

Guidelines for the exercise of the Lord's day Prophesying

Message Four : The History of the Ark and the Tabernacle

I. Overview:

God built Himself into us in order for us to be built into Him to become a corporate God-man, as the reality of the tabernacle of God. In order to see the intrinsic significance of the Ark, we need to know that 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. The propitiatory cover of the Ark signifies Christ as the meeting place of God and His people. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the cover of the Ark, and the sinners can have fellowship with the righteous God. 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 in the second stage of its history. Later, the Ark was 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. David moved the Ark from Obed-edom's house to a tent that he had prepared for it in his own city. 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. These five main aspects of the church are a prefigure of the church history.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound that the law is the testimony of God, and also is a type of Christ.

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.

B. Describe the Ark in the tabernacle.

The tabernacle had a number of important furnishings, and the Ark as the first item 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.

Day 2 —

A. Expound that the Ark was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold.

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. 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 so that it may be expressed through the human nature.

B. Explain the propitiatory cover of the Ark in Exodus 25:17.

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. 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.

Day 3 —

A. State what the meaning and signifying of the Ark in all aspects are.

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.

B. Expound how the Ark was usurped superstitiously by the Israelites.

The Ark of God was usurped by the elders of Israel, who were degraded from the line of God's economy. 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 into battle with them. They trusted in the system ordained by God, but they did not trust in God directly.

Day 4 —

A. Explain our situation being the same as the Israelites.

Their past told them that quite often when the Ark of God moved, there was a victory. 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. When God departed, the glory departed from Israel.

B. Expound the importance of our relationship with God.

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. 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.

Day 5 —

A. Expound the abnormal state of Ark and tabernacle in separation.

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. 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.

B. Explain what David had learned his lesson with God in the matter of the Ark.

David left the Ark with a man named Obed-edom and after a short time, he was informed that God had greatly blessed Obed-edom. David was moved, that he proceeded to bring the Ark from the house of Obed-edom into his own city. David realized that the Ark should not be borne by a cart but by living persons. But God is a tolerating God. He tolerated David's shortcoming in bringing the Ark into a tent of his own choosing in Zion.

Day 6 —

A. Expound how the history of the tabernacle with the Ark in the first stage.

The history of the tabernacle with the Ark is a prefigure of the church history, giving us a full portrait of the course and situation of the church from the very beginning to the present time. 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. That is the absolutely normal condition.

B. Explain the situation of the second stage in the history of the Ark.

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. This was not the normal state.

III. Conclusion:

The people of Israel in the Old Testament are the greatest type of the New Testament church today. During the old time of Eli, the priesthood degraded and the children of Israel forsook God. They were sinful in the eyes of God, and they were defeated by the Philistines. The leading elders trusted in Ark superstitiously; usually according to the past history, as long as the Ark moved, they would have prevailed upon the battle. At that time, however, their condition was not right because they forsook God. Even though they brought the Ark out to fight against the enemy, it would not serve them and would have even captured by the Philistines. Whenever our relationship with the Lord is not right, He will not listen our prayers; even though He is almighty, He will not fight for us. In these circumstances, we should repent, confess our sins thoroughly, and fully turn to Him. What a warning and reminder this picture and scene are to us!