

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 10TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

ESCAPE (1 SAMUEL 6:1-12)

SEND IT BACK!

After seven months of sickness, the Philistines asked their religious leaders how to get rid of the ark and escape God's wrath.

- **They sought advice from ungodly men to solve a godly problem. We can expect problems when we do the same thing today.**

GUILT OFFERING

The Philistines had heard of God's judgment of Egypt and recognized His power. Golden tumors and rats represented their disease and were meant to appease God.

- **Although they may have believed God was real, they desired to get as far away from Him as possible. Who can escape from God?**

THE TEST

The leaders propose the untrained milk cow test. It would take a miracle for these cows to take the cart to Israel. The leaders reveal the depth of their beliefs. The "test" was their way out if the sickness didn't go away.

- **Testing God isn't the way to solidify our faith. Escape isn't the answer; surrender is.**

WHO KNEW?

The leaders may have thought the cows would go to their calves and prove that God was not the power behind the plague.

- **They did not know God, but the cows did! They walked straight to their destination, never straying to the right or the left. We should know what those cows knew: follow God first.**

MISTAKES (1 SAMUEL 6:13-7:1)

OVERJOYED

The ark had been missing for seven months. It was received with joy, thanksgiving, and sacrifice.

- **The Philistines had only known God's wrath and wanted to escape. The Israelites had known His mighty grace. We are strongest when we are rejoicing in the Lord.**

OFFERING

As the authorized custodians of the ark, the Levites could handle the ark while the people offered sacrifices. Mistakes were made; the law only allowed male animals for offerings.

- **God still accepted their offerings. The Lord is looking for a broken and remorseful heart. We aren't slaves to the law; we are servants of Christ.**

STRUCK DOWN

What should have been great joy was a cause of sorrow. The priests had allowed the ark to become a tourist attraction, and God took action.

- **This is a danger in the modern church. Too many are focused on "the look" and not the Lord. The ark didn't belong to the people; it was FOR the people.**

SENT OFF

Because of their own sin, the people believed no one could stand in the presence of God. Instead of repenting, they sent the ark to the next willing town.

- **The Philistines tried to escape from God, and the people at Beth-shemesh tried to send Him away. Do we think we can avoid Him? Do we want to?**

REPENTANCE (1 SAMUEL 7:2-11)

LONGED FOR THE LORD

It took twenty years for the people to come to a place of genuine repentance—willing to turn away from other gods.

- **Repentance involves far more than feeling sorry about our sin. We must forsake our sins and turn to God in new obedience. How long will we wait before we turn to the Lord? Do we want to?**

CONFESSED THEIR SINS

Samuel called them to Mizpah for a time of worship and prayer for deliverance. They had destroyed their idols but must still confess their sins and surrender themselves to the Lord.

- **We come together to encourage one another, but we must be honest with ourselves, each other, and God.**

SACRIFICE

Samuel took a young lamb and offered the whole animal. As he cried out, the Lord answered him.

- **Let's not miss this...Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered Himself completely as a sacrifice for our sins. He even cried out for our forgiveness. How will we respond?**

HELP

Israel was broken, surrendered to God, and felt weak and helpless. Their gathering had scared the Philistines into attack mode. Israel finally asked for God's help first.

- **Prayer was more powerful than an army, and it still is. There will be battles, but we must get our protection and direction from God.**

VICTORY (1 SAMUEL 7:12-17)

AFTERWARD

Setting up stones to commemorate significant events has been a part of Hebrew culture since the time of Jacob.

- **They had Ebenezer, the "stone of help," to help them remember God's provision for those who trust and obey Him. Do we take time to remember what He has done? Do we want to?**

RESTORED

With the Philistines subdued, Israel was safe and recovered the land lost in previous battles.

Samuel would travel and remind them of God's deliverance, and they would follow Him... for now.

- **We will praise, worship, and follow when we experience restoration. Will it last? Do we want it to?**

HIDING

- God is omnipresent (everywhere).
- **God doesn't ignore anyone's sin.**
- **It is impossible to appease God with our stuff—it is already His stuff! It is impossible to run away from God's judgment. There is nowhere to hide. Why would we want to?**

EXPOSED

- God knows what we should confess.
- **Our fear of exposure makes us insecure and prone to deny our sin.**
- **Confession is the beginning of restoration. When we are willing to tell the truth about ourselves to God, we become more honest with each other.**

RESTORED

- We want restoration, but the Church is weak because we don't repent.
- **God loves His Church and wants to use it as a light to the world.**
- **In humility, we must remember that Christ gave His life, that God protects, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live lives that glorify God. Do we want to?**