

**Remnant Life Church**  
April 23, 2017  
**The Danger of the Idols**  
I Samuel 5:1-12

READ – I Samuel 5:1-5

In The Chronicles of Narnia, 2 girls, Susan and Lucy, are getting ready to meet Aslan the lion, who represents Christ. In Narnia, all of the animals can talk. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are helping to prepare the children for the encounter. “Ooh,” said Susan, “I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I would feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “That you will,” said Mrs. Beaver. “And make no mistake, if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or just foolish.” “Then isn’t he safe?” said Lucy. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the king, I tell you!”

- The Israelites find themselves in familiar territory
  - They have forsaken God and now corruption is running rampant especially in the temple by the actions of the priests (I Sam 2:12)
  - Eli is the Chief Priest
    - By all accounts a godly man but he has gotten old and lazy
    - His two sons - Hophni and Phinehas - were wicked taking portions of the sacrifice to God for themselves
    - Sleeping with the women who attended the temple
  - God sends a messenger (not an angel) to prophesy against Eli and his house because of the evil that has been permitted to continue (I Sam 2:27-36)
    - His line would be cut off
    - His sons would both die on the same day
    - It happened just as God said it would
- Because of their wickedness, and the sin of the people, God allows the Philistines to rise up and capture the Ark
- Philistines (land of Philistia)
  - A nation of people well known to the OT reader as the perpetual adversary to the nation of Israel
  - The Table of Nations in Gen 10 says they are the descendants of Mizraim, the son of Ham, the grandson of Noah
    - Note – when God makes His covenant with Abraham in Gen 15 the Philistines are not one of the nations mentioned as being given to Abraham’s descendants
    - The same is true in Duet 7:1; 20:17 when God tells Moses the nations he will conquer the Philistines are not among them
    - Why? Because God had set them apart from the beginning to be used as a rod of discipline against the Israelites

- It would not be until the time of Samson in 1080-1070 that (right around this same time) that the Israelites would begin to separate themselves
  - Not until David nearly 100 years later are they finally defeated
  - Whenever you see the Philistines mentioned know that God is disciplining His people
  - Just like He does today – because He loves us (**Heb 12:10** - *but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness*)
- Come back to what we read this morning
  - The Philistines have just defeated the Israelites and have carried the Ark of the Covenant back to their temple
  - The Ark is holy to the people and represents God presence
    - It represents the power and love of God to His people
    - Inside are 3 things – the stone tablets of the 10 commandments; Aaron’s staff that budded in the wilderness (**Num 17**), and a jar of manna
    - This was the embodiment of the power of Israel’s God and the Philistines had it
  - They took it to the town of Ashod (**5:1**)
    - One city of the Philistine pentapolis (**I Sam 6:17**)
    - When they arrived they took the ark to the temple of their demon god Dagon
- Dagon was a half-fish half-man – a Merman!
  - Very present through the region of Mesopotamia (Babylon, Assyrian, Sumer, modern day Iraq)
  - It encompassed an area 350 miles long by 150 miles wide
  - The name means “land between 2 rivers”
    - Those rivers are the Tigris and the Euphrates – two of the 4 rivers that comprised the location of the Garden of Eden in **Gen 2**
    - Why this region is called the “Cradle of Civilization” or “Cradle of Life”
      - First large cities
      - First forms of government
      - First written languages
  - Dagon was one of the main gods of this vast civilization
- The statue of Dagon would have sat up high on a platform
  - The Ark would have been brought in and set on the floor at its feet or off to the side
  - The word “beside” in **5:2** means below, off to the side, or even under
  - This was a symbolic position to be inferior or submission
- Next morning
  - The statue of Dagon is lying on its face before the Ark

- Their priests did not see the significance of what had happened so they set him up right again
- Following morning
  - Not only face down again but it was now decapitated and dismembered
  - Head (representing wisdom) and the arms (representing power and activity) had been broken off
- Now faced with a theological problem
  - If the God of Israel is greater than their god they have a problem
  - So they made up a new tradition (5:5)
  - Since it happened on the threshold of the room no one was allowed to step on it
  - 400 years later – the prophet Zephaniah warns the people that God will wipe out those who worship pagan gods in the last days
    - *On that day I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit. (Zeph 1:9)*
    - God will not share His glory – not then and not now
- This is, very simply, a story of what occurs when anyone, anything, any attempt is made to be exalted over God
  - And who is the most guilty of this? We are – God’s best creation
- How did the Israelites come to lose the Ark in the first place?
  - Nothing has done more to popularize the Ark than the movie “Raiders”
  - The box was approx. 4’ by 2’ made of Accia wood and covered inside and out in gold
  - 2 winged angels or Cherubim were seated on the top with their wings spread out to the other
  - They lost it because they believed they could never lose a battle if they had the Ark
    - They trusted in a box instead of God
    - They traded in the Golden Calf for the Ark
- Today many Christians are trusting in their own special boxes instead of in God
  - Trusting in the prayers of others instead of humbling themselves to God
  - Trusting in their benevolence and kind works to curry God’s favor
  - Trusting in their own goodness or what they have done in the past for God
  - To trust in these things is no different than the Israelites trusting in a gold box instead of the Maker of the Universe
- What has become the idol or idols in your life?
  - An action of sin or way of life that you know is wrong but can’t or won’t give up?
  - Your love for the world and the pleasures, however fleeting, they provide?
  - Or is it your need to be in control of your life refusing to surrender to His will?
- Don’t be fooled
  - *Isa 45:23 - Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.*



- *Phil 2:10 - At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
- *Isa 5:15 - So people will be brought low and everyone humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled.*
- *Matt 23:12 - For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

In 1715 King Louis XIV of France died after a reign of 72 years. He had called himself “the Great,” and was the monarch who made the famous statement, “I am the state!” His court was the most magnificent in Europe, and his funeral was equally spectacular. As his body lay in state in a golden coffin, he had given orders prior to his death that the cathedral should be very dimly lit with only a single special candle set above his coffin, to dramatize his greatness. At the memorial, thousands waited in hushed silence. The Bishop Jean-Baptiste Massillon took his place at the head of the ornate coffin but before he began to speak he slowly reaching down, snuffed out the candle and said, “Only God is great.”

- Anything in your life that you have over God is your idol
- That idol will become your undoing, the anchor that weighs you down, the vehicle through which God will operate to humble you
- You can either fall on the rock that is our God and cry out for mercy, or you can go on your way as the ruler of your life with all your idols in place, and the rock will fall on you.
- His desire is to love and care for you as a father for his son or daughter
- Don't let idols in your life get in the way of your relationship with your Heavenly Father because they will fall before Him and, if you hold to them, you'll go down with them.
- “Safe?”, said Mr. Beaver, “who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you!”