

LESSON PLAN

ARK OF THE COVENANT LOST

1 Samuel 4 – 7

Lesson Memory Verse: Psalm 96:9 – “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him, all the earth.”

Lesson Aim: We should worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. However, we must remember that only God is holy and we are sinful. Therefore, we must humble ourselves before Him, confess our sins, and be cleansed before we can truly worship Him.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): What happens to a white sheet of paper when you take hold of it with dirty hands? It gets dirty. (Put a little dirt on a child’s hand and then have him hold of a sheet of white paper to show what happens to the paper.) Our lives are dirty with sin. We say and do sinful things. God is holy, cleaner than a white sheet of paper, and will not let us come and worship Him with sin in our lives. We must be cleansed by Jesus’ blood. How do we do that? We must humble ourselves, confess our sins and ask Him to cleanse us by Jesus’ precious blood. Then we will be whiter than the whitest sheet of paper.

HE (for Authority): Our memory verse tells that we are to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Can anyone tell me why holiness is beautiful? (It is clean and clean things are beautiful.) We like clean clothes, clean food, clean air, clean water, and a lot of other clean things. Holiness is clean, absolutely clean, perfectly clean, and it is beautiful to the Lord. We must be cleansed from all our sins before we can worship the Lord. We will be cleansed by the blood of Jesus when we confess our sins by naming them. Then we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

“Fear” in this verse means we respect the Lord and trust Him. We do not have to be afraid of Him if we are cleansed by Jesus’ blood. However, anyone who tries to worship the Lord without being cleansed should be afraid.

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scriptures for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. (How to prepare a lesson is given in the Introductory Notes.) In this lesson, we will learn how various kinds of people were rejected by the Lord and not allowed to worship Him because of their sins. We will also learn how one group worshipped the Lord properly and, as a result, was blessed with joy.

I. The Ark Removed from Israel – 1 Samuel 4

A. Israel lost a battle with the Philistines – 4:1-2

Israel lost the battle with the Philistines because the people were not holy; they loved idols (cf. 7:3). Therefore, God let them lose the battle against the Philistines, and 4,000 men were killed.

WE: We will not have God’s help, if we refuse to confess and leave our sins. We must be very sorry for our sins and ask the Lord to forgive us so He can help us stop doing those sins.

B. Israel took the ark of the Lord to the next battle against the Philistines – 4:3-11

Israel attempted to defeat the Philistines by bringing the ark of the Lord out of the tabernacle to the battlefield. They failed because they did not confess and stop doing their sins. As a result 30,000 men were killed as well as Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli. The ark of the Lord also was captured by the Philistines.

WE: We, too, will fail in our fight against Satan, if we do not get rid of our sins. First, we must receive Jesus as our Savior. Second, we must confess any sins that come into our lives after Jesus becomes our Savior. Then we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and He will help us defeat Satan.

C. Israel was shocked by the loss of the ark of the Lord – 4:12-22

Eli and Israel were horrified by the loss of the ark. They should have been horrified by their sins. What happened in Israel? Eli died. The wife of Phinehas died while she gave birth to a baby boy. She was so

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sad that she called him Icabod (“no glory”); the glory of God had departed from Israel (12:21-22). None of this would have happened, if they had been humble and had asked the Lord to cleanse them of their sins.

WE: We must learn from their experience that we must hate our sins, confess them and leave them or else we, too, will lose our battles against Satan.

II. The Lord Ruled over the Philistines (1 Samuel 5)

A. The Lord ruled over Dagon – 5:1-5

The Philistines took the ark of the Lord to Ashdod and put it in the house of Dagon, the temple of their god. The Lord showed the Philistines His power by making Dagon fall on his face before the ark two days in a row (5:3-4). As a result they did not want the ark of the Lord in their city. They needed to seek the Lord’s forgiveness, but instead they simply wanted to get rid of His ark.

WE: We must not get rid of the Lord in our lives. Instead, we must get rid of our sins by seeking His forgiveness.

B. The Lord also showed His anger – 5:6-12

The Lord struck the Philistines with a painful sickness that caused many of them to die. They captured the ark of the Lord, but they could not capture the Lord and make Him bless them. They needed to be cleansed from their sins. The ark became a curse to them instead of a blessing. Why? They were cursed because they did not fear the Lord and worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

WE: We can expect sickness and many troubles if we do not fear (respect) the Lord. If we respect Him, we will confess our sins and worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Do this while you are young.

III. The Ark Was Returned to Israel (1 Samuel 6)

A. The Philistines made plans to get rid of the ark – 6:1-9.

The Philistines decided the Lord caused them too much trouble by keeping His ark, so they decided to send it back to Israel. The ark symbolized the presence of the Lord. They learned it was a dreadful and fearful thing to be in His presence without holiness,

WE: We will have similar problems if we try to come into God’s presence without being cleansed of our sin. We must not think that we can hold on to our sins and ask Him to bless us. He will trouble us.

B. The Philistines planned a test when they sent the ark back to Israel – 6:10-12.

They made a new cart pulled by two milk cows that had given birth to calves. They kept the calves and sent the cows toward Israel. If the cows left their calves, they would know that their sickness was caused by the hand of the Lord. If the cows returned to their calves, they would know that their sickness was not caused by the Lord. What happened? The cows left their calves and took the ark back to Israel.

WE: We need to be like the cows and do the Lord’s will.

C. The Israelites rejoiced to see the ark come back to them – 6:13-21.

The men of Beth-shemesh made a sacrifice to the Lord for the joy they had when the ark came back to them. However, they looked inside of the ark, which was forbidden by God. They sinned against God. Their sin made their worship worthless and they died.

WE: We must worship the Lord with a clean heart. It is a fearful thing to worship the Lord with sin in our lives. We must humble ourselves, confess our sins and be cleansed by the blood of Jesus; then we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and we will be filled with joy that will last as long as stay away from our sins

II. The Ark Remains in Israel (1 Samuel 7)

A. The ark was kept in Kirjath-jearim for twenty years – 7:1-2.

B. Revival came to Israel – 7:3-6.

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Revival came to Israel when they put away their false gods, prepared their hearts, and only served the Lord.

WE: We will experience revival, when we get rid of our sins and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

C. The Philistines tried to fight the Israelites again – 7:7-17.

After Israel was cleansed of sin, the Philistines tried to fight against Israel, but now Israel was strong; the Lord gave them power. It was the wrong time for the Philistines to fight Israel. Even though Israel was still afraid of the Philistines, the Lord was ready to help them. Samuel prayed for them and offered a lamb as a sacrifice. Why was the Lord pleased with Israel? He was pleased because Israel had confessed their sins and were cleansed of their sins. As a result, God thundered against the Philistines, and Israel defeated them so badly that they did not attack Israel again while Samuel was their judge.

WE: We will have the power of the Lord to defeat Satan and those who serve him when we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Our victories over Satan will give us great joy.

BE (for Action): Can you name the people that tried to worship the Lord with their sins? (The people of Israel, Hophni and Phinehas, the Philistines, and the men of Beth-shemesh.) What did the people of Israel finally do to have a revival? (Humbled themselves, confessed their sins, and were cleansed.) How did the Lord help them? (He gave them power to defeat the Philistines.) Are you ready to confess your sins so you can be cleansed and worship the Lord? First, you must receive Jesus as your Savior to be cleansed from all your sins. Second, if you have sinned after receiving Jesus as your Savior, you need to confess your sins as soon as you realize that you have sinned against the Lord. If you need to be cleansed of your sins, do it now. I am ready to help you and pray with you.