

# Capturing God

Welcome

We are going to be looking together at the Word of God in 1 Samuel 4.

**Philistines = people who refuse to serve God**

**Israelites = people who try to serve God (but often fail)**

**Ark of the Covenant = God's presence**

1 Samuel 4:10-11 (NIV) So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot

soldiers. 11 The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

Israel lost more than a battle, they lost the ark of the covenant.

Philistines rejoiced - captured the God of the Israelites.

## **Capturing God**

1 Samuel 5 - Philistines take the Ark to Ashdod

Display God

## **Ashdod = Spoiler**

Ashdod means spoiler, ravager, one who plunders...

Capture and display

Dagon – fish-god temple

1<sup>st</sup> time knocked down Dagon

2<sup>nd</sup> time Dagon knocked down – head and hands broken off.

## Capturing God

It seems like the God of Israel is not so easy to capture. He has busted up Dagon and that is just the start.

1 Samuel 5:6-7 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> The LORD's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumors.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>7</sup> When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of

the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god."

Ashdod, the spoiler is having trouble, so they send their "captive" to another city named Gath.

## **Gath = Presser**

Gath is known for 2 things.

- 1 Goliath,
- 2 Winepresses.

Strength to crush and squeeze anything that stood in their way.

Gath would show Ashdod how to capture God...

1 Samuel 5:9 (NIV) But after they had moved it, the Lord's hand was against Gath, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors

\*10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron...

## **Ekron = Eradicator**

Known for their complete destruction of cities & crops. How would they respond to the captured ark of God?

\*1 Samuel 5:10 (NIV) ...As the ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought the ark of the god of

Israel around to us to kill us and our people."

As the ark entered the people cried out...  
Your God is powerful!

The God of Israel was not like any other captured spoiled, king, or idol.

They thought they had captured God, but instead this happened.

**Spoiled the spoilers**

**Pressed the pressers**

**Eradicates the eradicators**

The ark of God was in a foreign land... but God was still on the throne.

11 So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, "Send the ark of the god of Israel

away; let it go back to its own place,  
or it[c] will kill us and our people.” For  
death had filled the city with panic;  
God’s hand was very heavy on it.

Israel got the Ark back without having to send out a search party.

Israel got the victory without forming an army.

Israel received the Ark back because God is not capturable.

You can win a victory today, because Your God is uncapturable.

**Any God that can be captured  
is not really God**

God cannot be manipulated.

...controlled.

... imprisoned.

Worship is not manipulation...

Pray is not holding God captive...

Worship because He is the uncapturable God.

NEVER place God in the temple of an idol

We should never hold God as lesser than Dagon... sin, greed, lust, disobedience, sickness, problems

Break the idol.

We pray to God because He is the uncapturable God.

We should never treat him as a means to a desired end.

God is the desired end!

His blessings are not the desired end. His blessings come along as an added bonus.

**Uncapturable God**



Woah to any enemy that thinks they can take God from you.

Woah to the enemy who thinks they can capture God.

Even when Israel lost the Ark of God, God continued to work on their behalf. God won battles for Israel in Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, that Israel never earned.

The uncapturable God will do that for you today.

(SING BATTLE BELONGS)

**Capturing God**

God ransacked Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron.  
Ark sent back to Israel.

They placed the Ark on a wooden cart  
pulled by 2 cows.

Gold from 5 cities. (gold shaped like the  
judgment they had received – tumors and  
rats/mice. (1 Sam 6:4))

So Israel receives the Ark and gold!

Happy end? ...something happens when  
the ark comes to is city of Beth Shemesh.

1 Samuel 6:19-20 (NIV) 19 But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the Lord. The people mourned because of the heavy blow

the Lord had dealt them. 20 And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, “Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?”

The heavy hand of God. Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, Now Beth Shemesh mistreated God’s presence - looked inside the Ark of the Covenant.

They did not honor God’s presence.

They did not humble themselves before His presence.

Treated God as a captive and did as they pleased.

Like the previous philistine towns, Beth Shemesh also seeks to send away the Ark of God.

1 Samuel 6:21 (NIV) Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and take it up to your town."

And for 20 years the ark stays at Kiriath Jearim.

Just sat there until David retrieved it in 2 Samuel 6.

2 Samuel 6:5 (NIV) David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

Happy ending? No

2 Samuel 6:6-7 (NIV) 6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon,

Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. 7 The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

Uzzah who had been watching the ark for many years in Kiriath Jearim  
Became casual with God's presence.  
Touched the ark and died.

Ark stops. Now what? Where?

REMINDER – Ark has been an issue -  
Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Beth Shemesh, and  
Kiriath Jearim

Who in their right mind would want the  
Ark?

2 Samuel 6:10-11 (NIV) 10...David  
took it to the house of Obed-Edom  
the Gittite. 11 The ark of the Lord  
remained in the house of Obed-Edom  
the Gittite for three months, and the  
Lord blessed him and his entire  
household.

Ark IN HIS HOUSE! (coffee table joke)

## **Obed-Edom the Gittite**

Name means “servant of Edom.” Edomite = enemy. Possibly an Edomite.

Gittite means from city of Gath - enemy of Israel. Possibly a Philistine.

told later Obed-Edom - Israelite / tribe of Levi. (1 Chronicles 15:17-18)

Mixed bag. Levite? Friendly with enemies of Israel?

Yet Obed-Edom allows God in His home.

2 Samuel 6:11 The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.

For 3 months the ark was in his home and he was blessed.

So what is the difference between Obed-Edom and the cities of Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Beth Shemesh, and Kiriath Jearim?

They “captured God.” They treated God callously. They treated God like He were common.

Obed-Edom welcomed God into His home as a guest.

# How do you treat God?

Do you treat God like a captive?

Do you tell God what to do?

Do you tell God what He is allowed to do in your life?

Do you tell God what in His Word you will follow and what you will not follow?

Traditions, Unbelief, Unforgiveness...

Do you treat God as common?

Are you surrendered to God or do you act like He should surrender to you?

Do you treat God as a guest?

Do you make room? Make time?

Are you glad God is present?

Do you ask God what you can do for Him?



Ark in home 3 months = blessed home.

King David comes for Ark? Happy ending?

Obed-Edom waves goodbye and has a wild story?

Not the end...

Once you really experience God's presence... His love... His blessing... you are never the same again.

REALIZE you could never capture God, but that He could capture you.

## **God captures us**

God captured the attention of Obed-Edom.

God captured the heart...

God captured his desire (his life goals changed)

Obed-Edom did not just wave goodbye to God... He followed God all the way to God's house in Jerusalem.

\*1 Chronicles 15:24 (NIV) Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God.

***Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also to be doorkeepers for the ark.***

Because God came to his house, He decided to dwell in God's house.

Obed-Edom went to Jerusalem, to the temple, and was the door keeper for God's house.

**God captures us**

Those that try to capture God end up sending God away and running away.

Those that are captured by God are changed forever.

Experiencing God's goodness changes you.

Experiencing His kindness and blessing changes you.

Are you trying to capture God today, or will you allow God to capture you?

Psalm 84:10 (NIV) Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Obed-Edom said I would rather be a  
doorkeeper...

What will you say to God? I would rather  
be...?

Worship and altar time