

Last week we looked at the worst day in Israel's history. It was the day they were defeated and the Ark of the Covenant was captured by Philistines. This morning we will find out what God is up to. Because God is doing a great work even though the Israelites cannot see it.

We are actually going to cover two chapters this morning from 5:1-7:2. It is a little longer than we normally do. But this is one story that I think is worth looking at together. Even though it is longer, I will still read it in its entirety at least at the beginning. Because its longer, it is okay if you don't stand the whole time. It should take us about 5 minutes to read. Standing is just a way to place our whole selves before the Lord out of respect to His word. And you can do that even if you are unable to stand. But I think God's Word is certainly worth five minutes of our time this morning. And as I read it, I want you to pay attention to the main question: "Who can stand in God's presence?"

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 5:1-7:2

### **I. No other (gods) can stand (5:1-12).**

I'll do something a little different this morning.

I have read through these two chapters back to back already.

I won't read them all exactly again.

But we are going to slowly go through the story.

We see again that **"the Philistines captured the ark of God."**

They have taken the great symbol of God's people.

In the Philistines eyes, they have captured Israel's God.

And Israel feels like their God has been taken.

Verse 2, **"Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set up beside Dagon."**

The Philistine takes YWH and places Him before their god.

Dagon is the main god of the Philistines.

And so now YWH has to be in his house.

And is supposed to bow down before him.

It is meant to demean God.

And it is meant show that their pagan god is in charge.

But when they come in

Verse 3, **"behold, Dagon has fallen face downward in the ground before the ark of the LORD." so they took Dagon and put him back in his place."**

He is on his face, which is a position of worship.

This is their god falling on his face.

Prostrating himself before the true God to worship him.

They thought our God was defeated, but it is theirs who bows.

Instead of repenting and worshiping the true God, they pick their god up from the ground and put him back in his place.

Our God does not need human hands to put him back.

He does not need anyone's help at all.

And so often we have to prop our idols back up.

They fail to satisfy us, and we try again and again.

We keep picking them back up and placing them on the throne.

Verse 4, **"But then 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."**

Their god falls down again.

This time it is even worse.

This is partially humiliating Dagon.

It is showing that our God wins.

This is also common practice in the ancient world for how you treated conquered enemies.

You chop off their heads and hands after winning to humiliate them.

So, God does it to their would be god.

Verse 5, **"do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day."**

And this is here to show us that they remember.

Even generations later, they avoid the threshold because of what YWH did.

Their gods cannot stand, but they don't repent or worship the right God yet.

Verse 6, **"the hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors,"**

Their god has no hands, But God's hand is heavy.

It is again that same word for weight, glory, or honor.

Now, it is not just their god who cannot stand.

They cannot stand.

All of the people in the city.

And all of the people near the city are afflicted with tumors.

Not internal ones, but this is visible swelling.

Picture tumors growing that are visible on arms, legs, and faces.

Rightfully so, this makes them terrified.

Verse 7, **"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."**

They believe this is YWH.

So in verse eight, they get all of the leaders and the Lords of their nation together to find out what to do.

And so they decide to take the ark to another city to Gath.

So they sent it to the home of Goliath.

And they think maybe there's just a weird thing in this city and let's take it somewhere else. We'll see what happens.

What happens verse nine is that every single man, young and old in Gath gets tumors.

And it causes an even greater panic in the city.

So they try again in verse 10 and send it to the city of Ekron.

But before the ark even gets there, the people shout and scream and say no no no you're trying to kill us.

Because we see there in verse 12 that now even more people are dying and those who aren't dying have tumors.

And they're crying and begging and think they need to send this Ark back.

God has defeated the Philistines without needing any help.  
God does not need armies or godly government or prophets.  
He can just do it on himself.

In the main thing, this is trying to show us as God's glory.  
Sin cannot be in his presence.  
There cannot be other gods in his presence.  
And people who worship other gods cannot be in his presence.  
Because if they are, God's judgment will come.

There is part of this that might seem harsh, but it is also natural.  
Many of us, probably struggle with some form of allergies.  
And there are seasons and times of year, where the land itself is rising up  
against us.  
There is real sense in which sin is allergic to God's holiness.  
The reason these false gods are allergic to God.  
It's because of their rejection of God and their rebellion against him.  
And when God's actually in their presence, there's consequences.

What does this means for us as well?  
We can't worship God and idols.  
Our idols will have to bow down to God.  
We cannot come and say, we want to worship God while nursing  
addictions.  
We can't come and say we want to worship God while worshiping greed  
and money.  
We can't come and worship God, while worshiping other gods.  
So we need to examine our own hearts and instead of taking our idols off  
of the ground and putting them in their place.  
We need to repent.  
We need to search out our hearts and destroy our idols.  
Because they cannot stand in God's presence.

## II. No one can stand without (a guilt offering) (6:1-18)

Our sinfulness makes us unable to stand before God.

Our sin separates us from God and so something has to be done to make us right with God.

And this is something that the Philistines begin to understand.

We owe God something.

**6:1, "The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months."**

This whole story moves quickly for us.

But it takes plenty of time for them.

They are spending seven months suffering under the weight of sin.

Seven months before they decide to change.

**Verse 2, "And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place."**

The recognizes that they need to do something.

The ark needs to leave.

They need to get it out of their cities.

They have realized something important.

They recognize that God is punishing them.

They need to do something in order to appease him.

But they are not sure what to do.

So they seek out all of their spiritual leaders.

**Verse three, "They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you."**

They're given some advice.

And it's important to note that this is not God's advice, and that this is not the priest and prophets of Yahweh, but of Dagon.

However, they do get something right.

So they tell them that if they're going to send back the ark, they need to make an offer offering.

They cannot send something back to God empty-handed.

And they need a guilt offering.

And their guilt is that they have stolen him that they have offended God.

And so only after they do this, will they be healed.

Verse four, **"And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords."**

This is what they think God needs.

And this is where they're a little wrong.

God has never asked for us to do this.

God does not need gold, tumors, and mice.

However, their hearts are a little in the right place.

They understand that they are guilty and need to be made right and they need to apologize.

They need to make reparations.

Verse five, **"So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land."**

And they need to do something to give the God of Israel glory.

They need to glorify that God and worship that God.

Verse six is really kind of the key, **"Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?"**

Here they acknowledge that they do not want to be like Egypt.

They don't want to harden their hearts to God's judgment.

God sent the plagues on Egypt similar plagues that he is bringing now on the philistines.

And the Egyptians did not repent, and so God rebuked them.

They want to respond rightly.

They recognize this God can't be defeated so they need to submit.

Verse seven they come up with a plan.

But this plan really is still to see if this God is real.

You see they don't wanna harden their hearts, but they're not jumping all the way into repentance and obedience.

They don't seem to be converting.

They don't destroy their idols or worship YWH.

And so their plan is to make a new cart to transport the ark.

This part is out of obedience and respect to God that it is new.

But the test comes with the cows.

To pull this cart, they get milk, cows, or dairy cows.

These will not be the cows that you would choose to pull this cart.

And these are cows who have never pulled a cart and don't know how to do it.

You cannot expect to just take any cow that has never pulled a yoke and throw it behind a cart and for it to be able to travel.

Especially for them to be able to work together to pull it.

And they double down by taking some that I've just had calves.

Feel like me, and you don't know a lot about cows and calves they are usually inseparable.

They are not gonna like being separated from their calf and they're gonna do everything they can to get back.

So the odds are stacked against God.

They don't want to just walk the ark back to Israel and say sorry they want to see and are testing if this is really God.

Because if these dairy cows that want to be with their babies, it have never pulled a yoke immediately had exactly to Israel to this named city then they'll know that's only God.

Then they will know it is not a coincidence.

Then they'll know why they need to repent.

Verse 10 begin the experiment, **"The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. <sup>12</sup> And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.**

And these cows go straight where they should go.

They follow only one road.

They never take a step to the left or right other than that they should take.

And all of the Lords in the Philistine's watch and almost to hushed and step after step proof that this is the God.

And the ark comes the people who live in that town are just working at harvest time, and as they lift up their eyes, they see it.

And they rejoice.

When the Philistines see that the God has been returned to, they go back home.

And we get some more details that these tumors and mice were for every city.

And they were for every village in town that got cursed.

Because they acknowledge something needs to stand in their place as an offering for their sins.

Now there's a problem that the Philistines don't actually repent fully.

They make this sacrifice.

And it is good they are not harder in their hearts, but they don't soften them all the way either.

They don't come to Israel and want to convert and worship Yahweh.

This is where some people are today.

So people don't harden their heart and they soften them a little bit, but they don't give them fully to God.

They make a sacrifice or do something that they think is sufficient.

They say well I know the Lord wants me to be a part of his church, but I think that I will just worship in my bed.

I know God wants me to give my life to Jesus, but I think I'll just donate a little extra to some charity.

Our sin has to be paid for.

And got his gracious, and he accepts some of their sacrifice and he withhold some of his judgment, but they are not saved.

Because the only sacrifice the only thing that can pay for all of our sins, the only true guilt offering is Jesus Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to make us right with God.

Jesus died in order to take our guilt away.

We have to recognize our guilt and sin.

That we are filled with spiritual tumors.

There is no money or work that can make us better.

Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sins.

Only Jesus could pay our guilt offering and He paid it with His own body.

We must accept this gift.

And only when we do can we stand before God.

### **III. No one can stand just because they are the (right people) (6:19-7:2).**

Now something I want us to see here is that story doesn't quite have a happy ending.

We seen the Philistines humbled.

And now we will see God's people be humbled too.

It's significant that the ark comes to this city.  
Because the people here are priests.  
They are able to make sacrifices they should know the law of Moses.  
They should know God's commands, and how to care for the ark.  
And it begins they are very excited and they are celebrating.

They rejoice.  
They destroy the cart and decide to make an altar and a sacrifice  
But there was a bit of a problem this isn't where they're supposed to make  
the sacrifices.  
And they sacrifice the cows.  
As priest, they should know God's Lord does not say to sacrifice cows.  
It says to only sacrifice bulls.  
So their sacrifices are insufficient.  
Their sacrifice are not what God asks for.

And we see they don't return the arc to where it should be.  
They don't take it back to Shiloh to the Tabernacle.  
They don't appear to move the tabernacle here.  
They put them up on a great stone, where everyone can see.  
And this is going to be a problem.

Verse 19, **"And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the Lord. He struck seventy men of them,<sup>[a]</sup> and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great blow."**

God kills the Israelites.  
Ok before we saw the stains had a plague in there were many who died  
but here God just kills them.  
And it's a little unclear if he just kills 70 men or if he kills 50,070.  
Either way, many are killed by God because of their sin.

And he does this because they looked at the ark.

It does not mean that they looked inside of it or opened it up.  
It really just appears that they looked at it at all.  
Because the ark is meant to stay behind the curtain and the holy of holies.  
It is not meant to be a tourist attraction.  
It is not meant to be put up high on a rock at a high place where everyone can see.  
The presence of God is meant to be treated with a reverence and respect.  
And so because they have failed to do so God judges them.

And God judge judges them partially because they should know better.  
For 20 they ask, **"Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?"**

This is the main question who can stand?  
They're not able to stand just because there are from Israel.  
God still expects holiness.  
These might have been the wrong conclusion.  
And it's something that we can do all the time we can think because we're in a Christian nation God must love us  
As a Christian nation, God couldn't judge us.  
We think because we grew up in a Christian home that we can stand before God.  
I think because I'm an elder or a pastor or a leader, I can stand before God.  
We can only stand before God if we are holy.

And we see in verse one, **"And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the Lord."**

Men come from another village come for the ark.  
And we need to know about these men is that they are from Gibeon.  
These are men who are not originally from the people of Israel.  
These are the people who tricked Joshua.

They were supposed to be eradicated and killed along with everyone else in the holy land.

But they pretended to be from far away to survive.

They do this in faith.

They believe God was going to kill them so they come to join God's people.

And so these who were outsiders come, and they are the ones who care for the ark the right way.

They take it and they put it in the house and they hide it.

And they consecrated and set apart a priest to care for the ark.

And it stays there in that place for 20 years until later when David comes to care for it.

But here we see the outsiders are included.

It is not the people who are expected..

Because this is who the gospel is for.

It is for those who are far off.

It is not for those who have it all together.

It is for the people from far away.

Just because you have a Christian family does not mean you know Jesus. There are people in closed countries who have nothing and Jesus called them.

Your children can't stand in God's presence just because you have faith.

They need to have faith.

You must have faith.

Not just your spouses faith or families faith.

You must stand before God all on your own.

We can only stand if we are standing in Christ.

Faith is what we need.

Everything else will fall down.

Everything else will fail.

Do not trust in anything other than Jesus.