

Ark Errors

- A. Israel foolishly ascribed the power of salvation to the ark of the covenant. They had turned it into a talisman or charm. **1SAM 4:3**.
1. The ark was a token of God's power, presence and favor to Israel, a box crafted by sinners' hands out of elements under the bondage of corruption. **EXO 25:10**.
 2. Many likewise have errantly ascribed saving power to other than God in areas where He alone has power and will be glorified, ascribing power to such things as genealogy, circumcision, sacraments, even sinners' righteousnesses, will, faith or prayers.
 3. Such thinking is akin to having *the form of godliness but denying its power* (**2TI 3:5**) and Israel would have done better to repent of its corruptions. **1SAM 2:22-25; 7:3**.
 4. The pagan idolatrous Philistines seized the ark (**1SAM 4:11**) and the glory thus departed from Israel (**1SAM 4:21-22**). If Israel insists on idolizing the ark, let other idolaters have a go at it.
 5. This marked the beginning of a span of many years when the ark of the covenant was separated from the tabernacle, thus forbidding the keeping of the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) detailed in **LEV 16**.
- B. **1SAM 5** shows that the Philistines in no wise benefited from the ark; it ruined them.
1. Like impenitent or backslidden sinners who have heard the gospel, they were the worse for the blessing. c/w **JAM 4:17; 2PE 2:20-21**.
 2. Idolatry and corrupt religion are likened to dung (**2KI 10:27; PHIL 3:6-8**) and God fittingly smote them in their secret parts with emerods. **1SAM 5:12**.
 3. God had ordered that the ark be carried (**NUM 7:9 c/w 1CH 15:2**) but when the Philistines tried this, they were ruined (**vs. 8-9**). The *form of godliness* alone did not save them.
 - a. The ark housed the tables of the covenant (**HEB 9:4**), the first commandment of which condemned idolatry. **EXO 20:3**.
 - b. Those who bear the word must be clean of its censures. **ROM 2:17-24**.
 4. What happened to the Philistines is not unlike what happened to the unbelieving Jews who rejected the gospel or what happened to the nations which later received the gospel but sinned away its light.
- C. After seven months of trouble, the Philistines had a consultation with their spiritual guides to figure out what to do with the ark. **1SAM 6:1-3**.
1. Consulting with such makes as much sense as a man struggling with a drinking problem going to the bar for the bartender's recommendations.
 2. It seems strange that it took them seven months to realize they had to get rid of the ark for their own good but such is the nature of unhealthy addictive relationships.
 3. They somehow figured they had to make amends for a trespass. c/w **LEV 5:15-16**.
 4. The best amends for a trespass in a holy thing is repentance. **ACT 3:17-19**.
- D. In their recommendation we perceive they were in all things too superstitious. **1SAM 6:4-9 c/w ACT 17:22**.
1. They lumped together in their reasonings: plague of mice, plague of emerods, five lords, five cities (**1SAM 6:17**). Solution: five golden mice, five golden emerods, gold jewels. We know not whether the lords were a' leaping or if this was the fifth day of Dagonmas.
 2. Had they consulted the information which the ark contained as a guide, they would have known that the God of the ark looks not for vain offerings of gold to cover sins but rather the blood of a blemish-free sacrifice. **HEB 9:22 c/w 1PE 1:18-19**.
 - a. Mice were unclean. **LEV 11:29**.
 - b. Emerods were a curse. **DEU 28:27**.
 - c. Vain thinking concocts all manner of false substitutes to please God.

EXO 32:5; MAR 7:7.

- d. Gilded good intentions are poor substitutes for obedience. **1SAM 15:22.**
 - e. The Corinthians gilded a rave (**1CO 11:20-22**) and the church at Pergamos gilded fornication. **REV 2:14.**
3. They recommended a new cart and two milch kine (milk-producing cows) for the task of appeasing the God of the ark (v. 7). Cash-cow religion remains popular to this day in pretended shows of piety to please God. But big expense never really satisfies. **ISA 55:1-2.**
- a. David with good intentions thought to transport the ark like these Philistines and it cost a “deacon” his life. **1CH 13:6-10.**
 - b. God will not accept heathen methods in His service. **DEU 12:29-32.**
 - c. The ark was to be carried by Levites when moved. **1CH 15:2-13.**
 - d. The law of God is the burden of His ministers who are His oxen (**1TI 5:17-18**) and they should not shift that burden onto an ox-cart of seminaries or Sunday-school teachers, nor exchange that burden for an ox-cart full of false duties, social programs, a social gospel or unprofitable entanglements. **2TI 2:4.**
4. The association of mice and emerods is interesting. This implies that a horrible bacterial pestilence such as bubonic plague (which is transmitted by rodents bitten by infected fleas) had destroyed the Philistines.
- a. God has often directed the course of history by little fleas, little bacteria, little viruses, etc.
 - b. Despise not the day of small things. **ZEC 4:10.**
- E. The rest of the chapter shows that Israelites had almost as much to learn as the Philistines. **1SAM 6:10-21.**
- 1. Upon the ark’s return, the men of Bethshemesh rejoiced (v. 13) but their joy was not regulated by faith. c/w **LUK 24:41.**
 - 2. They tried to gaze where they shouldn’t have. c/w **EXO 19:21.**
 - 3. The ark was to be covered and only handled by Levites. **NUM 4:5, 15, 20.**
 - 4. Churches should think through the notion of making deacons into the church’s leadership. **HEB 13:7, 17.**
 - 5. We should be cautious about peering into things God has not revealed to us when His word is sufficient (**COL 2:18; 2CO 12:4; 2TI 3:16-17**) or looking into the perfect law of liberty and not obeying it. **JAM 1:22-27.**