



*'Honing in on the Heart!' Sermon Series*

**Sermon #10:**

***'The Mistake of Messing with God!'***

Wednesday, April 10th, 2024

**Last week in 'Honing in on the Heart':**

- Last week we resumed our study in 1st Samuel after being away from it the last few weeks by looking at the Cries from the Cross.
  - Last week when we resumed, I preached a message entitled *'The Pitfalls of a Patriarchal Priest!'* from *1 Samuel 4:12-22*
  - I asked the question: *What were the pitfalls that led to the downfall of the entire family of the Elide priestly line?*
    - **Point 1: *Disheveled Priorities.* (V. 12-18)**
    - **Point 2: *Dead Parents.* (V. 19-20)**
    - **Point 3: *Dissolving Presence.* (V. 21-22)**

- Based on last week's message, how do you need to make sure your family is not sacrificed at the altar of ministry?
- Tonight we are going to look a little bit deeper into what happened to the Ark when it left Israel and went into the hands of the Philistines.

***'The Mistake of Messing with God!'***

*1st Samuel 5:1-12*

**Sermon in a Sentence:**

*We can see the Mistake of Messing with God in 1st Samuel 5:1-12, when we see that the false gods fell, and that fear goes very far throughout Philistia.*

**Intro:**

- Messing with God is the biggest mistakes that anyone can make.
  - ***Oftentimes non-believers and pagan countries make the big mistake of messing with God simply because they do not know the power of God.***
    - Even in our own country, we have seen different non-believer groups show acts of hatred towards God and His people.
- ***Tonight in our study of Samuel, we will see that those who mess with God, are making a really big mistake.***
  - When I think of the results/effects of messing with God, I can't help but think of what is going to occur one day, soon.

- ‘so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ Philippians 2:10-11
- ***Tonight we will see that the philistines thought that they wanted the Ark of the Covenant as a war trophy from their recent victory over Israel, but as we will find, they messed with God, and they made a big mistake.***
  - Many of the philistines were murdered and or miserable due to the fact that they took the presence of God (the ark), and put it up against their gods.
- Tonight I believe we will see how no one should mess with God. There are bad consequences.

***\*Read 1 Samuel 5:1-12\****

### **Question to Ask:**

***How can we see that when the Philistines steal the ark of God and put it with their other gods that they are making a big mistake of messing with God?***

### **Point 1: *False gods Fall. (V. 1-5)***

- ***1st Samuel 5 picks up with discussing what happened to the ark of God after the Philistines had already won the battle.***
  - Remember back to 1st Samuel 4, where Eli and Phinehas’s wife were both extremely worried

about how the ark had been captured and I assume, they were concerned with what was going to happen to it.

- ***In the ancient world, it was common that once you defeated your enemy and battle, that you would take any physical item or resemblance of their god and ‘test’ it with their own.***
- ***So because the Philistines defeated the Israelites they think that their god, Dagon, is superior to the God of Israel.***
  - By thinking this, the Philistines are showing that they do not truly know the power of our God and who He really is.
    - ***Their own people will pay greatly for their tragic/deathly mistake of taking away the Ark of the Covenant.***
- In verses 1-5, I believe there are 4 key things to point out concerning how the false god of the Philistines fell.
- ***The Capitol. (V. 1)***
  - ‘When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.’ 1st Samuel 5:1
  - ***Ebenezer was the battlefield where the Philistines and Israelites fought one another.***
    - So, they take back the ark of the Covenant to Philistia, and they take it to

what some scholars call the capitol of Philistia.

- *The city of Ashdod was located three miles from the Mediterranean coast and about 30 miles southwest of Ebenezer.*

- *There were 5 major cities in Philistia that were known as the 'ruling' cities.*

- Those were Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

- *Robert D. Bergen said 'Due to the fact that the ark was brought to the temple there, Ashdod may have been the preeminent site for worship of Dagon.'*

- Either way, this was a prominent city within Philistia.

- *The Competition. (V. 2)*

- 'Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon.' 1st Samuel 5:2

- *This was an action that was done on purpose by the philistines. It was their attempt to show superiority over the God of Israel.*

- *In their minds, they had just defeated them in battle, so their god would defeat Israel's God, in their mind.*

- *This is an example of how different countries acted with one another after battle, in the ancient world.*

- As far as *Dagon is concerned*, this is not the only mention of him in the OT scriptures.

- When Samson died, this false god of the philistines is mentioned.

- *'Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." Judges 16:23*

- When King Saul and his sons would die, this false god of the philistines is also mentioned.

- *'And they put his armor in the temple of their gods and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.' 1st Chronicles 10:10*

- *Concerning this false god dagon, John Woodhouse states 'He (dagon) is thought to have been a god associated with vegetation and fertility.'*

- There are ancient written accounts of 'Dagon' being worshiped in ancient mesopotamia and Syrian cities.

- *\*Word Study\**

- In verse 2, it's important to pay attention to the phrase 'set it up' in the english.

- This comes from a strong Hebrew verb, **'Yasag' יָסַג** which literally means to *set, place and present*.
    - *This is the same Hebrew word that is used in 2nd Samuel 6:17, where the Ark is brought in to the tent of David.*
    - 'And they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.'
  - *The reason that this particular Hebrew verb is used, is to show that this was a deliberate act of a formal presentation.*
    - *The philistines thought that they 'owned' the God of Israel because they had control over the ark.*
      - What happens to them in the verses that follow, is a direct result to how they tried to control our God and how they were wrong about Him.
  - *I believe that God punishes them in such a public and painful way, so that they will not forget to never mess with the God of Israel.*
- The philistines wanted to place the ark of God beside their false god in their temple, to show who had won on the battlefield, and in their mind, whose god had won.
    - *To them it was a competition, one that clearly and detrimental cleared their sight to the truth, for a time.*
  - We've seen the capitol, the competition, but now we need to look at:
    - *The Conceit. (V. 3)*
      - 'And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place.' 1st Samuel 5:3
    - *In their own temple, their own false god falls.*
      - Now, the scripture doesn't tell was what happened to the false god dagon over night, we are just told that he had fallen face downward, right in front of the Ark of the Covenant.
    - *Ever since the Philistines captured the Ark of the Lord, they had referred to it as the 'Ark of God'. This is seen in 1st Samuel 4:11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22.*
      - *But here in 1st Samuel 5:3 is the first time that the narrator refers to it as the*

**covenant of the LORD (YAHWEH in the Hebrew.)**

- I believe that this is significant, because the fact that their false god had fallen face down, showed that God was superior and holy.
- **We must remember that God is not going to allow Himself to be mocked.**
  - **Scholar John L. Mackay said ‘The Lord does not permit Himself to be mocked by the treatment accorded to the ark.’**
- We also get the vibe throughout chapter 4 and into chapter 5, that the Philistines felt proud and very possessive, of the ark.
  - **In the Hebrew text they use possessive verbiage to show and indicate control and ownership over Israel and their God.**
- **\*Word Study\***
  - The english word ‘Behold’ here in the middle of verse 3 is conveying a strong sense of surprise.
    - The Philistines had been so proud of their ‘god’, and know, he was on the ground.

○ **The Philistines show their conceit even more when they just simply passed it off as not a big deal, since they put it back on the pedestal.**

- What we don’t need to miss here, is the Narrator’s ironic commentator when he says ‘So they took Dagon and put him back into place.’
  - **It’s interesting that they have to ‘prop him back up’, which shows how powerless their false god is.**
- **Sadly, you and I do it too. When God purposely knocks something down that may be taking His place in our lives, we prop it back up on our own, because nothing can take God’s place in our lives unless we allow it too.**
- **The Conquering. (V. 4-5)**
  - ‘But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.’

- *While verses 4-5 may not seem like a 'conquering' to us, we need to view it through the lenses of the ancient world.*
  - In the ancient world severed heads and hands were known as battlefield trophies.
- We see this when David defeated Goliath:
  - *'Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.'* 1st Samuel 17:51
- In one of the battles referenced in Judges:
  - 'And the officials of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?" Judges 6:8
- David E. Garland notes *'this (cutting of hands), helped the victor to find the correct body of the dead.'*
  - *God did this to show the philistines just how powerless their great god really was.*
- The false god has no head, and no hands, so what else could he do?
- *Verse 5 is an indication that everyone who goes into Dagon's temple will remember this night.*

- *Because of their remembrance of this, they would not touch the entrance of the door where the head and hands were cut off.*

- Now, they were fully aware of the power of our God, and that their false god had officially fallen.

- *False gods fall, and now we are going to see that fear is going to go far into the land of the Philistines.*

**Point 2: *Fear goes Far.* (V. 6-12)**

- *The fact that their false god, who they had trusted in so passionately had fallen, wasn't enough.*

- Things were about to get a whole lot worse for the Philistines.

- Before we look at the three ways that fear went far in the land of the Philistines from verses 6-12, we need to look at the beginning of verse 6.

- *'The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod'*

- *This is something that even our nation does not accurately understand. When God is mocked and messed with, He will respond.*

- We don't know when necessarily, but I can promise you that it won't go unpunished.

- *I believe this phrase is pretty powerful because 'Dagon' lay in the dirt with no*

- hands, but God's hand was heavy against them.*
  - *Remember that when God brought the nation out of Israel, He did so with His hand.*
    - 'And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror,[a] with signs and wonders.' Deuteronomy 26:8
  - *Just as God can do powerful things, He can also give powerful punishments, and the Philistines at Ashdod were about to feel His wrath.*
    - In verses 6-12 we can see how the fear goes far into the nation by looking at 3 specific things!
- *A Plague. (V. 6)*
  - 'The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory.'
  - *God sends them a plague here. The key to understanding the plague that He sent, is the word 'Tumor'.*
  - *\*Word Study\**
    - The english word 'tumor' comes from the Hebrew word **'Thoriym'** which literally means to swell up, and is a references to boils and or swelling in the skin.

- *In 1st Samuel 6, there are four mentions of 'mice' and or 'rats'.*
  - *This has caused some scholars over the years to infer that this was possibly the Bubonic plague that hit the Philistine nation.*
- *Whether or not this was the bubonic plague, we can not be sure of. But we can be sure of the fact that God sent this and He (God) was responsible for this.*
  - What the Philistines once thought as humorous, putting the God of Israel beside their god, had not become deadly and their were ramifications all across Ashdod.
    - We see the plague that affects them, but it also turns into a nationwide panic.
- *A Panic. (V. 7-10)*
  - 'And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." 8 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. 9 But after they had brought

it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. **10** So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.”

- **Finally, the Philistines realize that the fact that they have the Ark of the Covenant, could be the reason as to why they are experiencing all of this tragedy in their nation.**
  - The leaders panic, but also the citizens panic as well.
- **Now they are aware and know that there defeated god, dagon, is no longer able to protect and help them.**
- **In verse 8, we see the leaders of the Philistines put their heads together, and decided to send the Ark down the road to Gath, thinking that may solve their problem to get the ark out of ‘dagon’s’ city.**
  - The city of Gath was 12.5 Miles southeast of Ashdod, so it would’ve been closer to the border with Judah.
- **Verse 9 shows us though, that just because they moved the physical location of the ark, people still had trouble.**

■ **This is a lesson for us today. No matter how much you try to move the idols around in your life, until you commit to kicking them out of your life, they will still wreck havoc and cause immense pain.**

- **You’ve got to get idols OUT. Not let them swap around in your life.**
- Then in verse 10, the Philistines send the ark to Ekron, which was 5 miles north of Gath.
  - **There the population must’ve already heard what was going on, because as soon as the ark came, the people wanted it to go away.**
    - **Remember when the Philistines first heard the Israelites cry out when the ark came to Shiloh?**
    - And these philistines went and got it, they said ‘Be men and fight’
    - **What had happened to that? God had caused confusion and chaos on the people. But, they brought it on themselves.**
      - Often like we do.
- **The Pain. (V. 11-12)**
  - ‘They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away



the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. **12** The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.’

- **Now the pain had quite literally swelled up, to where the leaders of the Philistines decided to meet again.**
  - The panic had become too great, and the pain. So, they made the decision to send the ark back to the Israelites.
    - *Next week we will study and see how the Philistines returned the ark back to the Israelites.*
- **Now verse 12 indicates that not everyone died that got the tumors, but the way that it is worded, does indicate that they had the long lasting effects of the tumors.**
  - **I think that it’s important to note that the Philistines were prideful and arrogant. Yet now, they were humble and just wanted the pain to go away.**
- **John Woodhouse stated ‘The Philistines who had defied God, fearing that they would become slaves of the Hebrews, found themselves crying out of Heaven, just like the**

**Hebrews when they were slaves of the Egyptians.’**

- The pain had just become too much.
- Before you choose to be defiant to and mess with God, weigh the consequences before you do.

### **Conclusion:**

- **Tonight here in our sanctuary, I’m very well aware that no one is a worshiper of ‘Dagon’.**
  - **But, I do feel certain that we have believers in this room who need some false gods to fall in your life, in order for God to use you the way that He wants to.**
    - Don’t expect God’s upmost blessings if He is not in first place in your heart and life.
- **When you make the mistake of putting anything before God, you make the mistake of messing with Him.**
  - **I hope and pray that tonight you’ve seen what a big mistake it truly is to mess with God.**
- If you’ve got some idols that are in your life, no matter what they may be, it’s time on this Wednesday night to lay them down, let them go, and allow God to reign supremely in your heart and life tonight.
  - **Point 1: False gods Fall. (V. 1-5)**
  - **Point 2: Fear goes Far. (V. 6-12)**