
The Ark of the Covenant

Exodus 25:10; Hebrews 9

You will turn with me now to Exodus 25. And we read from verse 10 through verse 22. Exodus 25, verses 10 through 22.

In the ninth chapter of the Book of Hebrews, the author has much to say about this Holy of Holies. In the tabernacle and, beyond that veil, in the Holy of Holies, was this piece of furniture, every part of it, a beautiful, meaningful, significant symbol of our Lord. In it, you will find the whole gospel of grace.

Exodus 25:10-22—twelve verses. Now let's read them together:

¹⁰ “And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.

¹¹ And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. ¹² You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. ¹³ And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. ¹⁵ The poles shall be in

the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. ¹⁶ And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

¹⁷ “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. ¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. ²⁰ And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

We have come to the most holy place in the earth. No other place ever so sacred, so hallowed, as this before which now we stand. It is as though God had commanded us that we take off the shoes from our feet, for the place where we stand is holy ground.

This is the meeting place between God and man. This is the place where, for five hundred years, Jehovah God spoke to His people, from the days of Moses to the days of David, here in the Holy of Holies, in the tabernacle.

Coming in through the gate into the outer court, going in through the door into the holy place, and there was the veil separating in between. Beyond the veil, facing the veil, was this holy ark of the covenant of God. And, everything in that place—every part of it, every piece of it, how it was made, what it was made of, what it stood for, what it meant—all of it spoke of the marvelous grace of God in Christ, our Lord.

The Holy of Holies was a square, was a cube: this way, this way, this way. Every way, it was exactly square. Like the city of God, the new Jerusalem, it is four-square. And, there was no light in it. Just the Shekinah glory of God burned in it. Like the celestial city of the new Jerusalem, they need no light of the sun to shine by day or light of the moon to shine by night, for the Lord God enlighteneth it and the Lamb is the light thereof.

And, it was entered on just the Day of Atonement with blood of atonement. And, the only approach that is ever made into the immediate and awful and holy presence of God is in blood of atonement.

This holy and sacred place is a throne in a sanctuary. And, out of it, God rules the universe in righteousness, in love, and in grace. In the ninety-ninth Psalm:

The Lord reigneth; et the people tremble; he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved.

The Lord is great... he is high above all the people.

Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

He dwelleth between the cherubim.

Israel was a theocracy and their king was Jehovah God. And, He reigned from His throne in that Holy of Holies. And, the seat of God's holy presence was there between the cherubim, above the mercy seat that crowned the ark. That is one of the most, one of the most marvelous and wonderful of all the revelations of the Bible: a throne in a sanctuary, a throne in a Holy of Holies, from which God exercises His government of justice and of grace.

That idea is all through the Scriptures: that God's throne is in a sanctuary—it is in a Holy of Holies, and that God's government is in righteousness and in holiness and in grace and in mercy. When Isaiah saw his great vision of the Lord, it was in the Temple, high and lifted upon a throne: God's throne in

that Holy of Holies. In that marvelous, ideal temple that Ezekiel describes in his great prophecy, he sees God on His throne in the Holy of Holies.

In the Revelation, in the fourth chapter, when the seer of Patmos is allowed to look into the heavens, the first thing that he sees is the throne of God sitting in the midst thereof. And, when he hears the angels sing and the saints praise the Lamb, it is in the presence of the throne of God and before Him who sits upon the throne, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away. A tremendous conception: the finest representation we have of God in this Book is this representation of the Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant, which is Christ our Lord, and the government of the whole universe, from the throne of the almighty in this sanctuary, in this temple, in this holy place.

For the ark itself is a symbol of the invisible God. No eye ever gazed upon it. No Levite, no priest, ever saw it. No profane hand ever touched it. The eyes of no man ever fell upon on it.

When the ark was moved, the veil in between was lowered over it. And, over that veil, was placed a covering of badger skins. And, over the badger skins, was placed a cloth of blue. And, when the priest carried it from place to place, it was very conspicuous. It was the only article covered with blue in all of the trains of the moving, marching camp of Israel. But, no eyes set upon it and no one ever saw it. It was veiled from view by the badger skins

and by the covering of heaven, just like our God. “No man hath seen God at any time.”

Just once a year, the high priest entered beyond the veil and, there, with blood of atonement, bowed in the presence of the great and invisible God. “No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” [[John 1:18](#)] The badger skin represented the covering of the humility of our heavenly Lord. And, our only sight of God is in our sight of Jesus Christ. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” [[John 14:9](#)]

This is our vision of the invisible God: this ark of the covenant, which represents, in all of its parts and ways, the incarnation of the Son of God. It was made of acacia wood and of pure gold inside and out. The hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ: the wood, His humanity; the gold, His deity—but, the two are never inter-commingled. The wood is the wood and the gold is still the gold. He is God of very God. He is man of very man.

And, two the natures, though there is one Christ, are yet separate and distinct. Never did a hyphen mean so much as when we speak of the “God-man,” Christ Jesus.

And, this ark of acacia wood and of pure, beaten gold is a picture of the humanity of our Savior, who sat weary by the well, who was hungered and

who did thirst, who wept our human tears and lived our life of sorrow and death: a man of men, a true man, but, at the same time, God, our very God: “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” “It pleased God that in Him should all the fullness of deity dwell.” Just as the ark was of wood and of gold, so our Lord a true man and the only God.

These things that were in the ark, each one of them speak of the wonderful personality of our Savior. There was in the ark—says the author of Hebrews, here in the ninth chapter, there was in the ark the tables of the testimony—the tables of the covenant, the two tables of stone. They were deposited there inside of that ark.

The first tables of stones that God had made, Moses breaks them on the stones of the mountain. The people down in the valley, in an orgy of dancing and merriment around a golden calf, had broken God's commandment. But, the commandments that God gave to Moses on those other two tables of stone were deposited in the heart of the ark. And, there, they lay unbroken and undefiled.

So it is in the humanity of our Lord and of us. In us, the tables are broken and cast down in pieces. But, in Christ, in the heart of our Savior, God's law is unbroken and it remains undefiled, every part beautifully and marvelously kept in the life and soul of Jesus, our Savior—In the ark, the two tables of stone unbroken.

And, in the ark, he says, was the golden pot of manna, representing the ableness and the adequacy of our God to fulfill all of the needs and wants of our life. As it says in the second chapter of the Book of the Revelation: “To Him that overcometh will I give to each of the hidden manna.” The fullness of God, the unwasted adequacy of God to take care of all of the needs of his people, all of them met in Christ—the golden pot of manna.

And, in the ark, the rod of Aaron that budded: a picture of our Lord, this dead stick, this rod, that was laid up before God. Dead, lifeless, inanimate, a dry stick and, behold, in the morning, when they came into the house of the Lord, the rod had budded. It had flowered, and it bore almond fruit unto God. So our Lord did, a corpse, leave the grave.

And, on a morning, behold, the rod had flowered and fruited unto God. By that budding of the almond rod, God designated Aaron as mediator between God and man: the high priest in the tabernacle. Oh, by the resurrection from the dead, God designated Jesus Christ as the one and only mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus!

It is not Mohammed. It is not Buddha. It is not Zoroaster. It is not Moses. It is not any other man that ever shall or will or has lived. The one man designated to be the great high priest and mediator between God and man is this one man, Christ Jesus, designated such by the resurrection from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

So, the ark speaks of our Lord. And, the ark always speaks of grace and salvation. There are three arks mentioned in the Bible. One of them is the ark of Noah, how Noah was saved. The other, the second ark, is the ark laid upon the bosom of the Nile River, in which the child Moses was saved. And, the other ark, the third one, is this one in the Holy of Holies, in which and by which we are brought nigh unto God, through the propitiary, the mercy seat that covers the tables of the law and the testimony. These things all bring us into the very presence of the Almighty God, through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now, in the sermon tonight, I can do nothing more than kind of introduce the subject. In the few moments that remain—and, follow me just the best you can, these things have to be so briefly spoken and so much condensed, in so little a while. In the brief time that remains, I want to follow the story of the ark, which is the story of Jesus, the Son of God.

To begin with, the ark was placed in the center of the people. There was the court. And, inside of the court was the tabernacle. And, inside of the tabernacle was the holy place. And, beyond the veil of the holy place was the Holy of Holies.

And, inside of the Holy of Holies was the ark of covenant, the throne of God, the center of the moral government of the universe. And, the camp was all

around: three types to the right, three to the left, three in front, and three behind. And, in the center, the throne of God, the ark of the covenant.

And, when the people of God marched, they marched six tribes in front, six tribes behind, and the ark of God in the center. The only time of exception to that was when the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey to search out a resting place for them, when Jesus, three days and three nights was in the grave, seeking out, searching out a resting place for the people of God.

The next time we see the story of the ark is at the waters of the Jordan. I prepare a sermon once in a while that means so much to my soul. And, the sermon that I prepared this morning for the eight-fifteen o'clock hour was one of those messages.

I could not tell you how I was blessed in my soul as I prepared that sermon. It was on the ark at the purged, flooded waters of the Jordan River. And, when the feet of the priests that bore the ark came down and touched the little wavelets of water, brown with mud and yeasty with foam in the descending torrent, the waves fled away and the waters cranked back. And, the great, strong hand of God stayed the flood until the last little one that believed in Jesus had crossed through the waters of the Jordan. So it is with God, who holds back the day of judgment and the awful flood of

the waters of the wrath of almighty God until the last little ones of God's redeemed have passed over.

Then, when God's people had passed over into their promised land, there is the ark again, in the center of the church militant. In the center of the warriors of Christ as they march around the city of Jericho, there, in the center, is the ark. There in the center of God's militant churches to be, standing in the midst of the seven-branched lampstand, is the presence of our warrior Christ.

When we have a great task to do, such as we face now in this vast stewardship program, there stands Jesus by the side of his people—the ark of the covenant, the warrior Christ, as they march in the name of Jehovah God. And, when they are defeated at Ai, Joshua rent his clothes and fell down to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord, even until eventide. When we stagger and fail and fall into difficulty, there we are on our faces before the ark of the Lord, before Jesus our Christ. O God, lead us in the way and give us victory in Thy presence.

Then, at Gerazim and at Ebal, the mount of blessing and of cursing, there is the ark in between. And, the people are on this side of it, and the people are on the other side of it. And, the blessings are read and the cursings are read.

So it is with Christ today, as He goes among His people with blessings and with judgments upon our work. When we are faithful and do it well, God gives us His blessings. When we don't have faith and unbelief seizes us, then we have from Christ—like in the messages of Christ to the churches of Asia, we have His rebuke and His call to repentance and a new quickened life in Him.

Then, the story of the ark is the story of Israel. Upon a day, they took the ark without the sanctity of God, using it as a fetish, just like some people have shibboleths and some people trust in ordinances. Some people trust in all kinds of things.

Israel came to trust in this symbol as the thing itself, as God Himself. And, they took it out into battle against the Philistines. And, the Philistines fought and they slew Israel. And, Israel fled every man into his tent. And, the ark of God was taken, just as it was in the life of our Lord: His disciples forsook Him and fled. And, Jesus was betrayed into the hands of sinners, and He was taken away.

Then, you have the story which illustrates so well: 2 Corinthians 2 and 16: “For this thing of the message of Christ is the savor of death unto death that them that don't believe, and it is a savor of life unto life for those who accept it.” That ark, in the hands of the Philistines, was a curse wherever it went.

They took it into their house, to god Dagan. And, Dagan fell off of his pedestal and his head fell off and his hands fell off, broken before the great God Jehovah, represented in the ark. And, then, they took it to one city, then to another city. And, wherever it was taken, it was a curse to the people. And, for seven months, it stayed there in the land of Philistia, in the hands of those that did not believe—the blaspheming, uncircumcised Philistines, and it was a curse to them, death unto death to those who do not believe, but life unto life to those who receive it in faith and in love.

And, the men of Beth-Shemesh rejoiced when the ark was brought by back to the household of faith. And, it was taken, finally, to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite. And, the ark of the Lord stayed in the house of Obed-Edom and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all of his household.

And, David said: “We must bring it back to the holy city,” to Jerusalem. And, they brought the ark of the Lord. And, David built for it there, in Jerusalem, a temporary dwelling place: a tabernacle that David had pitched for it.

And, then, David said: “Son, I have gathered together 100,000 pallets of gold and 1,000 talents of silver to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord into the house to be built in the name of the Lord.” And, Solomon built the house of God.

And, Solomon assembled the elders of the people and the heads of the tribes to bring up the ark of the covenant of God into its final resting place. And, they brought up the ark of the Lord. And, the priests brought it into His place and set it underneath the wings of the overspreading cherubim. And, they drew out the staves of the ark. It had finally come to its ultimate resting place.

Then, the people forget God and they turn to the idols of the heathen around them. And, God brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men and carried away the sacred vessels of God and burnt the house of the Lord and break down the walls of Jerusalem and carried the ark into Babylon, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah”

“And Jeremiah said, It will never be found in this earth. You shall seek it, but not find it. God has taken it away.”

And, where? Where is the ark of God today? Where is our Savior, who was refused by men and crucified beyond the city walls?

Where is the ark of God today? Where is our Savior now? In the eleventh chapter of the Revelation, he sees into the heaven of heavens: “And behold, the temple of God was opened in the heavens, and there I saw in the temple, the ark of the covenant of the Lord.”

John saw it in the temple of the Lord in heaven. All of it a picture of our Savior Jesus Christ in heaven, in the heart of its glory, before whom the angels and the saints, world without end, sing praises of love and adoration and glory and thanksgiving and honor now and forever and forever.

O what a fullness, what a meaning, what a story of love and grace! To be found in the holy pictures God has given us of His only begotten Son, even centuries before He came. And, now, for the centuries since, to comfort us, to encourage us, to enhearten and quicken us, as we lift our eyes to the heaven of heavens, where God doth keep in store all that we have loved and lost for a while. The ultimate, final victory of our pilgrimage in this earth, for us in heaven, in the Holy of Holies, where God dwells and where Jesus sits on the throne at His right hand: The ark of the covenant in heaven.

While we sing our song, in this balcony round, somebody—you; on this lower floor, a family—you, giving your heart and faith to Jesus, or coming into the fellowship of this church, would you come and stand by me? “Tonight, I take Jesus as Savior.” Or, “Tonight, we're putting our lives into the fellowship of the church.”

While we sing the song, and while we make appeal, would you come? On this the first note of this first stanza, immediately: “Here I am, pastor. I give you my hand. I give my heart to Jesus.” Or, “Here we come, pastor, putting

our lives with these beloved people in the fellowship of and precious and wonderful church.” Would you do it now? Would you do it tonight? Would you come on the first note of that first stanza, now, tonight, while we stand and while we sing?