

II. God's presence is connected to the destruction of idols.

To be close to God means we cannot be close to Him if our allegiance is compromised. There is no way to get close to God without God showing you the things you actually put your trust in for your happiness.

III. God's presence is always connected with His mercy.

In the O.T. God's presence was with the Ark. It was at the Ark where Israel's sins found atonement.

Priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. ⁷ But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people. Hebrews 9:6,7

In the N.T. God's presence was seen in Jesus. It was trust in Christ that gives atonement for sin.

Christ has now become the High Priest ...¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. ... Hebrews 9:11,12

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. Hebrews 4:16

Community Group Questions:

1. What does this story tell you about getting close to God?
2. In what area(s) can you improve your commitment to God?
3. What idols have you struggled with in the past and even now?
4. (Read Hebrews 4:16 above) What drives your boldness?



When Dagon Meets God

God is not tame.

1 Samuel 5:1-4

After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they took it from the battleground at Ebenezer to the town of Ashdod. ² They carried the Ark of God into the temple of Dagon and placed it beside an idol of Dagon. ³ But when the citizens of Ashdod went to see it the next morning, Dagon had fallen with his face to the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord! So they took Dagon and put him in his place again.⁴ But the next morning the same thing happened—Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact. 1 Samuel 5:1-4

What is the Ark of God?

God made a covenant with Israel through Moses. He promised good to them if they obeyed His laws. As a sign of His covenant, He had the Israelites make a box overlaid with gold. The Ark was housed in the tabernacle and later in the Temple when it was built in Jerusalem. It is also known as the Ark of the Covenant.

(God told Moses to) put the atonement cover on top of the Ark. ²² I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel. Exodus 25:22

The Back Story:

Israel had fallen into a state of moral decay. The High Priest, Eli's two sons were the worst of it. After Israel entered into a war with the Philistines, they suffered a defeat. Before the next battle they took the Ark of the Covenant and placed it before the Israelite troops. However, the next day in battle, 30,000 Israelite soldiers died, as did Eli, and his two sons.

Who is Dagon?

Dagon was the chief deity of the Philistines, and the worship of this pagan god dates back the third millennium BC. According to ancient mythology, Dagon was the father of Baal. He was the fish god (dag in Hebrew means "fish"), and he was represented as a half-man, half-fish creature.

Dagon Pagan Worship-

Is best described in today by what we call Animism. Animism is the belief that everything has a spirit, including animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, and stars. Each is a powerful spirit that can help or hurt them and are to be worshiped or feared. It is a primitive religion whose adherents have for thousands of years deified nature and idols of any kind. They use magic arts, superstitions or anything that they believe will help to protect them from evil spirits and placate the good spirits that are found everywhere in everything.

The real question for pagans wasn't,

"Is your god real, but how much power does your god have?"

Dagon's Fall I & II

Dagon had fallen with his face to the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord! So they took Dagon and put him in his place again. 1 Samuel 4:3

But the next morning the same thing happened—Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact. 1 Samuel 4:4

Philistines Are Punished

⁶ Then the Lord's heavy hand struck the people of Ashdod and the nearby villages with a plague of tumors. ⁷ When the people realized what was happening, they cried out, "We can't keep the Ark of the God of Israel here any longer! He is against us! We will all be destroyed along with Dagon, our god." ⁸ So they called together the rulers of the Philistine towns and asked, "What should we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?" 1 Samuel 5:6-8

The rulers discussed it and replied, "Move it to the town of Gath." So they moved the Ark of the God of Israel to Gath. ⁹ But when the Ark arrived at Gath, the Lord's heavy hand fell on its men, young and old; he struck them with a plague of tumors, and there was a great panic. 1 Samuel 5:8,9

So they sent the Ark of God to the town of Ekron, but when the people of Ekron saw it coming they cried out, "They are bringing the Ark of the God of Israel here to kill us, too!" 1 Samuel 5:10

The people summoned the Philistine rulers again and begged them, "Please send the Ark of the God of Israel back to its own country, or it will kill us all." For the deadly plague from God had already begun, and great fear was sweeping across the town. 1 Samuel 5:11

What does this story tell us about getting close to God?

On one hand, the Ark appears powerless to rescue the Israelites in battle. On the other hand, it lays waste to an entire nation without one soldier defending it. **Did you catch that?**

God isn't a genie in anyone's bottle. God isn't permanently attached to any one thing or style. God cannot be tamed by the whims of man.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. Isaiah 55:8

How to enter God's way into God's presence

I. God's presence is always attached to total commitment.

These guys thought they could live life the way they wanted to and then suddenly use the ark as their personal war genie.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what they sow. Galatians 6:7