

I Samuel Lesson 05

I Samuel Chapter 5

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

E-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Memory verses for this week: *Psa 67:3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Samuel this week. In last week's lesson, we studied about the defeat of Israel by the Philistines. Not only were they defeated, but the Ark of God was lost. Both of Eli's sons were slain, and this news led to the death of both Eli and Phinehas' wife as she gave birth to a son which she named Ichabod. As we mentioned last week, this meant the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel.

I. The Ark of God and the Philistines

1 Sam 5:1 And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

1 Sam 5:2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

The Philistines felt that they had conquered and captured Israel's God when they took possession of the Ark of God. They perceived God as no more a god than their false gods, so they felt they had him in their control. Perhaps they felt they were honoring God by bringing the ark into the house of Dagon. This was in Ashdod, and Dagon was their false God. The place they took the ark was the temple of Dagon. Dagon was known as the fish-god, with the first part of the word 'dag' meaning fish. Dagon had the likeness of a man from his belly up. He had folded hands before his face as though he worshipped, he had no feet, but his tail was that of a fish.

1 Sam 5:3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

1 Sam 5:4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

When the pagan priest came into the temple on the next day, they found Dagon had fallen down before the ark as though in worship of it. They took him and sat him up again. The following morning, the priest again found him upon his face

before the Ark of God. This time had had fallen down to the ground, and struck his head and hands on the door. Both the head and hands were broken off, leaving just the middle section of the false god. By being broken and ruined, you'd have thought his worshippers would have realized that the God of the ark was the real God. All false idol gods are broken and worthless. The scriptures do not tell us what they did with him. Perhaps they tried to piece him back together.

1 Sam 5:5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

1 Sam 5:6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

Since Dagon had suffered by falling against the threshold of the door, they supposed this had somehow made the threshold holy. After this, the people were very careful lest they step on the threshold hallowed by the break up of their false god Dagon. The false god Dagon was not the only one affected by the presence of the ark there in Ashdod. The people soon realized that the Lord was displeased with them. They were afflicted with emerods which caused many of the people to die.

Matthew Henry made some interesting comments about the thinking of the Philistines about putting the Ark of God with Dagon.

- I. The Philistines' triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud, to be now masters of, because before the battle they were possessed with a great fear of it, ch. 4:7. When they had it in their hands God restrained them, that they did not offer any violence to it, did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but showed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and to read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone that were in it, we are not told; perhaps they looked no further than the golden outside and the cherubim that covered it, like children that are more affected with the fine binding of their bibles than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was; there they placed the ark of God, by Dagon (v. 2), either 1. As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious respect to, in conjunction with Dagon; for the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners.
- II. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all if he is not worshipped alone. The Lord our God is one

Lord. Or rather, 2. They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour of Dagon their god, to whom no doubt they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done when they had taken Samson (Jdg. 16:23, 24), boasting that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion so now over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! what a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill deity? (1.) So it is, because God will show of how little account the ark of the covenant is if the covenant itself be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to or we can trust to. (2.) So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affront him, and get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel, that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, he will next deal with those that abused it, and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the wrath of man shall praise him; and he is bringing about his own glory even when he seems to neglect it, Ps. 76:10. Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

II. Ark of God is Sent to Gath

1 Sam 5:7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

1 Sam 5:8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, 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 about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

The Lords of the Philistines got together and decided that they should remove the Ark and send it to Gath. They concluded that God did not like Dagon, and would be better pleased in a town where there would be no competition as to who was God. No sooner did the ark arrive in Gath than the people began to fall victim to emerods.









J. Vernon McGee said that everyone seemed to be passing the buck. No one wanted the ark, and they couldn't find a place for it.

I do not mean to be irreverent but everyone was passing the buck. Finally there was a meeting of the lords of the Philistines and they decided to send the ark back to Israel. God had sent judgment upon the Philistines. The Philistines had one question, "What shall we do with Israel's ark?"

1 Sam 5:9 And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men

of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

In the Believer's Study Bible, W. A. Criswell gave some insight into what might have plagued the Philistines.

5:6 The terms      and    (Heb.), translated “tumors” (cf. 5:9, 12; 6:4, 5, 11, 17), refer to some type of growths or swellings on the body. The first term occurs elsewhere only in Deut. 28:27; the second occurs only in this passage. The association with rats (6:4, 5) suggests to some that the plague that afflicted the Philistines may have been bubonic plague, which is characterized by swelling of the lymph glands. It should be noted, however, that the rats themselves constituted a pestilence (cf. 6:5). On the basis of related terms in Arabic and Aramaic, others suggest that the terms translated “tumors” here may be better rendered “hemorrhoids.”

Based upon verse 9, I would tend to believe that they were plagued most likely by hemorrhoids. The Philistines were very unhappy to have the ark in their presence, so they send it on to the town on Ekron.

1 Sam 5:10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

The Philistines in Ekron were not happy to have the ark with them either. They cry out and ask if this was sent to slay us and our people. The word of the terror associated to the Philistines spread fast concerning the Ark of God. While it brought great glory and safety to God's chosen nation Israel, it wrought havoc on the lost Philistines. God is never pleased with a people who fail to serve him totally and wholly from the heart. And that begins by acknowledging that there is only one true God. The first four commandments have reference to man's relationship towards God.

Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Exo 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exo 20:6 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Exo 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Exo 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Exo 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

Exo 20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

Exo 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

We today may not build a little gold or silver image that we bow down to each day, but we can just as easily be worshipping a false god if we fall in love with our television set or some sport. We can take almost anything and make it into an idol if we are not careful. It might be a new vehicle, or even our own children. God is a jealous God, and he wants us to acknowledge Him and Him only as God.

III. Second Meeting of the Lords of the Philistines

1 Sam 5:11 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 again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

1 Sam 5:12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The lords of the Philistines put their heads together and decide that the best thing to do is to send the ark of God away from them that they be not slain. Many Philistines had died, and a great plague had fallen upon them for having the ark in their presence. God is both a God of love and a God of judgment. For those who know Him not as Lord and Savior, he is only a God of judgment. Every lost person will one day have to stand at the Great White Throne judgment. It says in verse 11 that the hand of God was very heavy there. Many died, but some that did not die were smitten with the emerods. I know that the Philistines thought they were really doing a great thing when they took the Ark of God into their possession. But many a person who failed to acknowledge God for who He was and is paid a high price in the bible. We need to learn from the failures of others that we might not make similar mistakes in our lives.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

E-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.