

# 1 SAMUEL 5 - DEFYING GOD

## Study 6

### **GOD VISITS HIS ENEMIES**

The Philistines had captured the ark of God and had placed it before the image of their god Dagon in Dagon's shrine. The point is simple, Yahweh has been defeated and made subservient to Dagon. However, before the Philistines could have their weebix, "Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of Yahweh" (v. 3). Now Dagon bows before Yahweh!

This event would bring the faithful Israelites to a Godly laughter. But the next line is a cause for even more amusement, "So they took Dagon and put him back in his place." What God needs help to get back on his feet? Apparently Dagon!

It became worse. Next morning Dagon's head and hands came off when he tried to bow before Yahweh's ark (v. 4). Dagon is getting the divinity knocked out of him. Indeed, the Philistines themselves will soon admit that Dagon is no match for Yahweh (v. 7).

Though through the laughter, we should see the important point God is making. Unlike a battered Dagon, Yahweh doesn't have to have someone come and set him up again. He can fight the Philistines by himself. He doesn't need his people to cheer him on; he will bring back his ark all by himself. Yahweh is supreme and self-sufficient. We cannot think for one moment, that we can manipulate the true and living God, or that he needs us to carry him... he will carry us!

Dagon represents the pagan understanding of the gods in this period, that the God were dependent on men to serve them. First Samuel 5:1-5 is meant to counter such thinking in Israel. Not only does the episode teach the Philistines the supremacy of Yahweh over Dagon but it instructs Israel that such supremacy is utterly independent of his people. Yahweh is not like Dagon (and his kind), a helpless god needing to be cuddled, protected, and sustained by his worshipers.

### **READ - 1 SAMUEL 5:1-5**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Have you encountered any 'pagan' elements in worship that would cast God in Dagon's image. Namely a God that is helpless to act without our service?
  - a. Consider any songs we sing or elements in how we pray?

3. Consider the question, “Why did God create people?” How would you answer?
  - a. Compare this to the answer given by the “1689 Baptist Confession of Faith” (below). How does it differ from your answer?

*In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good. (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)*

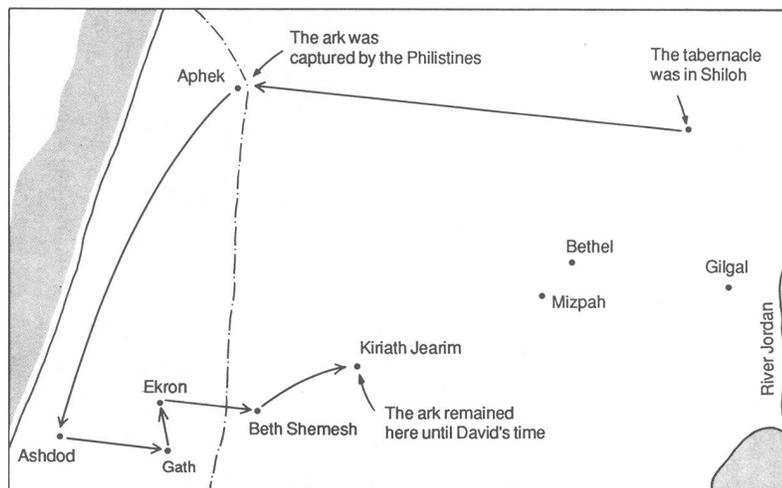
4. How can we strike a balance between two facts: that God is totally self-sufficient and that he graciously uses us in his service?

## THE HEAVY HAND OF THE LORD

The Philistines had not brought home a tame God. Although they believed the Ark had fallen into their hands, in actual fact they had fallen into the hands of God (5:6). Yahweh struck the people of Ashdod and its surrounding areas with tumors (5:6b), which brought terror, suffering, and death (vv. 9, 11–12). The Philistines were experiencing the judgement of God. The Ashdodites confessed that neither Dagon nor they could stand up to Yahweh (5:7).

After official consultation the ark arrived in Gath... along with plague and panic (vv. 8–9). Gath sent the ark to Ekron but the Ekron leaders met the transport party at the city limits, refusing it entry to the city. The men of Ekron knew that these afflictions were accompanying the Ark.

At this point in time, the Philistines are an object lesson of Hebrews 10:31: “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”



*The path of the Ark*

**READ - 1 SAMUEL 5:6-12**

**QUESTIONS**

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. How do these verses speak to our idols (anything that we would elevate above God)?
3. Does God continue to bring temporary judgement today? Toward nations and churches?
4. How does this passage point to Jesus?