

Confronting an Evil World

What do we learn when God confronts an evil world?

¿Qué aprendemos cuando Dios enfrenta un mundo malvado?

1. We cannot prop up our _____.

No podemos sostener a nuestros _____.

1 Samuel 5:3

Isaiah 46:5-7 (Isaías 46:5-7)

1 Corinthians 10:19-20 (1 Corintios 10:19-20)

2. We cannot hold on to our _____.

No podemos aferrarnos a nuestro _____.

1 Samuel 5:5

Romans 6:1-4 (Romanos 6:1-4)

John 8:34-36 (Juan 8:34-36)

3. We cannot get rid of _____.

No podemos deshacernos de _____.

1 Samuel 5:7

Acts 17:27-28 (Hechos 17:27-28)

Revelation 3:19-20 (Apocalipsis 3:19-20)



Discussion Questions and Notes

Week 6: September 20-27

Scripture: 1 Samuel 5

In 1 Samuel 5, the Philistines have just defeated the Israelites. They've captured the Ark of the Covenant. To them, this is a trophy of war. They put it in the temple of Dagon, the false god of their nation. They set it right beside his statue, as if to say, "Our god is greater than your god." But what happens next is not a story about two gods competing for supremacy. It's a true historical event when the one true God confronted an evil world. As we read this chapter, let's ask ourselves this question: "What do we learn when God confronts an evil world?"

Read 1 Samuel 5

1. What was the first city the Philistines took the ark to after they captured it?
2. Where did the Philistines place the ark in verse 2?

James Smith writes,

In those days a god was considered only as powerful as the army of the people who worshiped him. The ark was placed in the temple of Dagon evidently as a dedicatory offering. The placement of the ark symbolized that Dagon, through his worshipers, had defeated Yahweh. (Smith, 92)

3. What did the Philistines do on the first morning after they found Dagon on his face before the ark? (5:3)
4. What did the Philistines find in the temple of Dagon on the second morning? (5:4)
5. How do we know that the Philistines continued to worship Dagon for many years after this event? (5:5)

Bill Arnold comments,

The added detail that the executed Dagon's extremities are found "lying on the threshold" is interesting. The narrator inserts the historical note to explain why "to this day" priests of Dagon step over the threshold of the temple of Dagon in Ashdod. The superstitious custom of jumping over the threshold of a sacred place was known in ancient Palestine, even practiced by idolatrous priests in Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:4, 9). (Arnold, 118)

6. How does verse 6 describe "the hand of the LORD"?

In chapters 4-6, the "hand" of God is mentioned seven times. John Woodhouse observes,

As Dagon lay in the dirt, handless, the one whose name belonged to the ark was not handless! Dagon could do nothing... The Lord, Yahweh, was the powerful one—in the temple of Dagon and, as we will see shortly, anywhere else. The hand of the Lord was "heavy." The word play cannot be translated into English, but we noted earlier that in Hebrew one word, *kabod*, means "glory" and "heavy." The mother said in Shiloh, "Where is the *kabod*?" Now we learn that in Ashdod the hand of the Lord was *kabod*! (Woodhouse, 90)

7. What did the LORD do to the Philistines in the vicinity of Ashdod? (5:6)

8. Why did the men of Ashdod think that the ark should not stay in their city? (5:7)

9. Where did the people of Ashdod send the ark? (5:8)

10. What did the LORD do to the people of Gath when the ark came to that city? (5:9)

11. What did the people of Gath do with the ark? (5:10)

12. How did the people of Ekron say when the ark came to their city? (5:10)

13. Why did the Philistines think that the ark should go back to Israel? (5:11)

14. How was God's hand "very heavy"? (5:11-12)

Smith notes,

From the description given here, it would appear that the visitation against Ekron was even worse than that at Ashdod and Gath. The longer the Philistines resisted the chastening hand of the Lord, the more the pressure against them intensified. The outcry (הַשָּׁוֹא, šaw'āh) of the city went up to heaven. This suggests that the Ekronites were forced by their circumstances to call on the one true God to relieve their suffering (Ex. 2:23). (Smith, 96)

15. What do you think God wanted the Philistines to realize when they found Dagon fallen over?

16. How do people feel when their cherished symbols of power are revealed to be powerless?

17. What are some of the popular "idols" in the world today?

18. How do people today prop up their "idols"?

19. How can you help others see that God is greater than the idols people follow?

20. What difference has God made in your life? How will you share that testimony with someone this week?

Sources cited:

Arnold, Bill. *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel*.

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Smith, James. *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*.

Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000.

Woodhouse, John. *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Wheaton, IL:

Crossway, 2008.