



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 063 - What Were They Thinking? 1 Samuel 4-6

God is incredibly ingenious at hallowing His Name or protecting His reputation, especially when it seems there is no possible way to do it.

- How would it have harmed His reputation if He gave victory to faithless Israel just because they had His ark with them as a good-luck charm in battle?
- What risk was He taking to His reputation by allowing the Philistines to defeat His chosen nation Israel and capture His ark?

God's Name took a beating when the Philistines were victorious. The city of Shiloh was devastated, and His ark was captured. To add insult to injury, the Philistines celebrated the victory of their god over Israel's God by placing the ark—like a trophy of war—in the temple of the Philistine god Dagon. Yet God found an effective way to hallow His Name. Just as He had done with Egypt, God started gently. He then gradually tightened the screws on the Philistines, in effect saying, "Let My ark go."

- Describe the steps God took in convincing the Philistines to return the ark to Israel (see 1 Samuel 5).
- How was God teaching the Philistines to fear Him above their own gods?
- Where do you see God's mercy and love for the Philistines in this story?

Finally, the Philistines were beaten and just as Pharaoh, the ruler of the Egyptians, let God's people go, the Philistine rulers let the ark go.

- Discuss how God worked a small miracle to again hallow His Name as He passed the final test of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 6:1-16.

As Jesus went to the cross for our salvation, God faced a similar struggle to hallow His Name. He had publicly declared Jesus His beloved Son with whom He was well pleased, now He must allow His Son to be condemned and executed on the cross for the sins of the world.

- How were the taunts of Jesus' enemies at the cross similar to the Philistine's gesture of putting the ark in the temple of Dagon?
- What miraculous signs did God use to hallow His Name to these enemies?
- How did God show His love and mercy for these enemies?