
Week Four

The History of the Ark and the Tabernacle

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 4:1—7:2

§Day 1

- I. **Christ has 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—Phil. 3:8, 12-14; John 1:14; Rev. 21:2-3; 7:15; 1 Tim. 3:15; John 14:2, 23.**
- II. **In order to enter into the reality of the Body of Christ, we must see the intrinsic significance of the Ark:**
 - A. **The Ark typifies Christ as the presence of the Triune God with His people for the carrying out of His economy to establish His kingdom on earth—Matt. 1:23.**
 - B. **The Ark was 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 indicates that Christ occupies the place of preeminence in the church—Exo. 25:22; Col. 1:17b, 18b:**
 1. **The Ark contained the tablets of the law as the testimony of God, the expression and revelation of who God is—Exo. 25:16; 31:18.**
 2. **The Ark in the Holy of Holies signifies Christ as the center of God's dwelling place, the church (Eph. 2:21-22), and the contents of the church as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15-16; cf. 1 Sam. 4:22; Rev. 3:20).**

§Day 2

- C. **The Ark of acacia wood overlaid with gold signifies 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—2 Tim. 4:22; 2 Cor. 3:17; Col. 2:9; Heb. 9:4:

1. Acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity, strong in character and high in standard, as the basic substance for expressing God—Exo. 25:10; Matt. 3:16; 4:4; 8:20; 9:12-13; 11:29; 12:19-20; 17:27; 20:28; 27:12, 14; Mark 1:35; 6:39-41; John 6:12; 7:6; cf. Acts 16:7.
2. 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.

D. The propitiatory cover of the Ark signifies Christ as the meeting place of God and His redeemed people—Exo. 25:17-22:

1. Christ is the One who propitiates (Heb. 2:17), 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 (1 John 2:2; 4:10).
2. Christ is 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—Rom. 3:25; Heb. 4:16:
 - a. The two cherubim of gold on the propitiatory cover indicate that God's glory shines out from Christ (Exo. 25:18-20); the blood of the propitiatory sacrifice being sprinkled on the propitiatory cover of the Ark signifies that because of the blood of Christ's redemption, we can have fellowship with the righteous God in the midst of His glory (Lev. 16:14-15).
 - b. The more God meets with us and speaks with us, and the more we meet with God and listen to His speaking, the more of the testimony of God there will be in our experience.

§Day 3

III. The history of the Ark and the tabernacle portrays the desire of God's heart, the desolation of the church, and the recovery of the church for God's testimony, God's expression—Exo.

25:9-10; 26:26-30; 40:38:

- A. As the center and content of the tabernacle, the Ark signifies Christ as the center and content of the church as God's tabernacle, God's house, for God's corporate expression—25:22; 40:21; Col. 2:9; Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15.**
- B. In the first stage of its history, the Ark was in the tabernacle; this signifies that the normal church was the expression of Christ, and Christ was the content of the church; however, the Ark eventually was separated from the tabernacle; this signifies that the church became degraded and lost the reality and presence of Christ—Exo. 40:34-35; 1 Sam. 4:1—7:2.**
- C. The Ark typifies Christ as the embodiment of God and as the presence of the Triune God with His people for the carrying out of His economy to establish His kingdom on earth (Josh. 3:3, 10-17); to bring out the Ark was to bring out the presence of God (Num. 10:33-36; 1 Sam. 4:3-4).**
- D. The move of the Ark was a picture of God's move on the earth in Christ as His embodiment (Psa. 68:1-18); however, during Israel's fighting with the Philistines, God did not intend to move.**
- E. The children of Israel had no thought of or concern for God's economy, and their bringing out the Ark to battle the Philistines indicated that they were usurping God, even forcing Him to go out with them for their safety, peace, rest, and profit.**
- F. In principle, we do the same thing whenever we pray for our prosperity without any consideration of God's economy; instead of usurping God, we should pray, live, and be persons, like Samuel, according to God's heart and for His economy.**

§Day 4

- G. Today men are replacing God's testimony with man's need; when man's need replaces God's testimony, degradation begins and problems arise; the Ark was not only the Ark of God (1 Sam. 4:11, 13, 17-19, 21-22) but also the Ark of the Testimony (Exo.**

25:22; 40:21).

- H. Israel should have repented, made a thorough confession, returned to God from their idols, and inquired of God as to what He wanted them to do.
- I. Instead, having no heart for God's desire or for His eternal economy, they exercised their superstition to trust in the Ark based on their past victories that they had experienced through the move of the Ark.
- J. Due to Israel's degradation, the Ark was captured by the Philistines and was separated from the tabernacle, leaving the tabernacle an empty vessel with no reality, no proper content (1 Sam. 4:11—6:1); this signifies that in the second stage of its history, the church became degraded and lost the reality and presence of Christ (chs. 3—4; Rev. 3:20).
- K. In their degradation Israel was foolish because they did not trust in God directly; rather, they trusted in the systems ordained by God; before bringing the Ark of God out of the tabernacle, they should have checked with God as Joshua did at Jericho (Josh. 6:2-4; cf. 9:14).
- L. From the depths of our spirit we should 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"—1 Sam. 2:30b, 35; Num. 6:1-9; cf. 1 Kings 8:48; Jer. 32:39.
- M. 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 (1 Sam. 2:30, 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).

§Day 5

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- IV. Later, the Ark was recovered and brought first to the house of Abinadab at Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for twenty years (1 Sam. 6:2—7:2), and then to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, where it stayed for three months (2 Sam. 6:1-11; cf. 1 Sam. 1:24; Josh. 18:1); this signifies 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).**
- V. David moved 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 (2 Sam. 6:12-19; 1 Chron. 15:1—16:1); this was an improved situation, but the Ark was still in an improper place because it had not been returned to the tabernacle:**
- A. This situation signifies 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.**
 - B. These believers had Christ, but they had Him with an improper practice of the church life (typified by David's tent in Jerusalem)—cf. 1 Kings 3:3-15.**
- VI. Finally, after Solomon finished the building of the temple in Jerusalem, the Ark was moved into the Holy of Holies in the temple for a full recovery of the normal situation; today in His recovery the Lord is working to restore the normal condition of Christ within the proper church as the reality of the Body of Christ for His expression—8:1-11, 48; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:16-21.**

§Day 6

- VII. The history of the Ark and the tabernacle is 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 are five main aspects of this history:

- A. 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.**
- B. 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.**
- C. 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-edoms.**
- D. 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.**
- E. 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.**

WEEK 4 – DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Exo. 40:20-21 Then he took the Testimony and put it into the Ark.... And he brought the Ark into the tabernacle...and screened the Ark of the Testimony...

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

1 Tim. 3:15 ...You may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God,...the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

According to Exodus 25:22, this Ark was called “the Ark of the Testimony.” In the book of Exodus the testimony refers to the law. God regarded the law decreed through Moses on Mount Sinai as His testimony.

Suppose I have never met a certain brother. When someone shows me a photograph of that brother, I see a testimony of what that brother is like. As a description of the brother, his photograph is his testimony. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 983)

Today's Reading

In His work of creation God accomplished many things. However, Genesis 1 does not reveal what kind of God our God is. We do not know from this chapter whether He is a God of love or of hate, a God of darkness or of light,...whether He is holy or common, righteous or unrighteous. The law was given that we might have a portrait, a description, of God and thereby understand what He is. For this reason, God considers the law as His testimony. As a testimony of God, the law is a type of Christ. Christ is the living portrait of God, His living definition and description. Therefore, Christ is the real testimony of God.

The tabernacle is called the Tabernacle of the Testimony (Exo. 38:21), because the testimony is in the Ark, and the Ark is in the tabernacle. In...Exodus, when we speak of the Ark of the Testimony or the Tabernacle

of the Testimony, we should understand that the word testimony refers to the law. However, it refers to the law as a definition of God, not as commandments for people to keep.

The tabernacle had a number of important furnishings: the altar and the laver in the outer court; the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar in the Holy Place; and the Ark in the Holy of Holies, the inmost chamber of the tabernacle.... As the first item, [the Ark] occupied the place of preeminence. We know from Exodus 40:2 and 3 that it was in the tabernacle, and from 40:20 and 21, that it was in the Holy of Holies.

The Ark as the embodiment of God's testimony typifies Christ as the embodiment of God. All that God is, is embodied in Christ. Colossians 2:9 says that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. Our use of the word embodiment is based on this verse. Because God is embodied in Christ, He is portrayed, defined, and explained by Christ. Christ is God's definition, His explanation. As God's testimony, Christ is typified by the Ark of the Testimony.

Because the Holy of Holies is in the inmost part of the tabernacle, it is the center of the tabernacle. It is the focus of the tabernacle and signifies the center of God's dwelling place. God dwelt in the tabernacle but not in the outer court or in the Holy Place. He dwelt in the Holy of Holies. The Ark in the Holy of Holies signifies the center of God's dwelling place, the church (Eph. 2:21-22). The cover of the Ark is equal to the throne of grace in Hebrews 4:16. It was upon the cover of the Ark, the throne of grace, that God dwelt. This was the exact place where God was. In the Old Testament this place was in the Tabernacle of the Testimony. But in the New Testament this place is in the church. The church today is God's tabernacle, His dwelling place.

The Ark also signifies the contents of the church as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Just as the Ark as the embodiment of God's testimony was the content of the tabernacle, so Christ as the embodiment of God is the content of the church.... Inwardly the church must have Christ as the content in reality and not merely in terminology. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 983-987)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 84

WEEK 4 – DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Exo. 25:10-11 And they shall make an ark of acacia wood... And you shall overlay it with pure gold; inside and outside you shall overlay it...

Rom. 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness...

The Ark was not made of gold. It was made of acacia wood, which signifies Christ's humanity, strong in character and high in standard. Christ's humanity is the basic element, the basic substance, for Him to be God's testimony. Christ became the embodiment of God's testimony in His humanity.

The acacia wood was overlaid with gold both inside and outside. This signifies the divine nature mingled with the human nature—God and man becoming one. This also signifies that the divine nature penetrates the human nature and also rests on the human nature so that it may be expressed through the human nature. If only the outside of the Ark had been overlaid with gold, this would have signified joining instead of mingling. Mingling is signified by the fact that the acacia wood was overlaid with gold both inside and outside. The acacia wood was between two layers of gold. This is mingling. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 988, 990)

Today's Reading

Exodus 25:17 says, "And you shall make an expiation cover of pure gold...." This expiation [propitiatory] cover was the lid of the Ark.... The Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to reconcile us to God by satisfying God's righteous demands on us [Heb. 2:17].... The Lord Jesus is [also] the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins [1 John 2:2; 4:10]. Christ is not only the One who reconciles us to God by fulfilling God's requirements and appeasing Him, but He is also the propitiatory sacrifice.... In Romans 3:25 Paul says that Christ is our propitiation place.... This means that...Christ is

also the very place where God is able to meet with us, His redeemed people, and talk to us. Therefore, Christ is the One who propitiates, He is the propitiatory sacrifice, and He is the propitiatory cover, the place where God and His redeemed people meet together.

Exodus 25:18 says, “And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, at the two ends of the expiation cover.” The cherubim signify God’s glory (Ezek. 10:18; Heb. 9:5).... The cherubim on the expiation cover indicate that Christ expresses God’s glory, that God’s glory shines out from Him. The cherubim were on the cover, and the cover is Christ. This means that the glory of God shines out of Christ and upon Christ.

The blood shed on the altar for atonement was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the lid of the Ark, the expiation cover.... Through the sprinkling of the blood, the golden lid became red in color. Because of the blood sprinkled on the expiation cover, sinners could have fellowship with the righteous God.... Because of the blood of redemption, we today can have fellowship with the righteous God in the glory of Christ.

Actually, the lid of the Ark is not a mercy seat; it is a propitiatory cover with the shining of Christ’s divinity and the redeeming of Christ’s humanity as the place where we can meet and speak with our righteous, holy, and glorious God. This place is Jesus Christ Himself, the One who is both God and man. In His humanity Christ shed His blood to redeem us, and in His divinity He shines with God’s glory. Today He is for us the redeeming and shining Christ as the place where the righteous, holy, and glorious God can meet with fallen sinners.

The propitiatory cover is also related to the testimony. The more God meets with us and speaks with us, and the more we meet with God and listen to His speaking, the more of the testimony of God there will be in our experience. The function of the Ark of Testimony depends on the cover. ...Because of the cover on the Ark, the Ark becomes our enjoyment and God’s testimony. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 1007-1008, 1010, 1014-1017)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msgs. 86-89

WEEK 4 – DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Num. 10:35-36 And 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, which was made of acacia wood covered with gold, was a type of Christ as the embodiment of the moving and working God. The Ark was placed in the inner chamber of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, and thus became the center of the tabernacle. On the lid of the Ark God came to contact His people. There God's righteousness was appeased, and God and man could have peace and harmony with each other. This was also God's oracle, where God spoke to man. The Ark was respected to the uttermost by the Jewish people because they considered that the Ark was God's presence. To go to the Ark was to go to God. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, p. 146)

Today's Reading

The Ark of God was usurped by the elders of the people of Israel, who were degraded from the line of God's economy (1 Sam. 4:1-8). The elders usurped the Ark in their superstition for their fighting against the Philistines. Because the children of Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, the elders of Israel proposed that the people take the Ark of God from the tabernacle in Shiloh into battle with them. The elders 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" (v. 3b). When the Ark came into the camp, the people were glad and "all Israel shouted with a great shout" (v. 5). They trusted in the system ordained by God, but they did not trust in God directly. They should have repented to God of their failure and inquired of Him as to what He wanted them to do. Before bringing the Ark of God out of the tabernacle, they should have checked with God as Joshua did at Jericho (Josh. 6:2-4). The

elders knew the history of Jericho, but because they had become degraded, not having any heart for God's desire or His eternal economy, their situation was absolutely different.

The Ark was a type of Christ as the embodiment of God. It also signified Christ as the presence of the Triune God to be with His people for the carrying out of His economy to establish His kingdom on earth. To bring out the Ark was just to bring out the presence of God. When the children of Israel began to move with the Ark from Mount Sinai, Moses offered a prayer to God, saying, "Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered" (Num. 10:35). The Ark took the lead to travel onward. The move of the Ark was a picture of God's move on the earth.

In 1 Samuel 4 the elders of Israel were actually usurping God. At that time, God did not intend to move. The children of Israel had no thought of or concern for God's economy, and their bringing out the Ark indicated that they were usurping God for their safety, peace, rest, and profit. They were usurping God, even forcing Him, to go out with them.

Today many Christians usurp God by praying for their prosperity, health, or family without any consideration of God's economy. When we ask God for His healing, we must be fully related to His economy. If you are ill, you should not pray for healing in the way of usurping God. On the contrary, from the depths of your spirit you should say, "Lord, I am not here on earth for my health, my prosperity, my children, or my work. I am here for Your economy. Do You still want me to live on earth for Your economy? I have seen Your economy, I realize that You need Nazarites, and I have a heart to be a Nazarite for You. As one who has been born of God and who has the life and nature of God, I ask You what is on Your heart concerning me." If God intends that you continue living on earth for His economy, you will be healed, either through a physician or through some other way. The point here is that, instead of usurping God, we must pray, live, and be persons according to God's heart and for His economy. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, pp. 21-23)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, msgs. 3-4, 22

WEEK 4 – DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

1 Sam. 4:11 And the Ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

Rev. 3:19-20 As many as I love I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent. 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.

Israel was foolish in their degradation because they did not trust in God. Rather, they trusted in the systems ordained by God. In their situation they should have repented, made a thorough confession, and returned to God from their idols. Instead, they exercised their superstition to trust in the Ark. Their past told them that quite often when the Ark of God moved, there was a victory (Num. 10:35; Josh. 6). But this time their situation was not right. In their degradation they offended God to the uttermost, and God left them. Eventually, instead of the Ark saving Israel, the Ark itself was captured (1 Sam. 4:11a).

When the wife of Phinehas, who was pregnant and about to deliver, learned that the Ark had been captured and that her husband and her father-in-law had died, she bowed down and gave birth to a son (vv. 19-20). She named the child Ichabod (v. 21), meaning “No glory, “ indicating that the glory had departed from Israel. Glory is God Himself. When God departed, the glory departed from Israel. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, pp. 18-19)

Today's Reading

During the time of Eli the priest, the people of Israel failed God. They were sinful in the eyes of God. They were wrong with God, yet they still went on to fight the battle. Of course, they were defeated (1 Sam. 4:1-2).... If we are rightly related to God, we can never be defeated. When we are wrong with Him, we must be defeated, for the ground is lost. We must learn

this vital lesson. Although the Israelites were defeated, they would not learn their lesson; they would not be judged and dealt with by the Lord. Rather, they developed a certain superstitious attitude concerning the power of the Ark of God. Because they were wrong with God, they misused the Ark. They superstitiously planned to let the Ark fight the battle for them (vv. 3-9). The Ark did not help the Israelites. They were defeated, the Ark was captured, and the two sons of Eli the priest, the two leaders, were killed (vv. 10-11). The glory of God departed from Israel (vv. 19-22), and the tabernacle was left empty.

The Ark was indeed powerful, for it did protect itself. After defeating the people of Israel in battle, the Philistines placed the captured Ark in their own temple, and in so doing their idol was defeated. Eventually, the Ark even defeated and subdued the Philistines (ch. 5). The Philistines had vanquished thousands of the Israelites in battle, but they could not vanquish the little Ark.... Eventually they decided to send the troublesome Ark back to the Israelites and did so (6:1-16), sending it to Beth-shemesh. Upon receiving the Ark, the people of Beth-shemesh dealt carelessly with it, and many of them were struck by the Lord. The Beth-shemeshites then sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, asking them to take the Ark to their place. Hence, the men of Kiriath-jearim fetched the Ark and brought it into the house of a priest named Abinadab, where it remained for twenty years (6:12—7:2).

The situation was indeed abnormal: the tabernacle with the altar was in Shiloh, but the Ark was in Kiriath-jearim. The content was separated from the vessel, and the vessel was left empty. This situation prevailed until a full recovery was realized by the people of Israel. The Ark must be in the tabernacle. If we would have a normal church life, we must have Christ, the Ark, in the church, the tabernacle. All these events in the history of Samuel, Saul, and David occurred with only one object and purpose in view—God’s building. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, “The Vision of God’s Building,” pp. 249-250)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, “The Vision of God’s Building,” ch. 10

WEEK 4 – DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

2 Sam. 6:12 ...So David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with rejoicing.

1 Kings 8:6 And the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah to its place, into the innermost sanctuary of the house, into the Holy of Holies under the wings of the cherubim.

The abnormal state of Ark and tabernacle in separation lasted for at least twenty years. God suffered long because His Ark was not in the tabernacle. The desire of God's heart was for His building. Finally, God found David, a man according to the desire of His own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Saul was not such a man. Saul walked according to his flesh, his lusts, his own aims. Thus, God raised up David as king over Israel. Upon taking the throne as king, practically the first thing in David's heart was to care for the Ark. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, "The Vision of God's Building," pp. 250-251)

Today's Reading

Upon the incident of Uzzah and the resulting frustration, David left the Ark with a man named Obed-edom (2 Sam. 6:1-10).... But after a short time, he was informed that God had greatly blessed Obed-edom. David was moved, so much so that he proceeded to bring the Ark from the house of Obed-edom into his own city (vv. 11-12). It is always like this with spiritual blessings: people discover where the blessing of the Lord is, and they want a share in it. David had now learned his lesson with God. This time he realized that the Ark should not be borne by a cart but by living persons. And it was not to be carried by just anyone but by those who were designated, separated, and holy. Only the priests could bear the Ark (1 Chron. 15:1-15).... Living persons, the priests, must carry the Ark in coordination to its destination. David finally succeeded in bringing the Ark to Mount Zion, the choicest spot in Jerusalem (v. 25; 16:1).

On Mount Zion David had prepared a tent to contain the Ark.... With

this arrangement there was not yet complete satisfaction. One day David realized the need of a proper and established temple to be built up to house the Ark of the Lord.

Many times we desire to do something for God. In our first endeavor we are totally wrong. Then we learn our lesson and begin again. Yet in our second attempt we are only half right; fifty percent of what we are doing is still wrong. But God is a tolerating God. He tolerated David's shortcoming in bringing the Ark into a tent of his own choosing in Zion. David should have put the Ark in the tabernacle originally made according to the pattern revealed by God. Therefore, he still did not have settled peace. Many times after accomplishing something for God, we do not have full peace and rest; we do not have full satisfaction. The reason is that we did not act in an absolutely right way.

David then conceived to build a temple for God. This was indeed good, but God's answer to him was no. God's reason in so replying was first that David had been a man of war (28:3). Only a man of peace could build the house of God. Second, God promised David that He would give full peace to the people of Israel. It is only in peace that the house of God can be built up. Third, God told David that He would first build a house for David, and from that house God would raise up a son to build a house for Himself (2 Sam. 7:1-13; 1 Chron. 28:5-6). God would not give man any ground to boast of doing something first for God. The testimony must be that man can do something for God only out of that which God has first done for him. Thus, David did not build a house for God; rather, he prepared the materials (v. 2; 29:1-9) and the ground (21:18-30; 2 Chron. 3:1). Finally, he prepared Solomon, the builder, and all the helpers (1 Chron. 28:9-11, 20-21). Eventually, after all these preparations, Solomon received the authority on the throne and built the temple (1 Kings 6:1-2). (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, "The Vision of God's Building," pp. 253-254)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 37, ch. 33; CWWN, vol. 57, ch. 5

WEEK 4 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Exo. 40:21 And he brought the Ark into the tabernacle...and screened the Ark of the Testimony...

34...And the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

Eph. 3:16-17 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts...

The history of the [Ark with the tabernacle] is 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 are five main aspects of church history.

In the beginning the tabernacle contained the Ark. As God's dwelling place, the two were one.... This prefigures the first stage of the church.... The church was the expression of Christ, and Christ was the very content of the church.... On [the day of Pentecost] Christ was the Ark, and the church was the tabernacle. That is the absolutely normal condition. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, "The Vision of God's Building," pp. 255-256)

Today's Reading

Because of the failure of the people of God, the Ark was separated from the tabernacle, and the tabernacle became empty. This portrays the failures of the Christians causing the church to lose the reality and presence of Christ. This is the second aspect.... Christ as the very content was separated from the church, and the church became an empty vessel, merely an outward expression with no inward reality.... Even today, many so-called Christian churches are empty tabernacles without Christ in them as the reality.

The third situation prefigured in the Old Testament is that of the Ark without the tabernacle. First, in the house of Abinadab...for twenty years (1

Sam. 7:1-2) and then in the house of Obed-edom...for three months (2 Sam. 6:10-12), the Ark was apart from the tabernacle. The blessing of God came upon Obed-edom's house because of the Ark's presence, yet the tabernacle was still in Shiloh, separated from the Ark. This third condition... is much better. However, it is still not normal. Church history reveals that from the second century to the present time...there have been many persons [like Obed-edom] with the reality and presence of Christ in their personal lives. The Ark was with them, but this was not the normal state.

The fourth position is that of the Ark in an improper, inadequate tabernacle. King David had prepared a tabernacle in Zion, but it was not according to the pattern revealed by God on the mount. It was a tent pitched according to David's opinion. Church history is full of such incidents. So many faithful Christians do have the Ark—Christ alone. Then, later, they sense the need of the church life to express Christ, just as David sensed the need of a tabernacle to contain the Ark. Thus, they “pitch a tabernacle”; they set up a meeting according to their own understanding.... It was good, but it was inadequate.... The fourth condition—Christ in an improper “church”... is only half right.... Most people in this poor condition do not have full peace or satisfaction, because in fact they have fallen short of the full purpose of God concerning the church life.

The fifth condition is that of the Ark with the proper tabernacle, enlarged and increased. It is in this situation, of Christ with a proper church to express Himself, that we feel completely at home.

The first [position] is completely right, whereas the second is completely empty; the third position is good but abnormal, and the fourth position is one of half-satisfaction; the fifth position is that of Christ as the reality with a proper church as the expression.... I believe that in these last days the Lord is not only going to recover the original, normal condition, but He is also going to enlarge the church life and make it more solid.... Let us praise Him! (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, “The Vision of God's Building,” pp. 256-259)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, “Knowing Life and the Church,” ch. 10

<< WEEK 4 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #194 Thou art God's testimony, Lord

Praise of the Lord — His All-Inclusiveness

- 1 Thou art God's testimony, Lord,
 Much better than the law;
The law in letter was engraved,
 In it Thy type men saw.
A definition was the law,
 God's picture to provide;
But Thou art God's reality,
 In Thee doth God abide.
- 2 The ark of testimony too
 Was but a type of Thee;
In it the law of God was placed,
 But God in Thee we see.
The ark, in type, was made of wood
 And overlaid with gold;
It typifies Thee as a man,
 Who God in full doth hold.
- 3 Thou art the tabernacle too,
 God's holy dwelling place;
Incarnate in the flesh Thou art,
 And full of truth and grace.
God's glory we behold in Thee,
 Thou art the Word divine;
Thy words and deeds of love and light
 Do God in life define.
- 4 The temple was a type of Thee;
 The house of God Thou art;
God dwells in Thee, Himself to show,
 His fulness to impart.
Though Thou by Satan wast destroyed
 And numbered with the dead,
In resurrection Thou dost build
 A larger one instead.

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- 5 The city shows Thy fulness true,
A figure of Thy Bride,
The increase of Thyself in full,
In whom Thou dost abide.
In Thee is God, the light divine,
The lamp in her art Thou;
With Thee God shines thru her on all,
His glory to avow.
- 6 The tabernacle and the ark,
The law within them stored,
The temple and the city too,
Are all Thyself, dear Lord.
Thou art the hub, Thou art the rim,
The all in all Thou art!
In Thee we see both God and man,
How precious to our heart!