

Open:

- Chapter 4
 - The Israelites were defeated in battle because of an abandonment of a relationship with God. **vs. 1-3**
 - The Israelites remained powerless and suffered greater casualties at the hand of the Philistines because of their lack of a relationship with God. **vs. 4-10**
 - God took from His people the physical representation of His presence to show His people His power and presence was not based on a ritual, but on a relationship. **vs. 11**
 - God fulfilled the prophecy, given to Samuel in chapter 3, by killing Hophni and Phinehas and in the death of Eli and Phinehas’ wife. **vs. 12-22**
- Chapter 5
 - God taught His enemies that their victory over His people was not a defeat of Him. **vs. 1-5**
 - God taught His enemies to respect and fear Him. **vs. 6-12**
- Chapter 6
 - The Philistines make a peace offering with God and God accepts it. **vs. 1-6**
 - The Philistines make a cart and send the ark of God back to Israel. **vs. 7-12, 16**
 - The men of Bethshemesh, in their fervor and excitement, in the return of the ark bring about a great curse because of a failure to recognize the holiness of being in God’s presence. **vs. 13-15; 17-21**
- Chapter 7
 - It took 20 years for the Israelites to recognize the presence and power of God was not on them. **vs. 1-2**
 - Samuel leads in preparing the people to be blessed by God. **vs. 3-6**
 - The Israelites finally experience victory because of their renewed relationship with God. **vs. 7-14**

I. Don’t fall into the trap of failing to realize God’s presence and power is not based on a ritual, but a relationship.

- Too many Christians have placed their faith in the performance of spiritual rituals and not in a relationship with God. **II Tim. 3:5** *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”*
 - A. Many Christians believe that because they go to church, they are a good Christians [You can’t be a good Christian for long without being faithful to church].
 - B. Many Christians believe that because they read their Bible, they are a good Christians [You can’t be a good Christian for long without being faithful in reading God’s Word].
 - C. Many Christians believe that because they pray, they are a good Christians [You can’t be a good Christian for long without being faithful in prayer to God].
 - D. Many Christians believe that because they witness to lost men, they are a good Christians [You can’t be a good Christian for long without being a faithful witness].
 - E. Many Christians believe that because they are separated from the world, they are a good Christians [You can’t be a good Christian for long without being separated from the world].
- We must realize that the keeping of spiritual rituals is not what makes a person spiritual, this is the lifestyle Jesus condemned in **Mt. 23:23-39**. The true test of one’s personal relationship with God is not what one knows or what tradition one does before men, but what one obeys before God, **Mt. 6:1-18. James 1:22-27** *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. [23] For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: [24] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [25] But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. [26] If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. [27] Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”*

II. Don't delay God's blessings in your life and bring the judgement of God upon your community because of your lack of recognition of God's holiness.

- If victory can only come in proportion to our relationship to Him, then our relationship to God will only be in proportion to our holiness. **II Cor. 6:17-18** *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

A. The men of Bethshemesh were excited to see the return of God's power, because they wanted to see a change in circumstances. Because of a lack of holiness, they failed to experience the victory God's power can bring, because they did not want to do the work to have a relationship with God. **I Sam. 6:13-19**

- i. **I Cor. 3:16-17** *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? [17] If any man defile the temple of God, **him shall God destroy**; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”*
- ii. **I Cor. 5:9-10** *“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: [10] Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.”*

B. The men of Bethshemesh went 20+ years without the presence of God in their lives because they failed to recognize the importance for holiness in their life. **I Sam. 6:20-7:2**

- How many years will we delay God's blessings in our homes and in our country because of a lack of holiness?

 - i. **Is. 44:3-4** *“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: [4] And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”*
 - ii. **Ps. 81:8-14** *“Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; [9] There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. [10] I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. [11] But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. [12] So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. [13] Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! [14] I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries*

➤ **“Our desire for a return of blessings from God, and a relationship with God, is not based on the prayers unholy people; but it is based on the actions of a holy people.”**

III. We must realize we will not see victory in our land until there is a revival of a personal relationship with God.

- Until we see that victory in this life can only come from God, then we will fail to see victory in our life. **II Chron. 7:14** *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*
- A. The men of Bethshemesh did not experience the power and blessings of God until they recognized and returned to their relationship with God. **I Sam. 7:3-4**
- America and her families, will not see a return of God’s power and the sweetness of fellowship with God, until she recognizes her need of God and return to their relationship with God. [This begins with removing the idols.]
- B. We will not experience victory in our land until we return to the methods prescribed to the child of God in God’s Word. **II Cor. 10:3-6** *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: [4] (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) [5] Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; [6] And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”*

Close:

- Don’t fall into the trap of failing to realize God’s presence and power is not based on a ritual, but a relationship.
- Don’t delay God’s blessings in your life and bring the judgement of God upon your community because of your lack of recognition of God’s holiness.
- We must realize we will not see victory in our land until there is a revival of a personal relationship with God.

II Tim 2:22

“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.