

Message #12**I Samuel 5:1-12**

One of the saddest stories of the Apostles and yet a necessary story of the sovereignty of God is the story of Judas Iscariot. It was clearly predicted in the O.T. that the Messiah and Savior would be betrayed by a close friend (Ps. 41:9; 55:12-13) and that He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver that would be thrown on the floor of the Temple (Zech. 11:12-13). Judas was the one who fulfilled all of these predictions.

So we could legitimately say that God sovereignly used the evil of Judas to fulfill His program. But after Judas had thrown the 30 pieces of silver on the Temple floor (Matt. 27:5), he went and hanged himself and committed suicide. So what we may also conclude from this is that God even used the godless behavior of Judas for His purposes and then when the purpose had been accomplished, He judged him.

That point is the very point of I Samuel 5. I Samuel 5 is an amazing chapter in the Bible and it is an amazing moment in the history of Israel. Because of the corruption of the religious leadership swamp, the Philistines had sovereignly been used by God to defeat the Israelites and capture the Ark of the Covenant (I Samuel 4). **The fact is, all of this will actually become a prelude to bring Israel a King.**

So God was completely sovereign in permitting His Word to be taken and His people to be defeated. Yet the Philistines, who had done these negative things against God's people and Word, were responsible and accountable for their actions. These Philistines would come to regret the day they ever got their hands on God's Word. They will regret the day they came in contact with the sacred property of God. **God's Word was not a blessing to them; it was a curse.**

When Madelyn Murray O'Hare's property was seized by the IRS and sold at an auction for tax evasion, it was discovered that she had a Bible that had been given to her from a Sunday School Class of twelve-year old-girls, from a Baptist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The woman who was known for saying there is no God, had a copy of God's Word in her own home. That Word has now become her judge. That is what happened to the Philistines. They got their hands on the Word of God, but it became their judge.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY USES GODLESS PEOPLE TEMPORARILY FOR HIS PURPOSES; BUT AFTER HE HAS USED THEM, HE WILL JUDGE THEM FOR WHAT THEY DID AGAINST HIM, HIS WORD AND HIS PEOPLE.

If a person is succeeding by doing the opposite of what God's Word says, that person had better realize the peril he/she is in. God is sovereign and He is the one permitting that person to succeed and when He has used that person for His sovereign purposes, He will destroy them.

Any person, who thinks lightly of the Word of God, will ultimately find nothing but misery. Any person who tampers with the Word of God will find nothing but misery. Any person who tampers with the people of God or the property of God will find nothing but misery. That is clear here in this text.

The Philistines were a strong, formidable enemy of Israel and God. God permitted them to defeat the Israelites because He wanted to remove Eli and his family and punish Israel. The Philistines were proud and arrogant and defiant people against God. They dared to fight God and they dared to take the Ark of the Covenant that contained His Word. God permitted them to do this and then He tracked them down in judgment.

In this passage there are three judgments:

JUDGMENT #1 – God sends a judgment against Ashdod. **5:1-8**

Verse 1 informs us that the first place the Ark was taken to by the Philistines was Ashdod. The Philistines were excited and elated with their victory. They were proud of their military victory and the fact that they had captured the Ark of God.

Ashdod is one of five main Philistines cities (I Sam. 6:17). The city was located about 70 miles SW of Shiloh; about 35 miles SW of Jerusalem; about 30 miles south of Aphek, where the Philistines had been camped (I Sam. 4:1). It was about 30 miles from Ebenezer where they had actually captured the Ark (4:1).

Archeology has uncovered ruins of this city, which today is mostly inhabited by Jewish people. In fact, it is the sixth largest city in Israel and it is the largest port on the Mediterranean Sea.

According to **verse 2**, when the Philistines brought the Ark into Ashdod, they took it like a trophy to the temple of Dagon and they set it by an idol that depicted their invented deity. Dagon was the Philistine fertility deity and the chief “god” of the Philistines. He is pictured as having the body of a fish and the hands and the head of a human. He was a human from head to waist and a fish from waist to foot. They proudly took that Ark to this temple to say, “We won.”

We know that there was also a temple of Dagon in Gaza because according to Judges 16:21-23 that is where Samson was taken after his eyes had been gouged out by the Philistines. It was there where God gave him strength to push the pillars of the Temple and destroy many God mocking Philistines.

According to **verse 3**, during the night, God tipped over the idol. When the Ashdodites got up in the morning and went to the temple, Dagon was lying face down on the ground “before the ark of God.” Dagon was flat on his face in a reverent and humble posture before the true Living God.

So they sat him up and put him back in his place. Now you would think the people would say, well if this is our God, why do we have to put him back into his place? This thing we are worshipping doesn't even have enough strength to pick himself up out of the dirt. This shows you the fallacy and the folly of idol worship.

This first time it happened, they thought it was some fluke or accident. In all reality, this was no fluke or accident; the false god was bowed down flat on his face before the true God.

According to **verse 4**, early the next morning Dagon was found fallen on his face before the Ark of God and this time his head and both palms of his hands were broken. Not only was this false deity fallen, he was broken. Now you can't put Dagon back up because he doesn't have a head or hands.

It is interesting that when the text says his head and palms were "cut off," it is the same verb used in I Samuel 17:51 for what David did in cutting off the head of Goliath.

We may recall that when chapter 4 ended, it ended with the fact that the glory of God had "departed from Israel." About 30 miles south that glory of God was being displayed.

What we do see here is that God, at any time, can do anything He wants to do to anything or anyone. He can break them down and He can cut them up. He can rip into things and rip things to shreds any time He wants. He can use earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, avalanches, fires and mudslides to destroy whatever He wants them to destroy.

According to **verses 5-7**, there are three results:

Result #1 - The priests of Ashdod became afraid. **5:5**

The priests sensed there was something sovereign and scary about this. They were afraid to even walk into the area where Dagon was housed.

The phrase "to this day" means they did not go into this place for a long time. They realized something was taking place that was way beyond anything they had ever seen.

God can break anyone at any time. God can force people to fear Him. He has sovereign power to do this with anyone.

Result #2 - The people of Ashdod were physically ravaged by God. **5:6**

The text says that God ravaged the people with "tumors." The Hebrew word is one that is derived from a verb which means to swell as in some type of boil or tumor. This is the same word used in Deuteronomy 28:27 in which God says He would smite those who were disobedient with "tumors and with scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed."

In I Samuel 6:4-5 we learn that not only were there tumors, but also God ravaged them with mice. Flavius Josephus claims that the people were struck with a dysentery fever that brought death on them suddenly. The death he describes was one of people vomiting, which drew mice that made things worse (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 123).

Mice are not nice little cute furry creatures that are like a pet ferret. These tumors and mice were judgments of God.

If God ever turns His hand heavy against someone, you may be certain that he will be broken without remedy.

Result #3 - The men of Ashdod want to get rid of the Ark of God. **5:7**

This is important to see. These people know this is a judgment of the God of Israel. They know these disasters are coming from His hand. **Not one person suggests getting right with God. What they suggest is we need to get rid of the Word of God, the Ark of God.**

They know their false deity Dagon, cannot defeat the true God of the Bible. However, their solution is not to humble themselves before God; it is to send the Ark to Gath, some ten miles inland.

God may, at times, permit some enemy to temporarily overtake us. But that enemy is not off the hook. Truth is if God permits His own people to suffer hardship, imagine what He will do to the ones who cause the hardship.

This is so interesting because Israel thought having the Ark was the key to victory and the Philistines thought that same Ark was the reason for their problems.

JUDGMENT #2 – God sends a judgment against Gath. **5:8-9**

According to **verse 8**, the Ark was transferred to Gath, some ten miles inland away from Ashdod. The Philistines think that by sending the Ark to a different city, it will make a difference.

Truth is by sending the Ark to a different Philistine city, they are setting the city up for the judgment of God. They actually send the judgment of God to one of their cities after another.

According to **verse 9**, God once again sent those tumors. The result was both young and old had them and died.

In Gath, God also caused great confusion. He touched the people's minds so they didn't think right. Well, the people of Gath said let's send this to Ekron, which is another Philistine city located about 18 miles north of Gath.

We learn an important point about judgment here. Don't make excuses and don't pass the buck. Face up to the sin and deal with it in a right way before God. If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

JUDGMENT #3 – God sends a judgment against Ekron. **5:10-12**

Ekron is another Philistine city. Dr. McGee said he thought these verses prove God has a sense of humor.

Now the people of Ekron appear to be just a little brighter than the people of Gath. When they learned that the Ark was on its way to their town, they got all of the living leaders of the Philistines to say don't bring that Ark here, take it back to Israel.

They said we don't want to get sick and we don't want to be killed by God so send that Ark back to Israel.

God had sent great confusion to that city and His hand of judgment was smiting people and killing people.

PARTING THOUGHTS:

- 1) Anything or anyone who thinks lightly of God or His Word is destined for disaster.**
- 2) The Glory of God was being displayed by judgment disasters.**
- 3) One may temporarily succeed in trampling God's people, but in the end they will be trampled far worse by the judgment of God.**
- 4) Everything that happens to us is sovereignly controlled by God—the good and bad.
We must do our best to learn the lesson God is teaching us.**
- 5) When faced with chastisement, face the reason and deal with it to lift the chastisement.**