

Sermon of Sunday 2^{6th} February 2012 Who is able to stand before this Holy LORD God?

1 Samuel 6

In 1 Samuel chapter 4:1-11 we read of the Ark of God being taken by the Philistines in battle against Israel.

Israel thought that they would be assured of victory because of the Ark. Their faith was in the Ark and not in God!

Israel was in sin and we even see the godless sons of Eli (1 Samuel 2:12; 2:25; 3:13), Hophni and Phinehas go with the Ark into battle.

However, God did not honour the Israelites by giving them victory.

Anyway, we read in 1 Samuel 5, the Philistines captured the ark and brought it to Ashdod and set it in the house of Dagon. God toppled the statue of Dagon and then eventually destroyed it as well as bringing a plague on the people.

The Philistines were scared and sent the Ark to Gath whereupon God also brought a plague.

The Ark was then sent to Ekron and the same thing happened so the Philistines decided to send the Ark back to Israel and this is where we find ourselves in 1 Samuel chapter 6.

All of the above happened within 7 months.

1 Samuel 6:6

⁶ Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?

Here is the other side of the story regarding Pharaoh. We see here that he himself hardened his own heart but the Bible also says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3) so how do we reconcile this? God only hardened it after Pharaoh had already done so himself!

Also, it was obvious that the story of Pharaoh was well known and these Philistines were eager not to repeat his mistakes! See also 1 Samuel 4:9

1 Samuel 6:13

¹³ Now the people of Beth-Shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it.

Beth Shemesh was one of the Levitical (**Joshua 21:9; 13-16; 1 Chronicles 6:54-59**) cities and was set aside for the clan of Kohath (2nd son of Levi, see **Genesis 46:11**), the Levitical family in charge of caring for the Ark (See **Numbers 4:4-6, 15, 20; 2 Samuel 6:7**).

The Kohathites were to care for the Ark but even they were not allowed to view or touch it.

So, Beth Shemesh as the destination for the Ark was no coincidence. If anyone knew how to care for the Ark it was these people.

1 Samuel 6:19-21

¹⁹ Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

²⁰ And the men of Beth Shemesh said, **“Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?”** ²¹ So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down *and* take it up with you.”

Note how God killed over 50,000 of them while the Philistines only killed 30,000.

1 Samuel 4:10

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers

God’s righteous judgment was to be feared more than the Philistines. **Israel was to fear God!**

My studies of the book of Deuteronomy show me that we cannot trivialise the “Fear of God”.

Remember, fear is meant to be a restrainer of evil.

Whatever, a lack of respect toward the Ark brought severe punishment.

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The LORD had struck Israel a great blow because of their sin and disobedience to Him.

These people should have known better.

They asked the question "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?"
The correct answer is no one, certainly not someone who has sinned against God and is not following His ways.

The people moaned about the blow God had dealt them instead of repenting before Him.

They then decided the answer to their problems was to do exactly what the Philistines did - send the ark away to another city!

This gives us an indication of just how apostate Israel had become.

Move the problem elsewhere rather than deal with it!

Most people think they can do whatever they want and still stand before God without any consequences.

Many people think they can do whatever they like because they don't believe in God.

Psalm 14:1

¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"

There are also many others who think they can do all sorts of things which will make them right with God.

- I've given so much money to charity this week and that makes me right with God!
- I've done all sorts of good deeds this week. I helped the old lady across the road,
- I went shopping for my invalid neighbour and I dug the garden for my elderly parents. That makes me right with God.
- I just ran the Sydney marathon and raised \$2000 for cancer. That makes me right with God.
- I wear a dog collar and say take the mass 7 days a week. That makes me right with God.
- I read the Bible every day and go to church every week so that makes me right with God.

Isaiah 64:6

⁶ But we are all like an unclean *thing*,

And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;

The Hebrew (*beqed idim*) is very strong in this verse and it actually says that all our righteous deeds are like a used sanitary towel!

Daniel 8:15-17

¹⁵ Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this *man* understand the vision." ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end."

Revelation 1:17

¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

We can try all sorts of things to get right with God or to even save the world. However, the only way to get right with God is by true repentance. Also, we cannot save the world.

Just look at recent events in Chile, Haiti, Pakistan, New Zealand and Japan not to mention the massive upheaval we are currently seeing in the Middle East.

Whether you think it is climate change (which is total nonsense) or the judgment of God or just things happening randomly, we cannot fix the earth.

However, God does judge and here are a few examples. I won't go into this too deep as I've done that before:

God controls the weather

Genesis 19:24

²⁴ Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.

Psalms 107:25

²⁵ For He commands and raises the stormy wind,

Which lifts up the waves of the sea.

Isaiah 29:6

⁶ You will be punished by the LORD of hosts

With thunder and earthquake and great noise,

With storm and tempest

And the flame of devouring fire.

Psalm 78:47

⁴⁷ **He destroyed their vines with hail,**

And their sycamore trees with frost.

So, God does judge but even if He didn't we still can't save the planet.

Genesis 3:17

¹⁷ **Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':**

2 Peter 3:10-11

¹⁰ **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.** ¹¹ **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**

There is your Biblical "global warming"! The earth is cursed and it's going to be burnt up!

This does not mean we shouldn't be respectful and sensible i.e. we don't throw our litter all over the place and we don't go throwing pollutants into the sea, rivers or lakes etc. It just means that we are not going to be able to save the planet.

In much the same way, we are under a curse. Regardless of how much **botox** we pump into our bodies or **beauty treatments** we apply to ourselves, or have our **bodies frozen** for many years using cryogenics until man has found the answer to immortality, we cannot make ourselves immortal. We are under the curse of sin and our bodies are going to give up on us sooner or later.

We need to come to God on His terms and His terms alone.

Remember the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter 4. Abel sacrificed animals before the Lord but Cain brought the fruit of the land. The Lord did not recognise Cain's offering and Cain became angry. God warned him to beware of sin crouching at his door but Cain got more and more angry, gave into his sin and eventually killed his brother. We see a similar thing with king David in 2 Samuel 11.

How do we get right with God?

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim;

each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts;

The whole earth *is* full of His glory!”

⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ So I said:

“Woe *is* me, for I am undone!

Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,

And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King,

The LORD of hosts.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

“Behold, this has touched your lips;

Your iniquity is taken away,

And your sin purged.”

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:

“Whom shall I send,

And who will go for Us?”

Isaiah came before God in a vision and realised immediately that he was unfit to stand before Him. He realised how sinful he was. He understood his condition before a hold and righteous God and confessed immediately.

However, the seraphim put the burning coal to his mouth and his sins were cleansed and he was forgiven.

Now, note the change in Isaiah. God asks the question “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Isaiah is able to answer with confidence “Here am I, Send me!”

Only once we are right with God can we answer His call to service.

Only once we have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins can we experience forgiveness and then serve Him.

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

¹¹ **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;** but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

¹² For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. ¹⁴ **For the love of Christ compels us,** because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: **we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.** ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

From 2000 years ago Paul the apostle, and others, make an appeal to you and me.

This very same message still resonates through the centuries right up till this present day!

BE RECONCILED TO GOD!

WHO CAN STAND BEFORE GOD? NO ONE WHO IS NOT BORN OF THE SPIRIT!

BE RECONCILED TO GOD!