



MOSAIC Gospel Project

Volume 4, Unit 10, Lesson 2: The Ark Was Captured

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 4-6

Personal Preparation

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 (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 god Dagon was better than the God of Israel. They moved the ark to Dagon’s temple, where God showed his power over Dagon (1 Sam. 5:1-5). As the ark moved between the 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.”

As you prepare to teach, thank God that he is present with us. Thank him for symbolizing his presence through the ark of God and for sending Jesus as the incarnate presence of God. Pray that the individuals would know the presence of God and his grace in choosing to be with us.

Memory Verse

Begin the lesson by reviewing the memory verse.

Jeremiah 10:6

“Lord, there is no one like you! For you are great, and your name is full of power.”

Points of Emphasis

1. God showed the Philistines that he is the one true God.
2. God is greater than everything and everyone.

Activity #1

Guide the group to begin working on the activity sheet. Feel free to let them continue working as you teach the lesson.

Video

After God’s people left Egypt and refused to trust God and enter the promised land, they wandered in the wilderness. God told his people how to build the tabernacle where he would dwell with them. One of the things they built with the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant, or ark of God. The ark was a wooden box covered in gold that contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron’s rod. The ark was very important to the Israelites.

Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land. When Joshua died, the Israelites were led by judges. Samuel was the last judge. He grew up and was a prophet and leader to Israel. The title of today’s Bible story is “The Ark Was Captured.” Uh-oh. That doesn’t sound good. Let’s find out what happened.

Play the video for the lesson titled “The Ark Was Captured.”

Bible Lesson

When the people of Israel were defeated in battle, they knew it was because God did not fight for them. However, they made a crucial mistake. They did not stop to consider that their sin was the problem. Instead, they assumed that they just needed the ark of the covenant. The ark was a symbol of God’s presence with his people, after all. God’s people wanted God to fight for them, but they did not care about loving or obeying him.

Instead of seeing the ark for what it was—a special way God showed his love for them—they treated it like a good luck charm. Perhaps they thought if we carry the ark of God into battle, God will have to defeat our enemies for us. But God cannot be controlled or manipulated. God always does what he wants because what he wants is always best. When the Philistines won the battle and took the ark, they thought it was proof that their false god was stronger than the one true God.

They had no idea how wrong they were! Their statue of Dagon fell over and even broke. Then, the people began to get sick in the cities where the ark was kept! Clearly, their false god could not stop the punishment that the one true God was sending. God showed the Philistines that he is the one true God. Soon, the Philistines decided they needed to give back the ark. They were no match for God.

Activity #2

Lead the group to finish filling out the activity sheet. Review the memory verse with the group. Let them practice what they’ve learned, and help them continue learning the verse. Encourage them to write the verse using the Velcro pictures.

Christ Connection

Both the Israelites and the Philistines learned they could not control God. Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone. God cannot be controlled or contained. Thankfully, he is holy, good, and loving. We can trust God to use his power to do what is best.

The ark of God reminded the Israelites 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.”

Review Questions

(Optional: Play the Questions from Kids (QFK) video to continue the discussion on the Philistines taking the ark of God. Today’s episode asks how we know that God is with us if we can’t see him.)

Group A

Early Learner

Encourage the individuals to point to the pictures provided or to draw in order to answer these questions.

1. **Point to what God gave the Israelites as a symbol of his presence.** The ark of God
2. **Point to who defeated the Israelites and took the ark of God.** The Philistines
3. **Point to who got sick because they stole the ark of God.** The Philistines
4. **Point to whose presence the ark of God symbolized.** God

Group B

1. **What did the people of Israel do to try and win the battle against the Philistines?**
Took the ark into battle
2. **Who won the battle?** The Philistines
3. **What happened to the Philistines while they had the ark?** Their idol fell and broke. Their people got sick.
4. **Why did Israel lose the battles they fought?** Most of the Israelites weren't interested in loving or obeying God. God chose not to fight for them because he wanted them to turn back to him from their sin. They wanted to use the ark to force God to fight for them. They expected the ark to protect them, instead of trusting in God and obeying him.
5. **What action did God take many years after the story to even more clearly show his presence with his people?** Jesus is the visible image of God. He is God's Son and perfectly shows us what God is like. When we know Jesus and have faith in him, God forgives us and gives us new life. The Holy Spirit fills us with God's power and stays with us to help us love and obey God.
6. **What are some ways we show that we do not trust God? How can we grow to trust him more?** Sin in our lives usually proves there are ways we are not trusting God. We worship or trust in other things, which leads us to sin. We can grow in our faith by reading his Word, going to church, asking him for help, and confessing our sin.

Group C

1. **What was wrong with the Israelites' battle strategy?** The ark was a reminder of God's presence, but God did not live in it—you can't put God into a box! We can ask God

for things we want or need, but we cannot make God do what we want.

2. **Do you always consult God when you want something to happen a certain way? Why or why not?** God is in control of all things. He does everything for his glory and our good. If something happens in a way we do not desire or expect, we can still trust God even when we don't understand.
3. **How is God with us today?** God gave us his Son, Jesus—God in the flesh. One of Jesus' names in Immanuel, which means "God with us." When Jesus went back to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to live inside believers.

Prayer

Lord, you are good, and your mercy never ends. You are above all things and all people. Nothing can stop your plans, and they are always perfect. Help us to love and trust you more each day. Give us hearts that long for you. Amen.

