live under God's protection?

When is it time to humble yourself before the LORD?