

Comfortable in Your Own Understanding

“... and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD” - 1 Samuel 6:15

Our text describes an extremely joyous spiritual event that occurred when the ark, which earlier had been captured by the Philistines, mysteriously returned one day to the Israelites on a cart drawn by cows. As has long been their custom, the people of Bethshemesh rightly praised God for the return of the ark by offering sacrifices unto Him. However, God did not accept their offerings. True worship is done from a willing heart according to His plan. For one, the ark belonged in the Holy of Holies, behind the veil in the temple, and could only be approached by the high priest once a year with sacrificial blood: their sacrificial offering was done in the middle of a field. Secondly, even though they were filled with thankful emotions toward God, the people were not ready in their hearts for true worship as they mixed pagan worship with the worship of their forefathers, offering gold and jewels from the Philistines along with their traditional animal sacrifices. Thus, their once true temple worship had become compromised so that God *“... smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men...”* (1 Samuel 6:19). God rejected this outwardly joyous worship, because it came from unbelief.

God allowed the ark to be captured when the Israelites foolishly thought that it would somehow save them from the Philistine army, *“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 ark of the covenant 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”* (1 Samuel 4:3). Once they captured the ark, the Philistines soon learned that God was nothing to trifle with; experiencing numerous calamities as they hastily sent the ark from city to city. Finally, they decided it best to return the ark to Israel on a cow-pulled cart along with gifts of trespass offerings unto the God of Israel. They reasoned that if the cart went to Bethshemesh, then it was God who caused all their sorrows, if not, then it was only chance. The cows headed straight to Bethshemesh, *“... and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left...”* (1 Samuel 6:12) confirming that God was alive and was contacting them. Irrespective of this call from God, the Philistines remained resolute in their unbelief. Scripture provides no evidence of them ever turning to God.

The Bethshemites were no better equipped to deal with the holy ark of God than were the Philistines, even though the ark was theirs and they were God's people. After suffering the great slaughter they asked Kirjath-jearim, another town in Israel, to take the ark. They did, and there it sat for twenty years, having no use for it until at some point they began to experience Godly sorrow, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10). Up to this point both the Philistines and the Israelites only experienced worldly sorrow, not associating their trouble brought on by unbelief as a call from God. Tragically, those Philistines that died in unbelief will one day suffer the second death mentioned in Revelation, which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire.

Godly sorrow came to the Israelites when Samuel told them to repent. Indeed, he had spoken of this need numerous times in the past but the people were not prepared to listen just yet. Although they were fully aware that Samuel spoke the word of God, as *“all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD”* (1 Samuel 3:20) they refused to accept his words as the truth but retained their own religious interpretations. They jumbled their God-given faith with teachings that pleased their passions, so *“Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return 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 only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines”* (1 Samuel 7:3). A simple message of repentance was all that was necessary to cause an awakening among the people. Samuel did not direct the people to fulfill the law or to change their lives in any way but to confess their sins and to allow God to subsequently direct their lives through the word. He simply pointed to their confused understanding of faith being part pagan, part God. God had perfectly prepared their hearts to at long last hear His call through Samuel's preaching to where they willingly confessed their sins to Samuel *“... We have sinned against the LORD...”* (1 Samuel 7:6) who then offered a burnt sacrifice to God, forgiving them, *“And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him”* (1 Samuel 7:9).

Dear reader, merely belonging to a church and going through the motions, as did the Philistines and Israelites, provides no assurance of eternal salvation.

Without repentance and the forgiveness of sins, done according to scripture and not according to our own belief or to that of others, we have no part with God. Diligently pray to our heavenly Father that He would open His word to you as He did with the Israelites. Pray that you will not end up as the Philistines, comfortable in your own understanding.

God's Peace,
Charles Korhonen

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June 3	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
June 10	Sunday School Picnic	
June 17	Charles Korhonen	
June 24	Charles Korhonen	

Church Cleaning:

Chuck, Jane and Marcus Korhonen

Summer Schedule

Church at 10am

Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH
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Online Broadcasts

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services. Previous sermons will be archived and available on the web.

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