

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Who's Got Who?

I Samuel 5-6

Intro: Ch4 ends w/ a shocker! Philistines show up 2 fight & Israel loses the 1st round (4K men). What does Israel do? They get the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh & bring it 2 the battle field believing its presence will win them the day. It doesn't. In fact, it only made the Philistines more determined 2 win & win they did: big time (30K). They also routed the Israelite army, captured the Ark & kill the 2 priest carrying it (H & P). This was the worst possible outcome any Israelite could dare 2 imagine. The very news kills Eli the High Priest & causes his daughter-in-law 2 die in childbirth. B/4 her death, she named her son *Ichabod: the glory has departed*. YHWH was still on the throne but the Ark had been carried away & in the Israelite experience, this was an unthinkable circumstance.

Now, in the Philistine culture (mindset), a defeat of Israel was equal 2 a defeat of Israel's God = the common belief among pagan peoples. Yet, YHWH's about 2 make it crystal clear 2 them that this is certainly not the case. Yes, they had defeated Israel soundly but they hadn't defeated Israel's God. In fact, they only defeated Israel b/c YHWH was dealing w/ Israel & their sin & He allowed them 2/b defeated in battle as a chastening mechanism (2 get their attn). YHWH wasn't defeated by Dagon (Philistine's god) & yet, YHWH cares enough 4 the Philistines 2 reveal this truth 2 them. Over the course of the next 7 months, YHWH will instruct Philistia on the finer points of "Ark-eology."

1-5- **Dagon-** YHWH's instruction of Ashdod now commences. Dagon (like Poseidon), was fashioned in the form of a merman: half human & half fish. In the pantheon of gods of that region, Dagon was father 2 Baal (the bane of Israel). Ashdod is excited about the arrival of the ark but that excitement w/b very short lived. Now the Ark, representing YHWH (defeated God) is brought in 2 pay homage 2 Dagon (victorious god) = gospel according 2 the Philistines.

Early next morning, b/4 Cheerios time, they walked into a worship service: Dagon was bowing down 2 YHWH! So, what did they do? Did they immediately recognize the vast superiority of YHWH over Dagon? Did they reject Dagon as the puny non-god that he was & repent of their sins & accept YHWH as the only true & living God? No, they did what any self-respecting Philistine would do – they picked up Dagon & put him back in his place. That's the funniest part of all! Granted, it doesn't sound like a punch line but this is their "god" & yet, **they** have 2 stand him back up! What kind of god is that? Think about it: if you worship a god that tends 2 fall off his pedestal & needs 2/b put back on it = you're worshipping the wrong god. What's your god's problem?

YHWH's not trying 2 scare them, He is graciously witnessing of Himself 2 Ashdod. This was supposed 2/b Israel's job but they failed miserably at it. But still, YHWH is quite capable of declaring himself 2 all the nations around Israel & He thought enough of the Philistines 2 let them know w/o a doubt that Dagon had nothing 2 do w/ their victory!

Next morning, even worse: Dagon's head & hands fell off when he tried 2 bow b/4 YHWH. A regular Humpty-Dumpty scenario & their fresh out of Gorilla glue! Dagon's just getting the "godness" knocked out of him. They weren't so blind 2 see that the "defeated" God (YHWH) was defeating their "victorious" god on Dagon's own home turf. In fact, they'll soon have 2 admit that YHWH has "out-godded" their god (vs7). Dagon pays homage 2 YHWH, he's helpless b/4 YHWH & in the end, he's completely destroyed by YHWH.

Why does YHWH do all this? Just 2 watch them squirm? No, He's teaching both Philistines & Israelites that He is the only self-sufficient, superior God. He doesn't need someone 2 come & set Him back on His throne. He can fight the Philistines on His own. He doesn't need His people 2 cheerlead 4 Him; He'll bring back the ark all by Himself. But, after all of this theological revelation, the Philistines opt 4 **religion** over **repentance**. Instead of rightly recognizing YHWH as the supreme God, they decide 2 simply create another tradition. Why? B/c gluing Dagon back together & jumping over the threshold was easier than changing the way you think & the way you live = what YHWH requires!

6- **heavy-** God had spoken 2 the Philistines twice now & they had ignored Him both times. When we close our ears 2 God, He often finds another way 2 speak 2 us & we might not like the 2nd way! This was no tame God the Philistines had conquered. The ark had fallen into their hands but it seems they have now fallen into YHWH's hand & His hand was **heavy** on the Ashdodites! Last time, we mentioned how the Hebrew word 4 **heavy** (*kabed*) is the same word used 4 **honor** (*kabed*) but its also closely related 2 the word 4 **glory** (*kabod*). So the play on words here is saying: tho the *kabod* has departed from Israel, it was certainly **kabeding** the Philistines – it was devastating them! How?

tumors- emerods: 1) **hemorrhoids** or 2) **bubonic plague**. Whatever it was, it **ravaged** the city & surrounding areas bringing terror, suffering & death. **Remember:** whenever God wants 2, He can deal w/ his enemies. He can do whatever He wants 2 do & He w/b very effective in whatever He chooses. "Why doesn't He do it now?" B/c He has a plan & a purpose; both 4 the world & 4 His people. Right now, His plan 2 reveal Himself 2 the world is 2/b fulfilled by His people, in the way they live & conduct themselves in good times & in trying times. We are His instruments of instruction 2 the world, we are His ambassadors of grace & salvation. Are we walking in that ministry? The Philistines hadn't learned the lesson of vs.3-4 but YHWH will get the message 2 them clearly in the end. It was only after YHWH had ravaged them that they were willing 2 confess that neither Dagon nor they could stand up 2 Israel's God (7)!

7-12- Ashdod finally got the message & what was their solution? Get rid of it! After an official consultation, the ark arrived in Gath & so did the plague & panic! It didn't take Gath long to connect all the dots & they sent the ark to Ekron. The ark became a hot potato, "burning" every Philistine city it came to. Ekron was not happy to see the ark. They probably sent the city council out to block the gate with an, "Oh no, you don't!" But with all their fear & loathing, they still refused to submit to the God of the ark. That was the only profitable solution, the only logical one but they stubbornly refused to accept that reality & were determined to follow a false reality of their own making & it would cost them more

6:1-2- country- field: they didn't bring it into any towns, just left it out in the field until they could figure out what to do with it. Solution: send it away. Instead of submitting to YHWH they decide to just get rid of Him. Many people try to do this today in different ways that boil down to ignoring truth, rejecting reality. Problem is: we can't get rid of God! We can do things to push Him away but these are just temporary. 1 day, we'll all have to stand before God & face Him.

3-6-lighten- So, they decided what to do with the ark, now they just had to figure out how to do it. They called the clergy: "Don't send it back without a trespass offering." By this time, there's no doubt that the Philistines clearly failed to defeat Israel's God. Now they have to figure out a way to confirm this is the hand of Israel's God against them, return the ark to Israel, save face in the eyes of their own people & most importantly, not incur any further judgment from YHWH.

Offering - 5 golden tumors & 5 golden rats (ugly jewelry). The Jews knew that only blood brings atonement, not gold, but these were pagans. They are admitting (5) the YHWH was acting against them, was judging their gods & even had jurisdiction over their lands, confessing He's Almighty God yet refusing to worship Him over their own puny gods.

harden- this was 500 yrs ago & yet it was still big news: no good comes from hardening your heart against the Lord!

7-11-watch- this was a set up, an experiment. They believe all this calamity was from the Lord but not 100% sure so they devise this test to see if it all was coincidence or Providence. After all, 1 never wants to repent unnecessarily! Every aspect was designed to fail in the natural world even though they really wanted to get rid of that infernal gold box! If the cows didn't move= Israel's God wasn't in control & they had nothing to fear. If cows roamed around= same thing.

12- lowing- Philistines didn't know the true & living God but the cows did & they obeyed Him! They went straight to Beth-Shemesh, lowing as they went. They needed to nurse their calves, they didn't know where they were going, they didn't even know how to pull a cart but yet, they were being driven by the hand of the Lord. These cows had more reverence for YHWH than H & P ever did. Against nature, instinct, desire & physical need, these cows obeyed God against all odds. The question isn't, "Are you smarter than a 5th grader?" but are you as obedient as a milk cow?

God was also speaking to the Philistines through these cows, albeit in a "low" - but clear - voice, declaring His glory! They now knew, in no uncertain terms, that everything that happened to them was from the God of Israel, not by chance.

13-18- rejoiced- this was a Levitical city & they were overjoyed to see the ark arrive on its own, back to Israel's land.

19-21- struck- Whoa! Even if it's just 70 men, that seems a little severe, right? If the pagan Philistines were judged for the way they treated the ark, how much more responsible were the Jews who knew the law & lived in a Levitical city? Why did they look into the ark? No telling - but they sinned against light: they knew they weren't supposed to do that.

"Who is able to stand...?" That's the point = no one! What was inside the ark? A pot of manna; Aaron's rod that budded & tablets of the Law. How did they look into the ark? They had to remove the lid, which is: the mercy seat. When they removed the mercy seat, where the blood of atonement was sprinkled, they came face-to-face with the Law of God before which no man can stand as innocent. When they removed the blood of the lamb of atonement from between them & the Law, all that was left for them was the justice of a holy God against sin.

This points to the great failure of religious people: they'll never be made righteous by keeping the Law because the Law is impossible to keep! What to do? The truth is: God has made a provision for dealing with man's sin. The blood of Jesus that was poured out for us is the only acceptable propitiation for our sin (it satisfies God's just wrath against sin). Jesus' blood has made peace between us & God. The basis of our salvation is His completed work on the cross. Now, the blood of the Lamb stands between you & the just recompense of God against your sin, His necessary wrath against your iniquity. The problem here is they removed the mercy seat (YHWH's sole provision for forgiveness) & they came face-to-face with the holy Law of God that no one can keep.

Do you know Jesus? If not, you need to turn to Him today because on your own, you're facing the same sentence of death these 70 had executed on them. But you have a chance to change this today. You have the opportunity to accept Jesus as your Forgiver, Redeemer, Savior. You have the opportunity to relate to God on the basis of His mercy, not His judgment. Don't kid yourself in thinking you're not as bad as those guys were. The 70 were priests of God & they received the just recompense of their sin & God is no respecter of persons. Sin is sin & it must be dealt with.

Instead of repenting & restoring God's honor, the people of Beth-Shemesh did what the Philistines did - they just got rid of the ark. They failed to deal seriously with their own sinful hearts. Now they know that the Lord is holy but instead of drawing closer to God, they want to distance themselves from Him. This doesn't remove the threat of judgment, it only delays it temporarily. Ultimately, judgment will come & it will be unavoidable. God has graciously provided a way of escape, not by running from Him or ignoring Him but by running to Him & acknowledging His gift of salvation &

accepting it into your heart. It's the only logical choice, rational choice – it's the only choice...

