

*The House of Dagon*

*“When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon” (1 Sam 5:2).*

The ever raging conflict between good and evil in the hearts of men is portrayed in this incident of the Philistines defeating the Israelites and capturing the Ark of the Covenant. Background to this event begins when God appoints the making of the Ark for use in worship of Him *“And they shall make an ark of shittim wood” (Ex 25:10)*. Notably, the Ark was used once every year when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, where the Ark was kept, and atoned for his sins and the sins of the people. The priest sprinkled blood of a sacrificial animal onto the Mercy Seat atop the Ark to appease God’s wrath for past sins. This was the only place where a penitent heart could find forgiveness of sins, *“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people” (Heb 9:7)*.

A problem arose when the Israelites misused the Ark by worshipping it rather than God, *“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies (1 Sam 4:3)*. Having just been defeated in battle by the Philistines the people turned to the Ark in hopes that it had special powers to save them. They did not turn to God in prayer even though they knew that He demands exclusive worship, *“Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold” (Exodus 20:23)*. Even when He sanctions certain worship practices, such those involving the Ark, we are not to place undue emphasis on the practice itself nor are we to minimize the importance of the practice. The Israelites did this at another time in their history by worshipping the brass serpent rather than worshipping God through it, *“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Num 21:9)*. It was to be by faith in Jesus that sins could

be removed when the serpent was looked upon but the people eventually began placing faith in the image rather than in the Creator so that it had to be destroyed, *“He (Hezekiah) removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan” (2 Ki 18:4)*. Today, Jesus has given us the keys to the kingdom of heaven to loosen sin-sick hearts from the serpent’s bite, but we are cautioned, as were the Israelites, not to worship the keys but rather to use them as God intended.

God was calling both Israelite and Philistine alike unto Him, as He yet calls unto all people today without discrimination. The Israelites clearly saw that the spirit of God was not in the Ark and that they were chastised for thinking so. The Philistines, on the other hand, believed their god Dagon was superior to the God of Israel and their victory over the Israelites seemed to confirm their beliefs. Throughout the ages men and women have sought evidence of faith from sources outside of the Word and, as we witnessed here, have come up empty. The house of Dagon is like unto the heart of man that is filled with idolatry or false doctrine. When the Word enters such a heart, as the Ark entered the house of Dagon, man is faced with a decision because the idol of unbelief and the spirit of God cannot coexist in the same heart, *“And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him” (1 Sam 5:4)*. The Philistines, like most people confronted with the truth, rejected the one true God despite clear evidence from Him of His Deity; Dagon was cast down and broken apart. The Philistines stubbornly refused to believe the obvious because it did not conform to their thinking. It was more palatable to repair Dagon and to set it back up on its altar than surrender to the Lord.

Instead of submitting to the Word of God, people often find it more convenient to get rid of it or at least to get rid of the portions they do not agree with, *“They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the*

*Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath" (1 Sam 5:8). If the Philistines had repented of their unbelief the Ark would have been a comfort to them but, instead, it became a curse and a judgment against them, "But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god" (1 Sam 5:6-7).*

We can push God away for a while—even for a lifetime—but one day we must all stand before Him.

God's peace,

Charles Korhonen

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH  
P.O. Box 531  
Houghton, MI 49931

Oct 04	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Oct 11	Nathan Ruonavaara	
Oct 18	Ken Storm	
Oct 25	Charles Korhonen/Chad Kuivanen	Potluck meal following service

**Semi-Annual Meeting October 14<sup>th</sup> 7pm**

**Online Broadcasts**

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services.

**Winter Schedule**

Sunday Service 11:00am. Sunday School 9:45am  
Wednesday night Bible Study 7pm