

Approaching the Holy God (1 Samuel 6:1-7:2a & Hebrews 4:14-16)

15-July-2018

So we're continuing our series on the OT book of 1 Samuel.

And we're looking at 1 Samuel chapter 6 through to the 2nd verse of chapter 7

And we'll also briefly look at the NT passage from Hebrews 4:14-18

There's a sermon outline in the bulletin if you'd like to take down notes

Let's pray before we take a look at this passage together

Intro/Context

Just a reminder of last week - where we got up to

The Philistines had stolen the Ark of the Covenant

[PowerPoint 1-Ark]

[Explain]

The Philistines thought they'd captured Israel's God - and captured God's power

They placed the ark in Dagon's temple and thought the more gods the merrier

[PowerPoint 2-Dagon's temple]

The next day Dagon was flat on his face

So they stood Dagon up and the next day Dagon was flat on his face again -

lying across the threshold with his head and arms broken off

The Philistines are pretty sure this has happened because of the presence of the Ark of God

[PowerPoint 3-Pass the Ark around]

And so they pass the ark around the land of the Philistines like a hot potato

Each town the ark went to - Ashdod, Ekron and Gath - each town was infected with tumours (hemorrhoids)

As a result we left the story with the Philistines in v12 where it says

[PowerPoint 4-1 Sam 5:12]

Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

As we said last week - it's funny how unbelievers cry out to God in Heaven isn't it?

(pause)

All of this begs the question - how do we approach the one True Holy God?

That's the question our passage today asks in chapter 6 verse 20

[PowerPoint 5 1 Sam 6:20]

Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?

You see God is Holy

In fact Isaiah 6:3 says God is Holy, Holy, Holy

[PowerPoint 6-Holy]

What do we mean when we say something is Holy?

Hebrew word is Qadowsh (Kadoshe)

It means set apart, sacred (ceremonially moral, pure, clean, free from defilement of crimes, free from idolatry and from unclean and profane things) - only God can be that - which is why He is Unique and Holy

[PowerPoint 7-Holy Bible, Land, City]

Look at the front of your Bible and it says Holy Bible

What makes it Holy?

The Land of Israel is often called the Holy Land?

The city of Jerusalem is often called the Holy City?

Why?

They share something in common

They are all God's property

Bible=God's Book, Israel=God's Land. Jerusalem=God's City

They all belong to God

That is why they are Holy!

[PowerPoint 8a-Draw near to God]

James 4:8 says:

⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you.

So why don't people draw near to God and give their lives to Him?

[PowerPoint 8b-Reasons they don't draw near]

1. Well some people see having a relationship with God - as dull and boring and not exciting - like going to a Harp Concert -
2. Some people delight in doing evil - and they can't imagine giving up their sinful way of life - they don't want to change
3. Some people Fear God - and they fear their sins will be judged and punished - so if they ignore God - ignorance is bliss

But our Lord, the Holy God desires that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9)

So how do we approach the Holy God?

Well - we can learn a lot from Unbelievers

And in our passage today, we can learn a lot from the Unbelieving Philistines

Learning from Unbelievers (1 Sam 6:1-12)

In 1 Samuel 6:1-12 the unbelieving Philistines have -

Some *right thoughts* and some *wrong thoughts* about approaching God

[PowerPoint 9-Right Thoughts]

Right thoughts

- V4-5 - The Philistines knew they were guilty before the Holy God of Israel - therefore when they decide to send the Ark of God back to Israel - they sent a guilt offering with the Ark - they knew they had to make amends to God - gold tumours and rats were sent because that was what they were inflicted with
- V5 - The Philistines knew they had to give glory to the Holy God of Israel - (give credit to God) - because God had conquered their false god - Dagon - and had left Dagon flat on his face
- V6- The Philistines also knew they mustn't harden their hearts against the Holy God of Israel - they knew what had happened in the Exodus - when Pharaoh hardened his heart and Israel's God had defeated all the Egyptian gods

They had these right thoughts about God because as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:18-20 says:

Everyone knows there is a God - but people suppress the knowledge of God by their wickedness (v18) - but God has made it plain to everyone (v19)

Since the creation of the World - God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, from what He has made, so that people are without excuse (v20)

(pause)

- So unbelievers suppress their knowledge and worship of God
- Even atheists - suppress knowledge and glory of God - they know deep down there is a God - they live in God's World! - They constantly butt up against the real world of God - But atheists are like a character in a novel who denies the author exists - or like children who deny mum and dad exist but they wouldn't exist without mum and dad!

(pause)

We can also learn from the unbelieving Philistines from the wrong thoughts they have

[PowerPoint 10-Wrong Thoughts]

Wrong Thoughts

- V2 - They called on the pagan priests and diviners to tell them what to do - but deep down they know the God of Israel was the one who acted - but they relied on other sources - they wrongly thought in v4-5 that God would be appeased with golden tumours and golden rats - rats- which are unclean animals and not pleasing to the God of Israel

- The Philistines were so confused that even though all the tumours of chapter 5 have happened they're still not sure if this is from Israel's one True God or just some coincidence or chance
- So in v7-12 they tested God - they took the Ark of God and built a new cart for it - they yoked two cows - who had never been yoked before - cows who had calves - and they decided to see where these cows go - If the cows went towards Israel - to the border town of Beth Shemesh - then they'd know it was the God of Israel that brought the tumours on them - And if the cows didn't go back to Israel - they'd know it was accident
- These cows worked smoothly together - even though they hadn't ever been yoked before - they mooed all the way - they didn't go back to their calves - they went to Beth Shemesh - confirming that the punishments of chapter 5 were truly from the God of Israel - as they suspected

(pause)

God speaks to people - whether believers or unbelievers through our life experiences - if we have eyes to see!

But it's like unbelievers are in a dream

When we have a dream it feels real doesn't it? But when we wake up - the dream wasn't the real world at all!

When unbelievers become believers - they wake up to God's real world - the Lord's is real - that's what the Philistines realized in chapter 6 - The Philistines didn't act on that realization as far as we know - and put their faith in God

So my first point today is we can learn some right thoughts and some wrong thoughts about unbelievers

[PowerPoint 11-Challenge]

Challenge for us:

The challenge for us today is:

- Are we aware of the guilt of our sins?
- Do we give glory to God for all aspects of our lives or do we take the glory?
- Are our hearts hardened at times - and we fight stubbornly against God's rule of our life?
- Are we consulting other sources instead of God - when we need guidance?
- Do we attribute blessings in our lives to coincidence or chance - rather than counting our blessings from God?
- Do we try and test God to see if He's right - instead of just obeying Him and submitting to His Word and His Will?

Being Judged like Unbelievers (1 Sam 6:13-7:2)

My second point is:

[PowerPoint 12-Judged like Unbelievers]

People who act like the unbelieving Philistines will be judged like unbelievers - even God's people - the Israelites - that's in 1 Samuel chapter 6 verses 13 to 20

- V13 - When the Ark of the Covenant returned to Beth Shemesh - the Israelites rejoiced - there's nothing wrong with that!
- V14 - The first thing they did - was to chop wood and build an altar and sacrifice the cows that had transported the Ark from Philistia - Now

according to the Law of God - the sacrifice should have been male cows - maybe they sinned maybe they didn't - maybe it's exceptional circumstances as the Ark has been missing for 7 months?

- In V15 - we see that Beth Shemesh is a Levitical city (Levites there) - they are the priestly tribes - they knew what to do- they should have covered the ark (Exodus 40:2-4, 19-21; Numbers 4:4-6)
- The people weren't supposed to look at the outside of the Ark - obviously as its being recovered they have too - but once they received it they should have covered it straight away (same references)
- The Law of God said they were not to touch the Ark or look in it which would mean removing the cover - the mercy seat - the presence of God - but they did touch it and did look inside it! (Numbers 4:15)
- V19 - So the Lord struck down 70 people for looking inside the Ark
- This brought great mourning and lamentation for the people of Beth Shemesh

And so they ask the question - we began with?

In V20 - [Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?](#)

This passage reminds of the sheer awesomeness of God

And we stand before Him as sinners, defiled, unclean, stained by our sins - and we are the complete opposite of Holy!

We cannot come into His presence boldly and confidently because of our transgressions and sins

Imagine if I was to ask one of us to come up [mention someone] and tell us all the sins they committed in their whole life?

Their sins - in thought, word and deed

That would be embarrassing - wouldn't it? And we're all sinners here - so we can relate to them

We might say to ourselves - I'm glad Paul called on [someone] and not me!

Now, imagine standing before our Lord, the Holy God and telling Him all our sins [which He already knows] - imagine telling God who is Holy and without sin, all our sins!

Our God demands perfection and we sin against Him repeatedly

So who can stand before the Holy Lord?

How could we illustrate what it's like to enter in to God's presence?

An imperfect illustration might be:

Imagine going to an Art Gallery - a quiet reverent atmosphere - beautiful paintings - where we can respect the artists and paintings - As sinners we're like hooligans going to the art gallery - making a racket - and bagging out the artists and the paintings and ridiculing the people who have come to the art gallery - laughing at them - saying what's wrong with these people - The hooligans think they're so enlightened and progressive and these arty people are just so pretentious - The Hooligans shout out their disapproval and even spit on the paintings. We're like the Hooligans in the art gallery, standing before God with all our sins!

But we should fear and respect Him - the Lord judges and punishes!

He Killed 70 people of Beth Shemesh for not worshipping and honouring His Holiness!

How can we stand before Him?

Who can stand before Him?

[PowerPoint 13-Who?]

We can - We can stand before the Holy God

Because of the Gospel - the Good News!

Because Jesus died for our sins to be forgiven

Because He is our Saviour

Because of God's power in raising Him to life - so we can have eternal life

We're free - and we can rejoice

And we can enter the Holy of Holies because of Jesus

Because of Jesus we can stand before the Holy God - no matter what our sins and how many sins there are

(pause)

As long as we repent!

(pause)

Responses to Approaching the Holy God

[PowerPoint 14]

So our responses today must be:

[PowerPoint 14a-Repent]

1. Repent of our sins - and confess our sinfulness to God and say sorry (Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19) and believe Jesus' death on the cross has made us clean of sin - and believe he has infused us with His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21)

[PowerPoint 14b-High Priest]

2. As our NT passage from Hebrews reminds us:

Remember - we have a great high priest in Jesus - who is the Ark - the actual presence of God - and He's the once and for all sacrifice for sins - so sacrifices for sin don't have to be repeated over and over

We have Jesus who we can hold on to - firmly in faith

Jesus understands our weakness - he was tempted but didn't sin

So we can approach God's throne of Grace with confidence - knowing we have mercy and grace in our time of need

[PowerPoint 14c-Worship]

3. Because of Jesus our high priest - we are free to come near to God and worship Him properly - *William Temple, the famous archbishop of Canterbury describes worship as: - stimulating our conscience by understanding the Holiness of God; feeding our mind with the Truth of God; purging the imagination by replacing it with the Beauty of God; opening our hearts to the Love of God; and devoting our will to the Purposes of God*

[PowerPoint 14d-Stop Sinning]

4. And as 1 John 3:7-10 tell us we must stop sinning John says:

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. ⁹ No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. ¹⁰ This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do

what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

It is foolish to build a chook pen on the strong foundations of a skyscraper!

In the same way it is foolish for us to build half-hearted lives on the rock solid foundation of Jesus

We are to build worshipful and faithful lives on the foundation of Jesus - the Cornerstone

The Christian who fails to live a holy life is failing to utilize the foundation for his life that Christ Jesus has given them

So friends, let us all

- Repent
- Hold on firmly in faith to Jesus our Great High Priest
- Worship God properly
- Stop sinning and build our lives on Jesus

Let's pray...