

1 Samuel 6:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

Analysis

And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

The survivors' response contains profound theological insight expressed through two questions. First: 'Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?' The Hebrew 'qadosh' (holy) emphasizes God's otherness, His separation from all that is common or profane. Their question echoes throughout Scripture - who can endure the presence of the Holy One? (Psalm 76:7; Nahum 1:6; Revelation 6:17). The answer, apart from grace, is no one. Second: 'To whom shall he go up from us?' reveals their solution - not repentance and consecration but removal of the dangerous presence. Rather than asking how they might be purified to dwell with the Holy, they ask who else might bear the burden. This response, while understandable, misses the deeper issue: the problem was not the Ark's presence but their hearts' condition.

Historical Context

The question 'Who can stand?' appears repeatedly in Scripture when humans encounter divine holiness (Psalm 130:3; Malachi 3:2). The men of Beth-shemesh, despite living in a Levitical city, apparently lacked proper instruction on approaching the Ark or had neglected what they knew.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Is your response to God's holiness to seek transformation or to seek distance?
2. How does the cross of Christ answer the question 'Who can stand before this holy God?'

Interlinear Text

לִפְנֵי יְלֻעַם דָּ יוֹכֵל מִי שֶׁ מֵשׁ בֵּית אֱלֹהִים יֹאמְרוּ
said H376 H0 **of Bethshemesh** H4310 **Who is able** H3201 **to stand** H5975 **before** H6440
H559 H1053

יַעֲלֶה הַמִּי וְאֵל הַזֶּה הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְשֵׁ הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הַ
LORD H3068 **God** H430 **this holy** H6918 H2088 H413 H4310 **and to whom shall he go up** H5927
H3068 H430 H6918 H2088 H413 H4310 H5927

מַעֲלִינוֹ:
H5921

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:2 (Parallel theme): But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope:

2 Samuel 6:9 (References Lord): And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

Revelation 6:17 (Parallel theme): For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Psalms 76:7 (Parallel theme): Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

Luke 5:8 (References Lord): When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Luke 8:37 (Parallel theme): Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

Leviticus 11:45 (Holy): For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

2 Samuel 6:7 (References God): And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

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