

• **The people of God must keep a healthy fear of God.**

Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and take it up to you.” 1 Samuel 6:20–21 (ESV)

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. 1 Samuel 7:1–2 (ESV)

Applications

1. God loves to rescue us when things look hopeless.
2. The answer for how anyone can stand against God’s wrath is found in the construction of the ark.

Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?...” 1 Samuel 6:20 (ESV)

...whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith... Romans 3:25 (ESV)

Life Group Questions

1. What did you learn in this week’s lesson that you did not know? What questions do you have?
2. What do these chapters teach us about God’s character?
3. What mistake did the Israelites of Beth-Shemesh make when handling the ark? How can we make a similar mistake today? **Read Psalm 111:10, Hebrews 10:31, 1 Peter 2:17.**
4. In 1 Samuel 5:4, Dagon was face down in the dirt and needed to be put back on his pedestal by the people that worshipped him. What are the things we worship today? What does this teach us about the way things we worship will fail us? **Read Isaiah 46:7.**
5. It was only after the ark seemed completely defeated that God “resurrected” it in power. Where else in the Bible does God snatch victory out of defeat? How is that similar to what God did with Jesus? How can we expect to see this character quality of God works its way out in our life?
6. How does the ark portray the work of Christ? **Read Hebrews 9:1-14.**



1 Samuel 5:1-7:2 – The Ark Returns

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1. The Double Defeat Of Dagon

When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 1 Samuel 5:1 (ESV)

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. 1 Samuel 5:2 (ESV)

And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 1 Samuel 5:3 (ESV)

But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 1 Samuel 5:4 (ESV)

This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. 1 Samuel 5:5 (ESV)

- **Sometimes when people see evidence of God, they will stubbornly refuse to repent and believe in God.**

2. God’s Heavy Hand On The Philistines

The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. 1 Samuel 5:6 (ESV)

And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.” 1 Samuel 5:7 (ESV)

So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” They answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. 1 Samuel 5:8 (ESV)

But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. 1 Samuel 5:9 (ESV)

So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.” 1 Samuel 5:10 (ESV)

They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. 1 Samuel 5:11 (ESV)

The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. 1 Samuel 5:12 (ESV)

3. The Return Of The Ark

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 1 Samuel 6:1 (ESV)

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.” 1 Samuel 6:2 (ESV)

They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.” 1 Samuel 6:3 (ESV)

- The freeing of the ark from the Philistines is similar to the freeing of God’s people from Egypt.
 1. The phrase, “send away” are the same Hebrew words used by Moses when he said, “Let my people go!”
 2. The Israelites did not leave Egypt empty but were given gold. The ark did not leave the Philistines empty, but with gold.

And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing... Exodus 3:21–22 (ESV)

And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. 1 Samuel 6:4–5 (ESV)

Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? 1 Samuel 6:6 (ESV)

- **When God is trying to get our attention in life, don’t be hard-hearted and ignore Him.**

Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.” 1 Samuel 6:7–9 (ESV)

The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. 1 Samuel 6:10–12 (ESV)

Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. 1 Samuel 6:13 (ESV)

The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up 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 beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the Lord. 1 Samuel 6:14–15 (ESV)

And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron. These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwallled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh. 1 Samuel 6:16–18 (ESV)

And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow (slaughter). 1 Samuel 6:19 (ESV)

but they shall not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.” Numbers 4:20 (ESV)