

The Problem of Taking God for Granted

Four revelations that help us revere the holiness of God – 1 Samuel 5:1—7:1a

Main Idea: Israel enjoyed an immensely privileged position; the God of the universe dwelt in their midst. But they had come to take their privileges for granted, not revering his holiness, and wishing they could be like other nations who worshipped many gods. Therefore, God allows the Ark of the Covenant to be captured. And as the ark travels through Philistine territory, God demonstrates his power to such an extent that his people again come to revere his holiness. In this passage God reveals 4 things that display his sovereign power over all the earth.

1. 1ST REVELATION – God proves that he is a universal God. 1 Samuel 5:1-5

- A. The Philistines win a mighty battle. 1 Samuel 4:7-10
 - 1. They capture the ark, take it to Ashdod, and place it in the temple of Dagon. 5:1-2
 - 2. This act reflected the worldview of polytheism.
- B. God demonstrates that he is more powerful than their chief god Dagon. 5:3-4
 - 1. On day one Dagon bows before Yahweh. On day two Dagon is broken before Yahweh.
 - 2. But the Philistines come to a wrong conclusion: “don’t step on the threshold.”
- C. Jesus Christ demonstrated that his is the universally great God.
 - 1. It was easy to take Jesus for granted in his day...and in our day.
 - 2. But Jesus showed his greatness in his resurrection and his ascension.

2. 2ND REVELATION – God is sovereign over other religions. 1 Sam. 5:6-12 (6:17-18)

- A. First phase: God begins to judge the people of Philistia. 5:6-7
 - 1. Notice the description of God’s power in “his hand”. (Dagon’s hands had been broken.)
 - 2. God punishes Philistines with a plague that should have been upon Israel. See Dt. 28:58ff
- B. Second phase: God judges the wisdom of the Philistine leaders. 5:8-9
 - 1. The Lords consult with each other and out of pride decide to move the ark. 5:8
 - 2. The “hand of God” comes against the city of Gath, hitting everyone irrespective of age.
- C. Result: The people of Ekron fear God greatly. 5:10-12
 - 1. The writer of this chapter wants to contrast the people of Ekron with Israel.
 - 2. The people are devastated by the plague and determine to send the ark back.
- D. We see this today: God is sovereign over other religions.

3. 3RD REVELATION – God shows his sovereignty over nature. 1 Sam. 6:1-12

- A. The Philistine make a series of decisions that reflect what they’ve learned in judgment. 6:1-6
 - 1. They are going to make a series of sacrifices: tumors and rats. 6:1-5
 - 2. They are going to not harden their hearts. 6:6
 - 3. They are going to depend on a miracle. 6:7-9 (See also Isaiah 1:3.)
- B. God allows his ark to be returned to Israel to the priestly city (Jos. 21:13-16). 6:10-12
- C. God demonstrates his sovereignty over nature by doing what Dagon could not do.

4. 4TH REVELATION – God displays sovereignty over his people. 1 Sam.6:13-7:1

- A. The question: How will the people of Israel respond to the lessons learned through the Philistines?
- B. The people of Israel display two responses. 6:13-16
 - 1. Some people respond with worship and submission, and God is honored. 6:13-16
 - 2. Their obedience was not totally according to the law, but God was gracious. Ps. 51:15
 - 3. Others respond with pride and they suffer judgment. 6:19
- C. The people come to a right conclusion: we can’t take God for granted. 6:20-7:1