

'The Rise of the Kings Series'

Sermons in the Book of 1 Samuel

Message 10 - 'God's Holiness - The Forgotten Fear Factor' 1 Samuel 6:13 - 7:2



There are different aspects of the nature of God's holiness, but our starting point is not just that God displays holiness, God is holy! He is perfectly holy and unchangeably so. In the current broader church climate the 'fear factor' is a forgotten factor. Much is said and sung about the holiness of God, but what should that mean for us in reality, in how we live, in how we function, and certainly in how we worship? So much is emphasised in the intimacy we have with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, that the sense of a trembling approach has been lost. The two should always be held in tension. Certainly, those who are in Christ have access and acceptance with God, but we must never forget that He has declared that He is the Lord and He changes not. The power of His holiness has not decreased, nor should our view of it. As we saw:

1. The Position - The Israelites joy at the return of the Ark is unmistakable. As there was no Tabernacle, no sanctuary available for worship, they used the large rock as an altar, and the Lord accepted their offerings. The judgement fell on the people of Israel, as it did upon the pagan Philistines, because they too violate the holiness of God. They should have covered the Ark, it was not meant to be seen by anyone except the High Priest. As men gazed on the Ark a great mistake was made that led to a very tragic consequence. The pagan Philistines had been judged for their hideous use of the Ark, and so it would be that the Lord's people would also be judged for their abuse. Following this, the questions are asked, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall it go up from us?' What a response! They see the immensity and purity of God's holiness, and then they want it to go from them.

2. The Problem - The major issue that arises when looking at this passage of the Scriptures is in verse 19. It is difficult to ascertain what the exact problem was that caused God's judgement to fall upon the Israelites. There are some differences in the Hebrew texts pertaining to this event. I only mention this to make you aware of the details, the understanding of these issues does not in anyway call into question the Word of God, as just that, God's inspired Word, rather as with evidences in history, sometimes there minor discrepancies in the record that is transmitted. This does not undermine the purpose, the reality of the event, or the principles that stem from it. The facts remain, men were slain, the Lord judged them for sin concerning the Ark. It seems most likely that considering the text that the number of people slain is 70 although some versions record larger numbers. The most important thing to grasp is the fact that there was loss of life for this sin. The original Hebrew text points to the following expression 'because they looked into the ark'. Yet, if one is given to looking at Hebrew grammatical combinations and the like, it is translated, 'to look/gaze at' rather than to look into. So, we need to take care in our understanding of what happens, and in my mind it seems more likely that the offense was not running and taking lid off and having a good root around inside. Rather, it seems that the way they treated the Ark in that they gazed at it, or inspected it, and such an activity was clearly forbidden in the regulations that the Lord had given in Numbers 4 concerning the Tabernacle furniture. The transgression of the people which saw an abuse of the Ark of the Covenant was met with the righteous judgement of God against the people who violated His law.

3. The Principles - The utmost aspect of the passage that we need to remember, is that God is Holy. They ask two questions, 'Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?' The first question is entirely correct, and needed some deep reflection on their part. The second question reveals the attitude of men in their sin, how can we get rid of this from our sight, our thinking! **God IS HOLY and is not mocked.** Too often the 'fear factor' is a forgotten one. In our current church age, anything goes! We need to share that attitude with those people at Beth-Shemesh, in which they understand the fear of being in the presence of God, but at the same time we must not desire for Him to go from us. **Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?** - In the light of God's holiness, they felt their sin, their inadequacy before Him. When we see God's perfection and holiness, we see our sin, and we too should cry who is able to stand? For no-one can. However, just as we are sinners, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, there is a way of salvation, and it is found in God's provision of His Son, Jesus Christ.



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs