

引言 INTRODUCTION

People always want to make use of power for their own gain. But when they fail to overcome power, power will overcome them. Some people keep wild animals as pets. Those creatures may look cute when they are small. Before long babies grow into beasts. It brings people headache when they do not know how to handle a full-size python, an allegator or even a lion. In some cases, it is against the law to raise those animals. The real problem occurs when those exotic critters attack their owners. After all, they are predators in nature. A blessing can easily become a curse. We see the same thing in our story today. In our last lesson, the Philistines defeated the Israelites. Soldiers perished and the ark was taken as a plunder. The Philistines knew that the chest was the most sacred object to the Israelites. They heard stories about how Jehovah helped the Israelites defeat the Egyptian army. But this time, the God of Israel did not protect His people. It was surely a great victory for the Philistines. They thought they had God's power source in their possession. Good news quickly turned into bad ones when the ark caused them big troubles. In the end, God showed that His power is unequal. We must submit ourselves to God, rather than trying to subdue His power for our use.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 向異教的挑戰 Confrontation to the Pagans

The Israelites lost two battles to the Philistines. Little could they imagine that God used their defeat as an opportunity to confront the pagans. First, God would confront Dagon, the main idol the Philistines worshipped. Those pagans hauled the ark back to Ashdod. It was one of the five major cities of the Philistines. Of all the places, they put the ark in the temple of Dagon. **Verse 3-5 of chapter 5** tell us what happened next. The Philistines thought adding another deity to the temple would give them more power. It is like installing a second engine to your car. The message was clear when Dagon's statue fell face down before the ark. Jehovah was more powerful than Dagon. Even its head and hands were broken when it tumbled the second time. No one and nothing can stand before God. Any idol is but a man-made image. Paul says in **Philippians 2:10-11 that 10 ... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** All created beings, including people, angels and demons must bow down before Jesus, either in this life or in eternity. We should worship God and Him alone. But very often we put God next to our idols like the Philistines did. Many people worship their capabilities, possessions and accomplishments. Have you put God at the highest priority? You can check your schedule and see how you spend your time, money and attention. Do you rely on Biblical principles to make decisions? Do you focus only on instant results rather than eternal values in your work? Jesus asked us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then God will provide for all of our needs. It does not mean we will be rich according to the world's standard. But God will make us content. It does not mean we will be trouble free. But God will fill our hearts with peace and joy. It may not mean that we will always be healthy. But God assures us that He will always be with us. After confronting Dagon, God confronted its

worshippers next. Let us continue to **read verse 6-7**. We do not know the exact nature of those tumors. The Hebrew word means a mound. It can be translated as hemorrhoid, as the Chinese Union Bible renders it. In chapter 6, the Philistines associated the tumor with rats. Therefore, it could be a skin disease spread by mice. Some Philistines died as a result of the infection. Regardless of its nature, they knew the spiritual reason behind the illness. The phrase “God’s hand” is used four times in chapter 5. The Philistines understood that God was making them sick. The leaders had a meeting and they determined that they should send the ark elsewhere. From Ashdod they transported the ark to Gath. It led to the same disease outbreak. Therefore, they decided to take the ark to Ekron. The citizens there protested at the city gate. They did not want the same trouble! Finally, the rulers realized it would be wiser to return the ark. They witnessed the power of Jehovah. However, instead of searching for a proper way to honor Him, they rejected Him completely. That reveals the heart of idol worshippers. They are only interested in using supernatural power for their benefits. It is like taming a wild horse and use it in your farm. Idol worshippers seek their gods for a long life, a happy marriage, material blessings and success, etc. We should never treat God as an idol. Receiving blessings should not be the ultimate goal for our faith. Blessings should be seen as results of our faith. You give good things to your children because they are your offspring. You love them due to their blood relationship with you. Likewise, God sees our relationship with Him as the most important. He wants us to love Him and obey Him, not just think of Him when we are in need.

2. 對問題的賠償 Compensation for the Problems

The Philistines decided to send the ark back to Israel. But they figured they should compensate for the problems they caused. Let us look at their plan in **verse 4-6 of chapter 6**. The Philistines understood that God punished them for taking the ark. Therefore, they had to prepare some gifts to quench His anger. They got all that correct except for their choice of gifts. Five golden mice look odd enough. Five lumps of golden tumors might not look that presentable. What made sense to them did not make sense to God! Those religious leaders should have consulted the priests of Israel and found out what would be acceptable to God. The Philistines reacted with fear toward a powerful God. Do you see God the same way? Some Christians see God as a boot camp instructor. There will be penalties if they do not live up to God’s perfect requirement. The Bible describes God as a compassionate Father. He accepts us with perfect love, but He will never condone our sins. He does not hesitate to discipline us when we go astray. The purpose is to alert us of our wrongdoings, so that we will humbly repent to Him. The Philistines religious leaders urged their people not to be stubborn like the Egyptians. The country suffered great losses and humiliation in one after another plague. The Philistines did not want to take their chances. **Verse 7-9** tell us they presented the gifts to Israel. They came up with a nice decoration. They built a new cart to transport the ark. It was hauled by a pair of cows that had never been yoked. Then they put the gold pieces in a new chest. They also ran a final test to verify that the plague was from God. Two cows left the calves they were still nursing would be against the natural instinct of a mother. More importantly, if the cows walked straight toward Israel without any supervision, then God’s hand must be behind it. Everything turned out as the Philistines had predicted. They must breathe a sense relief that their trouble was gone. All along they only wanted to use God’s power for their own gain. They had no interest to leave the false gods they worshipped and to embrace the one true God. When the apostle Paul visited Athens, he met pagans with a similar mindset. He exposes their fallacy in Acts 17:24-25: **“The God who made**

the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” God is the Creator of all things. He sustains the world by His power and He provides for our needs. He is not a man-made idol that can be contained in a temple. He does not need people to offer anything for His survival either. What does God want from us? Skip down to verse 30: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” God calls us to repent of our sins and accepts His salvation grace. God has great joy when people receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord. The Philistines carved gold into shapes that represented their plague to compensate for their mistakes. Similarly, Jesus came into the world as a man. One man died on behalf of the whole mankind. One life compensates all of our sin debt. God’s grace is free because it is priceless. We can never do enough good work to exchange for God’s acceptance, nor can we afford the price tag for our sins. Jesus Christ had made the compensation for our sins. All we can do is to accept Him by simple faith. It is like the lyrics of a traditional hymn: “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.” God does not need our stuff. He wants our hearts. True worship is not about presenting a gift to Him, hoping to get some reward in return. It is about building a relationship with God. Whenever we drop some money into the offering box, or contribute our time and talents in ministries, everything must be presented with love. God loves us first, and we love Him back.

3. 給百姓的審判 Condemnation to the People

The ark was now back in Israel. The responses of the Israelites showed how far they had departed from the faith. Because of their sins, God cast down His condemnation. Verse 13-15 tell us what happened next. The Israelites offered those two cows as a burnt offering. According to the Law, only a male animal can be sacrificed in a burnt offering. But the more serious mistake was putting the ark on the rock for people to see. God asked His people to conceal the ark at all times. Normally, the ark was placed in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. It must be covered with three layers of cloth even when people transported it. God assigned the sons of Kohath as the only movers. No one was allowed to peek at or even touch the ark. Now the Israelites treated the ark like an antique car and put it on display when it arrived at Beth Shemesh. Based on the book of Joshua, it was one of the cities allotted to priests. How come the priests did not cover up the ark immediately? They were as ignorant as Eli’s two sons who stole meat from sacrifice. When Christians do not uphold God’s truth, they will follow the world’s standard to please people. The Bible says marriage is between one man and one woman. Some churches say: “We should celebrate the love between people of the same gender too.” The Bible says Jesus is the only way to salvation. Some churches say: “God can’t be so narrow-minded.” God puts us in the world to reflect His glory. Some churches say: “God wants you to get rich and enjoy life.” Preaching the truth will most likely offend some people. May the Lord give us courage and wisdom. When I go see a doctor, I hope to hear the facts, not just good news. I want him to point out obvious and potential problems, then inform me how to correct those issues. God condemned the Israelites and struck some of them because they violated God’s holiness. Instead of asking why God judged them, the Israelites reasoned that they should find a place to store the ark. Continue to read 6:20 to 7:1. The residents at Kiriath-jearim were Gibeonites. They belonged to a Canaan tribe. Back then when Joshua led the Israelites to conquer Canaan, the Gibeonites deceived them to sign a peace treaty. God’s people then made an oath that they would preserve

the lives of the Gibeonites. Later, they realized that the Gibeonites were actually local people. The Israelites could not take back their promise. Therefore, they assigned the Gibeonites and their descendants to chop firewood and carry water for God's people and the altar. Now they would take care of the ark. In particular, Abinadab's son Eleazar would be responsible for this important task. Eventually, the ark stayed in his home for twenty years until king David sent people to bring the ark to Jerusalem. During that long period of time no one wanted the ark because people were afraid of it. But God blessed the faithful service of the Gibeonite family. A foreigner had the privilege to get access to God's presence. The same question lingered in the mind of the Philistines and the Israelites: **"Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?"** (6:20) Nobody can come to Him except those God allows. In the Old Testament time, animal sacrifice temporarily cleansed people of their sins. Only the High Priest could get near to the ark once a year. When Jesus came, He atoned for our sins on the cross. Paul says in Colossians 1:21-22 – **21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.** No one can stand before God. But Jesus removed our sins through His blood. He is the Mediator who leads us to the Father. In Jesus, we have been reconciled with God. Today, we come before God without fear because we know that we have been accepted by Him. We approach God not because we want to tap into His power. Rather, we get near to Him to express our adoration, joy and thankfulness.

結論 CONCLUSION

We must submit ourselves to God, rather than trying to subdue His power for our use. The Philistines and the Israelites made the same mistakes. They were only interested in using God. Hence, a source of blessings turned into a cause for curse. That reminds me of the legend of the Trojan Horse. Scholars debate if the story was a historical event or it was only a myth. The Greeks laid siege around the city of Troy. One warrior named Odysseus came up with an ingenious plan. A giant wooden horse was made. Some Greek soldiers hid in its belly. They then towed the horse to the city gate. After that the soldiers retreated. The people of Troy thought the war was over and the horse was a gift. Horse was a sacred animal to the Trojans. They brought the horse in without any suspicion. They let it sit in the town-square while the leaders discussed what to do with it. Meanwhile, the Trojans spent the night in wild celebration for the victory. The Greek soldiers came out from the horse when their enemies let down their guard. Eventually, the Greeks took over Troy. A source of blessings turned into a cause for curse. We are destined for destruction as sinners. But God loves us and sent His Son Jesus Christ to shoulder the curse of sin on the cross. God in His wisdom turned a tool for death penalty into an instrument of grace. The world despises the cross because it sees no use in it. But Christians take pride in the cross, because it reminds us how undeserved we are, but yet Jesus loves us anyway. Praise to our Lord and Savior!

引言 INTRODUCTION

人常常想為了個人利益而運用能力。但是當他們無法駕馭能力時，能力就會駕馭他們。有些人養野生動物作為寵物。牠們小的時候看起來很可愛。不久，小動物長成猛獸。當人們不知道如何處理已經長大的蟒蛇、鱷魚甚至獅子時，麻煩就來了。在某些情況下，飼養這些動物是違法的。那些動物甚至會攻擊牠們的主人。畢竟，那是牠們在自然界的求生本能。祝福很容易變成咒詛。我們在今天的經文中看到了同樣的事情。上一次我們提到非利士人打敗了以色列人。士兵陣亡，約櫃被搶走。非利士人知道那個箱子是以色列人最神聖的寶物。他們聽說過耶和華如何幫助以色列人打敗埃及的軍隊。但這一次，以色列的神沒有保護祂的子民。對於非利士人來說，這無疑是一場偉大的勝利。他們認為得到了神能力的源頭。但是沒多久好消息變成了壞消息，約櫃使他們受虧損。在過程中，神表明祂的能力是無可比擬的。我們必須降服於神，而不是試圖征服祂的能力作個人使用。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 向異教的挑戰 Confrontation to the Pagans

以色列人在兩次戰事中輸給了非利士人。他們無法想像神將要使用他們的失敗作為挑戰異教的機會。首先，神要挑戰非利士人崇拜的主要偶像大衮。那些異教徒把約櫃搬到亞實突。那是非利士人的五個主要城市之一。他們把約櫃放在大衮廟裡。**第5章第3-5節**告訴我們接下來發生的事情。非利士人認為在廟裡增加一個神明會給他們更大的能力，就像在你的車上多安裝一個引擎。結果大衮的像面朝下倒在約櫃前。含義很清楚，耶和華比大衮更有能力。當神像第二次倒下來的時候，它的頭和手都斷掉了。沒有人也沒有任何東西可以站在神面前。任何偶像都不過是人造的形象。保羅在**腓立比書 2:10-11**說：**10 叫一切在天上的、地上的，和地底下的，因耶穌的名無不屈膝，11 無不口稱「耶穌基督為主」，使榮耀歸與父神。**所有受造之物，包括人類、天使和邪靈，不是在今生便是在永恆裡，都必須在耶穌面前屈膝。我們應該只敬拜神。但我們常常像非利士人那樣把神放在我們的偶像旁邊。許多人崇拜自己的能力、財物和成就。你是否把神放在首位？你可以查看你的時間表，看看你是如何運用時間、金錢和注意力的。你是否依靠聖經原則來做決定？你是否只關注立時的結果過於事物的永恆價值？耶穌要我們先尋求神的國和神的公義，然後神會供應我們所有的需要。這並不意味著我們會得到世人追求的財富，但神會使我們知足。這並不意味著我們不會碰到問題，但神會使我們的心充滿平安和喜樂。這並不意味著我們將永遠健康。但神向我們保證，祂會永遠與我們同在。在挑戰大衮

之後，神接下來挑戰大衮的信徒。讓我們繼續閱讀**第 6-7 節**。我們不能確定那是什麼疾病。那個希伯來字的意思是土堆。它可以是指痔瘡，正如中文和合本聖經所翻譯的那樣。在第 6 章中，非利士人將疾病與老鼠聯繫起來。因此，它可能是一種由老鼠傳播的皮膚病。一些非利士人因感染而死亡。不管它的性質如何，人們知道疾病背後的屬靈起因。在第 5 章中，「神的手」這個詞語出現了四次。非利士人明白是神讓他們生病。領袖們召開會議，然後決定把約櫃送到別處。他們從亞實突把約櫃運到迦特。它導致了同樣的疾病爆發。因此，他們打算將約櫃抬到以革倫。那裡的居民在城門口抗議。他們不想惹到同樣的麻煩！最後，領袖們明白到歸還約櫃才是最明智的。他們見證了耶和華的能力。然而，他們並沒有尋找正確的方式來榮耀神，而是完全拒絕了祂。這顯示出偶像崇拜者的心態。他們只有興趣使用超自然力量來得到益處。這就像馴服一匹野馬，讓你在農場中使用牠。偶像崇拜者找他們的神明，只是為了長壽、婚姻美滿、物質和成功等。我們不應該把神看為偶像。得到祝福不應該是我們信仰的最終目標。祝福應該被視為我們信心的結果。正如你把好東西給你的孩子，因為他們是你的後代。你愛他們是因為他們與你有血緣關係。同樣，神把我們與祂的關係看為是最重要的。祂希望我們愛祂並順服祂，而不是只在有需求的時候才想到祂。

2. 對問題的賠償 Compensation for the Problems

非利士人決定將約櫃送回以色列。但他們認為應該賠償他們引起的問題。讓我們看看他們在**第 6 章第 4-6 節**中的計劃。非利士人明白神懲罰他們奪走約櫃。因此，他們必須準備一些禮物來平息祂的憤怒。他們的理解是正確的，但是他們卻選錯了禮物。五隻金老鼠已經夠奇怪，五個金痔瘡看起來會令人噁心。他們認為合理不等於符合神的要求！那些宗教領袖應該諮詢以色列的祭司，找出什麼東西是神會接受的。非利士人對一位強大的神感到恐懼。你是否也以同樣的態度看神？一些基督徒以為神是軍營的教練。如果他們沒有達到神完美的要求，就會受到處分。聖經形容神是一位憐憫人的父親。祂以完全的愛接納我們，但是祂絕不會姑息我們的罪。當我們偏行己路時，祂會毫不猶豫地管教我們。目的是提醒我們錯誤的行為，使我們謙卑地向祂悔改。非利士人的宗教領袖敦促人民不要像埃及人那樣固執。他們的國家在一場又一場瘟疫中蒙受了重大的損失和羞辱。非利士人不想得到同樣的遭遇。**第 7-9 節**告訴我們，他們將禮物獻給以色列。他們弄了一個漂亮的裝飾。他們造了一輛新車來運送約櫃。它是由一對從未負過軛的母牛拖著的。然後他們把金子放在一個新的箱子裡。他們還進行了最終測試，以驗證瘟疫是否來自神。兩隻母牛離開牠們的小牛，那是違背了母親的天性。更重要的是，如果牛在沒有人帶領之下一直走到以色列，那一定是神在背後的作為。事情正如非利士人所預料的那樣發生。他們肯定是鬆一口氣，因為他們的問題已經解決了。一直以來，他們只想利用神的能力來得到益處。他們沒有興趣離開他們所敬拜的假神，去信靠獨一的真神。當使徒保羅到雅典時，他碰到同樣心態的異教徒。他在使徒行傳 17:24-25 中指出他們的

錯誤：24「創造宇宙和其中萬物的神，既是天地的主，就不住人手所造的殿，25也不用人手服事，好像缺少甚麼；自己倒將生命、氣息、萬物，賜給萬人。」神創造萬物。祂以自己的能力維持世界，並供應我們的需要。祂並不是一個可以放在寺廟中的偶像。祂也不需要人們獻上什麼東西來供奉祂。神對我們有什麼要求？看第30節：「世人蒙昧無知的時候，神並不監察，如今卻吩咐各處的人都要悔改。」神呼召我們認罪悔改並接受祂的救贖恩典。神非常喜悅人們接受耶穌成為他們的救主和生命的主宰。非利士人將金子雕刻成代表他們瘟疫的形狀來作賠償。同樣，耶穌以人的身份來到世上。一個人代替全人類犧牲自己。一個生命補償了我們所有的罪債。神的恩典是免費的，因為它是無價的。我們永遠無法以好行為來換取神的接納，我們也無法為自己的罪付出代價。耶穌基督已經為我們的罪作出賠償。我們所能做的就是憑單純的信心接受祂。這就像一首傳統聖詩的歌詞：「主替我捨身，罪債全還清；無數罪孽污穢心，主洗比雪白淨。」神不需要我們的東西，祂要我們的心。真正的敬拜不是關乎於獻禮物給祂，然後希望得到一些回報。重點是建立與神的關係。每當我們將錢投入奉獻箱，或是付出時間和才幹參與服事，一切都應該是出於愛。神先來愛我們，然後我們以愛作回應。

3. 給百姓的審判 *Condemnation to the People*

約櫃現在回到了以色列。以色列人的反應表明他們偏離信仰有多遠。由於百姓的罪，神審判他們。第13-15節告訴我們接下來發生的事情。以色列人將那兩隻母牛獻為燔祭。根據法律，燔祭只能獻上公的動物。但更嚴重的錯誤是，他們把約櫃放在磐石上供人觀賞。神要求祂的子民將約櫃收起來。通常，約櫃是放在會幕的至聖所。即使有人搬運，也必須用三層布遮蓋。神指派哥轄的兒子們為唯一的搬運的人。任何人都不可看甚至摸約櫃。現在以色列人把約櫃當作古董車，在伯示麥公開展覽。根據約書亞記，伯示麥是分配給祭司的城市之一。祭司們怎麼不馬上把約櫃蓋起來呢？他們看來像以利的兩個兒子一樣無知。當基督徒不持守神的真理時，他們就會按照世界的標準來取悅人。聖經說婚姻是一夫一妻。一些教會說：「我們也應該慶祝同性之間的愛。」聖經說耶穌是得救的唯一途徑。一些教會說：「神不可能那麼心胸狹隘。」神把我們放在世界中，以反映祂的榮耀。一些教會說：「神希望你變得富有並享受生活。」傳講真理很可能會冒犯一些人。願主賜給我們勇氣和智慧。當我去看醫生時，我希望聽到事實，而不只是聽到好消息。我希望醫生指出明顯和潛在的問題，然後告訴我如何處理這些問題。神審判以色列人，並擊殺了其中一些人，因為他們冒犯了神的聖潔。事後以色列人沒有問神為什麼審判他們，他們認為應該找一個地方把約櫃收藏起來。請繼續看6:20到7:1。基列耶琳的居民是基遍人。他們屬於迦南的一族。當年約書亞帶領以色列人征服迦南時，基遍人欺騙他們簽訂和平條約。神的子民隨後起誓保護基遍人的性命。後來，他們發現基遍人原來是當地的居民。以色列人無法收回他們的承諾。因此，他們派基遍人和他們的後裔為神的子民和祭壇劈柴挑水。現在他們被分派看守約櫃。亞比拿達的兒子以

利亞撒將負責這項重要的任務。結果，約櫃放在他家二十年，直到大衛王派人把約櫃移到耶路撒冷。在那很長的一段時間裡，沒有人想要靠近約櫃，因為人們都害怕它。但神祝福這個基遍家庭的忠心服事。這一家外邦人有福份得到神的同在。非利士人和以色列人的心中有同樣的問題：「誰能在耶和華這聖潔的神面前侍立呢？」（6:20）除了被神允許的人之外，沒有人可以來到祂面前。在舊約時代，獻動物為祭暫時洗淨了人們的罪。每年只有大祭司可以靠近約櫃一次。當耶穌來的時候，祂在十字架上為我們贖罪。保羅在歌羅西書 1:21-22 說：21 你們從前與神隔絕，因着惡行，心裏與他為敵。22 但如今他藉着基督的肉身受死，叫你們與自己和好，都成了聖潔，沒有瑕疵，無可責備，把你們引到自己面前。沒有人能站在神面前。但是耶穌用祂的寶血除去了我們的罪。祂是引導我們到父面前的中保。在耶穌裡，我們已經與神和好。今天，我們來到神面前不需要懼怕，因為我們已經被神接納了。我們接近神不是因為我們想要利用祂的能力。我們親近祂是為了表達我們的崇敬、喜樂和感謝。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們必須降服於神，而不是試圖征服祂的能力作個人使用。非利士人和以色列人犯了同樣的錯誤。他們只想要使用神。因此，祝福的源頭變成了咒詛的起因。這讓我想起了木馬屠城記的傳說。學者們爭論這個故事是一件歷史事件還是只是一個神話。當時希臘人圍攻特洛伊城。一位名叫奧德修斯的軍人想出了一個巧妙的戰略。他找人造了一匹巨大的木馬，一些希臘士兵躲在它的肚子裡。然後他們把馬拖到城門口。之後，士兵們撤退了。特洛伊人以為戰爭已經結束，馬是希臘人送上的禮物。馬是特洛伊人的神聖動物。他們毫不懷疑地把馬帶進城裡。領袖討論如何處理那隻木馬，於是把它留在城鎮的廣場上。與此同時，特洛伊人徹夜狂歡慶祝勝利。當人們放鬆戒備時，希臘士兵從馬裡面出來。最後，希臘人佔領了特洛伊。祝福的源頭變成了咒詛的起因。作為罪人，我們注定要被神審判。但神愛我們，並派祂的兒子耶穌基督在十字架上承擔了罪的咒詛。神藉著祂的智慧使一個死刑的工具變成了恩典的器皿。世界鄙視十字架，因為它認為十字架毫無用處。作為基督徒，十字架應該提醒我們自己是多麼不配，但無論如何耶穌還是愛我們。讚美我們的主和救主！