

The ark in Philistine hands

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[0:00] This chapter together in two chunks. Let me read another little story about Jesus who cast out demons from a man.

! And told about the pigs as well.

And the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. So interesting, Jesus gets asked to go away. And in this story, the ark of God gets asked to go away. Anyway, we prayed.

And boys and girls, you're sitting here this morning. Can we just see, where am I supposed to be looking for boys and girls? Over there, over there, over there. Any over there at the back?

Right, I'm going to be expecting some help today. So please be on the ball. This story, boys and girls, is not really suitable for you.

[1:07] Because it contains things about a terrible illness. Tumours. And it's also got some nasty animals in it.

Some not nice animals. Some rats are in there. So it's not really suitable for children. It's also got a statue with his hands.

As I put arms. His hands and his head cut off. So we're going to have hands being cut off and heads cut off. So mums and dads, it's not really suitable for your children, is it? And in this chapter, God says nothing.

There's no word from God in this chapter. And Samuel. I don't know whether you remember, boys and girls. Were you here when we talked about Samuel, the baby that was prayed for and grew up? And in this chapter, Samuel, the chapter is named after him, one Samuel. Well, he's not in here either. And there he is, baby, being turned into a man.

[2:08] And you may remember, those of you here for that very first time, that Hannah prayed right at the beginning. That everything would come right and God would turn things round so that everything was the upside down or the right way up.

And in this chapter, it doesn't seem to happen at all. So, interesting. And grown-ups, you're here this morning listening to this chapter.

And you might be expecting to hear about a God who only ever blesses people and who only ever affirms people.

And here in this chapter, when God is involved with the people of Ashtod and Ekron and Gath, it's terrible for them. The God of this chapter is a God who smites.

Well, he doesn't smite as much as he could, but he's a God who smites. He's the God of the Bible. You might think that we have a God who is stuck without the help of well-meaning people, that God needs a bit of a hand all the time.

[3:15] And in this, God single-handedly sorts things out. This is a sovereign God who does whatever he pleases and nobody can stop him. You might be thinking, particularly if you don't very often come to church, that the Christian message is that there are many ways to God and all people are quite nice.

And a God who says, well, there are many ways. Actually, this is not the God of the Bible. This God says, there is just me. I am unique.

I am supreme. I don't have competitors. I don't give my glory to anybody else. That's the God of this chapter. And you might, well, I suppose most people would like today to hear a God who says, never mind.

If you're true to yourself, it will all work out well in the end. And that's not what this God in this chapter says. He says, you need to be true to me.

That's what I'm looking for. So it's a very, it's not really a suitable chapter for children. And it's a bit of a jarring chapter for grown-ups as well.

[4:33] Anyway, let's look inside it. Oh, one more thing. A God who never shows weakness or apparent defeat.

Is that the God of this chapter who never shows weakness and never shows apparent defeat? And actually, the God of this chapter does show weakness and does seem to be defeated because his ark has been captured.

So lots of surprising things in this chapter, things that you might not expect. What we're going to do, boys and girls, we're going to do some, oh, it's unsuitable, but this is what God wants us to hear this morning.

We'll do some homework together so you can do most of the work and I'll just flack the pointer around. And then we'll sing something and then we'll make some conclusions from it.

So that's the plan this morning. So first of all, we're going to look at the ark. Boys and girls, if you can look across at somebody's Bible or have a Bible in front of you, that would be really helpful.

[5:37] So we're in 1 Samuel chapter 5 and there's mention of the ark of God. The first verse says, After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

Now, what is the full name of the ark of God? So in 5 verse 1, it is the ark of God. In verse 3, it is called...

I have to be quick, I'll be here all morning with this. In verse 3, it is called... Somebody shout it out? The ark of the Lord.

Yeah. And in verse 7, it is called... The ark of the God of Israel. Thank you. And verse 8, it is called...

The ark of the God of Israel. And the next bit of verse 8, it is called... The ark of the God of Israel. Thank you.

[6:43] And the next bit of verse 8, it is called... The ark of the God of Israel, I think. End of verse 8.

Yeah. Verse 10, it is called... Sorry? The ark...

Well, no, it's 2 Ekron. The ark of God, 2 Ekron. And then the next bit in verse 10, it is called... The ark of the God of Israel.

The ark... Okay, the ark of the God of Israel. It's also called the ark of God in verse 10. In verse 11, it's called... The ark of the God of Israel.

Well done. And in 6 verse 1, it's called... The ark of the Lord. And in 4 verse 4, it is called...

[7:39] So let's have a grown-up tell us this one. Quick as you like. 1 Samuel 4 verse 4, it is called... In full... The ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty. Keep going.

Oh, sorry. Who is enthroned between the cherubim. Okay, thank you. That's the longest of all. It says he is... It is the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty who is enthroned between the cherubim.

That's the most glorious statement of the ark. So as we went through chapter 5, you see it's all about the ark, isn't it? The ark of God, the ark of the God of Israel, the ark of the Lord. Ark, ark, ark, ark, ark.

It's all to do with the ark. So let's find out what is this ark of the covenant. Have I got the answer there? Anybody know what the ark of the covenant is?

I'm sure you do. But roughly speaking... Yeah? Yeah? Yeah, it did have. It certainly did have the Ten Commandments in it. Just going back, what sort of thing is it?

[8:38] Is it a thing on wheels? Is it a curtain? Is it a... What is it? Okay. It's carried on poles. I was going to say it's a box.

Yeah. It's a wooden box. And I did work this out. It's about 1.3 metres. So that's not ever so big, actually, by 0.79 metres, by 0.79 metres.

And I did on SketchUp this picture. We've got a random American guy in the picture. But just to give you the scale... I mean, it's not that big, actually, is it?

You could easily fit it onto the stage here. And it's got these poles for carrying it, which we'll come to in a moment. What's it covered with? Anybody like to tell us? So hands up this time.

Anybody like to tell us what it's covered with? What do you think? Well done. Gold. Right. Covered with gold. So it's a very special box.

[9:33] And what did it have on the top of it? Anybody know what it had on the top of it? At the back, yes? Somebody will have to shout it out because I couldn't hear.

Cherubim. Cherubim. That's right. So I think if you... It's a cherubim. Cherub is the singular and cherubim is the plural.

And there's two of them. And I've got a picture of them. I don't know what they look like. This is a guess. But there are some cherub-like sculptures in the British Museum.

And they're not from Israel. They're from Assyria. But they look like that. So maybe these ones look similar to that. And what are cherub? What are cherub?

What are they? And I've put that. See if you can guess what I was thinking the cherubim do. And I'm thinking it's like when the Prime Minister, who is a very special person, goes anywhere, he is accompanied by some guys in suits and dark glasses like this.

[10:45] Or when Joe Biden, the President of USA, goes anywhere, he's accompanied by people with guns and dark glasses. And they're all on the lookout.

So can you guess from that what I was thinking? They are his S something C something R something T Y creatures. What do you think? Security.

Yeah. Should we just have a cumulative round of applause for all the work that we've done? Yeah.

Okay. So I think they're his security officers. They're there to take him where he wants and to guard things and to make sure that the wrong people don't get in.

The cherub were in the Garden of Eden with flaming swords to stop, you know, they were on security duty there, to stop people getting back into the garden. Now then, see whether you know this.

I'm sure the boys and girls will know this. Who built the ark and when? It goes back. It has a history. It was built in the days of by somebody.

[11:52] So right at the back, who do you think it was built by? Or who ordered it to be built? I couldn't hear that, so somebody will have to shout it out for me.

Moses. Yeah, that was it. Moses. Okay, a little round of applause for that. Well done. By Moses. And it was in the time of, I don't know, what have I put?

Yeah, it was in the time of the Exodus. So when God brought his people out of Egypt, he showed them lots of things and a whole load of how they were to live, how they were to be in relationship with God, and the ark was a key part of that.

And where did the ark? And where did the ark stay? Anybody know where the ark stayed? It had a particular place where it was meant to be parked, if you like.

I think you know this. Maybe I haven't asked the question in the right way. It was put in a certain place, certainly to begin with.

[13:01] In the tabernacle is right. Well done. I think you... And the tabernacle was a sort of tent.

So it was portable like tents are. And when God took his people across the desert and they camped, he camped with them. And he had his own tent.

And he sort of lived in that tent. And the ark was right in the most central part of the tent. The tent.

Later on it got moved to the temple. But it was in the tent. The place of meeting God. And it was...

There's all sorts of things to do with it. So priests would look after it. And certain people could touch the ark and move it.

[13:57] And there were always sacrifices happening. So animals were always being killed. And their blood was being... Things were done with the blood to do with the ark.

Whole system. Now then. I think we need some grown-ups to be looking this one up as well.

Exodus 29.46. And my question is, Why did Moses build it?

Why do we have this box? Why did we have the tabernacle? Why did we have all this system of priests and sacrifices? And I hope that the answer is in...

Exodus 29. If we took verses 44, 45, and 46. Exodus 29. 44, 45, and 46.

Is somebody going to read it to us? Yeah. Thank you very much.

[15:05] Let me just add the surrounding bits. I will consecrate the tent of meeting, the altar. I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.

They will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. So that's a key verse. Why did God do all that?

What's all the paraphernalia about? So that God could live with his people. So that there would be no distance between God and his people. So wherever they were, he would be.

This rings bells for us as Christians, doesn't it? The presence of God with his people. I don't know whether you noticed it, but the hymns we chose this morning, the songs, all have something about the presence of God.

And it says, I brought them out of Egypt because I wanted to be with them. Which is an amazing thing, isn't it? So that God could live with his people. Now then, there's another few questions.

[16:11] So who could see the ark? So it's all covered with gold, so that's pretty fantastic. Who could see it and in what way? Who could see the ark and in what way?

What do you think? I missed the last bit.

They could see it. Giving. Okay, when they were doing the sacrifices.

Yeah, the priest could see it. Yeah. Was it actually, do you think it was sort of up on a stand so everybody could see it? No. No. Only the priests could see it.

What are you going to say? I'm going to say it's got curtains on a specific room. It's in a specific room in the tabernacle. It's got curtains that close it off.

[17:12] So really, it's more or less hidden. You only, I think I'm correct in saying only once a year would the priest go in there. And he had to take something with him, which I think you mentioned.

But do you want to have a go? I just want to say, I know about that too. Yeah. I think that they've got a kind of gradual turn. that they attacked the priest or if they attacked it and died they put him to bring the priest yeah that certainly makes sense doesn't it because he was going into a dangerous place and if he keeled over or God zapped him or something he'd need rescuing yeah thank you that's a good one but I think my question was what did the priest take with him if he went into the holy place anybody any ideas there's something that's very important a sacrifice and in particular which part of the sacrifice the blood yeah not without blood so to enter into the presence of God for sinful people to enter into the presence of God there needs to be a sacrifice made and there needs to be blood so who could see the ark the priests taking blood and once a year who could touch the ark at the back no one

I think is the correct answer no one could touch it well done there was a I haven't looked it up and it's not fresh in my memory but if I remember correctly they had to cover it and they only certain people could do that it was their special job and they carried it now then I think I've probably drawn something without referring to it I put these two rings on the side and maybe you could just remind us because I did mention it before what these these rings there's two on one side and two on the other yeah they put they're supposed to put a pole pole through on either side and the Levites special group of people would carry it humanly human humans would carry it so in other oh I've asked I've already answered the question I was just going to ask it's like God's mobile throne and it's carried by respectful followers it was carried by people so the ark which is in this chapter we're doing a bit of homework on this it symbolized

God's presence it symbolized God's presence and symbolized his protection of his people and his fellowship with his people and it reminded people of the provisions necessary for God to dwell with people so they needed blood to be shed they needed to treat it respectfully and reverently and we also know the Lord liked to go with his people wherever they went which is a really wonderful thing isn't it wherever they went he would go with them and in many cases he would just go ahead of them and I think that's a rather lovely thing isn't it the Lord likes to go ahead he doesn't say you stay here I'm having a cup of coffee you go off into the dangerous area while I'm sitting here he says I will go with you and he says in fact actually I'll probably go ahead of you just to make sure it's safe for you and that's a sort of principle of the sort of God he is so while we're on the subject of the ark we will peep ahead in the story and go into 2 Samuel chapter 6 and again if the grown-ups could join us in looking at that so we're leaping ahead into 2 Samuel chapter 6 and that is what happens

so this is sort of a long throw of the story from here right up to something in the future and could anybody tell us

I've put up there King D something V something D brought the ark into J something R something S something L something M what do you think David Jerusalem what do you think what do you think Gracie David in Jerusalem is that right well done a little round of applause I think yeah so the story is headed towards King David and bringing the ark into Jerusalem and then King Solomon building the temple that's where the story's headed and it'll take a while to get there and this is actually a really key thing to realise the idea of God's people and God's city and God's king and God's temple and God's presence that is the grand story of the Bible and if you wanted to you could say that's it in a nutshell that's what the Christian message is all about that one day and we're throwing the ball forward as it were one day that is what

[22:40] God will say was my plan all along to have my people in my city with my king reigning and myself in the midst of it all and that's what glory will be that's what the book of Revelation portrays I mean it'll be lots of other things as well but that's a good way to think of it and if you're a Christian one day you'll be there in the holy city amen with the king and in the presence of God where sin won't disturb and enemies won't get in and it will all be glory and that's a view for the future if we're if we belong to the Lord Jesus that's what he has in mind for us that's what he has achieved that we're on our way to the city of God where the presence of God is okay that was homework on the ark we'll just do a little bit of homework on the Philistines so I've got a map there now does the map work on a bright sunny day sort of yeah that's the

Mediterranean that's the Dead Sea and that that's the coast along there okay the Philistines they in terms of the history they don't seem to have been there in the original times of Abraham they seem to have come in later click best I could find they are seafaring people so on the map there's a blob on the coastal area where the Philistines settled no there's the blob they were all the way through enemies of God's people they're always trying to get in the way of God's purposes and they're always trying to oppose God's king and they had five main cities with five lords or five princes or five rulers and they get referred to quite a bit so there is what's that what have I just clicked well I wanted Ashdod Ashkelon Ashdod Gath Ekron have I done five yeah oh I didn't mean to do that yeah that's the that's the place where they inhabited and there's lots about the battles isn't it with the Philistines do you remember no we haven't got to that so it's pointless saying do you remember I was going to say David and Goliath but we haven't got to that bit they have a god called Dagon and I looked it up and people are not sure whether it comes from dag which means fish or whether it comes from another word which means grains I don't think we know however in the Louvre en France there is it doesn't show very well does it but there's a sort of mermaid man with a tail and his head's up there and his arms there so I thought it's about the same historical period this sculpture in the

French Museum so let's use that as a picture of Dagon and I've turned him so that he's standing on his tail put him on his feet so I'll use that picture for Dagon so I'd like you to imagine that this is a great wooden god statue thing that they have and I'd like to just think about the size because he's going to fall flat on his face and when he falls flat on his face presumably he's against the back wall but when he falls flat on his face he hits the doorway so if you could imagine we don't have a statue of Dagon so it's purely imaginary but if we had a statue here and it fell up against the door there it'd have to be really tall wouldn't it so I've done a little picture there and the Ark of the Covenant is quite titchy quite small but there's Dagon and bang there he goes hitting his head on the door his head breaks off and his head is cut off and his hands are cut off

I didn't draw that but I just noticed that Dagon if you had gone in there you'd say wow look at Dagon so big so strong oh what's that little gold box there about the same size as the keyboard I guess not very impressive and it's a funny thing isn't it Dagon seems large and impressive and the Ark of the God of Israel the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Israel the Lord Almighty who sits enthroned between the cherubim seems very small and a bit silly that's what it would have looked like and I just want to say that that's often the way faith has to deal with things when the Israelites were exiled into Babylon they thought of Jerusalem what a great city when they went to

[27:59] Babylon wow it's huge they must have thought how small our faith is how small our God is but that's wrong isn't it it's just the way it seems it isn't the way it is because although the God of Israel seems small he is actually great and we'll see that in a moment so there's Dagon fallen over Dagon is a man made God now we don't have carvings of gods very much in this country if you went to Sri Lanka where Jess and Angel come from then there's carvings of gods and demons all over the place aren't there particularly Hindu temples would have carvings of gods they'd be made out of wood or maybe made out of concrete perhaps even made out of plastic but they're man made and here in the temple of

Dagon we have this wooden picture of a fish man god thing and we have this golden box representing the god who made everything and actually there is no comparison between them the god of Israel is not made by human hands he is the maker of everything psalm 115 verse 3 says the nations say where is your god but we say our god is in heaven he's not limited to a statue he fills the universe our god is in heaven he does whatever pleases him their idols are silver and gold they cannot speak they cannot see they cannot walk they cannot touch they're dead pieces of wood and the psalm says and the people who worship them become like them dead powerless useless useless in Isaiah 40 Isaiah mocks idol makers and says there's your god but make sure you nail him down properly otherwise he'll fall over put some brackets so that he doesn't topple and make sure that you've painted the wood nicely so that it doesn't rot i mean how pathetic that our god is i was going to say our god is a great big god he's the maker of the universe and there is no comparison between that wooden thing and the lord so let's let's stop there and we'll sing something so thank you boys and girls we've looked at the ark we looked at the philistines then we'll come and do some conclusions in a moment and this is what we're going to sing about the presence i stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me a sinner condemned unclean i stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me a sinner condemned unclean how marvelous how wonderful this my song shall ever be how marvelous how wonderful is my savior for me for me he prayed in the garden and bowed to the will divine he had oats is for his own face but sweat drops of blood for mine how marvelous how wonderful this my song shall ever be how marvelous how wonderful is my savior's love for me in pity

angels beheld him and came from the world of light to comfort him in sorrows he poured for my soul that night how marvelous how wonderful this my song shall ever be how marvelous how wonderful is my savior's up for me he took my sins and my sorrows and made them his very own he bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone how marvelous how wonderful is my song shall ever be how marvelous how wonderful is my savior's love for me his sorry his face i last shall see joy will be through the ages to sing of his love for me how marvelous how wonderful this my song shall ever be

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Saviour's heart for me Okay, well what we're going to do very quickly just go through the chapter and say what the story was because we've got the parts of the jigsaw puzzle let's just put them all in order we'll just go back to how come the ark ended up in Philistine hands the Israelites including Hophni and Phinehas wanted to beat the Philistines in battle so Daniel took us through this a few weeks ago so they brought out the ark thinking they could use it like a magic charm but the ark got captured at the battle of Aphek and was taken to Ebenezer, that's what we've been reading the Philistines then take it to Ashdod, that's in verse 6 and then they put it, I'm sorry am I getting this the wrong way around yeah, it's in Ashdod they put it beside Dagon in Dagon's house and then the next day when they come to rise early in the morning they find that Dagon has fallen over bang, like that before the ark of the Lord and so they stick him back up put some new screws in make sure that he's nice and secure and the next day he's fallen over again but this time his head and his hands have cut off and is lying on the border of the door on the threshold the threshold of the temple and they say in verse 6

God's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity so God's Dagon's hands have been cut off but God's hands, the Lord's hand is heavy and there's a play on words because heavy is a bit like the word for glory kabod, kated something like that and he afflicted the people in that city with tumours verse 6 he brought devastation on them and afflicted the city with tumours so not only does their God fall over but they get really ill and they say in verse 7 the ark of the God of Israel

must not stay with us here because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our God so they have a little conference and they say what should we do and they say we'll move the city sorry we'll move the ark to another of our five great cities we'll take it to Gath so they move the ark of the God of Israel and then the same thing happens there that the hand of the Lord was against that city throwing it into a great panic he afflicted the people of the city both young and old with an outbreak of tumours so they all got ill as well and there's a suggestion that rats were involved with this too sort of some sort of plague thing and they say what shall we do and in verse 10 they say [38:16] I know we'll send this lethal danger to our friends down the road in Ekron so they send it to Ekron and the people of Ekron say hey what's going on here they brought the ark of the God of Israel round to kill us and our people and so they and it says the God's hand was heavy on them and those who did not die were afflicted with tumours and the outcry of the city went up to heaven and they say we need to get rid of this ark we really do and that's what Daniel will tell us about next week yeah danger of death God's hand was heavy yeah so that's the story do you get the story I didn't do it too quickly got the idea of that so I've got three lessons so number one God cares about what people really think about God on the inside so the the ark was the visible presence of God but when

Hophni and Phinehas wheeled out the ark to use as a magic charm God says I'm not having that Hophni and Phinehas were just awful they were somewhere between the mafia and Jimmy Savile they abused the women at the in the temple and they stole stuff and they intimidated people they were just awful and God would rather allow him his army to be defeated than to let those people get away with it God would rather appear weak and defeated than let those men get away with their insolence and irreverence as leaders of the people of God and the people of God following them God says I'd rather seem defeated than let those people get away with that it was the sort of people that they were it was the way they treated

God it was their irreverence and their contempt! for God and I think there's a lesson for us that God really cares about what sort of people we are on the inside we can do all the right things on the outside or seemingly the right things on the outside so for us it's not getting arks but turning up at church doing the Christian things seeming to do the Christian things but God says well what what's actually on the inside what's on your motives what do you think of me says God what sort of person are you spiritually and I think we should tremble our holiness matters to God that we should be holy respectful believing reverent people before God and of course that's the bit that we need to deal with isn't it we constantly need to deal with what's happening on the inside the attitudes we've got the way we are with God on the inside so I think that's the first lesson

God really cares about that he really does and I've put there it's gone off the bottom of the screen the Lord will judge his people in 1 Peter it says judgment will begin at the house of God and it's a foolish thing for us to look out and say oh all these people have this ideology and that ideology and are teaching this and promoting that and celebrating this without first looking at ourselves because judgment doesn't begin with the ideologies and the it begins with the house of God if you're God's people what's going on inside you that's the first thing that matters second lesson the Lord allows himself to seem defeated but this defeat is temporary it's by plan and permission and it's only apparent defeat because the

Philistines thought they'd beaten God didn't they beaten the armies they've taken away the ark of the covenant and they got it securely there in their temple we've won said the Philistines but actually God says no you haven't your God is just gonna and your people they thought they'd won but they hadn't really God seemed defeated he seemed to have been defeated by Dagon and the Philistines but the reality is that Dagon is not in the same league as the almighty God and my example of it was do you see boys and girls on Preston Park there's little boys football have you ever seen the football that's on Saturday morning and little boys football always amuses me because you're older and maturer than this but the ball goes one place and all the little boys follow it round like bees following honey and they don't pass or strategize and they might score a goal and a little boy might say look at me

[44:03] I scored a goal I scored a goal I'm going to be playing for Manchester City tomorrow and you think there is no it's a different league you're not ready to play for Manchester City because you scored a

goal in little boys football please and Dagon he's a god no he isn't he's nothing God is in the top league where there's just him Dagon needs to be he falls out he needs to be picked up he needs to be restored or just touch up the paintwork that got broken he needs to be propped up that's the sort of god he is but the god of the bible picks us up the god of the bible restores my soul the god of the bible holds all things in his hand he's the almighty he is the lord almighty who sits enthroned between the cherubim that's who he is dagon ends up without power he's got no hands and he's got no plan and purpose because his head's been cut off that's the reality about dagon but our god his purposes stand forever and who can stand against him the lord may seem defeated but he isn't really just think of the cross where jesus seemed defeated and all his enemies said if you're really the king of israel come down that we may see you and believe and they all went and wagged their heads and made fun of him save yourself and he seemed totally defeated didn't he my god my god why have you forsaken me but it only seemed that way in fact where god seemed to be defeated on the cross was the moment of his greatest victory there sin was defeated satan was defeated and it's shown of course triumphantly in the resurrection where god seemed to be most absent he was actually most present things are not always as they seem and of course it was by god's plan and set purpose and foreknowledge wicked men took him and killed him they did and that was wrong but it was in god's plan and purpose when jesus died on the cross it was only a temporary apparent defeat because on the third day do you know what happened on the third day what happened what happened he rose from the dead he did that's right and he rose from the dead and a mighty triumph over his foes he arose from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign he arose he arose hallelujah christ arose a great victory from what seemed like defeat and the third lesson to think about the presence of the lord now here's the thing the presence of the lord can be a life giving blessing or a lethal danger depending on well yeah depending on what so we read in exodus 29 46 god says i've brought them out of egypt i've invented all this about tabernacles and arks and

priests and sacrificing animals so that i can live with them so that the presence of god can be with his people moses!

in exodus 33 had this dialogue with god where he said if your presence doesn't go with us what distinguishes us from anybody else i don't want to go up!

if your presence does not go with us i don't know would you pray the same thing as you set out on your life lord if you don't go with me i don't want to go if you're not going to be present with me what's the point of it it the point of the christian life if we don't have the presence of the Lord Jesus our speaker last night i think very movingly talked about his undergoing chemotherapy which he said was an awful terrible thing he says but the Lord is always with me and that's a truth of christian experience isn't it sometimes more sometimes less but he does say i will never leave you nor forsake you and for us that's precious isn't it isn't that a precious thing that the Lord says i will never leave you nor forsake you but for these people in Ashdod and Ekron the presence that to the Christian people is a blessing and a wonder and a comfort was death to them the presence turned life into death and brought plagues and panic and fear so much that they said we don't want this God with us so the presence of God is not a trivial thing is it it depends on something let's just try and work out what it depends!

[49:53] on I think we should think twice before we say Lord come near to me Lord abide with me because we just think who we're asking to come near the risen glorious Jesus the king of the universe the holy one of God!

I can't think of an example just some random buddy we're asking for the king of the universe to draw near to us the holy one of God we're asking to be in his presence and Peter was not wrong when he realised who Jesus was and said depart from me I am a sinful man Jesus said we can you know that's not the end of the story but it's right that he's a holy awesome saviour when John in the

book of Revelation saw Jesus he said I fell at his feet as dead we shouldn't lose that should we we shouldn't just domesticate Jesus in the same way that in the Narnia books they said Aslan is not a tame!

lion this is who God is he's not a magic genie there under our control for our instant gratification I think even believing Christians can sometimes get into that mode that God is just there to help me catch the bus and stop me getting a painful neck or something like that he is the almighty one isn't he and so I say again his presence can be a blessing or it can be a terrible burden depending on well I think depending in the sense that God reacts to the people who he's with the Hophni and Phinehas guys were irreverent the Philistines they just pick up the ark and take it places they're not supposed to do that are they they're supposed to put it on poles and cover it and be respectful it's only certain people are supposed to do that but they just plonk it here they grab it and take it and they put him of all places in the temple of

Dagon I mean how dare they how dare they and their ignorance of the things of God I suppose you could say they don't know any better but they didn't even live up to what they ought to have known God isn't like a fish God isn't like a grain our Lord God is the maker of the universe and God says I'm not going to be treated like that I'm not going to be treated!

like that I'm not going to God the eternal future where people who hate and resist and have contempt for God will never be able to avoid him throughout eternity just think of what that would be that's the definition of hell isn't it to be have God's holy majesty reacting against unbelief unrepentance forever something to be avoided the people of

[54:08] Ashdod tried to solve the problem by getting rid of God push him on get rid of him move him out but in fact you can't solve the problem that way God will not be pushed about he's everywhere but there is a way for people like us to dwell in peace and love with this almighty holy God and there was a clue from what we did earlier on with the ark it's approached with reverence and awe and not without shed blood that was the principle for the tabernacle in the old testament same thing is true in the new testament except we don't come to a physical structure we come into the holy place of

God and we come through Jesus Christ who shed his blood there is only one way to approach the holy one through Jesus Christ the one mediator between man and God there are not many ways there is one way and this is it we come into the holy place by the blood of Jesus and the future God said I want to dwell with them forever and that's what the future will be in the presence of God in the holy city through the blood of Jesus with King Jesus reigning and the presence of God filling everywhere that's what we're headed to that's what we're headed to and let us now be the people of the presence of God in the right way for his name's sake Amen