

The Heavy Hand of the LORD 1 Samuel 5

INTRODUCTION

God cannot be defeated, even when His children are.

When the Philistines vanquished the Israelites and captured the ark, all seemed lost. **The last chapter closed on a very distressing note.** The Philistines had driven the forces of Israel from the battlefield. The ark had been taken captive. The three senior priests were dead. The Philistines had now made major inroads into Israelite territory.

Phinehas' widow summed up the situation by naming her son, Ichabod because **"the glory has departed from Israel"**. She saw Israel as bereft as her newborn son. As that baby would have to grow up without parents, so Israel would have to live without her God.

She believed that God had abandoned His people.

The truth of the matter was that God had not abandoned His people at all, but He was disciplining them. As Samuel will point out, when they are ready to come back to God, God will be ready to receive them and remove the punishing Philistines. **We make a terrible mistake if we think that God has failed us, or stopped loving us the moment things go wrong in our lives.** There are many reasons why things go wrong, including God disciplining us. But in none of them is God anything less than active. In our pain, and in our joys, it is still God with whom we need to deal. One thing is certain, God is no passive onlooker.

I. A _____ god in the hands of the _____ God:
the _____ of Dagon (5:1-5)

A. The Ark's _____ (5:1-2)

B. The Ark's _____ (5:3-5)

Can we sit with this contrast for a minute? God doesn't need our help, but the idols in our life certainly do.

II. Troubled by _____: _____ in the hands of the living God (5:6-12)

The hand of the LORD represents Yahweh in action (cf. Exod. 9:3; Jer. 21:5-6). The hand of the Lord was **“heavy.”** The word in Hebrew is ***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!

While the hands of Dagon had been cut off, the hand of the LORD was not. The text says it was **“heavy”** on the people of Ashdod. Plague came, terrible tumors that signified something was up. This God was not to be trifled with. **Single-handedly, without the means of an army or physical weaponry, God had invaded the Philistine camp and brought His destructive hand.**

What God does is send a plague upon the city. From the next chapter (6:4,18) we understand that it was a plague brought on by rats and it was of epidemic proportions and a large proportion of the population came down with tumors.

It is not just the god Dagon who will be humiliated, the dignity of these Philistines will now be taken away. The word for **“tumors”** is very obscure (*literally, a thickening of tissue*) and the chances are it was deliberately left obscure in order not to be vulgar. The tumors were probably hemorrhoids resulting from dysentery, which had laid those affected prostrate. The Philistines had heard about the plagues that had come upon Egypt (4:8), now they are going to taste firsthand something of what the Egyptians had suffered.

CONCLUSION

By casting down the Philistine idol and striking the people in His wrath, God delivered a message not only to His own people but also to the Philistine world and for you and me today.

Let me share with you some practical applications:

1. God proved that He is a _____ God.
2. The LORD taught that He is the only _____ God.
3. The living and true God proved that He is _____ and _____.
4. God reveals Himself as a _____ God.

Idols may give us what we want, but God alone gives us what we need. The gospel tells us that only one Man had the power to break us from the cycle of pleasing ourselves to death. Jesus crushes the idol of self without our help so that we can run to God, Who we really need and Who we were created for.