

## 6. No Competition

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When we realize that we cannot compete with someone who is much stronger, better and smarter than us, it is best for our own benefit to listen to that person. If we insist our ways, either we are going to get hurt or get humiliated. That was the case in point with these Philistine people against God.

In chapter 4, the Israelites brought the ark of God into the battlefield and believed that the ark of God would win the battle for them. Because they believed it as a lucky charm. The result was far less and more terrible than they expected. 30,000 foot soldiers were killed in the battle. To make the matter worse, the ark of God was captured by the Philistines. The Israelites put their tails between their legs and high-tailed out to their camp. I am sure that there was a roar of victory chant from the side of the Philistine.

We are going to pick up the scene where the Philistines were bringing their main spoil of the battle, the ark of God of Israel into their base camp, Ashdod.

### A. BRING IT ON

*1 Sam 5:1-2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the temple of Dagon and set it by Dagon.*

What is this Dagon? It is the chief god of the Philistines, since they were polytheists. It was thought to control the weather and the fertility of the land. The appearance of this Dagon was a man's head with a fish body. The god appears to be a Philistine adaptation of the Canaanite god Baal, who is sometimes referred to in ancient literature as the "son of Dago." Philistia was an important grain producing region; the worship of Dagon was thought to ensure a good crop. This Dagon god also represent sex and violence, just like its descendant, Baal.

They brought the ark into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. No doubt, the Philistines were jubilant, and confident in the superiority of their god over the God of Israel. They had faced the God of Israel in battle, and believed their god Dagon had delivered them and defeated Israel. Now, the Ark of the Covenant of Israel's God stood as a trophy in the temple of their god Dagon. The victory was complete!

*1 Sam 5:3 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.*

Do you know what Dagon said to the people of Philistine? "I have fallen, I can't get up," like an old TV commercial.

Dagon couldn't stand in the presence of the true God.

What kind of god do these Philistine people have that they have to pick him up, because he fell before the ark of God? They had do something for him, because he cannot do anything for his people. Let's examine our situation: Do we have the same kind of gods in our lives that we have to move around and take care of? Our one true God take care of us, we don't take care of Him. So what kind of God should we have - the one needs our care or the One who takes care of us?

God will glorify Himself. Sometimes, when men disgrace the glory of God, we fear God will go without glory. We think the glory has departed. But when men and women will not glorify God, God will glorify Himself.

If that was not bad enough, their god Dagon hasn't seen anything yet.

*1 Sam 5:4-5 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. 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.*

An accident two days in a row? And now, the head and hands of Dagon broken? How strange!

The head is the seat of wisdom and the hands, the instruments of action. Both are cut off, to show that he had neither wisdom nor strength to defend himself nor his worshippers.

After seeing the superiority of the God of Israel, these Philistine priests had two choices. They could turn from their weak, inferior god Dagon, and begin serving the mighty, superior Lord of Israel. Or they could make a religious tradition instead. They chose the religious tradition. 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.

These Philistine priests, like men confronted with the truth today, rejected God despite the evidence. They wanted to believe it was an accident. How could they believe something so ridiculous? Many people in today are no different than these Philistine people. They'd rather believe the evolution theory, the Area 57, little green aliens in space ships, and even Star Wars garbage than God Almighty.

Because worshipping the Lord instead of Dagon meant a huge change in thinking and living. The Philistine priests were unwilling to make those changes. It was easier when they took Dagon and set it in its place again. Setting Dagon up and gluing him together was easier than changing your life and your thinking.

*John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

## **B. PAIN IN THE REAR ENDS**

*1 Sam 5:6 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.*

God not only destroy their image of Dagon god, but also He spanked the Dagon worshippers on their butts with Hemorrhoids. Some of your versions call it "swelling." That is another right translation too. It just swells in the very uncomfortable area that causes massive problems in the bowel area later. I think that God is having fun with these people and their false belief. They wouldn't stand for God, God made them they couldn't sit either.

To add more problems, God sent mice (6:4) to plague the people. The mice ruined the crops and carried disease germs to the people.

*1 Sam 5:7-8 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." 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.*

Aren't you glad that you don't have these people as your neighbors? After the receiving end of all the hind problems, the Philistines still didn't turn to God. Instead they sent away God's ark. They were thinking that out of their sight, out of God's reach. Wrong! Some of us are so stubborn like these Philistines. When God tries to get our attention with His disciplines to us, instead of turning to Him, we push God away. That really doesn't help any. No matter where we turn, God is there. We cannot run away from the presence of God.

### **C. PASS THAT HOT POTATO**

*1 Sam 5:9 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.*

Instead of submitting to the God of Israel, they decided to get rid of Him by passing it on to other neighbors. The problem is, we can't get rid of God. We must all face God, and stand before Him one day.

*1 Sam 5:10-12 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!" 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. And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.*

The Ark of the Covenant is now, among the Philistines, a "hot potato," burning every city where it stays. The Ekronites were not happy see the ark, but they still wouldn't submit to the Lord God of Israel.

The Philistines, if they would have repented and turned towards the Lord, could have benefited from the ark. Instead, it became a curse and a judgment to them.

*2 Cor 2:15-16 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

The same is true of the presence of God among us. The work of Jesus on our behalf will either be the greatest blessing we have ever known for all eternity or it will be the greatest witness of God's judgment against us. If we submit and surrender to God, it can be a blessing. If we refuse His voice and His heart towards us, it can be a curse. What will we decide?

### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) No program, no method, no religion, no person, no philosophy can replace God.**

26 We face difficulties & hopeless situations in our lives. So we try very hard to get rid of those difficulties from our lives by using some psychological methods, programs,

religions or people. Oh, they might entertain us and give us false hope for a time being. But in deep down, we are still empty, until we let the presence of God come into our hearts. Unless we have Jesus into our hearts and let Him override what we want to do in our lives, we really don't have the hope and peace.

**2) God cannot be pushed away.**

Just because we turn our faces away from God, it doesn't mean that He cannot see us. He knows our thoughts and the intentions of hearts. It is better for us to surrender to God and obey His commands.

**3) Coming to church to do our Sunday morning duty won't please God.**

As a matter of fact, the more we hear the Word of God and not do what God tells us to do, the more it will become a curse and judgement against us. If you are planning to not obey God, I ask you not to come to church anymore.