

# THE GOD OF ISRAEL CANNOT BE CAPTURED

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 SAMUEL 4-6



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

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**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. Hophni and Phinehas were too eager to allow this and traveled with them. 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.

**God brought His judgment upon Israel** – The Philistines feared the Lord more than did the Israelites. Israel’s shout actually sobered the Philistines and aroused Israel’s enemies to battle. This was a much different outcome than the shout which felled the walls of Jericho or the shout that caused confusion in the Midianite ranks, which lead them to killing each other while Gideon and 300 men watched.

The Philistines captured the ark of God, Hophni and Phinehas were killed, Eli fell over and died of a broken his 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.”

**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.

**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”, (see 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 were the Israelites were.

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### Where Is Jesus?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

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

Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, God's presence is now in the hearts of those who believe, see Ephesians 1:13-14. Because Jesus paid the penalty for all our sin, nothing can take away God's presence in the life of a believer, see 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). Once again we see the sacrifice of a lamb casting a shadow forward toward Jesus.



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### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

**Bible Passage: Isaiah 52:10**

#### Connecting the passage to Christ:

The salvation of Israel depicted here is worldwide. No salvation came to Israel that could quite satisfy the scope of this word 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".

#### Questions for reflection:

- What did Simeon see that gave him the confidence to declare the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy? (The Spirit of God told Simeon he would see the Messiah and the Spirit of God moves on him to go to the temple. When he does, he sees the baby Jesus, and takes Jesus in his arms and prophesies.)
- Simeon said that God could let him depart in peace because the word given to him had been fulfilled. What did Simeon say he saw? (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.)

### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

#### BUILD YOUR OWN ARK

##### Supplies

- enough yellow modeling dough to give each child a small piece
- photocopy of a picture of the Ark of God

The object of the activity is to help the children understand that Israel's power was not in a wooden box but in the presence of the Lord.

Locate a picture of the Ark from a Bible study aid or the internet. Make one copy for every desk or table in the classroom. Pass out the modeling dough and ask each child to sculpt a model of the Ark. When all students are finished, have them place the models on one table and have the children pick the one they think looks the best.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Now that we have picked the best Ark, what do you think we can get with it? Could it get us some money? If we asked it to give us a bag of chocolate, could it give us any? (The children should be easily able to tell you that these Arks cannot get you anything.)

- What is missing from our Ark? (God is missing.)

Make the comparison with the Ark in Israel. The Israelites tried to use it as a good luck charm and forgot about God. Explain that even for Israel to use the Ark as though the Ark itself was powerful was to make the Ark their God. That is idolatry.



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### DAGON'S DOWN

#### Supplies

- three foam spheres
- a foam cube
- toothpicks

Make a model of Dagon by attaching the spheres to the cube with toothpicks to resemble two arms and a head. Plain foam is fine or you may decorate it as you see fit.

Use the prop to bring a bit of drama to the story as you read aloud from 1 Samuel 5:1-5.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why did God topple the Philistine idol? (God wanted to communicate that He was God and that Dagon had no power.)
- Why do you think God had the head and arms broken off? (The head and arms represent the part of the image that can do something for the people. God was communicating that their idol was powerless.)

### WHAT DOES JUDGMENT LOOK LIKE

#### Supplies

- white board
- prizes for the winners

(option: you can award all students or those who put forth effort)

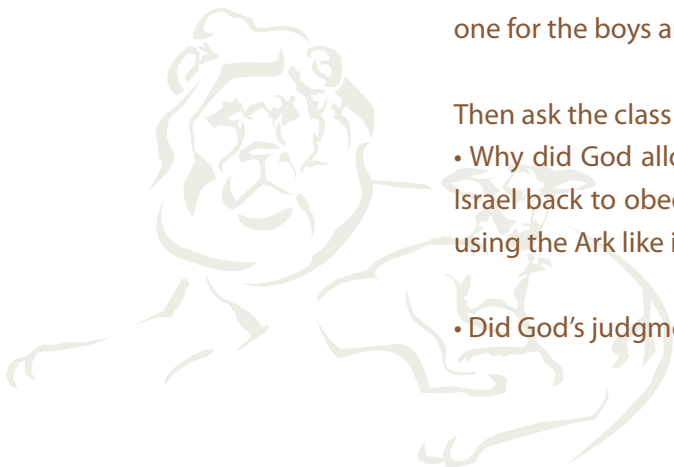
The object of this lesson is to help the children to see all the bad things that happened to Israel are as a result of their disobedience to the Lord.

Have the children open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 4-6 and tell them that you are going to have a contest between the boys and the girls. Each team will have ten seconds to call out a consequence of Israel's disobedience.

Have the boys get into a circle and the girls into another. Give them one minute to look and then flip a coin to see who goes first. Have an official timekeeper and someone to write their answers on the white board. They can make two columns, one for the boys and one for the girls.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why did God allow so much judgment to come to Israel? (God wanted to draw Israel back to obedience while they were worshipping idols and mocking God by using the Ark like it was a god.)
- Did God's judgment work? (Yes, read 1 Samuel 7:3-11 for the answer.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of the Ark next to a broken Dagon idol.

### FOR OLDER GRADES

Read the battles out loud and work through the first three questions as a class. Have the students record their answers on their worksheets. Then have the students write their answers to the last two questions on their own, followed by a class discussion.

Compare the battles of:

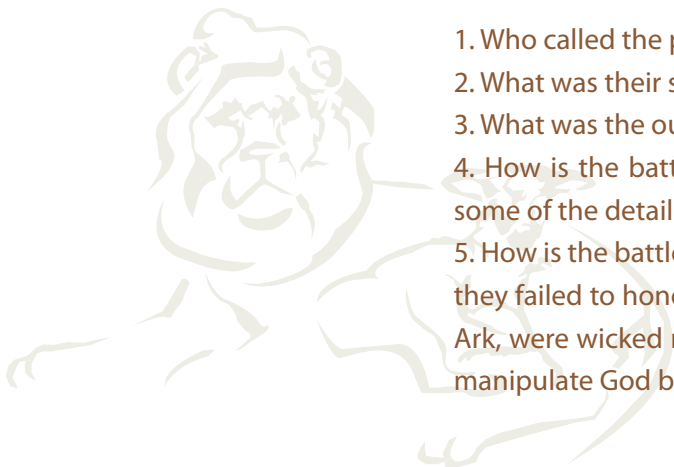
The capture of the Ark of God (1 Samuel 4:3-11)

Gideon's victory over Midian (Judges 7:9-25)

Joshua's victory over Jericho (Joshua 6:1-21)

Answer the following questions.

1. Who called the people to battle?
2. What was their strategy to win?
3. What was the outcome?
4. How is the battle of 1 Samuel similar to the other two? (The Israelites copied some of the details from past successful battles.)
5. How is the battle of 1 Samuel different? (The Israelites made a big mistake, when they failed to honor God before battle. Hophni and Phinehas, the priests with the Ark, were wicked men. God was not about to bless this charade. Israel could not manipulate God by moving the Ark. The Ark of God is not a good luck charm.)



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### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**The Ark of the Covenant** – The Ark of the Covenant (also called the Ark of the Testimony or the Ark of God) was a wooden box covered with gold and with two winged Cherubim facing each other such that their wing tips touched. It was part of the furnishings made for the tabernacle in Exodus 25. The Ark was a visible sign of the presence of God in Israel. 1 Samuel 4:4 talks about the presence of God in saying that the Lord Almighty is “enthroned between the cherubim.” The Ark is also referred to as the “footstool of God”, 1 Chronicles 28:2. God had Moses and Joshua lead the nation with the Ark of God in the front and the people came to understand that whenever the Lord’s presence leads, He will bring victory. It was not the Ark, but the presence and blessing of God, which brought victory for Israel.



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## WORKSHEET

Compare the battles:

The capture of the Ark of God (1 Samuel 4:3-11)

Gideon's victory over Midian (Judges 7:9-25)

Joshua's victory over Jericho (Joshua 6:1-21)

Answer the following questions.

1. Who called the people to battle? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What was their strategy to win? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What was the outcome? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How is the battle of 1 Samuel similar to the other two? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How is the battle of 1 Samuel different? \_\_\_\_\_

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