

THE GOD OF ISRAEL CANNOT BE CAPTURED

God's presence is not a good luck charm that can be manipulated for our benefit.



THE STORY: 1 SAMUEL 4

MONDAY

After a defeat, the Israelites took matters into their own hands

After a defeat, the Israelites took matters into their own hands – After the Philistines defeated Israel, the elders of Israel asked a very good question, “Why?” The Lord would have told them that they were not following God, but instead of turning to Him, they took matters into their own hands. The people, with the elders, sent for the ark which was at Shiloh. When the ark arrived, Israel gave a great shout. They drifted so far from the Lord that they thought victory was secured by simply bringing the ark to the battlefield. They did not consider their lack of faithfulness, their disobedience, or their lack of repentance. Trusting in the ark, not God, they proudly paraded a decorated wooden box and imagined that victory was sure.

The Philistines captured the ark of God, Hophni and Phinehas were killed, Eli fell over and died of a broken neck, and Phinehas’ pregnant wife gave birth. She called her newborn son, “Ichabod”, which means “no glory,” for she said “the glory has departed from Israel.”

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why didn't using the ark help the Israelites defeat their enemies? *(The ark was not God. The ark was simply a wooden box where God's presence fell. The Israelites didn't call out to God. They simply took the wooden box and thought they could control God.)*

Does everything work out the way we think it should? *(No.)* Is that good? *(Yes. God's plan is always better than ours, even when it doesn't look that way.)*

Read verses 7 and 8. What is different about the way the Philistines describe the situation. (It is interesting to note that when the Philistines refer to the ark as “these mighty gods,” the letter “g” is not capitalized. The ark went with Israel, but God did not.)

PRAY:

Exalt God and praise Him for His greatness. Recognize that God cannot be manipulated by man.



Grace in the midst of judgment

Grace in the midst of judgment – If the glory of the Lord had truly abandoned Israel, the ark would have been captured and likely destroyed or desecrated. Instead, the covenant-keeping God, unbeknownst to Israel, inflicted painful boils on the people of every Philistine city where the Ark resided. God also toppled the statue of the Philistine god Dagon. When the Philistines replaced their idol, they found it the next day toppled again with its head and hands broken off. The presence of the Lord had not departed. The Lord God of Israel, in His grace, toppled the heathen god in a demonstration of His supremacy. God cared for the unbelievers by showing them their sin and His power. One day they would be grafted into the people of God by the merciful sacrifice of Christ.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why did Dagon topple? *(Even though the ark was not God, the ark was a symbol of the true and living God. The Philistines treated the God of the Israelites with disrespect. They thought He was like any other god. God would show the Philistines that Israel's God was the true mighty God, the God who judges Israel's sin and judges sinful idol worship too.)*

Why were God's actions against the Philistines good news for the Israelites? *(Though God had allowed Israel to be defeated in battle, God had not forsaken Israel. God's presence remained close. The ark would one day return to Israel, and the presence of God would dwell on it once again.)*

PRAY:

Thank God for His amazing forgiveness both to Israel and to us.





THE STORY: EPHESIANS 1:11-14

WEDNESDAY

The Ark of the Covenant was where the presence of God fell. It represented God's presence among His people.

Where is Jesus?

Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, God's presence is now in the hearts of those who believe and in the midst of our gatherings (Mat 18:20). Because Jesus paid the penalty for all our sin, nothing can take away God's presence in the life of a believer (Romans 8:38-39). Now believers are the ark of God!

After the ark of God returned, Samuel mediated before the Lord for Israel. Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it to the Lord. Even as he did so, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. The Lord thundered a mighty sound against them and threw them into confusion and Israel routed them (1 Samuel 7:3-11).

TALK ABOUT IT:

In Samuel's day the presence of the Lord dwelt among Israel upon the ark of God. Where does the presence of the Lord dwell today? (*The presence of the Lord dwells in the hearts of believers and in midst of the gathered church.*)

Read 1 Samuel 7:3-11. What reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus in this passage? (*Samuel's sacrifice of the lamb points to Jesus' sacrifice.*)

PRAY:

Thank God for pouring out His Spirit into the hearts of everyone who believes.



THE STORY: 1 SAMUEL 6:1-16

THURSDAY

The ark of God came back to Israel

The ark of God came back to Israel – God did not need to be rescued. After repeatedly afflicting the Philistines, God gave the Philistine priests wisdom about how they could remove the curse from their people. The Philistines were to send the ark back with a guilt offering to “give glory to the God of Israel”(1 Samuel 6:5). In that way “perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods”. Amazingly, the Philistines were more aware of the supremacy of God than the Israelites were.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What is the first thing the Israelites did when the ark returned? *(They rejoiced and offered up a burnt offering to the Lord. Notice that they did not offer the sacrifice to the ark, but to the Lord.)*

How was this different from the way they went into battle? *(They treated the ark as a god in going into battle, but here they realize that "God is bigger than this wooden box.")*

PRAY:

Thank God for the grace He extended toward Israel in returning the ark and the grace He extends to us by allowing His presence to dwell in our hearts.



THE STORY: ISAIAH 52:10 & LUKE 2:29-32

FRIDAY

On the road to Emmaus.

The salvation of Israel described here is worldwide. No salvation came to Israel that could quite satisfy the scope of this world except the salvation brought through Jesus. Acts 4:12 tells us that salvation is not found in anybody else. Simeon, in Luke 2:30, speaks the fulfillment of this word: "For my eyes have seen your salvation". In Revelation 14:6 we see that God is saving people from every tribe and nation through Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did Simeon see and do at the temple? *(He saw the baby Jesus, took the child in his arms, and prophesied.)*

Why did he do that? *(The Spirit of God told Simeon he would see the Messiah and the Spirit of God moved him to go to the temple.)*

What did Simeon say? *(Simeon didn't say he saw the Messiah, he said he saw God's salvation. God showed Simeon the salvation of our God which one day will be seen by all.)*

Simeon said that God could let him depart in peace because the word given to him had been fulfilled.

PRAY:

Thank God that He included all nations in His plan of salvation. That means that you and your family can be included!

