

## **The Battle of the Gods**

### **1Samuel 5:1**

1 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the temple of Dagon and set it by Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. 4 And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it. NKJV

One of the recurring scenes in the Bible is a challenge between the God of Israel and the false gods of other nations.

In our responsive reading this morning we find that before the final plague on the nation of Egypt we find a glimpse of what these ten plagues have all been about. Exodus 12:12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

Each of the plagues on Egypt was to destroy another of the gods of Egypt. Until finally God killed the firstborn in all of Egypt. [http://www.padfield.com/acrobat/history/gods\\_of\\_egypt.pdf](http://www.padfield.com/acrobat/history/gods_of_egypt.pdf)

Most pagan societies were very pluralistic. You could worship any god you wanted, just so long as you did not claim exclusivity. It is true that this nation was set up so that you could worship whoever and however you wanted. But now it has been turned upside down. You can believe whatever you want as long as you are not a Christian. And the god of secular humanism has replaced Jesus in our educational system.

But God is not in favor of anyone worshiping anyone but Him through Jesus Christ.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul said to those of Athens who worshiped hundreds and thousands of various gods. Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in

temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

I. The battle with Dagon.

- A. After the Philistines capture the ark they set it in the temple of Dagon before the image of Dagon as sign of Jehovah's submission to Dagon.
  - 1. This was normal, as the people gave credit of their military victories to their gods.
  - 2. They assumed that all the gods had equal validation.
  - 3. They just did not realize who they were messing with.
- B. The next morning they come in and Dagon is fallen on his face before the ark of God.
  - 1. Here the roles are reversed.
  - 2. They meant to show that Jehovah was subservient to Dagon but now Dagon bows before Jehovah.
  - 3. So they set Dagon up again, supposing that some freak accident caused this.
- C. The next morning they enter the temple only to find Dagon once again on his face before Jehovah but this time his hands and head are broken off.
  - 1. These were signs of their god's power.
  - 2. And the fact that they were broken show that Dagon had not power against Jehovah.
  - 3. Now this did not make them believers but it did shake their faith in Dagon.
- D. Also God had struck the people with a terrible plague.
  - 1. We are not sure what this was but many think it was the bubonic plague.
  - 2. Tumors were evident and terrible pain and death followed.

3. Also they were stricken with rats which would be necessary for the bubonic plague.
- E. They move the ark from city to city to see if this was just bad luck or really a curse of God.
- F. Finally they devise a plan to send the ark home.
1. They put it on a cart and have it drawn by two new milk cows.
  2. They suppose that the cows will return to the stalls for the desire of their calves.
  3. But the cows head straight for the closest Israelite city.
  4. By these things the Philistines come to know more about the only true God.
- II. God's inaction might make it appear that God is losing.
- A. Judges 6:12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" 13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.
- B. In our text this morning the Israelites had lost the battle, thousands of soldiers had been killed, and even the ark of God had been captured..
1. It seemed obvious that the God of Israel was either dead, asleep or totally disinterested.
  2. But we must never count God out, for we can never know when He might show up.
- C. When you are faced with life's most difficult situations.
1. And your prayers seem to be so weak and seem never get to God, remember that God's ways are not our ways and if it is His will then He will show up.
  2. It never has to do with inability on God's part. Listen to what God told Abraham. Ge 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."
  3. Even that great man of faith, Moses at times wondered at God's ability. Number 11:21 And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.' 22 "Shall flocks and herds be

slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?" 23 And the LORD said to Moses, "Has the LORD'S arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."

4. The angel said to Mary, Lu 1:37 "For with God nothing will be impossible."

D. What ever is happening in your life, keep the faith for God is not impotent but omnipotent.

III. God is a jealous God who desires a people who worship Him above all else.

A. God is not insecure and needs the constant worship of His subjects.

1. Paul makes that plain in Acts 17: 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

B. But God is God and He will not consider other gods as His equal.

1. Isa 42:5 Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: 6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. 8 I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

IV. The battle of the Gods is fought in the hearts of God's people.

A. What is our response to Him?

B. Do we bow down to others and give God only a secondary place in our lives.

C. Have we lost faith in God because He has not shown up the way we wanted Him to.

D. Every day the battle continues between God and all idols of this world.

1. God calls us to give Him the place of worship.

2. God calls us to give Him our lives and make Him governor of all that we do.

The choice is yours. But don't make the foolish mistake of thinking that God is not God.