

# The Sanctuary – Most Holy Place

## ST Series 21

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### The Most Holy Place – *With Jesus in His Most Holy Shrine (Freedom from Sin’s Presence)*

We have come to the third and final chamber of the Sanctuary which God directed Moses to set up in the wilderness. It is commonly known that the Tabernacle proper was divided into holy and most holy places. The separation was the innermost veil, of the same material as the door (vail) between the court and holy place and the entrance into the courtyard, known as the ‘gate.’

The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube of 10 cubits or 18 feet (length, width, height). The same shape (foursquare) incidentally as that of the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:16). The wall boards were acacia wood overlaid with gold. The vail was suspended from four “nails” (Ex.26:32). These ‘hooks’ were attached to the tops of the wooden pillars encased in gold which formed the partition between the chambers. [Calvary fulfilled this tableau. There the real Veil, “that is to say His flesh,” (Heb. 10:20) hung from four nails driven into the cursed tree.] These four pillars were spaced about six feet apart and had no capitals.

Within the sacred cube stood one piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant.

### The Ark of the Covenant – (Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9; 40:20-21)

The ark was the only piece of furniture in the holy of holies, and was, perhaps the most intriguingly composite symbol in the entire Sanctuary system. Before giving any instructions for building the Tabernacle, or making its furnishings, consecrating its priests or carrying out its rituals, the Lord carefully described **the ark** to call attention to *its vital role in the plan of salvation*.

*The tabernacle was made according to the commandment of God. The Lord raised up men, and qualified them with more than natural abilities to perform the most ingenious work. Neither those workmen nor Moses were left to plan the form, and workmanship of the building. God himself devised the plan, and gave it to Moses, with particular directions as to its size and form, and the materials to be used, and specified every article of furniture which was to be in it. He presented before Moses a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Moses wrote all the directions in a book, and read them to the most influential of the people. {4aSG 5.1}*

*God gave a pattern of the ark to Moses with special directions how to make it...The ark of the earthly sanctuary was the pattern of the true ark in Heaven. {4aSG 7.2}*

Thus, the earthly ark was a symbol illustrating the function of its heavenly counterpart. It is said that the ark with its nine parts, was perhaps the most complex symbol in the entire sanctuary.

Please list the Ark’s nine parts:

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|----|----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. |    |

### Names Given to the Ark

The ark is more frequently mentioned in Scripture than is any other piece of Sanctuary furniture. On each occasion it played an important role in the \_\_\_\_\_, and pointed to some aspect of the ministry of Jesus. {We will review some of these later.}

The ark is mentioned 185 times under ten different designations. Each one of them teaches us something different about the throne of God. It is called

- "the holy ark" (2 Chron 35:3) to indicate its separateness.
- "the ark of His strength" (2 Chron 6:41; Ps. 132:8), as a symbol of the Deity
- "the ark of our God," *Elohim*, the great Covenant-Maker (1 Chron 13:3),
- "the ark of the LORD," *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, the One Who is all He is, the Ideal (Josh 3:13),
- "the ark of the Lord God," *Adonai Jehovah*, the Master of servants and the Husband of a wife (1 Kings 2:26),
- "the ark of the God of Israel" *Elohim*, (1 Sam 5:7; 6:3) to portray it as the seat of Divine majesty and power.

Each of these titles of Deity adds a special emphasis on the meaning of the ark. It is termed

- "the ark of His testimony," because it held the decalogue in its heart and testifies to eternal truth (Ex 25:22).
- And since Jehovah's contract to save doomed mankind is based on this law, it was given the designation "the ark of the covenant of God" (*Elohim*, Jud 20:27),
- "the ark of the covenant of Jehovah" (Num. 10:33),
- "the ark of the covenant of Jehovah of hosts" (1 Sam 4:4).

In fact, "the ark containing His law was to be a symbol of Himself" (4T 154). "The ark of God" was "the symbol of the divine presence" (PP 705). From this symbolic illustration of the authority and compassion of Deity in the earthly Tabernacle we should constantly keep our eyes on the goal of the Christian pilgrim's life in the celestial Sanctuary, the throne of grace and mercy (Heb. 4:16).

### Meaning of the Original Words for Ark

In the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) one word is used to designate both Noah's ark (*kibotos*, Gen 6:14) and the ark in the Tabernacle (Ex 25:10), while another term is used for Jochebed's ark of bull-rushes (*thibin*, quite close to the Hebrew *teab*, Ex 2:3). And since a single word is also found for the arks mentioned in the Greek New Testament (*kibotos*, Heb 11:7; 9:4), we conclude that whichever term is used it contains the same essential idea.

The term ark thus denotes a container for keeping valuables safe. By preserving mankind from extinction during the deluge (the Flood), by secreting the future deliverer (Moses) of Israel on the Nile, by carrying to the Promised Land the remains of the saviour (Joseph) of Egypt, by storing the three items in the most holy place of the Sanctuary, and by enclosing the treasure with which the Temple was to be restored, {emphasis supplied} the ministry of Biblical "arks" foreshadowed the activities of the eternal Preserver. The ark is thus a casket in which God protects inviolate (untouchable items) by His authority and power, what He considers necessary for the continuance of His kingdom into the next epoch of salvation history.

The Ark in the Sanctuary was a chest made of the thorny acacia, a wood which is used to signify the humanity of Jesus (Ps.1:3; Ex.3:2-6). This box was completely covered with gold, the emblem of His faith and love.

A **golden crown** around the top of the outer casket formed a recess in which the lid, or mercy-seat, rested. Josephus recalled that this cover was attached to the ark "by **golden hinges** after a wonderful manner, which cover was every way evenly fitted to it, and had no eminence to hinder its exact conjunction" (*Antiquities* III:6.2).

### The Ark – Symbol of God’s Throne

Look carefully at the **golden coronet** around the **mercy seat**, and listen to its message: "**Our King is Victor!**" In this tableau of **salvation** the crowned King upon a throne of compassion is triumphantly anticipated. He can provide grace and mercy, because He died upon His cross to exalt repentant sinners to be with Him in His kingdom.

The ark, with its cover representing the throne of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, was designed to be moved forward at God's discretion. To do this easily **golden rings** were attached at the corners of its two shorter sides as receptacles for **gold-clad acacia carrying rods** (Ex 25:12-15). Consistently the ark led God's people against every enemy to a joyous triumph.

### Three Objects in the Ark

God ordered Moses to place three objects within the ark (Heb. 9:4): the two tablets of the law He had written with His Finger, Aaron's miracle-working and resurrected rod, and the golden pot of nourishing manna. Upon the mercy-seat he ordered two cherubim to stand gazing reverently at the blood sprinkled upon it. Each of these symbols added its unique meaning to enlarge the total significance of the ark. What it was in itself, as well as each item it contained, reveal the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of God's throne in His celestial temple. As we consider each of these items we pray, **Eternal Spirit, help us to read these signs aright.**

The progress made by Israel on its wilderness journey was determined by the pace of the priests bearing the ark (Ex 40:36-38; Num. 7:9; 3:31; 10:33-36; 9:16-23; Josh 3:13, 15; 2 Sam 6:13). Toiling ahead with this load they blazed the trail, while the people marched unburdened. Let us keep vividly in our hearts the picture of our heavy-laden High Priest, staggering under His cross throne, so that we might joyously travel to Paradise.

The portage rods (staves) must never be removed from the ark (Ex 25:15), to remind the contemplative worshipers that God's throne was always ready to lead them on their march. This also sings a gospel song: Christ is prepared to go wherever His Father directs, and to obey His slightest wish while leading His church.

### The Ark was Seen by the Eye of Faith Only

In its secluded shrine the sacred ark was never to be looked upon by curious eyes. The Hebrews remember that even the priests who prepared it for its travels walked backward when shrouding it with the innermost veil. As the symbol of the inscrutable government of Christ the King and Judge, the ark was displayed only in outline when carried outside the Tabernacle, its meaning appreciated only by the **reverent eye of faith**. Natural man would perish were he to look directly at this representative of Deity.

In every age God has provided parables and symbols to aid man in grasping what he is capable of understanding of heaven's dealings with the world, for ". . .the judgment and purposes of God are

past finding out, His wisdom unsearchable. If He reveals Himself to man, it is by shrouding Himself in the thick cloud of mystery. God's purpose is to conceal more of Himself than He makes known to man. *Could man fully understand the ways and works of God, they would not then believe Him to be the infinite One*" (3BC 1141). Only as the seeker for truth lovingly and prayerfully passes through the outward trappings of time and sense, of word and symbol recorded in sacred writ, can his faith perceive the preciousness of the Saviour. The "veils" of Scripture, like the "flesh" of Jesus, are vehicles of a **controlled revelation** (Heb 10:20).

### The Mercy-seat

The lid of the ark was a slab of acacia wood encased in solid gold. It "was called the **mercy-seat**, to signify that although death was the penalty for transgressing the law, mercy came through Jesus Christ to pardon the repentant, believing sinners" (SD 66). It was also known by its gospel name, "the **throne of grace**" (Heb 4:16). Urging that all may be "**justified freely** by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus". In Rom 3:24, Paul intentionally used the word "propitiation" to explain the function of the "**mercy-seat**" (*hilasterion*, Rom 3:25), and picture Christ as the sinner's atoning victim and Kinsman Redeemer. [Obvious, tying the mercy-seat and thus the ark to Christ.]

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*Deeper Study: EGW references to Ark*

Ark (1014)

Ark of the Covenant (88)

Ark of Safety (33)

Ark of God (179)

Ark of the Lord (37)

Ark of His Testament (40)

Christ &amp; the Ark (131)

Ark of the Testament (19)

Paragraph in EW p.32 – Worth reading

Look up following verses -- 2 Chron 6:41  
Psalm 132:8

The majority of passages in Scripture involving the ark are in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, 1&2 Samuel and the Chronicles. This is not surprising, considering the construction of the sanctuary and its furnishings and the history of the ark and its wanderings, including when taken by the Philistines. But the rest of the Bible only contains seven more texts, five of which are in the New Testament.

#### *Thought and Discussion Questions:*

All of the N.T. passages involve either

- 1) Noah's Ark (Matt 24:38, Luke 17:27, Hebrews 11:7 and 1 Peter 3:30) or
- 2) The Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:4; Revelation 11:19)

- Why would Jesus and the apostles (Paul and Peter) reference the flood story twice as much as the Ark of the Covenant? Both are dealing with Judgment; both destruction; both are Arks of Safety and havens of refuge.
- Also, the Book of Revelation focuses on the Sanctuary teaching and specifically mentions the Lamb more than any other book in the Bible (27x) and yet there is only one reference to the Ark of the Covenant? This seems rather odd, considering the importance God placed on it.

Hint: The three veils shed light on this subject. Note the shape of the first veil, verses the other two. Also, Rev. 11, gives another clue, specifically the first two verses. Though the Temple of God includes the MHP, yet it is not stated specifically, but the theme of the chapter is dealing with \_\_\_\_\_.