

“Dagon Falls Before the Ark”

The terrible news of the Ark's capture by Israel's enemy precipitated the deaths of Eli and his daughter in law. Eli's two wayward sons died in battle and thousands of Hebrew soldiers died on the battle field. The whole thing was a disaster. This is what happens when God is left out of our lives and we do whatever we please.

In everyday life we follow the culture of the day, wanting good incomes, great jobs and employer applause. That is because we lack the understanding that we should pray for whatever GOD wishes us to do. When we thus leave out God and His will, we will live aimlessly through life, unless and if He graciously stops us in our tracks and causes us to think again. If this happens to you, do not moan and become depressed – thank Him for His mercy and look for HIS answers for your life. Otherwise your heart and mind will remain captive to the enemy of souls.

There are times when God will allow His children great latitude when they sin. This does not mean He allows the sin to go unchallenged, or that it is somehow forgotten. Sin that is not repented of is never forgotten by God! We are all challenged every day over our sins. The more we try to avoid listening to God's voice the worse becomes our sin, for to avoid God we must elevate self and silence conscience. Yes, God is 'longsuffering'... but NOT always! Beware.

Now, the whole nation of Israel was suffering because Eli did not control his own sons. To control children is every parent's (and societies') duty. But, when a high-profile man of God does not control his children, everybody knows about it and everybody must suffer, for his influence travels far.

Verses 1-5

1.

“And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

2.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

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3.

And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

4.

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

5.

Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day."

The Philistine victors took the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol and habitat of Almighty God on this earth, and carried it back to their city of Ashdod. They should have taken note of the other meaning of **'arown** (Ark of the Covenant), which is 'a coffin', for that is what it came to represent over the following weeks!

God allowed them to carry His ark all the way from north of Jerusalem to the coast of the Mediterranean. Ashdod (now modern Esdud), ('powerful') was a major city, inhabited by idol worshippers. The generals ordered the ark to be placed in their temple dedicated to [Dagon the fish god](#)

Dagon was the symbol of fertility. This is an irony, as all man-made gods are sterile! The huge statue had the hands and face of a man and the tail of a fish. The impudent Philistines placed the Ark right next to Dagon. The idea seemed to be to add extra impetus to their position by doubling-up on 'god power'. To them it seemed obvious – whoever had the Ark also controlled the god within. This is how many Christians see the 'God' of their imaginations... someone Who is at their beck and call.

Next day the temple attendants arrived in the great hall to find the Dagon statue fallen on its face in front of the Ark. Though the ark was not God, God made sure that this man-made edifice did not sit next to His ark as an equal... no, Dagon had to fall prostrate before Him! Every day

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we see the idols of man smashed and degraded before our eyes, yet people still maintain their allegiance to them, no matter what or who they are. And thus our societies become more wicked and less strong.

The puzzled attendants and priests set the statue back on its base and went on with their usual priestly tasks. But, next day, they arrived to find Dagon again on the floor before God's Ark – only this time both hands and the head were 'cut off', leaving only the tail. We should note that the statue was not just crushed or broken – the parts were *cut* off... **karath**. That was why the priests and everyone else refused to set foot in the temple after the discovery. They knew something was amiss.

Verses 6-9

1.

"But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them; and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

2.

And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

3.

They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, 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 about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

4.

And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts."

What we now see happening is a verity of God – when He says something is forbidden, He means it, not just for the faithful, but for everyone. And if He makes a demand, it applies to all,

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even if others do not know of His demands. This also applies to 'lost tribes' and anyone else who has not heard the Gospel. The Philistines were to find out that God would not tolerate anyone handling His Ark...

Thus it was that the 'hand of God was heavy upon them of Ashdod.' That is, God brought grief upon the people of the city. They were struck down and filled with awe, ravaged, stunned by their fate. It is commonly held that God gave the people haemorrhoids ('emerods'). This is one meaning of the word, but it does not seem to fit what actually happened to the people.

They appear to have died swiftly. It is true that haemorrhoids causes pain and bleeding, but death is not the usual result of their presence. The answer lies in the second meaning for 'emerods' – tumour. I suggest that the people were visited by fast growing and fatal tumours. We are not told what parts of the body were affected – but we all know how lethal cancerous tumours can be. We also know that this physical illness was accompanied by a plague of mice in the land (see chapter 6).

As is often the case, errors and sins made by national figures wreak national havoc. God killed the people of Ashdod and those in the surrounding country, with deadly tumours, which were probably fungating. The Philistines correctly identified the source of their discomfort... it was the God of the Israelites. He cannot stay with them any longer! The longer He stayed with them the greater would be the penalty.

The men of Ashdod convened a meeting of the lords of Philistia and sought an answer to their dilemma. They decided to send the Ark to another of their cities, the city of giants, Gath ('winepress'), one of the five royal cities. Swiftly, the Ark was transported to hapless Gath!

Soon, they, too were struck down with emerods and were destroyed. The meaning of 'secret parts' includes 'bursting forth'. From this we might reasonably conclude that the cancers were of a fungating type – bursting out from the body in hideous manner, through skin and muscle, filling the air with a foul nauseating smell that is intolerable from many yards away. God seems to want the Philistines to SEE the result of their evils. What they had proved to them beyond doubt, the power and wrath of the God of Israel.

In our own day, if we suffer a big and sudden downfall we should firstly examine our lives to see

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if they are as God wishes them to be. It is possible the new circumstances have nothing to do with sin, but if sin (public or not) is the cause of our downfall we must rectify it immediately, or the consequences will be enormous and maybe lifelong. If sin is not the reason, then the circumstance is a trial of our faith, which we MUST observe and pass, without fail.

Verses 10-12

1.

“Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that Ekronites cried out, saying, they have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

2.

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 again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

3.

And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.”

The deadly game of ‘pass the parcel’ continued, for the leaders of Gath quickly dispatched the Ark to yet another city, Ekron.(‘emigration’ or ‘torn up by the roots’). This was the northern-most royal city, in the Judaeen lowlands, so the Philistines could not get rid of the Ark much farther away! It seems that the inhabitants were unaware of the kind ‘present’ they were about to be given by their kinsmen, until it arrived, for as soon as they saw what was coming into their city, the cried out in alarm. They shouted that the coming of the Ark would lead to their deaths. Sensibly, spurred on by thoughts of their own awful deaths, they decided there and then to send the Ark back to its own land, after yet another convened meeting of the lords. Even as they spoke, people were dying all around them.

God did not let up on His wrath. This is worth bearing in mind – when God has decided to punish, nothing on earth will hamper that decision. He will act and will not stop until it is done. Not even a late repentance will alter the fact or the action.

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As the men of Ekron panicked and made their decision the cry of the dying and their families were heard everywhere. We can only imagine what will happen when God takes us all to Judgement Day and proclaims His wrath against the unsaved, who, He says, will be in hell forever with wailing and gnashing of teeth. God will and must act against those who displease Him. He even acts against His own children if they continue in disobedience. The Old Testament is replete with such instances. Let us all beware.

Today, many Christians remain silent and do nothing as evil fills the earth, and as wicked men place God's glory far lower than their current gods. These Christians fondly think they do well by turning the other cheek in ignorance. No, they are joining forces with the Dagon's of their age. God sees them and is angry. We are not called to hide behind church walls, but to stride out, sword in hand, to be alongside the Saviour in battle. The Christian who is without battle-scars is soft-bellied and useless, pretending to be holy when, all along, it is a cover for his fear and refusal to show himself as a true believer. He is a coward whose refusal to be a warrior will cause his earthly demise.

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