

May 7-13

Discussion Questions

Old Testament

Why did the Philistines return the Ark to the Israelites after it had been captured and held for 7 months? 1 Samuel, Chapters 5 and 6. The loss of the Ark was a terrible event. When Eli heard about it he fell off his chair and broke his neck.¹ Eli's daughter-in-law died in childbirth—she was so distraught at the news that her husband and father-in-law had died; and the Ark had been lost.

1 Samuel 4:21 (WEBME). *She named the child Ichabod,² saying, "The glory has departed from Israel"; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.*

They put the Ark in the same room as the idol of their false god, Dagon. However, Dagon turned up fallen down and broken the next morning.³ The Philistines started getting tumors⁴

The Philistines in Ashdod decided to get rid of the troublesome Ark, by giving it to the Philistines in Gath. The people of Gath got tumors too, so they decided to send the Ark to the Philistines in Ekron. The Ekronites knew the Ark's reputation, and didn't want it either.

Just like the Canaanites in the days of Joshua, the Philistines knew and respected the power of God, although they did not follow him. This knowledge explains why the Philistines didn't simply destroy the Ark, to be done with it.

The Philistines returned the Ark to the Israelites with a trespass offering. If their physical afflictions were removed, they would know the Ark had indeed been the source of their problems.⁵

[Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary] 2,
3. *"the Philistines called for the priests and the divin-*

¹1 Samuel 4:18.

²Ichabod means "Where is the glory?" Or, "Alas for the glory!" or, "There is no glory."

³1 Samuel 5:1-5.

⁴1 Samuel 5:6.

⁵1 Samuel 6:1.

ers”—The designed restoration of the ark was not, it seems, universally approved of, and many doubts were expressed whether the prevailing pestilence was really a judgment of Heaven. The priests and diviners united all parties by recommending a course which would enable them easily to discriminate the true character of the calamities, and at the same time to propitiate the incensed Deity for any acts of disrespect which might have been shown to His ark.

Why did the Israelites ask Samuel to appoint a King to rule over them? Why did Samuel oblige them?

1 Samuel 8:3-22, (WEB)

[3] His sons didn't walk in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice. [4] Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel to Ramah; [5] and they said to him, "Behold, you are old, and your sons don't walk in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." [6] But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, "Give us a king to judge us."

Samuel prayed to the LORD. [7] The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they tell you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them. [8] According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also to you. [9] Now therefore listen to their voice: however you shall protest solemnly to them, and shall show them the way of the king who shall reign over them." [10] Samuel told all the LORD's words to the people who asked of him a king. [11] He said, "This will be the way of the king who shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them to him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; [12] and he will appoint them to him for captains of thousands,

and captains of fifties; and he will assign some to plough his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. [13] He will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. [14] He will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive groves, even their best, and give them to his servants. [15] He will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. [16] He will take your male servants, and your female servants, and your best young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. [17] He will take the tenth of your flocks: and you shall be his servants. [18] You shall cry out in that day because of your king whom you shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not answer you in that day.” [19] But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No; but we will have a king over us, [20] that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” [21] Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. [22] The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their voice, and make them a king.”

Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Every man go to his city.”

[Adam Clarke’s 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible]

Verse 6. (The thing displeased Samuel) Because he saw that this amounted to a formal renunciation of the Divine government.

[Geneva Bible Translation Notes] But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” This was because they were not content with the order that God had appointed, but would be governed as the Gentiles were.

[Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] 4-9

Samuel was displeased; he could patiently bear what reflected on himself, and his own family; but it displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us, because that reflected upon God. It drove him to his knees. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to show our trouble before God. Samuel

is to tell them that they shall have a king. Not that God was pleased with their request, but as sometimes he opposes us from loving-kindness, so at other times he gratifies us in wrath; he did so here. God knows how to bring glory to himself, and serves his own wise purposes, even by men's foolish counsels.

New Testament

Why did the man at the pool at Bethesda suffer so long (38 years)? What can we learn from Christ's healing of this man? John 5:1-18.

The man was waiting for a miracle to heal him at the pool. Every so often an angel stirred the water. Whoever stepped in the water first would be healed. The man told Jesus, "*Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, another steps down before me.*"⁶

[Kretzmann Popular Commentary] Among all the sick people that were lying in the porticoes at the pool's brink there was no case more pitiful than that of a man who had spent thirty-eight years there in the misery of his sickness, thirty-eight years of alternating hope and despair, of eager longing and painful disappointment. Note: Many a person that is inclined to become impatient at a cross lasting but a few weeks or months might well consider this case and learn patience from the example of the man of Bethesda. Jesus, in accordance with His desire to help all men in whatever trouble they might be, visited also this hospital. He saw the man lying there in his misery; He knew that the poor fellow had spent a long time in that place. It was not merely that Jesus drew conclusions, or that He learned from the man himself or from his friends of his long sickness; His knowledge was that of omniscience. With a view to awaken the man to the nearness of divine power, the Lord addressed him with the question whether he wanted to become well. Through this question the Lord aroused and incited the

⁶John 5:7 (WEB).

desire and the longing of the man for the long-lost gift of health. The desire for help and salvation is awakened by the Savior Himself through His Word. The sick man gave a sad answer. He addressed Jesus as the Lord, indicating the beginning of faith in his heart; but he complained in a hopeless tone that he had neither relative nor friend, not a person in the wide world to help him into the water at the appointed time; and when at last he had dragged his helpless limbs over to the pool, some other person had preceded him, and therefore all his efforts were futile. For at each bubbling up of the water apparently only one could be healed. Note: The mere statement of trouble and misfortune is in itself a prayer and well acceptable to the Lord. And Jesus heard the prayer of faith. He gave the sick man the command to arise, a command to be obeyed on the moment by faith in Him who gave it. And not only that, but he should also take up his couch, or pallet, and walk, having been restored to full health and strength. This was a miracle in the true sense of the word, a deed against the course of nature. A sickness of thirty-eight years' standing was completely routed and replaced by the full vigor of complete health, with a perfect use of all organs and members. The man followed the words of Jesus to the letter; for faith accepts, and clings to, the help of Christ. He went away, carrying his pallet, though the day, not without design on the part of Jesus, was the Sabbath.

[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible] Observe, When Christ came up to Jerusalem he visited not the palaces, but the hospitals, which is an instance of his humility, and condescension, and tender compassion, and an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was to seek and save the sick and wounded. There was a great multitude of poor cripples here at Bethesda, but Christ fastened his eye upon this one, and singled him out from the rest, because he was senior of the house, and in a more deplorable condi-

tion than any of the rest; and Christ delights to help the helpless, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. Perhaps his companions in tribulation insulted over him, because he had often been disappointed of a cure; therefore Christ took him for his patient: it is his honour to side with the weakest, and bear up those whom he sees run down.

* * *

Christ was unknown to him when he healed him. Probably he had heard of the name of Jesus, but had never seen him, and therefore could not tell that this was he. Note, Christ does many a good turn for those that know him not, Isa. xlv. 4, 5. He enlightens, strengthens, quickens, comforts us, and we wist not who he is; nor are aware how much we receive daily by his mediation. This man, being unacquainted with Christ, could not actually believe in him for a cure; but Christ knew the dispositions of his soul, and suited his favours to them, as to the blind man in a like case, ix. 36. Our covenant and communion with God take rise, not so much from our knowledge of him, as from his knowledge of us. We know God, or, rather, are known of him, Gal. iv. 9.

[The Fourfold Gospel and Commentary on Acts of Apostles] [The Jews] literally, "pursued," or "hunted Jesus" [for his crime of breaking the Sabbath]. This is John's first plain declaration of open hostility to Jesus, though he has already implied it. From this point the blood-red line of conspiracy against the life of Jesus runs through this Gospel.

What did Jesus mean when he talked about eating his flesh, and drinking his blood? (John 6:53-58)

[Family Bible Notes from the Nazrene Users Group] Eat the flesh—drink his blood; not literally, but spiritually, as the food and drink

of the soul; thus, by a living union with him through faith, receiving from him forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life. The Saviour has in mind the gift which he is about to make on the cross, of his flesh and blood for the life of the world. The view which he here gives of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, is the same that underlies the ordinance of the Lord's supper, afterwards instituted by him.

[Geneva Bible Translation Notes] Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. If Christ is present, life is present, but when Christ is absent, then death is present.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] The flesh and blood of the Son of man, denote the Redeemer in the nature of man; Christ and him crucified, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption; pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the way to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life. These are called the flesh and blood of Christ, because they are purchased by the breaking his body, and the shedding of his blood. Also, because they are meat and drink to our souls. Eating this flesh and drinking this blood mean believing in Christ. We partake of Christ and his benefits by faith. The soul that rightly knows its state and wants, finds whatever can calm the conscience, and promote true holiness, in the redeemer, God manifest in the flesh. Meditating upon the cross of Christ gives life to our repentance, love, and gratitude. We live by him, as our bodies live by our food. We live by him, as the members by the head, the branches by the root: because he lives we shall live also.

Random Quotes

- *"Honesty pays, but it doesn't seem to pay enough to suit some people."* — Kin Hubbard (1868 – 1930)
- *"How to store your baby walker: First, remove baby."* — Anonymous Manufacturer

- *"I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."* — Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)

Notes:

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