

The Ark of the Covenant

What does the ark teach us about coming to God?
¿Qué nos enseña el arca sobre acercarnos a Dios?

1. We come to God through _____.

Venimos a Dios a través de _____.

1 Samuel 6:3

Hebrews 9:11-14 (Hebreos 9:11-14)

John 14:6

2. We come to God in _____.

Venimos a Dios en _____.

1 Samuel 6:6

1 Samuel 6:12

Hebrews 3:12-15 (Hebreos 3:12-15)

3. We come to God with _____.

Venimos a Dios con _____.

1 Samuel 6:19-20

Hebrews 12:22-24 (Hebreos 12:22-24)

Hebrews 12:28-29 (Hebreos 12:28-29)



Discussion Questions and Notes

Week 7: September 27 – October 4

Scripture: 1 Samuel 6

In First Samuel chapter 6, the Ark of the Covenant has been in Philistine hands for seven months. It was captured in battle after Israel treated it like a good luck charm. However, the Philistines quickly learned what the Israelites forgot: the living God cannot be stored, shipped, or used to their advantage. The ark was a symbol of God's presence. It was designed to teach us how to approach God. Those same lessons the ark taught to people in the Old Testament are important for us today.

Read 1 Samuel 6

1. How long did the Philistines keep the ark before they asked their religious leaders how to send it back to Israel? (6:1-2)
2. What kind of offering did the religious leaders tell the people to send to the God of Israel? (6:3)

James Smith writes,

They advised the rulers not to send the ark back without a guilt offering. This type of offering was offered when an offense had been unintentional (Lev 5:15). The offering would acknowledge that they had committed an inadvertent trespass against Yahweh by treating the ark of God as common war booty. (Smith, 98)

3. Why did the Philistines make five gold tumors and five gold rats to send with the ark? (6:4-5, 17-18)

Smith notes,

The word perhaps maintains Yahweh's freedom to act or refuse to act as he sees fit. Relief from their predicament was not automatic. These pagan priests were more committed to the sovereignty of God than were the priests at Shiloh who thought they could compel Yahweh to act on behalf of his people by lugging his ark to the battlefield. (Smith, 99)

4. What did the religious leaders ask the people in verse 6?

John Woodhouse observes,

The heavy or hard heart describes defiance toward God, like that of Pharaoh, and now of the Philistines. Such defiance brings God's heavy hand of judgment, as the Egyptians learned (see Exodus 3:19, 20; 6:1; 7:4, 5; 9:3, 15; 13:3, 9, 14; 15:6, 12), and as the Philistines had now experienced (1 Samuel 5:6, 7, 9, 11; 6:3, 5, 9).
(Woodhouse, 115-116)

5. What "test" did the Philistines design to determine whether God was really behind the plagues that came upon them when they took the ark captive? (6:8-9)

6. What did the cows do after they were hitched to the cart? (6:10-12)

7. How far did the Philistine rulers follow the cart? (6:12)

Smith comments,

The destination of the ark was Beth Shemesh, a priestly city (Josh 21:16) in the tribal area of Judah (Josh 15:10), the valley of Sorek, about eight miles southeast of Ekron (MBA, 84). The name means "House of the Sun" and is probably the same as Ir Shemesh ("City of the Sun") in Josh 19:41. (Smith, 101)

8. How did the people of Beth Shemesh respond when they saw the ark coming back to Israel? (6:13)

9. What did the Israelites do when the cart stopped? (6:14)

10. What did the Levites do in verse 15?

11. What did the writer say about the rock in verse 18?

12. Why did seventy men die in verse 19?

13. Why did the people of Beth Shemesh want the ark to go to Kiriath Jearim? (6:20-21)

Bill Arnold notes,

The geographical progression from Philistia to Beth Shemesh, and then to Kiriath Jearim, is part of a larger story told in the books of Samuel. Twenty years later, the ark is taken from Kiriath Jearim by Yahweh's specially anointed servant David and placed in Yahweh's chosen location, Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17). The exile of the ark and its eventual migration to Jerusalem reflects God's choice of Jerusalem, which is ultimately behind David's selection of that city as the new capital of unified Israel. (Arnold, 121–122)

14. Why do you think the Philistines kept the ark for seven months before they finally sent it back to Israel?

15. Why do many people today hold on to harmful addictions for years before they finally ask for help?

16. What lessons can we learn from the cows in this passage?

17. Why did God have such a harsh punishment for simply looking into the ark?

18. What does it mean to fear the Lord?

19. How will you demonstrate sincere reverence for God?

20. How can you help someone who is holding on to harmful addictions and sinful habits?

Sources cited:

Arnold, Bill. *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2003.

Smith, James. *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000.

Woodhouse, John. *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.