

GOD THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE:
THE SACRILEGE OF BETH-SHEMESH
(1 Samuel 6:13-7:1)

- I. A FLOUTED Protocol (1 Sam. 6:13-18)
 - A. The SETTING (6:13a)
 1. Time—WHEAT harvest in JUNE
 2. City—Levitical city assigned to KOHATH (Josh. 21:13-16)
 3. People—PRIESTLY clan responsible for CARING for the ARK (Num. 4:1-4, 15)
 - a. Knew regulations for SACRIFICE
 - b. Knew regulations for SERVICE
 - B. The SURPRISE (6:13b-14a)
 1. Two COWS walked in pulling a CART with the ARK
 2. People saw it and REJOICED
 3. Cows STOPPED beside a great STONE at the border
 - C. The SACRILEGE (6:14b-18)
 1. God said only MALE animals could be used for burnt offerings (Lev. 1:3ff), but they sacrificed the two COWS
 2. God said NO ONE outside the Aaronic priesthood could LOOK AT the Ark (Num. 4:5-6; cf. Gen. 9:23), but they PUT IT ON DISPLAY on the stone
 3. God said they were to have no IMAGES/IDOLS (Ex. 20:4), but they displayed the golden MICE/RATS and TUMORS/HEMORRHOIDS with the Ark (6:4, 15)

4. God said no one was to TOUCH the Ark (Num. 4:15), but they LOOKED INSIDE (6:19)
- II. A FURIOUS Potentate (1 Sam. 6:19)
- A. God judged them for DESECRATING the ARK
 - B. God killed 50,070 of the men of Beth-shemesh
 1. Huge number, attested by EVERY ancient Hebrew text and translation
 2. Some modern translations DROP the 50,000, saying only 70 died
 - a. Cite JOSEPHUS, a First-century Jewish historian
 - b. Assume there were NEVER so many men in Beth-shemesh
 3. Best to TRUST the biblical text
 - a. If 30,000 dead (4:10) was a “GREAT SLAUGHTER” (4:17), 70 dead would hardly qualify as the SAME (6:19)
 - b. If the PHILISTINES killed 30,000 and GOD killed 70, Israel would be likely to fear the ENEMY more than GOD
- III. A FOOLISH Priesthood (1 Sam. 6:20-7:1)
- A. Cried out for DELIVERANCE from GOD
 1. Blamed GOD for the deaths, not themselves
 2. Wanted God to LEAVE THEM
 - B. Convinced the GIBEONITES of Kiriath-jearim to take the ARK (cf. Josh. 9-10)
 1. Put it in a HOUSE
 2. Posted a GUARD: Eleazar
- IV. Lessons
- A. We must interpret CIRCUMSTANCES in the light of SCRIPTURE
 - B. GOD is more to be feared than our ENEMIES
 - C. God expects GREATER OBEDIENCE from His own people than He expects of others
 - D. HOW we worship MATTERS