

# 1 Samuel 5 - Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

- We completed chapter four two weeks ago with the Israelites suffering a decimating defeat at the hands of their archenemy the Philistines.
- A defeat so devastating that 30,000 men were lost in battle, also, Eli and his two sons, and his daughter-in-law were lost in just one day.
- If that weren't bad enough, in addition to all of this, the Ark of the Covenant had been captured, as the glory of God had already departed.

(1) Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. (2) When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon.

- As we'll see in the next verses this proves to be a huge mistake on the part of the Philistines for what should be deemed obvious reasons.
- Be that as it may, it's important to understand what this Dagon god of the philistines was about, in order to know the why behind the what.
- By that I mean, when we understand what this pagan god represented, then the way God does what He does will make more sense to us.

Henry Morris of this god writes, "Dagon, the chief deity of the seafaring Philistines, was formerly interpreted as the fish god, represented as a creature half man and half fish, personifying the belief that the primeval waters were the source from which both men and fish had evolved in the beginning. Dagon was also said to be the father of Baal, the supreme Canaanite deity, as well as being the provider of grain. Many modern scholars now believe that Dagon was the god of grain. All these pagan deities were essentially nature gods, personifications of the natural forces which had produced all things."

- What's interesting about this particular Dagon god is that the Assyrian's, also known as the Ninevites, also worshipped this pagan deity.
- The reason I point this out is because of the way God would use a man and a fish to reach the Ninevites to bring them to repentance.
- I suppose you could say that God knew it would take a fish barfing out a man to turn them from their half man half fish god to the true God.

- By way of a personal application to our lives, I would suggest that God uses that which He knows will get our attention, to bring us to Him.
- Furthermore, because it's not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance He will meet us right where we're at.
- Then, when He has our attention, He will use whatever it takes whether it's a fish, man, or even a donkey, to speak His Word into our lives.

(3) And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again.

- You'll forgive my silliness but when they see their god on it's face as if to worship before the Ark of the Lord, you'd know something is fishy.
- Apparently they don't get that, as evidenced by what were told at the end of the verse, when they took Dagon and set it in its place again.
- In other words, the Philistines think that this was a fluke that will certainly not happen a second time. Boy, are they in for a big surprise.

Henry Morris - "It was as though the god Dagon was falling prostrate before the true God. Undoubtedly this inadvertent act of 'worship' had a profound effect on the idolatrous Philistines."

- Before we move on to verse four and see their profound horror, there is something else here in verse three that I would like to point out.
- We should never worry about defending God, or His glory, when we're up against false gods, or those who are against us, and our God.
- God is fully capable of taking care of Himself, if we would but let Him by simply opening up the Word of God and let Him speak for Himself.

Charles Spurgeon - "The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we preach it, and cease defending it. See you that lion. They have caged him for his preservation; shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes! See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools, and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries. ... Let the Lion out, and see who will dare to approach him. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all his adversaries. ... they should kindly stand back, and open the door, and let the lion out! I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself; and the best "apology" for the gospel is to let the gospel out."

(4) And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it.

- You'll forgive my silliness once again, but if your god falls, and is broken, how can this god be there for you when you fall and are broken?
- Could it be, this is why God says not to have any other gods before Him, nor to make for our self any images to bow down and worship?
- Call me silly, but if I have to take care of my god then it would just stand to reason that this god couldn't be there to take care of me instead.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest that not only does the true and living God take care of me He also conquers those idols instead of me.
- Let me explain, in and of myself I'm incapable of conquering the sin and slavery of idolatry. The only way to break it is by the Word of God.
- Just as the Ark of God can break the Dagon god of idolatry by bringing it in, so too can the Word of God break the god of idolatry in my life.

Charles Spurgeon - "If idolatry did not make men foolish, they would see the absurdity of their conduct. ...The true God would not endure that an idol should stand erect in the same temple with His ark therefore down it must go. The ark was brought into the house as a captive, but immediately became a Conqueror. If the Lord, by His Spirit, comes into the human heart, sin soon falls before Him. ...The second fall was greater than the first, for the fish-god was broken, and only his scaly tail remained. The head and hands, which symbolized wisdom and power, were dashed to atoms. Thus does grace in the heart destroy the sovereignty and energy of sin."

**Psalms 119:9-16 NIV Beth.** How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. (10) I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. (11) I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (12) Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. (13) With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. (14) I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. (15) I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. (16) I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

(5) Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.  
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is how the Philistines react to a clear revelation of the true and living God.  
- Instead of repenting on the spot, they make a religious ritual of the spot, in that they would not ever again tread on the threshold of Dagon.  
- Lest we be too quick to dismiss them as doomed and damned we would do well to consider how we are just as prone to do the same thing.

- Here's what I'm thinking, God has just demonstrated His omnipotence in an undeniable way, yet we, like them refuse to turn away from sin.  
- In effect, God has said to them, and us with them, "you have a god that is no God at all, you have a god of foolishness and powerlessness."  
- "You have sinned against me by having another god before me, and now you will be on the receiving end of my judgment because of it."

(6) But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territory. (7) And when the men of Ashdod saw how *it was*, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god." (8) Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away.

- This plague of tumors is the subject of much debate amongst Bible commentators as it relates to whether or not they were actually tumors.  
- Some believe that they were hemorrhoids others believe it was the Bubonic Plague brought on by rats, and yet others believe it was both.

Henry Morris - "These 'emerod's' [or tumors], (the old English spelling of hemorrhoids), affected the 'secret parts' of the Philistines, and were apparently associated with mice. This fact has suggested that mice transmitted the disease, and many scholars argue that it was bubonic plague. The Hebrew words so translated mean 'tumor' or 'mound.'"

- I'll spare you from more gore, since the point of the passage is more about God meting out judgment on both these people and their gods.  
- If the truth be known, this is God's MO if you will, such that He meted out judgment on the Egyptian people and their gods in the same way.

- Every single one of the plagues that came upon the Egyptians was a demonstration of God's omnipotence over those specific false gods.  
- Actually, the ten plagues were directed against only ten of the thousands of gods that the Egyptian's worshipped, perhaps only the top ten.

- The lesson here becomes quite clear in that the heavy hand of God will come down upon us and strike us so as to show us that He is God.  
- I'm of the belief that it's not only that we "shall not" have any other gods before Him, but that we "can not" have any other gods before Him.  
- Even when we try, they will fall before God and we will unnecessarily suffer the judgment of God in the very areas that we sin against God.

(9) So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumors broke out on them. (10) Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!" (11) So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. (12) And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

- I don't think it's possible to adequately comprehend the seriousness of what's happening to these Philistines in every city the Ark goes into.  
- What I can't get over is why they would keep sending it to the other cities knowing that the Ark of the God of Israel was killing their people.  
- I find it rather humorous and ironic that the very trophy they had captured with the Ark of the Covenant had in fact captured them instead.

Charles Spurgeon - "This disease was not only extremely painful but was meant to put the Philistines to shame, because they insolently dared to seize the ark of God. How glad they would have been to be rid of their captive, which even in captivity triumphed over them."

- I'll bring tonight's Bible study to a close with one final thought. Notice how that they try to get rid of that which represents God's presence.  
- In other words, instead of turning to God in repentance, they want to get rid of God in arrogance. Does this sound just a little familiar to us?  
- What I'm speaking of is how that, we as a nation, have done the very same thing, and in so doing, the heavy hand of the Lord is against us.