



LESSON FIVE

The History of the Ark and the Tabernacle

Scripture Reading:

Section 1 & 2: Exodus 25:10-11, 16-22

25:10 And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: two and a half cubits shall be its length; and one and a half cubits, its width; and one and a half cubits, its height.

25:11 And you shall overlay it with pure gold; inside and outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make a rim of gold upon it all around.

25:16 And you shall put into the Ark the Testimony which I will give you.

25:17 And you shall make an expiation cover of pure gold: two and a half cubits shall be its length, and one and a half cubits, its width.

25:18 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, at the two ends of the expiation cover.

25:19 And make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the expiation cover you shall make the cherubim on its two ends.

25:20 And the cherubim shall spread out their wings above the cover, covering the expiation cover with their wings, with their faces toward one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the expiation cover.

25:21 And you shall put the expiation cover upon the Ark above it, and into the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.

25:22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

Section 3: 1 Samuel 4

4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. And Israel went forth against the Philistines in battle; and they encamped near Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphek.

4:2 And the Philistines arrayed themselves against Israel; and when the battle spread, Israel was struck down before the Philistines. And they slew about four thousand men of the array in the field.

4:3 And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, Why has Jehovah struck us down today before the Philistines? Let us take for ourselves the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh that it may come into our midst, and thus save us from the hand of our enemies.

4:4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they took up from there the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah of hosts who is enthroned between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God.

4:5 And when the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, and the earth resounded.

4:6 And the Philistines heard the sound of the shout and said, What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean? Then they found out that the Ark of Jehovah had come into their camp.

4:7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God has come into their camp. And they said, Woe to us! For there has never been such a thing as this before.

4:8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that struck the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness.

4:9 Be strong and be men, O Philistines, lest you become servants to the Hebrews as they have been servants to you. Be men then and fight.

- 4:10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was struck down; and every man fled to his tent. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell.
- 4:11 And the Ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.
- 4:12 And a man of Benjamin ran from the array and came to Shiloh on the same day, with his clothes torn and earth upon his head.
- 4:13 And when he came, there was Eli, sitting on his seat by the roadside watching; for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. And when the man came to tell the news to the city, the whole city cried out.
- 4:14 And when Eli heard the sound of the cry, he said, What does this sound of commotion mean? And the man hurried and came and told Eli.
- 4:15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old; and his eyes were set, and he could not see.
- 4:16 And the man said to Eli, I am he who has come from the array, and I fled from the array today. And he said, How did the matter go, my son?
- 4:17 And he who brought the news answered and said, Israel fled before the Philistines, and there was a great slaughter among the people; and even your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the Ark of God has been taken.
- 4:18 And when he mentioned the Ark of God, Eli fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate. And he broke his neck and died, for he was an old man and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.
- 4:19 And his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to deliver; and when she heard the report that the Ark of God had been taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she bowed down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her.
- 4:20 And around the time that she died, the women who stood around her said, Do not fear, for you have borne a son. But she did not answer or pay attention.
- 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, meaning, The glory has departed from Israel, because the Ark of God had been taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband.
- 4:22 And she said, The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God has been taken.

Section 4: 1 Samuel 6, 7:1-2

- 6:1 Now the Ark of Jehovah was in the country of the Philistines seven months.
- 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, What shall we do with the Ark of Jehovah? Make known to us how we should send it forth to its place.
- 6:3 And they said, If you send away the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but be sure to return Him a trespass offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be made known to you why His hand has not turned away from you.
- 6:4 And they said, What is the trespass offering that we should return to Him? And they said, Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for one plague was upon you all and upon your lords.
- 6:5 Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your mice that devastate the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand on you and your gods and your land.
- 6:6 Why then should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had dealt severely with them, did they not let the people go, and they went?
- 6:7 So now take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which the yoke has never come, and tie the cows to the cart, and bring their calves home, away from them.
- 6:8 And take the Ark of Jehovah and put it on the cart; and in a box by the side of it, place the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a trespass offering; and send it away that it may go.
- 6:9 Then watch: If it goes up toward its own border at Beth-shemesh, it is He who has done us this great harm. But if it does not, we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance.
- 6:10 And the men did so and took two milch cows and tied them to the cart and shut up their calves at home.
- 6:11 And they put the Ark of Jehovah on the cart with the box and the gold mice and the images of their tumors.

- 6:12 And the cows went straight in the way toward Beth-shemesh; they went on one road, lowing as they went; and they did not turn to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.
- 6:13 Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark, they rejoiced to see it.
- 6:14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemeshite and stood still there. And there was a great stone there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered up the cows as a burnt offering to Jehovah.
- 6:15 Then the Levites took down the Ark of Jehovah and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold; and they placed them on the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to Jehovah.
- 6:16 And when the five lords of the Philistines saw this, they returned to Ekron that day.
- 6:17 And these are the gold tumors that the Philistines returned to Jehovah as a trespass offering: for Ashdod, one; for Gaza, one; for Ashkelon, one; for Gath, one; for Ekron, one;
- 6:18 And the gold mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines that belonged to the five lords, both of fortified cities and country villages, as far as the great stone on which they rested the Ark of Jehovah, which is there to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemeshite.
- 6:19 And He struck the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked into the Ark of Jehovah; and He struck seventy men among the people. And the people mourned because Jehovah struck the people with a great slaughter.
- 6:20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who can stand before Jehovah, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?
- 6:21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have returned the Ark of Jehovah; come down and take it up to you.
- 7:1 And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the Ark of Jehovah and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill, and they consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the Ark of Jehovah.
- 7:2 And it was a long time from the day that the Ark began to abide in Kiriath-jearim, for it was twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What does the Ark typify? How can we see these aspects of Christ according to the Scriptures?
2. How can it be applied to us today?

Section 2:

1. What is the significance of the Ark being made out of Acacia wood? How can we see Christ's beautiful humanity in the New Testament?
2. What is the difference between Christ as the propitiatory cover, the one who propitiates and being the propitiatory sacrifice?

Section 3:

1. Please explain the history of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4:1 -7:2.
2. What is the big lesson that we should learn in relation to the history of the Ark?

Section 4:

1. What is the situation with Obed-edom? How does it apply to our situation today?
2. Please explain the five aspects of the church history in relation to the history of the Ark and the tabernacle?

----- [INTRODUCTION] -----

The history of the Ark and the tabernacle prefigures the history of the church, giving us a full portrait of the course and situation of the church from the very beginning to the present time. Can you believe that hidden in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel there is such a crystal that shows us church history? We will also see that this crystal shows us our own personal history.

First Corinthians 10:11 says, “These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have come.” This verse clearly tells us that all the things that happened to the Israelites happened to them as an example for us, and they were written for our admonition. The admonition refers to the holy warnings. We need to pay attention to what is in 1 and 2 Samuel. These are not merely stories from the Old Testament. These stories are related to us and to our going on, especially at the end of this age.

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**I. CHRIST HAVING GAINED US SO
THAT WE MIGHT GAIN HIM IN ORDER
FOR GOD TO BE BUILT INTO US AND
FOR US TO BE BUILT INTO HIM TO
BECOME A CORPORATE GOD-MAN,
THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH AS
THE TABERNACLE OF GOD, WHICH IS
THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING GOD, THE
MUTUAL ABODE OF GOD AND MAN**

Whenever we speak about the tabernacle, we are speaking about God’s house. First, God’s dwelling place is Christ because the tabernacle is a type of Christ. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.” Second, the tabernacle is also a type of the church. The tabernacle expands from Christ to the church through a process in which He builds Himself into us and we are built into Him. This is the mutual abode spoken of in John 14:2, which says, “In My Father’s house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.” In verse 23 Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.” Today He is working to produce this mutual abode.

**II. IN ORDER TO ENTER INTO
THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF
CHRIST, OUR HAVING TO SEE
THE INTRINSIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
ARK**

**A. The Ark Typifying Christ
as the Presence of the Triune God
with His People for the Carrying Out of His
Economy to Establish His Kingdom on Earth**

The Israelites considered the Ark as God’s presence. Wherever the Ark went, Jehovah went. This is mentioned by Moses in Numbers 10:35-36: “When the Ark set out, Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; / And let those who hate You flee before You. And when it came to rest, he said, Return, O Jehovah, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.” The Ark as the presence of God is a type of Christ. When the incarnate Word came to tabernacle among men (John 1:14), a person could find God by coming to the man Christ Jesus. Matthew 1:23 says that He is Emmanuel: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel’ (which is translated, God with us).” Hence, the Ark typifies Christ as the presence of the Triune God.

**B. The Ark Being the Center and Content of
the Tabernacle, Signifying Christ as the
Center and Content of the Church; the Ark
Being the First Item Mentioned in the Vision
of the Tabernacle Indicating That Christ
Occupies the Place of Preeminence in the
Church**

When God gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle, the first thing He mentioned was the Ark, showing its importance and preeminence. Christ should have such a place in the church. We should not take this for granted, because in the history of God’s people, we can see that many have had a good beginning but not always a good continuation and end. First Samuel 4:1—7:2 should serve as a warning to us. In this portion of the Scriptures, the children of Israel lost the Ark. They had the tabernacle but lost the Ark. According to this type, we need to make sure that in our personal life, our Christian life, our church life, and our service, Christ is the center. Do not be tempted to let something else become the center. I have fallen into this in my coordination with brothers at various times. We

came together and had a kind of perfunctory prayer. It was as if we needed to get the prayer out of the way to get down to business. We always need to be on guard to not let anything else become the center. In all our service Christ must have the preeminence. We should come together and enjoy Him first.

C. The Ark Containing the Tablets of the Law as the Testimony of God, the Expression and Revelation of Who God Is

Exodus 25:16 refers to the Ark of the Testimony, and 31:18 refers to the tablets of the Testimony. In these two portions the law is called the Testimony. I hope we all, especially the younger ones, might be impressed with this. The law is not only a set of demands; the law is a testimony. The law tells us what God is like. In this sense the law is a type of Christ. Christ is the definition, description, and explanation of God. If we want to know God, we need to look at Christ. Furthermore, the tabernacle was also called the Tabernacle of the Testimony (38:21; Num. 1:50, 53; 10:11; Acts 7:44; Rev. 15:5). Hence, if a person wants to know what God is like, that person should come to the church. Through the church a person is able to see God. However, this is only the case if Christ is our center and our content.

D. The Ark in the Holy of Holies Signifying Christ as the Center of God's Dwelling Place, the Church, and the Contents of the Church as the House of God

When the tabernacle was erected, the Ark may not have been at the physical center, but it was in the inmost part of the tabernacle. In the Scriptures the inmost part is the spiritual center. In the Old Testament the Ark was within the Holy of Holies. Today Christ, typified by the Ark, is in our spirit. He needs to be our center and our content.

I believe that most of the Lord's children do not realize that when the Lord comes into us, He comes into us not only as the Lamb but also as the Ark. When I was saved, I had no impression of Christ coming into me as the Ark. I just knew that He loved me and gave Himself up for me and that I had received Him as the Lamb. Nevertheless, He also came into me as the Ark. I hope that through this message we might see and appreciate this matter in a clear way.

Apart from Christ there is no way to contact God. Christ must be the content of the church. Within the tabernacle in the Holy of Holies there was only one item—the Ark. This picture is so simple. It shows that in the church there should be only one item—Christ. In order for a church to have a proper standing, there is an outward prerequisite and an inward prerequisite. This can be seen both in the pattern in the Old Testament related to having God's dwelling place and in the corresponding New Testament reality. Acts 8:1; 13:1; and Revelation 1:11 show consistently that the church should meet on the ground of oneness—one city, one church. However, if we meet in this way, it does not mean that we are God's expression, because along with the outward prerequisite, there is an inward prerequisite. Just as the Ark was the content of the tabernacle, we need to have Christ as our content and reality in order to be the embodiment of God as His testimony.

E. The Ark of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Gold Signifying the Pneumatic Christ as the Embodiment of God and as the Mingling of Divinity with Humanity, the Building of God with Man, Dwelling in Our Spirit for Us to Contact God and Enjoy God

Second Timothy 4:22 says, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." The Ark was in the Holy of Holies, and the Lord is in our spirit. Have we had much realization that He is the indwelling Ark? I hope that from now on we would have the realization and appreciation that He is our indwelling Ark. In Exodus 25:22 the Ark is crucial: "There I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel." There was only one place where the Lord met with and spoke with the children of Israel. According to this type, the Lord only meets with us and speaks with us on Christ. Hence, we need to be in our spirit with Christ as the Ark.

F. Acacia Wood Signifying Christ's Humanity, Strong in Character and High in Standard, as the Basic Substance for Expressing God

All these verses show us the Lord's humanity with its high character and standard. If we would spend time to read and study all these verses, we would see the beautiful humanity of Christ. In Matthew 3:13-14 Christ came to John to be baptized, and John tried to prevent Him, saying, "It is I who have need of being baptized by You, and You come to me?" But in verse 15 Jesus said to him, "Permit it for now, for it is fitting for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." It was as if He were saying, "As a man in this dispensation, I should not be an exception." Not being an exception is part of Christ's wonderful humanity. On our part, we almost always like to be an exception. We would like for there to be a way for us to be given a little slack. In contrast, the Lord Jesus did not seek to be an exception. He took the proper way.

In Matthew 4:4 He kept His position as a man when the enemy, Satan, tried to tempt Him: "He answered and said, It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.'" In 8:20 He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." This verse shows that He did not insist on His comfort and convenience. What a man! Matthew 9:12-13 and 11:29 show that He is merciful and that He is meek and lowly in heart. Matthew 12:19-20 says, "He will not strive nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench until He brings forth justice unto victory." These verses show His love and even His sensitivity toward the weak ones. Matthew 17:27 shows that He is flexible. Matthew 20:28 speaks of His serving spirit. Mark 1:35 reveals His diligence; Mark 6:39-41, His orderliness; and John 7:6, His being restricted by time. He has a beautiful humanity!

The picture of the Ark shows that humanity is the basis for God's expression. God wants to be expressed in humanity. The lid of the Ark, the expiation cover with the cherubim on top, was all of gold, but the rest of the Ark was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. When the priest

looked at the Ark, he did not see any wood. He saw only gold, both on the outside and on the inside. The wood was completely enveloped, or wrapped, in gold. The expression of the Ark was golden, that is, it expressed the divine nature, but the holding power of the Ark was the wood. This shows that humanity is necessary for God's testimony.

We must admit that we are living in an age where the attack on humanity is blatant, especially on the humanity of the young people. Even as a teenager, I could see this around me.

Satan's main target today is the young people. There are more mental cases among the young people than ever before. He does not care so much for the older generation, but he seeks to destroy the young people. Young people today have many kinds of concepts and movements. The source of all these concepts and movements is Satan. Satan has indoctrinated the mentality of the younger generation with all these things. We need to pray against this satanic tendency among today's young people. They do not know the risk they are running and the danger they are in. By considering how greatly they have changed from 1965 until today, we may realize how much the enemy is working. Satan is so subtle. He injects all his evil, satanic, devilish concepts and ideas into the young and fresh mentality of the young generation. This is his primary aim; he is out to damage the human mentality. This is why the Bible speaks so much of having a sound mind. The issue of this kind of mental damage is of three categories: fornication, suicide, and mental illness. I also want to give this word of warning to the young people and even to all of us. We need to pray for the proper humanity for the Lord's testimony.

The acacia wood being overlaid with gold both inside and outside signifies the divine nature penetrating the human nature and resting on the human nature so that it may be expressed through the human nature (Exo. 25:11; Rev. 3:18a; 2 Pet. 1:4; cf. Rev. 17:4).

H. The Propitiatory Cover of the Ark Signifying Christ as the Meeting Place of God and His Redeemed People

Christ is a meeting place. Romans 3:25 also refers to it as the "propitiation place." I do not know how Paul saw this, but he says clearly, "Being justified freely by His grace through the

redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth as a propitiation place” (vv. 24-25). It is amazing that Paul saw this and had this utterance. The Ark is a type of Christ, but the cover is also a type of Christ as the place where God meets with us (see footnote 2 on v. 25). Exodus 25:22 says, “There I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”

**I. Christ Being the One Who Propitiates,
the One Who Appeases the Relationship
between God and Us, the One Who
Reconciles Us to God by Satisfying God’s
Demand through Himself as the Propitiatory
Sacrifice**

Hebrews 2:17 says, “Hence He should have been made like His brothers in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Here we see that our High Priest is the One who propitiates. First John 2:2 says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world,” and 4:10 says, “Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.” These two verses show that He is the propitiatory sacrifice, the basis for the propitiation. Christ is both the One who propitiates, the faithful High Priest, and the propitiatory sacrifice. We will go on to see that Christ is also the propitiatory cover. What a Christ! He is the One who propitiates, He is the propitiatory sacrifice, and He is the place where propitiation takes place.

**J. Christ Being Also the Propitiatory Cover
with the Shining of His Divinity
and the Redeeming of His Humanity,
the Place Where We Enjoy Propitiation
before God and Where We Can Meet and
Fellowship with Our Righteous, Holy, and
Glorious God to Receive Him as Grace**

I hope that all of us would have such an appreciation and be able to pray, “Lord, thank You that You are the propitiatory cover. Without You there is no place where God can meet with me and where I can meet with God.” God has both a standing and a place to meet with us. The righteous God can meet with us who are so sinful because of the blood of sprinkling. We find the

phrase blood of sprinkling in Hebrews 12:24: “To Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks something better than that of Abel.”

Sometimes we may have the sense, as we are there with the Lord, weeping and repenting for our sinfulness, that we are in glory because we are in His presence. I believe that some of us, at the moment of our salvation, sensed that we were in glory. We may not have had words to describe it, but we knew that we were not only forgiven but in a sphere of glory. This can and should be our experience every time we come to Christ as the Ark in our personal, quiet fellowship with Him. Forgiveness and glory go together. In principle, God only meets with us in glory. In our meetings we may, at times, have the sense that there is glory. God is meeting with us and speaking to us. Praise the Lord, His glory broke upon us when we saw Him in the church! This is my experience.

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**III. THE HISTORY OF THE ARK AND
THE TABERNACLE PORTRAYING THE
DESIRE OF GOD’S HEART, THE
DESOLATION OF THE CHURCH, AND
THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH FOR
GOD’S TESTIMONY, GOD’S
EXPRESSION**

The story of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4:1—7:2 is an interesting story and somewhat even a humorous story, especially in regard to what the Ark did to the idol of Dagon, the Philistine god. This story begins with the people of Israel fighting against the Philistines. In the first battle they were defeated. Then, the people and the elders of Israel, under the influence of their superstitious thought, decided to bring the Ark to the battle. In 4:3b they said, “Let us take for ourselves the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh that it may come into our midst, and thus save us from the hand of our enemies.” This made matters even worse. More people were killed, and eventually, the Ark itself was taken. Not only did the Ark not help them; the Ark was ultimately captured. Of course, the Ark was able to fend for itself quite well and subdued the Philistines, who eventually sent it back. Initially, when God’s people received it back, they did not handle it well. Eventually, it ended up in the house of Abinadab for twenty years. Can you believe that it was there for twenty years, and no one had the

thought to unite the Ark with the tabernacle? When David became king, he realized that the Ark should be brought to Jerusalem. He had a heart for the Ark but was not enlightened regarding how to handle the Ark. As a result, he handled it improperly, and it ended up in the home of Obed-edom for three months. During those three months Obed-edom's house was blessed because of the Ark. Then David came and brought it to Jerusalem in the proper way with the priests carrying it. However, he did not bring it to the tabernacle but to a tent that he pitched for it. This was very close to what God wanted but not exactly what He wanted.

The story then continues with Solomon. Eventually, Solomon became the king, and when he became king, he went to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings. Then he had a dream, and in this dream God said, "Ask what I should give you" (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon asked for wisdom. Then when he woke up from this dream, the first thing he did was go to the Ark. He had been sacrificing in Gibeon, where the tabernacle was; however, the Ark was not there with the tabernacle. So as soon as he prayed and received wisdom, he went to the Ark, and shortly afterward, he began to build the temple. As soon as the temple was built, he transferred the Ark to the temple, and the glory filled the temple. This type shows us the complete history of the church. It is incredible!

A. In the First Stage of Its History, the Ark Being in the Tabernacle; This Signifying That the Normal Church Was the Expression of Christ, and Christ Was the Content of the Church; However, the Ark Eventually Being Separated from the Tabernacle; This Signifying That the Church Became Degraded and Lost the Reality and Presence of Christ

It is possible to have an Arkless tabernacle, and it is possible to have a Christless church. In Revelation 3:20 the Lord says to the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me." This implies that the Lord is outside the church in Laodicea. It has become a Christless church, and Christ is trying to get back in.

B. The Move of the Ark Being a Picture of God's Move on the Earth in Christ as His Embodiment; However, during Israel's Fighting with the Philistines, God Not Intending to Move

There is a big lesson here. We should not move the Ark if the Ark does not intend to move. Israel's presumption offended God to the uttermost. In their presumption they usurped God's headship. We want the Lord to be our King, our Lord, our Head, and our Husband, but the children of Israel had no such thought.

C. The Children of Israel Having No Thought of or Concern for God's Economy, and Their Bringing Out the Ark to Battle the Philistines Indicating That They Were Usurping God, Even Forcing Him to Go Out with Them for Their Safety, Peace, Rest, and Profit

Have we ever done this? Have we tried to force Him to go with us for what we want? We may have prayed, "Lord, I am doing such and such this weekend. Give us good weather." Sometimes we may even pray for our health or for our children. When our children are applying to university, we may pray, "Lord, my daughter is applying to such-and-such school. Get her in." When we do this, we are bringing the Ark out with us to fight our battles. Are the things that we are praying for God's desire? We should inquire first. It may be that your child gets into the school you prayed for, but it is very possible that there will be no glory, at least no glory for God. There may be glory for you and your child, but it is an Ichabod situation. Ichabod was the grandson of Eli. Eli's daughter-in-law gave birth when the news came that the Ark had been taken. She was waiting there with Eli, and when she heard that the Ark had been taken, she went into labor. She named the child Ichabod, a name meaning "No Glory," to commemorate that point in the history of the children of Israel. She stated clearly that the glory was gone because the Ark of God had been taken. Saints, we do not want Ichabod situations either personally or even more in our church life.

D. In Principle, Our Doing the Same Thing Whenever We Pray for Our Prosperity without Any Consideration of God's Economy; instead of Usurping God, Our Needing to Pray, Live, and Be Persons, like Samuel, according to God's Heart and for His Economy

This does not mean that we should not pray for the things related to us, but we should pray like Hannah prayed. She had a need; she wanted a child. But she also realized, "God, You have a need. You are poor in the priesthood. So how about this? Meet my need, and in meeting my need, meet Your need." What a wonderful prayer!

There was a young couple with a growing family, and they were praying about whether to move. It seemed to them like they needed to make a change in their arrangement, and they came for fellowship, asking, "What is best for the church? What is the best for our church life?" They surely wanted to take care of their family, but they wanted to care for their children in relation to God's economy. That was a beautiful thing. The church praying for them in a prayer meeting: "Lord, meet this dear family's need, but in meeting their need, meet Your own need." They were blessed, and the church was blessed.

E. In Their Degradation Israel Being Foolish Because They Did Not Trust in God Directly; Rather, Their Trusting in the Systems Ordained by God; before Bringing the Ark of God out of the Tabernacle, Their Needing to Have Checked with God as Joshua Did at Jericho

In Joshua 6 the situation was wonderful. God initiated the battle. But just a few chapters later in Joshua 9, there is the story of the Gibeonites. Verse 14 says, "But they did not ask for the counsel of Jehovah." Hence, we might inquire of Jehovah and have a victory, a good experience, today, yet we might forget to do so tomorrow. May the Lord have mercy on us.

F. From the Depths of Our Spirit Our Needing to Say to the Lord, "Lord, I Am Not Here on Earth for My Health, My Prosperity, My Safety, My Peace, My Rest, or My Profit; Because I Want to Be a True Overcoming Nazarite Cooperating with You for the Fulfillment of Your Economy, I Ask You What Is on Your Heart concerning Me"

If we encounter a health problem, is our reaction immediately, "Lord, heal me"? Instead, we should have a heart like Samuel's, asking the Lord, "What is in Your heart concerning me? Lord, what is this? Why now? Why this? I am before You." First Samuel 2:35 says, "I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in My heart and in My mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he will go before My anointed continually." Did you know that as a human being, as a man on the earth, you can know what is in God's heart and in God's mind? He wants to have this kind of fellowship with you. Why would we not inquire, asking, "Lord, what is in Your heart concerning me?"

In their degradation the children of Israel offended God to the uttermost, and God left them; eventually, instead of the Ark saving Israel, the Ark itself was captured, and the glory of God departed from Israel (vv. 30, 34; 4:10-18, 22; Psa. 78:61); to be "Arkless" is to be "Christless," and to be "Christless" means that there is "Ichabod," meaning No Glory (1 Sam. 4:21-22; Rev. 3:20).

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IV. LATER, THE ARK BEING RECOVERED AND BROUGHT FIRST TO THE HOUSE OF ABINADAB AT KIRIATH-JEARIM, WHERE IT REMAINED FOR TWENTY YEARS, AND THEN TO THE HOUSE OF OBED-EDOM THE GITTITE, WHERE IT STAYED FOR THREE MONTHS; THIS SIGNIFYING THAT BEGINNING FROM THE SECOND CENTURY A NUMBER OF "OBED-EDOMS" WERE RAISED UP, WHO HAD THE LORD'S PRESENCE (THE ARK) BUT DID NOT HAVE THE PROPER CHURCH LIFE AS THE EXPRESSION OF CHRIST (THE TABERNACLE)

With Obed-edom the situation was better but still not normal. According to church history, this situation began in the second century. There have been faithful ones throughout the centuries who saw through the degradation of the so-called church. These ones had Christ in their lives and Christ in their homes. They were faithful Obed-edoms. They did not want anything to do with formal religion, because it was Arkless, Christless. Rather, they did their best to follow Christ, paying more attention to the Ark than to the tabernacle.

We need the church life. Not only do we need the church life; God needs the tabernacle. Remember that the vision is not of Christ alone; it is a vision of Christ and the church. These two are the great mystery in the universe (Eph. 5:32). In Matthew 16:15 the Lord asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter's response was, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Then the Lord said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (vv. 17-18). I would like to emphasize the word also. All of the Lord's children need to have an "also" moment to see God's heart's desire. You may be satisfied with seeing Christ, but He is not satisfied. He also wants to show you the church.

**V. DAVID MOVING THE ARK
FROM OBED-EDOM'S HOUSE TO A
TENT THAT HE HAD PREPARED FOR
IT IN HIS OWN CITY, AT MOUNT ZION,
THE CHOICEST PLACE IN
JERUSALEM; THIS BEING AN
IMPROVED SITUATION,
BUT THE ARK BEING STILL IN AN
IMPROPER PLACE BECAUSE IT HAD
NOT BEEN RETURNED TO THE
TABERNACLE**

The Ark being in Obed-edom's house was an improved but still improper situation. It was not adequate. Again, throughout the centuries there have been some, including some in our history, who had Christ in their homes and in their lives, yet they realized that there must be more. As a result, some started a church or began a meeting. Although it was wonderful at the beginning, sooner or later, there was a sense that there must be more. These ones were doing something, but they did not have the assurance that what they were doing was totally proper. We need to be careful to not pitch our own tent.

**A. This Situation Signifying That Other
Believers Who, like David, Cared for God's
Interests, Attempted to Practice the Church
Life according to Their Own Choice,
Not according to God's Revelation**

Who, like David, Cared for God's Interests, Attempted to Practice the Church Life according to Their Own Choice, Not according to God's

Revelation This means that they attempted to practice the church life but not according to God's pattern. David's heart was good, but his first attempt was totally wrong because he tried to bring the Ark to Jerusalem in the same way that the Philistines had transported it. It is very interesting that God did not condemn the Philistines for their way of transporting the Ark on a cart. However, when His people tried to do the same thing, God came in immediately and judged them, even with death. Then the second time was better but still not satisfactory.

**B. These Believers Having Christ, but Their
Having Him with an Improper Practice of the
Church Life (Typified by David's Tent in
Jerusalem)**

In 1 Kings 3 we have the example of Solomon. Verse 15 says, "Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he went to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, and he offered up burnt offerings and offered peace offerings and made a feast for all his servants." In his dream the Lord spoke to him and blessed him with wisdom. Then as soon as he awoke, he went to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah. This means that as soon as he had enlightenment, as soon as God granted him wisdom, he left the Arkless tabernacle and went to the Ark, signifying that he went to Christ. Then shortly afterward, the temple was built.

**VI. THE HISTORY OF THE ARK AND
THE TABERNACLE
BEING A PREFIGURE OF CHURCH
HISTORY, GIVING US A FULL
PORTRAIT OF THE COURSE
AND SITUATION OF THE CHURCH
FROM THE VERY BEGINNING TO THE
PRESENT TIME; THERE BEING FIVE
MAIN ASPECTS OF THIS HISTORY**

The first situation is that of the church with Christ in it; this is typified by the Ark in the tabernacle, with the Ark as the content and the tabernacle as its expression; this is a picture of the first stage of the church in an absolutely normal condition of Christ being the content of the church and the church being the expression of Christ (Exo. 40:34-38; Eph. 3:16-21).

The second situation is that of the church without Christ in it; this is typified by the Ark being

captured and separated from the tabernacle because of the failure of the people of God; the tabernacle becoming empty portrays the failures of the Christians that caused the church to lose the reality and presence of Christ (Rev. 2:4-5; 3:20). Revelation 2 and 3 are a record of the Lord's speaking to the seven churches, which also portray the history of the church from the beginning of the church age to the present time. This portion of the Scriptures begins with the church in Ephesus and a warning. The holy warning is not to lose our first love (2:4). Then this portion of the Scriptures ends with the church in Laodicea and another holy warning. This holy warning is that the Lord is standing at the door and knocking (3:20). The encouragement here is to open the door. If we find ourselves in a situation in which Christ is outside, we need to open the door. Oh, that we all could be in the freshness of our first love! Oh, that through these messages and these Scriptures the Lord would bring us in by the blood of sprinkling to the propitiation cover to have intimate fellowship with Him! Then He can meet with us, speak with us, shine on us, and show us our true condition and situation.

The third situation is that of Christ without the church; this is typified by the Ark being without the tabernacle; first, in the house of Abinadab at Kiriath-jearim for twenty years (1 Sam. 7:1-2) and then in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months (2 Sam. 6:10-12), the Ark was apart from the tabernacle; church history reveals that from the second century to the present time there have been many Obed-edom.

The fourth situation is that of Christ with an inadequate church; David had prepared a tent for the Ark in Jerusalem, but it was not according to the pattern revealed by God to Moses; many Christians have the Ark—Christ—with an inadequate church (v. 17; 1 Chron. 15:1; 2 Chron. 1:4; Exo. 25:9).

The fifth situation is that of Christ with a proper church; this is typified by the Ark with the proper tabernacle that has been enlarged and increased to be the temple; it is in this situation—Christ as the reality with a proper church as His expression—that we feel completely at home (Psa. 90:1-2; 91:1-16; 92:12-15; 132:5, 8; 1 Chron. 28:11-20; 2 Chron. 3:1). Amen! Oh, we are home in the church! The first chorus of one Hymn says, "Home, home in the church; / Yes, it's here that we've ended our search." Then the

next chorus says, "God's home is the church; / Yes, it's here that He ended His search." We feel at home in the church because God feels at home in the church. When God is at home, then there is rest in our spirit. May we cooperate with the Lord for this.

We need to see the five positions of the Ark, typifying the situation of the church. The first position was completely right. The second is completely empty. The third is good but abnormal. The fourth is one of half-satisfaction. Finally, in the fifth position is a situation with Christ as the reality and the proper church as His enlarged and strengthened expression. In these last days the Lord is recovering the original, normal condition of the church, but He is also working to enlarge the church life to make it more solid. May we bring all these matters to the Lord, and may He gain in us the best cooperation so that He can have His heart's desire in this age.