

RISE OF THE KING AND THE NEED FOR A GREATER KING

1 & 2 SAMUEL

**LESSON 9:
THE LORD VS. THE GODS:
NO RIVAL TO HIS GLORY**

1 SAMUEL 5:1-12

REVIEW

THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED

DEVASTATING NEWS

- A man runs from battle to Shiloh
- Signs of grief: torn clothes, dust on head
- The whole city erupts in anguish
- Eli waits in fear for news of the ark

THE WORST NEWS

- Israel has fled
- Many are dead
- Hophni & Phinehas are dead
- The ark of God has been captured
- The greatest loss is not death—but God's presence

JUDGMENT FULFILLED

- Upon hearing about the ark, Eli falls and dies
- God's promised judgment is completed
- End of Eli's leadership (40 years)

THE GLORY DEPARTS

- Phinehas' wife gives birth in grief
- Names her son Ichabod = “No Glory”
- She recognizes what others missed
- God's glory has departed from Israel

WHAT IS REVEALED

- The ark represented God's presence
- Its capture = spiritual catastrophe
- God will not be treated casually
- His presence cannot be assumed
- Do we have God's presence or just activities?

**LESSON 9:
THE LORD VS. THE GODS:
NO RIVAL TO HIS GLORY**

1 SAMUEL 5:1-12

1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

¹ “After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, ² brought it into the temple of Dagon and placed it next to his statue.

1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

³ “When the people of Ashdod got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and returned him to his place.

1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

⁴ “But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. This time, Dagon’s head and both of his hands were broken off and lying on the threshold. Only Dagon’s torso remained.

1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

⁵ “That is why, still today, the priests of Dagon and everyone who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on Dagon’s threshold.”

(1) THE ARK IN ENEMY TERRITORY

1 SAMUEL 5:1-2

ARK IN ENEMY TERRITORY

- The Philistines take the ark from Ebenezer to Ashdod
- Not just relocation—display of victory
- They believed:
 - Their god **DEFEATED** Israel's God
 - The ark now a trophy of conquest

WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE

- “The Philistines took the ark...”
- Visual observations:
 - Israel is defeated
 - Ark seized
 - God captured & defeated
 - Enemy celebrating with their trophy

WHAT WAS ACTUALLY TRUE

- The ark ≠ God Himself
- It represents His presence & throne
- God is sovereign, omnipresent, & not confined to an object/space

“You cannot capture the Creator with
CREATED things.”

GOD IS MOVING THE STORY

- Philistines “took” the ark
- But God is:
 - Allowing it (**AUTHORITY**)
 - Directing it (power)
 - Using it (sovereignty)
- Divine strategy – not Philistine victory

INVASION – NOT CAPTURE

- Ark placed in Dagon's temple (Ashdod)
- Not God imprisoned – God INVADING
- Philistines: “We won!”
- Reality: God has arrived to confront their “god.”

(2) THE FALL OF DAGON

1 SAMUEL 5:3-5

WHO IS DAGON?

- National god of the Philistines
- Derived from “dagan” = **GRAIN**
- Associations: fertility, provision, harvest
- Epic literature – father of Baal
- Temples: Ashdod & Gaza (Samson)

THE SETUP

- Ark placed inside Dagon's temple
- Positioned beside the idol
- Message: "Dagon defeated Yahweh"
- Direct confrontation
- Not symbolic or accidental
- God vs. false god

FIRST FALL

- Next morning: Dagon FACE down before the ark
- No battle scene, contest, or struggle
- Posture = worship & submission
- Response: Set him back up
- We reset what God exposes

SECOND FALL

- Next morning: Dagon face down before the ark – head & hands cut off
- No head = no authority, wisdom
- No hands = no power
- Context = complete military **VICTORY**
- Not embarrassment but total defeat

THE THRESHOLD

- Head & hands land on threshold
- Public humiliation – your god is beneath your **FEAT**.
- Refuse to step on threshold after
- Turn defeat into a superstition
- Ritual adjustment – not repentance

THE THRESHOLD

- From sacred entrance to reminder of defeat
- Superstition mean to honor Dagon
- Instead memorializes his defeat

WHY THIS MATTERS

- God is not dependent on man's strength
- Israel lost battle ≠ God losing power
- God's **STRENGTH** ≠ our success
- God's authority ≠ our circumstances
- In defeat/failure – God is sovereign

IRONY

- They brought God into their judgment
- From trophy → judgment
- Didn't make them stronger – made them accountable

GOD CANNOT BE CONTROLLED

- Lesson 7 – Israel tried - Failed
- Lesson 9 – Philistines tried - Failed
- Dagon couldn't COMPETE
- No one can control or resist God's will

WE HAVEN'T CHANGED

- Our thought process:
 - Things are good → God is “with us”
 - Things go bad → God has “lost”
- Truth: God not defeated by
 - Cultural opposition
 - Personal hardship / Church decline

OUR IDOLS

- Modern idols aren't statues
- Success, comfort, programs, control, Identity, security, provisions
- These cannot stand **BESIDE** God
- Anything that rivals God will eventually collapse

(3) THE HAND OF THE LORD FALLS

1 SAMUEL 5:6-9

1 SAMUEL 5:6-9

6 “The Lord’s hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod. He terrified the people of Ashdod and its territory and afflicted them with tumors.

1 SAMUEL 5:6-9

7 “When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, ‘The ark of Israel’s God must not stay here with us, because his hand is strongly against us and our god Dagon.’”

1 SAMUEL 5:6-9

⁸ “So they called all the Philistine rulers together and asked, ‘What should we do with the ark of Israel’s God?’

‘The ark of Israel’s God should be moved to Gath,’ they replied. So they moved the ark of Israel’s God.

1 SAMUEL 5:6-9

⁹ “After they had moved it, the Lord’s hand was against the city of Gath, causing a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, from the youngest to the oldest, with an outbreak of tumors.”

GOD BEGINS TO ACT

- “The Lord’s hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod.”
- God strikes them with TUMORS
- Judgment city wide - widespread
- Not random but intentional judgement

HAND OF THE LORD

- God's "hand" represents power, authority, judgment
- Philistines understood this
- Connected it to plagues of EGYPT

1 SAMUEL 4:8

⁸ “Woe to us! Who will rescue us from these magnificent gods? These are the gods that slaughtered the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.”

NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT

- Tumors – painful boils & swelling
- Israel's curse of disobedience on the Philistines

DEUTERONOMY 28:27

²⁷ “The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, tumors, a festering rash, and scabies, from which you cannot be cured.”

NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT

- God's HOLINESS applies universally
- Causes weakness, humiliation, loss of control
- Not just physical – Humiliation
- God dismantles their god and their people

THEY START TO UNDERSTAND

- “The ark of Israel’s God must not stay here.”
- This is not a coincidence
- This is from Israel’s God
- “heavy on us and our god Dagon.”
- Their god could not **PROTECT** them

GOD VS. DAGON

- Suffering → Yahweh vs. Dagon
- Yahweh is winning
- Experience God's power – Refuse His authority
- This God must go away – move the ark

REMOVE THE PROBLEM

- Can't ignore, control, or escape
- Rulers **MOVE** the problem to Gath
- Get rid of the true God – keep the sin
- God uses discomfort to expose false securities, gods, or assumptions

AVOID NOT REPENT

- Correct question:
 - “How do we respond to this God?”
- They asked:
 - “How do we get this away from us?”
- Universal human response:
 - Conviction → Avoidance

SCARY TRUTH

- They knew it was GOD – but still refused to turn to Him.
- The world recognizes God – but does not submit to Him

(4) THE ARK REJECTED IN FEAR

1 SAMUEL 5:10-12

1 SAMUEL 5:10-12

¹⁰ “The people of Gath then sent the ark of God to Ekron, but when it got there, the Ekronites cried out, ‘They’ve moved the ark of Israel’s God to us to kill us and our people!’”

1 SAMUEL 5:10-12

¹¹ “The Ekronites called all the Philistine rulers together. They said, ‘Send the ark of Israel’s God away. Let it return to its place so it won’t kill us and our people!’ For the fear of death pervaded the city; God’s hand was oppressing them.

1 SAMUEL 5:10-12

¹² “Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.”

PANIC BEFORE PAIN

- Ark sent to Ekron from Ashdod
- Immediate reaction: “They moved the ark...to kill us!”
- Instant **FEAR**
- Word of God’s judgment spread fast

FEAR OF DEATH

- Not a curious response – terror
- Ark associated with
 - Death, judgment, divine power
- Don't doubt God's reality – Fear His presence

CITY IN CRISIS

- Urgently demand a meeting of rulers
- Demand: Send it away before it kills us and our people
- No longer an inconvenience
- This is about **SURVIVAL**

NO ESCAPE

- Some people die
- Some struck with tumors
- Everyone is affected
- God's judgment isn't **NEUTRAL**
ground

CRY OF THE CITY

- “Outcry of the city went up to heaven.”
- Echoes:
 - Israel’s cry in chapter 4
 - Egyptian cry during the plagues
- Absolute chaos - helplessness

ASHDOD – GATH - EKRON

- A repeated pattern in each city
 - Ark arrives
 - Judgment falls
 - Panic spread
 - Ark is moved
- You cannot OUTRUN God's hand

TRAGIC IRONY

- Clearly understood
 - This is the God of Israel
 - He is the source of our judgment
- Never repent or seek the True God
- Respond instead with fear and avoidance

FEAR ≠ FAITH

- Many recognize and fear God
- Many experience God's power
- Still refuse Him
- Conviction without repentance still leads to **JUDGMENT**.

WHAT WILL THEY DO NEXT

QUESTION

- How do you handle what you can't control
- 7 months in Philistine territory
- Judgment, panic, death
- What do we do?
- Not an object – the presence of God