

The Blessings of God

Several years ago, there was a movie that was centered on the search for the Ark of the Covenant. This movie is set in the mid-to late 1930's. In this movie, the Nazi's were trying to obtain this ark so that God's blessings would be with the Nazi's.

This ark is described in Exodus where God gave instructions to Moses on how to construct this ornate box.

“They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it. You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on 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. You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.

“You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim *of one piece* with the mercy seat at its two ends. The cherubim shall have *their* wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be *turned* toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark, you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. (Exodus 25:17-22 NASB)

So, we have box build of acacia wood that measures approximately 52 inches long and 31 inches wide and 31 inches tall. It was covered in gold. There were gold rings attached to the box and two poles (used to transport the box) also covered with gold. This box became the focal point of God's presence in the assembly. The children of Israel cherished this box and knew that having God's presence in their community was an assurance of having His blessings.

In the 4th chapter of 1st Samuel, we find that the children of Israel went to battle the Philistines and lost. The elders of the tribes reasoned that the best plan to win the battle against the Philistines was to take the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle.

Thus, the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.”⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God. (1 Samuel 4:1-4 NASB)

To make a long story shorter, they lost again and, in that loss, they lost the Ark of the Covenant. The Philistines now had the ark that represented the presence of God. The next 2 chapters cover

the trip of the Ark of the Covenant. First it was taken Ebenezer (the place of the battle) to the temple of Dagon in Ashdod (1 Samuel 5:1). From there, it was taken to Gath (1 Samuel 5:8). The Ark went from there to Ekron (1 Samuel 5:10). These various trips to move the Ark took about 7 months. All the time that the Philistines had the Ark, God brought various calamities on the people in the towns that housed the Ark. The Philistines were ready to get rid of the Ark and took it to Beth-shemesh. From there it was taken to Kiriath-jearim and the house of Abinadab where it stayed for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:2).

We now move fast-forward to the time of King David. He wants to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the capital city. So, he has it moved from the house of Abinadab to the house of Obed-edom.

Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned *above* the cherubim. They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. So, they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of *instruments made of fir wood*, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals. (2 Samuel 6:1-5 NASB)

From the house of Obed-edom, David had the Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem.

Now it was told King David, saying, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God.” David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattling. And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. So, David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

Then it happened *as* the ark of the LORD came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

So, they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house. (2 Samuel 6:12-19 NASB)

The return of the Ark of the Covenant to the children of Israel was a cause for celebration. The seat on which the spirit of God rested was once more with the children of promise. The significance of this symbol of God’s presence and blessings will eventually be placed in a permanent home when Solomon builds the temple. Later, as the children of Israel continue to turn their backs to God, we see the imagery of the spirit leaving the temple (Ezekiel 10:1-18). Even with the images of God’s spirit leaving the temple and vacating the seat that was a part of the Ark of the Covenant, Ezekiel points toward a time when God’s spirit will have a home in the individual who loves God and keeps His commandments.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NASB)

The Ark of the Covenant was the physical place where the spirit of God sat overseeing the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. It points toward a time when the elect of God would take the law of God into their hearts and becoming the living representation of the laws of God.

Jesus tells us that God would no longer live in a temple or sit on the Ark of the Covenant. He tells us that God live within the believers.

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him (John 14:23 NASB)

Paul uses the same image of God living within us as he writes to the church in Corinth.

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NASB)

Just as the children of Israel were blessed when God’s spirit was seated on the Ark of the Covenant, we are blessed when God’s spirit lives in us. We will close this morning with a brief glimpse of those blessings.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:3-8 NASB)