

Lesson Eight A

The Ark

Exodus 25:10-22; “They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four

feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give

you. “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the

cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will

meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.” (ESV)

The Ark and the Mercy-Seat



Of the seven pieces of furniture which were found in the Tabernacle the Holy Spirit has described first the ark and the mercy-seat.

Though these two are intimately related, so intimately that together they formed one complete whole—the mercy-seat being the cover or lid of the ark—yet are they mentioned, and are therefore to be considered, separately.

The ark was a wooden chest, slightly over four feet in length and about two and a half feet broad and high.

The wood of which it was made was overlaid with gold, both inside and outside, so that nothing except gold was visible to the eye.

The great importance of the ark is clear from several considerations.

When Jehovah gave instructions to Moses concerning the Tabernacle, He began with the ark.

It was first in order because first in importance. Before any details were communicated concerning the sanctuary itself, before a word was told Moses about its court and chambers its priesthood and ritual, its furniture and garniture, minute directions were given

regarding the ark; without the ark the whole service of the Tabernacle had been meaningless and valueless, for it was upon it, as His throne, that God dwelt.

The ark was the object to which the brazen altar pointed, the sacrifice of which gave right of access to the worshipper, who came to the ark representatively in the person of the high priest.

It was the first of the holy vessels to be made and made by Moses himself.

Deuteronomy 10:1-5 “At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.’ So I made an ark of acacia wood, and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the

mountain with the two tablets in my hand. And he wrote on the tablets, in the same writing as before, the Ten Commandments that the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they are, as the LORD commanded me.” (ESV)

It was the place where the tables of the law were preserved. Its pre-eminence above all the other vessels was shown in the days of Solomon, for the ark alone was transferred from the tabernacle to the Temple.

"The ark was a symbol that God was present among His people, that His covenant blessing was resting upon them.

It was the most sacred and glorious Instrument of the sanctuary; yea, the whole sanctuary was built for no other end, but to be as it were a house, an habitation for the ark. Hence sanctification proceeded unto all the parts of it; for, as Solomon observed, the places were holy whereunto the ark of God came. 2 Chronicles 8:11" (A. Saphir).

2 Chronicles 8:11; “Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, “My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy.” (ESV)

Adolph Saphir (1831 - 1891) was a Hungarian Christian who was born into a Jewish family. He and his family were converted in 1843 when the Scottish Free Church sent missionaries to the Jews in Hungary. After completing his studies in 1854, Saphir served in the Irish Presbyterian Church as a missionary to the Jews. He was later ordained by the Presbytery of Belfast. He was a pastor of churches in Glasgow and in London from 1861-1888. Saphir's book, *The Hidden Life* was described as "one of the most helpful books in English literature on the subject of prayer and the deeper Christian life."

**W e s h a l l
c o n s i d e r t h e
a r k i n f o u r
c o n n e c t i o n s .**



A. Its Significance -

The ark typified the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to pause and furnish proof.

The other two arks that of Noah, in which he and his family found shelter from the flood; and that in which the infant Moses was preserved, plainly foreshadowed Christ Himself.

The fact that the ark of the covenant was composed of two materials and of two only—the wood and the gold—clearly point to the two natures of our Lord: the human and the Divine.

The fact that the two tables of stone were preserved in the ark, and the words of the Savior, "Thy law is within My heart" (Psalms 40:8) supply us with a sure key.



The fact that the mercy-seat (where God received the representative of His sinful but blood-cleansed people) rested upon the ark furnishes additional confirmation.

It is the typical significance of the ark which explains its pre-eminence over the other sacred vessels.

Each of them pointed to same aspect of Christ's work. or its effects, but the ark spoke of His person: they of what He has done, this of what HE is.

It is the blessed person of Christ which gave value to His work.

Note how in the typical ritual on the annual day of atonement, the high priest first entered the holy of holies with his hands full of sweet incense (Leviticus 16:12), before he took in and sprinkled the blood (v. 14) - God would first be reminded of the fragrant perfections of Christ's person, before that which spoke of His redemptive work was placed before Him!

Leviticus 16:12,14 “And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil 14 And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.” **(ESV)**

Notice the order in the announcement by John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God" (first His person) which taketh away (second His work) the sin of the world," (John 1:29).

So with the apostle Paul, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ (His person) and Him crucified" - His work" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

So again, in the Revelation: "I beheld . . . and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb (His person) as it had been slain" - His work (Revelation 5:6).

Thus it was in this order of the Tabernacle furniture: first the ark which tells of Christ's person, then the mercy-seat, etc., which point to His work.

B. Its Materials -

The ark was made of "shittim wood," a species of the acacia, which is said by many to be imperishable.

The "shittim wood," grown here on earth, typified the humanity of our Savior. Isaiah 53:2 speaks in the language of this type: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

As the shittim-wood was one that never rotted, it was a most appropriate emblem of the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus.

It is indeed striking to find that in the Septuagint (the first translation ever made of the Old Testament - into Greek) it is always translated "incorruptible wood."

The wood of the ark was overlaid with gold within and without. This prefigured His Divine nature. While the acacia boards gave form and dimensions to the ark, the appearance was all gold—no wood was visible.

Thus our Lord's humanity gives Him the form in which He was and is, Light of light, the Creator and Upholder of all things, He became a Man, and was and is eternally 'the Man Christ Jesus.'



C. Its Contents -

These are described in Hebrews 9:4; "The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant."

Some have seen a contradiction between this verse and 1 Kings 8:9: "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone."

But there is no conflict between the two passages, for they are not treating of the same point in time. Hebrews 9:4 is speaking of what was in the ark during the days that it was lodged in the Tabernacle, whereas 1 Kings 8:9 tells us of what comprised its contents after it came to rest in the Temple.

Thus we see how quickly disappears one of the stock ‘contradiction’ arguments of infidels!

The three articles specified in Hebrews 9:4 point to God's provisions in Christ while they are journeying through the wilderness, this becomes abundantly clear when we consider the first thing named, "the golden pot that had manna."

1. The manna was the food which Jehovah gave to Israel while they were journeying from the house of bondage to the promised inheritance.

It foreshadowed Christ as the Bread of life, the food of His pilgrim people. But most blessed is the added word here.

In Exodus 16:3, we simply read that Moses said unto Aaron "take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein and lay it up before the testimony, to be kept; whereas in Hebrews 9:4, the Spirit tells us it was "a golden pot."

The Old Testament could not give us that, it was reserved for the New Testament to bring it out.

The Manna was the grace of God meeting the need of His people in the wilderness.

Now while the Old Testament makes it plain that Israel's deepest need would be met through the promised

Messiah, yet it was by no means clear that the Messiah would be a member of the Godhead; rather was the emphasis thrown upon the fact that He was to be the seed of Abraham and of David.

But with the New Testament before us, we have no difficulty in perceiving that nothing but a vessel

which was holy and Divine was adequate to hold what God had for impetuous sinners and that that vessel was no other than His beloved Son incarnate.

It is in John's Gospel, particularly, that we get the truth of the "golden pot." There we see the Vessel which was capable of holding the grace of God for His people: "full of grace and truth" is found only in John!

2. The second article within the ark was "Aaron's rod that budded."

This takes us back to Numbers 17 where we have the historical account of it.

In Numbers 16, we read of a revolt against Moses and Aaron headed by Korah, a revolt occasioned by jealousy at the authority God had delegated to His two servants.

The Lord told Moses to take twelve rods, one for each tribe, writing Aaron's name on the rod for Levi and placing these rods before the ark and the one that should be made to blossom would indicate which had been chosen of God to be the priestly tribe.

Next morning it was found that Aaron's rod had "brought forth buds, and blossomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."

Afterwards, the Lord ordered Moses to bring Aaron's rod before the testimony
"And the Lord said unto Moses. Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from Me that they die not."

Here, then, is God's provision for us in Christ: food to strengthen, priestly grace to sustain us.

Hebrews 7:25 “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” **(ESV)**

3. The third thing in the ark was the two tables of stone on which were written the ten commandments.

You will also recall that the Lord gave to Moses on two separate occasions tables of stone engraved by His own finger.

The first ones Moses dashed to the ground when he beheld the idolatry of the people (Ex. 32), thereby intimating that fallen man is unable to keep the law.

But God's counsels cannot be thwarted, neither will He diminish the requirements of His righteousness:

Deuteronomy 10:1-2 "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come

up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.” (ESV)

D. Its Coverings -

Numbers 4:5-6 “When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it.

Then they shall put on it a covering of goatskin and spread on top of that a cloth all of blue, and shall put in its poles.” (ESV)

First, the Ark was wrapped in the "covering veil"—the most precious of all the curtains.

The veil, as we learn from Hebrews 10:20, typified the perfect humanity of Christ, rent for His people by the hand of God.

This tells us that when God the Son was here in this wilderness-world His Divine glory was hidden from the eyes of men by His flesh, He who was in the form of God having taken upon Himself, the form of a servant.

Second, over the covering veil was placed "the covering of badgers' skins."

Unlike the skins of other animals, the lion, tiger, or leopard, the badger's is quite unattractive.

In our present type the badgers' skins tell of our Lord's humiliation, particularly that aspect of it from which nature turns away, saying, "He hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall

see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him"; but an aspect which those who through sovereign grace are in communion with Him, ever recognize as that which fills them with adoring love.

Third, the external covering of the Ark was "a cloth wholly of blue"—this alone being seen by men as the Ark was carried through the wilderness from place to place.

It was this which distinguished the Ark, once more, from the other vessels, for all of them had the badgers' skins for their outer covering.

Why, then, was the cloth of blue the external garment of the Ark?

Blue is the color of heaven and is ever employed for the setting forth of celestial things.

**All heavenly things are not
suitable for testimony to
the world, but Christ as
the God-man is to be
borne witness to before all!**



PRAYER TIME