

doubt that Dagon, the god of Philistia, was stronger than the God of Israel? In their exultation they took the ark into the temple of their god, and set it by Dagon, and there the two things were to be seen together—the figure of their god, whose upper part was like a man, and whose lower part was like a fish, and the holy chest which signified Jehovah's presence—the idol raised on high, the ark down upon the ground below. So they were left when night fell. But in the morning there was a change; for Dagon had fallen flat upon his face before the ark of the Lord.

The priests of Dagon could not understand the fall. Perhaps they would think that it was an accident. And so the idol was set firmly upon his pedestal again. But when the priests were gone Dagon fell again, and did obeisance to the ark of the Lord. And this time he did not only fall, but he was broken in pieces; his head was taken from his shoulders; his hands were cut off from his arms; only the stump of Dagon was left.

What did the priests say now? At least this second fall was no chance; there was a reason for it; and the reason was not far to find. As long as the ark of God was placed in Dagon's temple, Dagon could not stand up. Dagon's place was undermost, not uppermost. Dagon was not a better or a stronger god than the Lord God of Israel. The God who had made a way through the sea, and had done such great things in Egypt, was above all gods. Other gods were false gods, no gods. Jehovah, the God of Israel, was the one living and true God; and by this miracle He would teach the Philistines and other nations, that even if His ark should fall into the hands of enemies, still He, and He alone, was God.

And how often has He taught the same truth, though in other ways? All along throughout the course of ages God has taught an unbelieving world that often when His cause seems the weakest it is then most strong.

Especially and most memorably was this shown when Christ, His Son, was in the world. His Son was sent into the world to fight with Satan and wicked men, His enemies, as the ark was sent to fight against the Philistines. His Son was the true ark, containing in Himself and in His life the two tables of the law which He fulfilled—the priesthood, better than that of Aaron, which He discharged when He offered Himself as the Lamb of the atoning Sacrifice—the manna from heaven, which is His own body and blood, bestowed in the holy sacrament—and being personally the seat of the divine mercy on which God rests, and in which He manifests His love to us sinners. And this ark, this Son of God, how did He fight with Satan and the Philistines? He fought by dying, He conquered by defeat, when Satan moving wicked men, put Him to death upon the cross. A world knowing not His true nature and power did with Him as Dagon's priests did with God's ark; took Him into their temple, said to Him that He pretended to be a king and Saviour, but that they were His masters, and would kill Him. When Christ was lifted up upon the cross by sinful men, it seemed as if He lay before the world's feet, a helpless victim. And yet that very season of His extreme weak-