

The Ark of the Covenant

- I. Ark: “A chest, box, coffer, close basket, or similar receptacle; esp. a. in north. dial. a large wooden bin or hutch for storing meal, bread, fruit, etc. 2. *spec.* in *Jew. Hist.* The wooden coffer containing the tables of the law, kept in the Holiest Place of the Tabernacle. Also called Ark of the Covenant, Ark of Testimony.
- II. Principal passages that treat of the ark of the covenant are **EXO 25:10-22; 37:1-9; DEU 10:1-5; HEB 9:4-5.**
- III. The ark of the covenant was central to Jewish worship and service under the Old Testament.
 - A. As noted in the definition, it was also called the Ark of Testimony or Ark of the Testimony. **NUM 4:5; EXO 25:22.**
 - B. Sometimes it was simply called “the testimony” since it housed the stone tables of the testimony. **EXO 30:36.**
 - C. Sometimes it was called the “ark of his strength.” **PSA 132:8.**
 - D. It was the dwelling place of God. **NUM 7:89 c/w 1SAM 4:4.**
 - E. It was the place of communion with God. **EXO 25:22.**
 - F. Its absence or loss was equated with the departure of glory. **1SAM 4:22 c/w PSA 78:61.**
- IV. The ark spoke of Christ in many ways, by its individual components, its composite whole, its offices and its exalted status.
 - A. The ark was part of the elements of tabernacle service which were “...the patterns of things in the heavens...” (**HEB 9:23**), which signified their own shortcomings, termination and perfection in Christ. **HEB 9:1-12.**
 - B. Christ is the true Ark that contains the word, bread and rod of the High Priest.
 - C. Christ is the glory of the church (**LUK 2:32 c/w EPH 3:21**). If He departs, the church becomes nothing but a group or club.
- V. Consider some construction details of the ark. **EXO 25:10-22; 37:1-9.**
 - A. It was of a two-part construction: a coffer (box, chest) in which the tables of the covenant were placed, and a lid or covering which was the ornate mercy-seat.
 1. The coffer was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. It was of a dual nature.
 2. The mercy seat was of pure gold.
 3. This should remind us that:
 - a. Christ, Who bore the law for us, was truly God and man. **1TI 3:16.**
 - b. as gold overlaid the shittim wood and as the pure gold mercy seat was over the shittim-gold coffer, so the humanity of Christ was subordinate to His deity while on earth (**JOH 6:38; HEB 10:7**) and will ultimately be subject to God in eternity. **1CO 15:27-28.**
 - B. The Holy Spirit was careful to provide the explicit dimensions of the ark (**EXO 25:10**). The Spirit has also provided us with what is necessary to know the dimensions of Christ. **EPH 3:14-19.**
 - C. The mercy seat was made to the exact dimensions of the coffer which housed the Law that condemned man. **EXO 37:1, 6 c/w GAL 3:10; 2CO 3:7-9.**
 1. The word translated *mercyseat* in **HEB 9:5** (*hilasterion*, SRN # 2435) is rendered “propitiation” in **ROM 3:25.**
 2. This should remind us that:
 - a. Christ's atonement and righteousness is perfectly fitted to the church which

- He came to save, no more and no less. **EPH 5:25; JOH 6:39; 17:2.**
- b. Christ "... is the fulfilling end of the law, and exactly answers to all its requirements; his nature, to the holiness and spirituality of it; his righteousness, to all the obedience it commands; and his sufferings and death, to the penalty it enjoins..." (John Gill, on HEB 9:5).
 - c. as the mercy seat was between God (Who dwelt between the cherubims above the mercy seat) and the Law in the coffer, so Christ as our propitiation stands between God and the law which condemns us. **1JO 2:1-2.**
- D. There were four gold rings (one per corner) cast for the ark to accommodate its being borne from place to place. **EXO 37:3.**
1. None but the Levites were to bear the ark, specifically the sons of Kohath. **NUM 4:15.**
 2. The Levites were the appointed ministers of the Law to Israel. **DEU 33:8-10.**
 3. By carrying the ark which housed the Law and also being responsible to teach the Law, these men truly had "the burden of the word of the LORD."
 4. This model should remind us that:
 - a. God's ministers *bear witness* of Christ by *bearing His name before men*. **1JO 1:2 c/w ACT 9:15.**
 - b. God accommodates the burden of Christ and His word by His ministers. **2CO 2:14-16; 3:5-6; 2TI 1:14.**
 - c. Christ (as represented by His church and His word) is fitted for removal from one place to another: the gospel goes forth to diverse places as the Lord sees fit (**ACT 1:8**) and His church goes accordingly.
 - (1) Translate: "To bear, convey, or remove from one person, place or condition to another; to transfer, transport..."
 - (2) Translate: "To turn from one language into another; 'to change into another language retaining the sense'...."
 - (3) God well accommodated the spread of Christ to diverse places indeed. **ACT 2:5-11.**
 - d. The first and most basic elements of Christ with which men come into contact in the New Testament are the four gospels which set forth the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
- E. There were shittim-wood staves overlaid with gold that were to be put into the rings to bear the ark from place to place. **EXO 37:4-5.**
1. The Levites were not to touch the ark lest they die. **NUM 4:15 c/w 2SAM 6:6-7.**
 2. The ark was to be borne upon their shoulders. **NUM 7:9.**
 3. The foregoing should remind us that:
 - a. Whereas God's ministers should carry His word as commanded, they should, as it were, *keep their hands off of it!* **2CO 2:17; REV 22:18-19.**
 - b. God's ministers should hold the word up highly. **ACT 20:32; 2TI 3:16-4:2.**
 - c. God's ministers should hold Christ and His word higher than themselves. **1PE 5:1-3; GAL 1:8; ROM 14:10.**
 - d. Multiple ministers have been appointed to bear the same news. **EPH 4:11-12; 1CO 3:4-6.**
 - e. Christ's burden is bearable. **MAT 11:29-30; 1JO 5:3.**
 4. The staves were to remain in place in the rings of the ark (**EXO 25:15**). This should remind us that:
 - a. we should ever be ready to lift up Christ to men. **1PE 3:15.**

- b. the means of Christ's conveyance should endure.
MAT 23:34; 2TI 2:2; MAT 28:19-20.