

Series: 1 Samuel: The Chosen King V

Text: 1 Samuel 5:1-7:1

HI: Who can stand before this holy God?

Title: *When God Comes to Town*

Hook: God in the Dock

Date: 2.12.23

Purpose: To press upon the hearers the weight of God's glory, and to lift that weight with the gospel of Jesus.

FCF: The people in this story, Philistine and Israelite alike, show that no sinner can stand before a holy God. In his grace, the Lord has provided a mediator, Jesus Christ, who stands before God on behalf of sinners.

COR: All human beings have a religious instinct. It kicks in when things press upon us that are out of our control.

Witness of Christ [WC*]: God came to town in Jesus.

Apologetic: Link the judgment of God (God in the dock) with the message of Jesus.

Form: Inductive

Call to Worship: Psalm 99:1-5

Benediction: 2 Corinthians 13:14

Outline:

I. God's enemies assume victory, but they meet defeat. (5:1-12)

A. Dagon is a lightweight. (1-5)

B. Yahweh's hand is heavy. (6-12)

II. The guilty channel superstition, but the Lord proves sovereign. (6:1-12)

A. Their instinct is sacrifice. (1-5)

B. Their strategy is separation. (6-9a)

C. Their hope is coincidence. (9b)

D. Their cows don't come home. (10-12)

III. Those who take God lightly will learn he is holy. (6:13-7:1)

A. They rejoiced at the idea of the Lord. (13-18)

B. They trembled as the reality of the Lord. (19-7:1)

Main Idea:

Subject: Who can stand before the Lord, this holy God?

Complement: No sinner.

Exegetical Idea: No sinner can stand before the Lord, this holy God.

Theological Idea: God's holiness makes it impossible for any sinner to stand before him without facing righteous judgment.

Homiletical Idea: Who can stand before this holy God?

Introduction:

C.S. Lewis: "The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock."

READ 1 Samuel 5:1-12

5 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. **2** Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. **3** And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. **4** But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. **5** This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

6 The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. **7** And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god."

8 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. **9** But after they had brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. **10** So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron

cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.” ¹¹ They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. ¹² The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

I. God’s enemies assume victory, but they meet defeat.

Hannah: “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God...those who oppose the Lord will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth.”

READ 1 Samuel 6:1-12

6 The ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. ² And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.” ³ They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.” ⁴ And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. ⁵ So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. ⁶ Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? ⁷ Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. ⁸ And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way ⁹ and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who

has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”

¹⁰The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. ¹¹And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. ¹²And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

II. The guilty channel superstition, but the Lord proves sovereign.

READ 1 Samuel 6:13-18

¹³Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it.

¹⁴The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. ¹⁵And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the Lord. ¹⁶And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

¹⁷These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the Lord: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, ¹⁸and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

READ 19:1-7:1

¹⁹And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the Lord. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great blow. ²⁰Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” ²¹So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of

Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and take it up to you.”

7 And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD.

III. Those who take God lightly will learn he is holy.

Leviticus 11:45: “I am holy”

HI: Who can stand before this holy God?

Supreme over all
Sovereign in all
Sacred beyond all

HI: Who can stand before this holy God?

Deut 5:25b-27

If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die. ²⁶ For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? ²⁷ Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say, and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.’

HI: Who can stand before a holy God?

“And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.” (Mark 5:17).

“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” John 1:10-11

2 Corinthians 5:21: God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

John 1:12: But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...