

Samuel – God’s Kingdom and its King. (6) *Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?*

refs for Bible study 9/1/20: 1 Samuel 5v1-7v1

Many believe that everyone is entitled to have their own god. But this is not the Bible’s view: *‘Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods?’ Ex.15v11*. In Samuel’s day, it was thought that each nation had its own god. Both Philistines & Israelites had wrong ideas about the LORD, and must learn that he is the one, true & living God.

Sovereignty – the LORD is sovereign over all people and all ‘gods’: 5v1-5. The Ark (symbol of the presence of God) had been captured by the Philistines, and placed in the temple of Dagon. Their celebrations were cut short as the image of Dagon fell prostrate before the Ark. Dagon was left without hands to help and head to think, giving rise to a superstition that lasted 400 years, Zph.1v9. The LORD teaches that he is sovereign over all men and all ‘gods’. Every knee shall bow to him, Phil.2v9-10, and every false religion will be exposed as useless.

Severity – the LORD is severe towards sin & idolatry: 5v6-6v18. *‘the hand of the Lord’*. He is mighty to act. The hand of God was *‘heavy’* against their sin and idolatry, 5v6,7,9 & 11, 6v3,5 & 9. They moved the Ark in panic from Ashdod to Gath to Ekron as ‘tumours’ (bubonic plague?) spread like wildfire. It taught them to fear God and confess their guilt, 6v3. They came up with their own method of atonement, v4-11. The startling outcome, v12. The Lord will be praised, even by his dumb creatures, Ps.150v6, 148v7-13! The Philistines learnt to reverence God, but they did not repent, as future events will show. All men need to know that God is severe towards sin and idolatry, Rm.11v22. The gospel is urgent. We look not just for reverence, but repentance and saving faith.

Sanctity – the LORD is holy and will not be trifled with: 6v19-7v1. The scene moves back to Israel. At first joy v13, and sacrifices v14-15. But then in v19-20* a sudden jolt! They too must learn – that the LORD is holy. He is not to be trifled with. Their sin was to disregard the holiness of God. Beth Shemesh was a Levite town so they should’ve known better, Nm.4v19-20. Two questions: *‘To whom shall it go?’* – their priority is getting rid of the Ark not repenting of sin. *‘Who is able to stand?’* – good question, for he is set apart in holiness, a consuming fire, Heb.12v29. Yet, by the grace of God, we may stand before him, Rom.5v1-2. Thank God for the redemption price that Jesus paid – not gold – but the blood of Christ, 1Pet.1v18-19. The world must know that the LORD is sovereign over all, severe towards sin, and set apart in holiness – and so must his people.

* NB The number in NKJV of v19 is far bigger than the population of Beth Shemesh. Some manuscripts do not have the numbers ‘50’ & ‘1000’. Those that do have these numbers can be translated *‘seventy men, fifty from a thousand’* – meaning 5% of the population, i.e. 70 out of a population of 1400 men.