

Preschool
The Ark was Captured
Parent Devo & Bible Study

Session Title: The Ark Was Captured

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 4–6

Story Point: God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God.

Key Passage: Jeremiah 10:6

Big Picture Question: Is anything greater than God? No, God is greater than everything.

Parent Devotional

The ark of God (also called “the ark of the covenant”) was an important symbol in the lives of God’s people. Not only was the ark the original container for the Ten Commandments, it symbolized God’s presence with His people.

In Exodus 25, God gave Moses instructions for creating the ark. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. God forbade anyone from touching the ark, so it was carried by two poles. God would speak to Moses from between two golden cherubim on top of the ark, which was called the mercy seat. (See Num. 7:89.)

During the time of the judges, the Philistines were a near-constant threat to Israel. Under Samuel’s leadership, the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. But Israel was defeated because of their sin. The elders of Israel realized that God had allowed their defeat. He hadn’t fought for them against the Philistines.

So they did what seemed logical to them; they took the ark—the symbol of God’s presence—and carried it to the battlefield. But the ark was not a good luck charm. Not only was Israel defeated, the Philistines captured the ark and killed Eli’s sons. When Eli heard the news, he fell over and died. Having won the victory, the Philistines concluded that their chief god, Dagon, was better than the God of Israel. They moved the ark to Dagon’s temple, where God showed His power over Dagon. (See 1 Sam. 5:1-5.)

As the ark moved between Philistine cities, God afflicted the people and made them sick. The message was clear: No one is like the Lord. God is greater than everything and everyone. The Philistines returned the ark, Israel’s reminder that God was with them. Years later, God gave His people something greater than a sign that He was with them; God gave them His Son, Jesus—God in the flesh. One of Jesus’ names is Immanuel, which means “God with us.”

BIBLE STORY

The Ark Was Captured

1 Samuel 4–6

The people of Israel and the Philistines did not get along. The Israelites **fought a battle** against the Philistines, and the Philistines won. The Israelites were confused. Why had God allowed them to lose? **The Israelites made a plan to take the ark of God to the battle. The ark of God was a beautiful box from the tabernacle that reminded the people that God was with them.** They thought the ark might help them win the battle.

Eli's sons, the priests, took the ark of the covenant to the Israelites' camp. **When the army of Israelites saw the ark, they shouted with joy. Surely they would win the battle now!**

The Israelites fought the battle, **but the Philistines won** again! Many Israelites died—including Eli's two sons—and the Philistines **captured the ark of God!**

The Philistines took the ark of God to a temple where they worshiped Dagon (DAY gahn), a false god. They put the ark next to a statue of Dagon. The next morning, the Philistines went into **the temple** and saw that Dagon's **statue was facedown in front of the ark.** They set the statue back up. The next day, it was facedown again **and its head and hands were broken off.**

God punished the people living in the city where the ark of God was. God made them really sick. The people in that city wanted to get rid of the ark. **When they moved the ark to another city, everyone in that city got sick.** So they moved the ark to a third city. Then everyone in that city got sick as well.

The Philistines were afraid. They didn't want God to punish them anymore, so **they decided to return the ark** along with gifts of gold to show they were sorry for taking it. The people hitched two cows to a cart and put the ark on the cart. The cows moved the ark down the road until **the ark of God was back with the Israelites, where it belonged.**

Christ Connection: The ark of God reminded the Israelites that God was with them. Many years later God gave His people something even better to remind them that He was with them. God sent His Son, Jesus. One of Jesus' names is Immanuel, which means "God with us."

Memory Verse:

Jeremiah 10:6

“There is none like you, O Lord;
you are great, and your name is great in might.”