

The Restoration of God as Seen in the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant

by John Saunders

The sermon explores the theme of restoration, using the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant as symbols of God's desire to restore his people to a place of unity and peace with God.

Duration: 1:12:03

Scripture: Psalm 50:1, Psalm 67:1, Psalm 80:3, Psalm 80:7, Psalm 80:19, Matthew 18:21

Topics: "God's Restoration", "Biblical Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a story from the book of Judges in the Bible. The story involves a horrific act of immorality committed by the tribe of Benjamin, which leads to a war between Benjamin and the rest of Israel. Despite suffering defeats in battle, the people of Israel seek guidance from the Lord and continue to fight. The preacher emphasizes the theme of restoration, highlighting how God calls a remnant to Himself and works to restore what was lost. The sermon also draws parallels to the coming of Jesus, who, in his humility and weakness, ultimately defeats the enemy and brings about restoration.

Transcript

Lord, how we thank you for your great love for us. Father, you have demonstrated in sending your son to die for us that you love us with an eternal love. And Lord, we are quickened just as we have been singing to you.

Lord, open our ears and our eyes and my mouth. Oh, Lord, this is beyond us. We need you.

Lord, give us your word today. Lord, get past every barrier, every weakness, Lord, in the speaker and all the hearers. Lord, for you to come and make yourself clear and plain and understood.

Lord, not only do we ask for your word, but Lord, we ask for our hearts. Lord, we know that your eyes move to and fro throughout the earth, that you might strongly support those whose hearts are completely yours. Now, Lord, what should we say to this? Are our hearts completely yours? Lord, create in us a heart that is completely yours.

Lord, we don't want to be hearers only. Lord, we want to be those who respond to your word, heart obedience, faith and love. Lord, we need you.

Lord, we trust you. And we thank you for the blessing that you are pouring out for us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Could you turn to Psalm 80, the psalm of Asaph. I don't know what you know about Asaph. There are 150 psalms in the Bible.

Fifty are anonymous. No writer is ascribed to them in the scripture. David wrote 73 psalms.

And after David, Asaph wrote more psalms than anyone. He wrote 12 psalms. After Asaph, the sons of Korah are attributed 10 psalms.

Solomon wrote two, Moses wrote one, Heman wrote one, and Ethan wrote one. Who is this man? Hopefully the Lord will give us time at the end of my message. I'd like to speak a little bit about Asaph.

But this man spent over 40 years ministering before the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle of David. And I think that he has a kindred heart with us, I think, hopefully a kindred spirit. He spent perhaps most of his adult life in the most wonderful ministry.

And he writes in Psalm 80, O give ear, shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your power and come to save us. O God, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved.

O Lord, God of hosts, how long will you be angry with the prayer of your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears and you have made them to drink tears in large measure. You make us an object of contention for our neighbors and our enemies laugh among themselves. O God of hosts, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved.

You did remove a vine from Egypt. You did drive out the nations and did plant it. You did clear the ground before it and it took deep root and fill the land.

The mountains were covered with its shadow and the cedars of God with its boughs. It was sending out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the river. Why have you broken down its hedges so that all who pass that way pick its fruit? A boar from the forest eats it away and whatever moves in the field feeds on it.

O God of hosts, turn now again we beseech you. Look down from heaven and see and take care of this vine, even the shoot which your right hand has planted and on the son whom you have strengthened for yourself. It is burned with fire.

It is cut down. They perish at its rebuke, at the rebuke of your countenance. Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, upon the son of man whom you did make strong for yourself.

Then we shall not turn back from you. Revive us and we will call upon your name. O Lord God of hosts, restore us, cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved.

Perhaps you can see Asaph's heart and burden for restoration and it seems to build. Three times he says he asked for the Lord to restore his people, but listen to it build. In verse three, O God, restore us.

In verse seven, O God of hosts, restore us. And finally, in verse 19, O Lord God of hosts, restore us. Cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved.

Our brother has a burden and a heart for restoration. It's interesting, he wrote Psalms 73 through 83, 11, and he wrote Psalm 50. Now, there are 150 Psalms, someone would have to write Psalm 50, but I think it's interesting that all his Psalms are there together.

In the third book of the Psalms, he wrote most of them, 11 out of 17. But he wrote also, the Lord gave it to him to write Psalm 50. Now, 50 is the number of Jubilee.

You remember that every 50th year, everything was restored to those to whom it should be restored to. Maybe someone had to sell their land and it was held by others. But on the 50th year, it went back to those whose inheritance it was.

So 50 speaks of restoration. Our brother has this burden of restoration. He wrote Psalm 50.

And I hope today that I'm speaking to brothers and sisters in Christ who have a desire for the restoration work of the living God. Because our God is a God of restoration. And he's a God of restoration because he's chosen to be a God of restoration.

It's not circumstances that have caused the Lord to have to deal with things in this way. All through the scriptures, from beginning to end, he's the God of restoration. All through church history, he's the God of restoration.

The Bible begins, Genesis 1, when in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth became formless, a waste place, formless and void. And the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the deep.

Darkness was there. Isaiah chapter 45, verse 18 says, Thus saith the Lord who created the heavens and the earth, who created the heavens. And he, let me read it for you so I don't misquote it.

For thus says the Lord who created the heavens. He is the God who formed the earth and made it. He established it and did not create it a waste place or formless, but formed it to be inhabited.

And then we move to the end of the Bible and John says, And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. So from the very beginning, we see ruin come to something, to the Lord's purpose, actually. And we see the Lord all through the history of the universe bring that ruin to perfect restoration, filled with his glory.

It's interesting how it says, And I saw the city of God descending out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband, having the glory of God. Our God is a God of restoration. There was a rebellion in the heavenly places.

And Satan and a third of the angels rebelled and were cast out of heaven to the earth. When they came to the earth, it devastated God's creation. And the earth became formless and void.

That word became is the same word that's mostly translated was in many translations. But it's the word, the same word in Genesis 19 where it says, And Lot's wife became a pillar of salt. So, of course, it was formless and void because it became formless and void.

It was devastated, darkness. Emptiness, formlessness, a waste place. And you see the spirit of God hovering, moving, prevailing over the surface of the deep.

Our God is a God of restoration. On the second day of creation is a very interesting day because it's the one day in the whole story of God making, restoring the heavens and the earth from their devastation. Where the Lord does not say, and God saw that it was good because the enemy was there.

It's the day when God created the heavens around the earth. And in Ephesians chapter two, it said he's the prince of the power of the air. Chapter six, it says powers and principalities in the heavenly places.

The disciples came back to the Lord Jesus and said, Lord, even the demons were subject to us in your name. And he said, I was beholding Satan fall from heaven like lightning. The enemy was there already in the second day and the Lord began to restore.

God created man. Let us make man in our image and in our likeness. The enemy came and deceived man and man rebelled and fell.

And in the fullness of time, God, the son came in human flesh, the son of man and restored man to the purpose of God. But God was not after one man, he said, and give them dominion. It was a corporate man.

And every time a man, a woman, a child has believed in the Lord Jesus, over the last two thousand years, that restoration has become fuller, progressing further towards the purpose of God. God is the God of restoration. And in the scriptures, there are stories of restoration and like wheels within wheels and great stories of restoration.

Within them, there are little stories of restoration. The Lord, we have an enemy, brothers and sisters, and the Lord calls a people after himself and he will take that people with himself as far as they will allow him to take them. They love him.

They hear his call, they go after him, but the enemy tirelessly, ceaselessly, head on, violently, subtly comes against the work of God. And finally, those people turn to the right or to the left and it seems as though the enemy has won. But the Lord is the Lord of restoration.

He calls a remnant to himself and he begins to work again and he restores everything that was lost in the seeming victory of the enemy, everything that was lost and more. He never just restores what was lost, but always more. So he goes from glory to more glory to more and more glory until at the end he restores everything that he desired in the beginning.

The enemy has not forced the Lord to be a God of restoration. You know, the Lord has chosen to glorify himself in this way. Why? I do not know.

I mean, what can we know about why the Lord does what he does? But our God has all knowledge, omniscience, foreknowledge. Before he created any of the angels, he knew what they would do. If he wanted, he could have said, I think I'll create Gabriel and Michael, but not Satan.

But he created the ones he created. They chose to do what they chose to do, and he has spent the centuries and the ages restoring unto his glory. And in the end, all is restored.

It's the most amazing thing to me that when God the Son came, this is the one who created the universe. This is the one who has all power and authority, and in him all things hold together. And you're thinking, or maybe I'm thinking, oh, Satan, you're in trouble now.

God the Son has come, but he came to restore everything as a lamb in weakness. Amazing. One little word from the Lord Jesus, and the enemy is done for as God, but he comes as a lamb.

The enemy is filled with pride. The Lord Jesus is full of humility. The enemy is filled with ambition, grasping to take the highest place for himself.

The Lord Jesus takes the lowest place of the servant, delivers himself up to death. And in what seemingly is the weakest thing that anyone ever saw, completely and thoroughly defeats all of his enemy. Amazing.

Today, this afternoon, I would like to explore with you one of these movements in the scripture of restoration. There are a number of them. The one that the Lord has put upon my heart has to do with the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle.

As they travel and move through the nation of Israel after they crossed the Jordan River. And I would like us to be open to the Lord today to see, first of all, how the Lord builds what he builds. The process and then also the way the Lord restores once the enemy has come in and seemingly won a victory.

And then the Lord takes that seemingly disaster and takes it to his glory to restore to greater glory. So if you will, we'll begin telling the story as Joshua is leading Israel across the Jordan River. I'm going to be referring to a lot of scriptures in Joshua, perhaps also in Judges.

I'll try to just refer to them. If you want to jot them down, you could read them later. I think I have a lot of material to cover.

So here we go. We'll take this journey with the Ark and the Tabernacle. First, I'd like to say a little word about the Ark and the Tabernacle.

The Ark of the Covenant speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Tabernacle was made for the Ark, not the other way around. The Lord Jesus Christ has a centrality in the church.

He has first place. The church exists for him, not him for the church. And the Tabernacle speaks of the house of God.

And it's a glorious and wonderful place as long as the Lord Jesus has the headship, has the preeminence, has first place in everything. But when that ceases to be the reality, what does the church become? Derelict, something that it was never intended to be. So when it begins, we see everything in its right place.

We see the Ark of God in the Holy of Holies. We see the Tabernacle of Moses being a fit, right dwelling place for the testimony that speaks of the testimony of Jesus. They come to the Jordan River and the priests go out and stand in the middle of the Jordan with the Ark.

The waters heap up and Israel crosses on dry land and they come up out of the Jordan. In the first place that they set up the Tabernacle with the Ark in the Holy of Holies is a place called Gilgal. Now, Gilgal means rolling, revolving, and it's a place when they come there.

A couple of notable things happen there that tells us what this is speaking of to us who know the Lord Jesus. The first thing it speaks to us is concerning this matter of circumcision. For 40 years in the wilderness, none of the people of Israel were circumcised.

They were circumcised in Israel and Egypt before they came out, but then for 40 years, none of the people were circumcised. So when they came into the land, the first thing that happened was everyone, I guess 40 years and under, all the males were circumcised. And it was done at Gilgal and they called the place the Hill of the Foreskins.

And the next thing that happened there was they celebrated the Passover. All the years that they'd been in the wilderness, they didn't celebrate the Passover. And the first thing they did when they came in, it was exactly at the time of the Passover, they celebrated the Passover.

Now, what does this speak to us of but the cross of Calvary, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, his death, his burial, his resurrection? Circumcision speaks of baptism. It corresponds, the removal of the flesh. I've been crucified with Christ.

When the Lord Jesus was crucified on Calvary, one died and all died with him. And in the Passover, he is the Passover lamb. The blood of the Passover lamb is applied to the door of my life.

We sing that song, Christ is our Passover. And by his precious blood on Calvary, all of our sins have been washed away. For the church or for an individual Christian, there's no other starting place than the cross of Jesus Christ.

The mighty work, the victory that he accomplished there over all his enemies and our enemies. Gilgal, that's the beginning place, the first place that the house of God was set up in the land when they came. And it was from Gilgal that they went out and conquered the whole land.

Brothers and sisters, all the victory that we will ever know in the Christian life is based upon the victory that Jesus Christ won for us at the cross. Everything that he accomplished there, active, working, effective in our lives, brings us into victory. There's no victory aside from the Lord Jesus and what the victory that he has gained.

So they were there in Gilgal, the tabernacle was set up there and they went out and they conquered the whole land or as much of it as they cared to conquer. Unfortunately, they could have conquered a little more. The Lord said to them, wherever the sole of your feet touches, I've already given it to you.

Oh, that they would have walked a few more places. But they conquered a good portion of the land. And after they did, they moved the tabernacle.

The next place they moved it to, you can see it in Joshua chapter 18, verse 1, they moved it to Shiloh. And Shiloh speaks, well, it's translated great tranquility, peace, a savior. And Shiloh speaks of those who through the cross of Jesus Christ have peace with God.

By the way, as long as you are moving the tabernacle, the house of God, following the Lord, every place where they dwelt before, when they move it, they take the reality of that place with them. It's not like, well, we've known the reality of the cross now, now we're moving on. No, as you move on, you take the reality of everything you knew there and come to the next place and so on and so forth, as long as you're going forward with the Lord.

Now, if you retreat, you're abandoning ground. So they come to Shiloh, peace with God. And you see that in Shiloh, they found out that they have an inheritance.

And that's as it is with us. We are saved and the Lord Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin. And we find out that not only did he die for us, but we died with him.

And through the cross, we have peace with God. And we come into that relationship with him and we find out that we have an inheritance, a glorious inheritance in Christ. You know, I can see a group of people who begin to gather together, meeting, who love the Lord, who've believed on the Lord Jesus and who have come into peace with God in the body of Christ.

And, you know, the church is the Lord's testimony. The church of Jesus Christ is to be that place on the earth when people want to see what the Lord Jesus is like, they can come to his testimony. That's what the Lord told his disciples.

And John, he said, a new commandment I give unto you that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this, all men will know that you're my disciples if you love one another. So the whole world is looking at these people who are gathering there, who by the cross have peace with God and with one another and looking to see, do they love one another? With what kind of love? With the same love that the Lord Jesus loved us.

He laid down his life for us. Do they have this sort of love? Is this speaking that these people certainly are his disciples? And then what did he pray in John chapter 17? Oh, Father, I pray that these might be one, even as you and I are one, Father, that they might be one, that the world might know that you sent me. This glorious unity that the Lord has established for us, the unity of the Spirit of God, and when the world sees it, they know that the Father sent the Son.

They know that we're his disciples as we love one another, and they see us walking in this precious unity of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ, and they say, the Father certainly sent the Son. What a testimony. But as we are gathering together, at first, everything is wonderful.

We're just loving the Lord. And the time goes on, and I find that I have an interesting experience, and that is that my brother offends me. And I'm offended, and I come into crisis, and I say, Lord, I know you've called me to love my brother, but he's not only offended me, frankly, Lord, he's offensive.

Maybe if I don't meet with this one, Lord, I know that you made us one with the same unity that you have with the Father, one Spirit, but Lord, there are a few here that we need to weed out. Probably I'm the first one. We learned that we have a great inheritance in Shiloh, but I think in order to come into our inheritance, we need to move the tabernacle.

Again, we need to go onward and upward with the Lord. Where's the next place that they moved it? If you'll turn to Joshua, chapter 24, verse 1, Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers, and they presented themselves before God. Verse 23, Now, therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.

And the people said to Joshua, We will serve the Lord our God, and we will obey his voice. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and he made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Now, the sanctuary there is the tabernacle. It's the same word when the Lord first referred to the tabernacle in the book of Exodus. And he said, Now, build for me a sanctuary.

So, so far, the tabernacle with the ark at its center has moved from Gilgal, speaking of the cross of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, the victory that he has won and that we've won in him, to Shiloh, which speaks of having peace with God and finding out that we have an inheritance. But in order to gain this inheritance, we find out that we need something spoken of by this place called Shechem. Now, what is Shechem, and what does it speak of? Well, we see that when Abraham first came into the land, the first place that he came from Haran, when he entered the land of Canaan, he came to this place called Shechem.

And there was two things notably there. A notable tree, which apparently was still here in the book of Joshua, and he built an altar there. Now, the tree speaks of the work of the cross.

The altar speaks of the work of the cross. The next place we see Shechem is when Jacob is coming back from his uncle Laban, spending 20 years in Haran, coming again into the land of promise. And the first place that he comes to, once he finally crosses the Jordan River, is the place of Shechem.

And what do we find there? We see in Shechem at that time, a great circumcision. You remember the people who lived there, they wanted to join themselves with Israel. And they said, Jacob's son said, well, you're not circumcised, we can't have anything to do with you.

They had much wealth, livestock. And they said, well, we'll circumcise ourselves. And they said, well, OK, go ahead and do it.

And they did it. And in the third day, when they were in their pain, his two sons, Simeon and Levi, came in and slaughtered every man in the town. We see a great circumcision, the cross, a great slaughter, a great death, the cross.

And also, Shechem is the site of a very notable grave. It's the place that they buried the remains of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who had ruled Egypt. You remember when he was dying, he said, take me with you, whatever's left of me, take with you and bury it in the land when you come there.

They buried it there. The grave, a slaughter, circumcision, the tree, the altar. Shechem speaks of the work of the cross.

You think, well, I thought Gilgal spoke of the work of the cross. Well, it does. But Gilgal speaks of the objective work of the cross.

The Lord Jesus, who died once for all, Shechem speaks of the subjective work of the cross in your life and in my life. It's the Holy Spirit works in us so that we don't bite and devour one another in the house of God. I find that the Lord's house is a wonderful place.

The only problem is, is that I'm here and that there's something in me that doesn't jive with the house of God, with this command to love one another as the Lord loved us and with this unity that He's made for us by baptizing us into one spirit, into Christ. There's a self nature in me, very selfish, life of the flesh. And the Lord works in me by the power of the cross.

Everything that he accomplished at Calvary, he works in me subjectively in time and in place and in circumstances so that I can come into my inheritance. You see what happens at the end of Joshua, chapter 24, in verse 28. Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

So in Shiloh, they had peace with God. They found out they had an inheritance, but they couldn't receive the inheritance from Shiloh. They moved the tabernacle again to Shechem and by the work of the cross, putting to death that man of the flesh.

The mind set on the flesh is death, the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. We find that we can come into our inheritance. So then they moved the tabernacle and the ark again.

Now, where's the next place that they moved it to? It's difficult to find. If you look at the book of Judges, you see that the first 16 chapters in the book of Judges are in chronological order from the beginning to chapter 16. But the last five chapters of the book of Judges are not in chronological order.

They actually tell two stories that happened at the beginning of the book of Judges and one of them even before the book of Judges. I won't go into it too much because that's not my burden. But in chapter 17 and 18, we have that story of that Levite who for 10 shekels in a suit of clothes decided to become the personal priest of Micah and his family.

You know that story. And you know that later on, the tribe of Dan comes and sort of kidnaps him or takes him away to be their own priest. And it says some things that happened to Dan.

And we look back in Joshua chapter 19, verses I think 41 through about 47, and we see the same things that happened to Dan were happening there in Joshua. And in Judges, it says, now in those days, Dan had received an inheritance. But when we look back in Joshua, we see that they had received an inheritance.

And in Judges, we see they go off and take a place named called Laish and name the place Laish Dan. And then Joshua chapter 19, we see that they go and attack a place called Leshem and name the place Leshem Dan. It's the same place.

And this situation in Judges 17 and 18 is synonymous with what was happening in Joshua chapter 19. And the Lord put it there for a reason. And we can't go there today.

Now, the second story is that terrible story in verse 19, 20 and 21 about the Levite who had the concubine who he went to Bethlehem to woo her back. And they're on their way back to the hill country of Ephraim. And they stay overnight in a town in Benjamin.

And the men of that place, Israelites, behave just like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. Send that man out to us that we might have relation with him. Unspeakable.

The end result of the matter is that they rape and ravish and murder his concubine. And you remember that he, all of Israel, comes to a moral outrage at this immorality that has been done. And they all come together against Benjamin and say, we want those men who did that must be punished.

And Benjamin and their pride say, we will not give them to you. Now, if you'll turn there to Joshua chapter 20, I'm sorry, Judges chapter 20, they then go to war against Benjamin. And for two days they suffer defeat.

The first day they lose, I think it's 22,000. The second day, 18,000. And they're wondering what is going on here.

We know we're right. And so they, it says in verse 20, in chapter 20, verse 23, And the sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening and inquired of the Lord saying, shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin? And the Lord said, go up against him. Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.

And that's when 18,000 men perished. So in verse 26, it says, then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept. Thus, they remained there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening.

And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And the sons of Israel inquired of the Lord for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. And Phineas, the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before to minister in those days.

So by this, we know that this couldn't be happening hundreds and hundreds of years after they passed across the Jordan, because Phineas was a grown man in the wilderness. You remember he, there's an account of him taking a spear and checking a plague by running that spear through two people, an Israelite and a Midianite woman. So Phineas is a grown man when they crossed the Jordan River.

And at the end of Joshua, the book of Joshua, Joshua and Eleazar die and Phineas becomes the high priest at the very beginning of the time of the judges. And they didn't live hundreds and hundreds of years as some of their ancestors had. Moses lived for 120 and that was remarkable.

Joshua lived for 110, I think also remarkable. So Phineas was there before the ark at Bethel at a time synonymous with the beginning of the book of Judges. So the next place that the tabernacle was moved in the scriptures was Bethel, the house of God.

Finally, the tabernacle, the thing that is the house of God in the Old Testament that speaks of the house of God today, that's a picture and a type of the church of Jesus Christ today, is on the ground in the reality of the place that is the house of God. You remember when God appeared to Jacob when he was in Herod, he revealed himself, he was telling him to go back home. He said, I'm the God of Bethel, the God of the house of God.

Finally, so you see that the tabernacle has come from the place, from Gilgal, the place that speaks of the cross of Jesus. All that he accomplished on the cross, to Shiloh, peace with God, where we find we have inheritance, to Shechem, where the work of the cross causes us to be able to inherit our inheritance, and finally through all of that to the place that is the reality and the ground of the house of God. And the Lord has his tabernacle and his ark in the place where it was always meant to be.

So we find it very peculiar when we come to 1 Samuel and we see that the tabernacle is back in Shiloh. In other words, it's gone backwards. What could cause them, but more pointedly, what could cause us to abandon the reality and the ground in the place that says the house of God? And go back to that place that simply says, peace with God.

You know, as we gather together in our assemblies and we run this race, hopefully with endurance, it's a race to the end. I praise the Lord that Paul was able to write to Timothy and say, I finished my course. What a glorious thing.

I fought the good fight. I kept the faith. I finished my course.

Brothers and sisters, the race is a race to the end. But there is such a temptation to run and run and begin to look around and look at one another and say, you know, we've come so far. Maybe we compare ourselves to someone else.

That's what we always do. That's what I do. I don't know.

You do what you do, but I know what I do. I'm like Peter who says to the Lord, what about this man? The Lord says, no, that's none of your affair. You follow me.

So here we are and we say, you know, we've run, we've suffered, the cross of the Lord has worked. This is far enough. Don't you think? Who else has come this far? The old is good enough.

It's OK. Look, we belong to Jesus. We're going to heaven.

That's good enough, don't you think? It's difficult to remain on the ground of Bethel, the ground of the house of God, because it takes a continual dying. I must decrease, he must increase. Paul said, I die daily.

The Lord Jesus said, if any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily. And follow me. And we've known loss, we've given up our rights and we just get weary.

And we say, let's don't you think, peace with God, that's sounding better and better with me. Of course, we have peace with God. But if we just abandon the work, subjective work, daily work, the power of the cross applied by the Holy Spirit in our lives, we find one morning we wake up and we're no longer in the place called Bethel.

We're in the place called Shiloh, which was a good place to be in the beginning, but it's not the place to be anymore because the Lord took us past that and included peace with God in everything that we do and knew as we went on with him. But now we've abandoned everything else and we're back there. And look at the plight of the tabernacle, the house of God in those days.

Eli was getting older and blinder, and what was in his flesh was just a metaphor for where he was spiritually. And his two sons were immoral men who stole from the sacrifices of the people of God, who brought their offerings to God at the house of God and who even committed immorality and lay with the women who would come to serve at the door of the tent of meeting. Isn't it interesting that when the tabernacle was on the ground of Bethel, immorality, the outrage of it caused the whole nation to rise up and deal with it.

But when it's just peace with God, no working of the cross, no one seems to be willing to do something about these immoral men who are the priests. And what happens when we go backwards is the house of God comes into judgment. We find that the Lord would rather abandon the ark of his testimony, the Ark of the Covenant, to the Philistines than for it to remain in the house of God that is full of compromise and that has abandoned following him.

And that's exactly what happened. The Philistines came up against Israel. There was a defeat and Phineas and Hosni, the two sons of Eli, said, well, let's go get the ark.

I think I'm putting words in their mouth, but probably not too much of a stretch. Maybe we'll have some good luck sort of in a superstitious way. The Lord didn't command this type of thing.

And they go back and get the precious ark of God and carry it into the camp of Israel. And the Philistines defeat them again and take the ark captive into their land. And now the tabernacle is just an empty tent.

And for seven months, the ark is there in Philistia, and it seems as though the enemy is won. It seems as though the enemy is won. He's removed the testimony from the house.

And not only has he removed it, but it's in the house of Dagon, the Philistine God. But after seven months of great difficulties in Philistia, first of all, their God falling on its face before the ark, its hands and feet coming off it, and physical afflictions on the people, they finally realize we've got to get rid of this thing. They take an ox cart, they put the ark on it, and they send the cows away.

And they keep their calves. They say the natural thing would be for the milk cows to come to their calves because they want to be milked. But these cows go in the direction of Israel and they take the ark back.

It goes to Dush Shemesh, but it ends up in the house of a man named Abinadab, who lives on a hill in the town of Kiriath Jireh. Now, this place means City of Trees. The Lord, our God, is a God of restoration.

And he brings the ark back to a place that speaks of the cross, the work of the cross. And it stays in that man's house for 20 years, forgotten about, unsung. How many people walk past Abinadab's house on the hill on their way to the tabernacle to make their religious offerings? How many people even knew that the tabernacle was empty? I wonder what happened on the Day of Atonement every year for 20 years.

When the high priest went in to the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood, in my own mind, I'll give you the answer. This is total speculation. Disregard this.

I think he stayed in there about long enough to do it and came back out without a word of surprise. Hey, you won't believe it. There's nothing in there.

Why would you do that? You might lose your job. People say, why are we coming here? You know, he's just sort of business as usual, you know, and he realizes that nobody but him is really aware of it. Although if people can remember back that far, but people's memories aren't too good.

And there is the ark of God in a man's home. His son Eliezer has been consecrated to care for the ark. Now, what do you think is more precious to the Lord in these days? Simple home of a man whose son has been set apart, but to care for the ark of God, which speaks of the person of Jesus as head of the church or a tabernacle that's just going through religious exercises, but in reality is an empty tent.

Our God is a God of restoration. And finally, he brings David to the throne. Now, first, David comes to the throne only of Judah for seven years.

But when David came to the throne of all Israel, he's 37 years old. The first thing that he did, the first thing that he did was he took the city, Jerusalem. Now, up until that time, it had been a Jebusite city.

No one had cared to conquer it or take it, and it was just left alone. David somehow knew from the Lord that this was the place. The first thing he did was to take Jerusalem.

And then the second thing he did was to say, now let's go up and bring up the ark, because we didn't seek it in the days of Saul. And they get an entourage and they go to Abinadab's house and they take the ark and they put it on an ox cart, the good old Philistine method, and they are taking it up. And as they go along, of course, it hits a dip in the road and almost upsets Uzzah, reaches out his hand, the Lord strikes him dead.

And David is flabbergasted. I think he's both terrified and a little miffed. Lord, don't you see the service that I'm trying to provide for you? Doing the best we can.

Lord, we seek the ark. No one did it or sought it for years. Our hearts are right.

He says, how can I bring the ark up to me? And so there's a man who lives right next to where this happened named Obed-Edom the Gittite. Now a Gittite is someone from Gath. Gath is one of the Philistine cities.

It's where Goliath was from. I don't know where this man was from, but I think perhaps he was a Philistine who, it says in the scripture, that many in those days were turning themselves from the vanity of the nations and turning their hearts and throwing in their lot with Israel. Perhaps this man Obed-Edom was a Gittite from Gath who had come to Israel.

And I don't think they were doing him a favor by putting the ark in his house. I mean, Uzzah just died. I think for three months they did two things.

They watched Obed-Edom to see what would happen. And they got in the scriptures and began seeking the Lord as to what was wrong. Well, God blessed Obed-Edom.

And the Lord also blessed him because he revealed to them that it wasn't the man-made methods of dealing with the testimony of the Lord Jesus. That which speaks of the testimony of the Lord Jesus. You will forgive me, won't you, as I speak of these two things and interchange the words, because we know that all the things in the Old Testament are speaking of Christ.

And since the church is in Christ, the church. We don't deal with that which speaks, with the testimony of Jesus, nor they with that which spoke of it, with just man-made methods, with oxcarts. But according to the wisdom and the revelation that the Lord has given.

They come back with the golden poles and the priests. Insert them in the rings through the ark. And before they've gone six steps, David is sacrificing.

And thus, they bring up the ark to... Now, if you didn't know this story, and I think a lot of people do, you know, wouldn't you think, and they brought the ark back to the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle of Moses. But that's not where they brought it. They brought the ark to Mount Zion.

Remember, we said when the Lord restores, he restores everything that was lost and more. And through the seeming victory of the enemy, the Lord, the God of restoration, comes back and brings his testimony to Mount Zion. What did Asaph write in Psalm 50? Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God has shown forth.

Now, what happened to the tabernacle all this time? It was interesting because, you know, they had regressed to Shiloh. The ark was taken out of it. The next place we see the tabernacle is in a place called

Nob.

It's in Benjamin, probably, because Saul was king, and the person who was in authority liked to have the accouterments on his ground. Nob means a hill, an exalted hill. And here's what transpired there.

David was running from Saul. He went to the priests that were there. They didn't know that there was any problem between Saul and himself.

And he said, I'm awfully hungry. We haven't had anything to eat. Do you have any food here? And they said, well, there's only the bread of the presence, but that's only for the priests.

I guess you can have it, but only if you're clean. We're clean. He said, and in my haste of leaving, I forgot to bring a weapon.

Do you have a weapon? And they said, well, there is the sword of Goliath back behind the altar. David said, oh, there's no other weapon like that. Let me have it.

So he goes on his way. The Lord Jesus said, don't you remember how David entered the house of God and did these things that I just mentioned? Saul comes to the priest there. He's enraged that they've helped his supposed enemy.

And he says to his men, strike these priests dead. And none of them would dare lift their hand to a priest. But there's an Edomite there named Dog.

And he says, I'll do it. And that day he slew 85 men who wore the ephod. What a testimony.

From the ground of a place that is the house of God where brothers love one another and are one, retrogressing to just peace with God. Whatever happens, happens. Now to an exalted hill where the priests are slain.

And then finally, the next place we see it is in the great high place in Gibeon. Gibeon was a place of people. Gibeonites were a people who were not of Israel, but who, it's a long story, were allowed to live there among Israel.

And this place, this great high place in Gibeon was a place where idol worship went on, where incense was burned to false deities. Man loves, incurably religious man loves to worship in a high place. And so the tabernacle was taken there, the tabernacle of Moses, the altar of burnt offering, the brazen altar, all the furniture in the holy place, the table, the golden altar, the lampstand.

It was all there. And all Israel would go there. And the ark of God was on Mount Zion in the tabernacle of David, which brings us back to Asaph.

It's an interesting thing, this man Asaph, because he spent his whole, probably most of his adult life, over 40 years, before the ark at the tabernacle of David. How did Asaph get to be there? I'll tell you the story quickly and you can read some scriptures later on. In 1 Chronicles 6, it says that the Levites chose three men to be over all the worship in Israel.

The three men were Asaph, Heman, and Ethan. They didn't choose it themselves. They were elected, if you will.

They were chosen by all the Levites. So first, Asaph wasn't one of the three because he desired it. It was appointed to him.

And then, if you will turn to 1 Chronicles 16. I'll read verse 1. And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it. By the way, I don't think that that tent was some rude thing that David said, Oh, the ark, we need to pitch a tent.

And they just threw something together. My suspicion is, and you can develop your suspicion because we don't know, that all those seven years that he was king of Judah only, he was making provision. David was the type of man who made provisions for things that the Lord showed him.

And he, perhaps, was making provision for the day when he would bring the ark to the place where the Lord showed him and not the tabernacle of Moses which was on that high place. And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.

Verse 4. And he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. Asaph, the chief. Verse 7. And then on that day, David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord.

Verse 37. So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant to minister before the ark continually as every day's work required. Verse 39.

And he left Zadok, the priest, and his relatives, the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place which was in Gibeon. Verse 41. And with them were Heman and Jaduthun and the rest who were chosen who were designated by name.

There were these three men. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan. Now, later in the story, the person Ethan becomes Jaduthun.

I don't know if Ethan died and Jaduthun took his place. I don't know if Jaduthun is another form of his name or another name he was known by. But there were these three.

And in the day when David brought in the ark to the tabernacle of David on Mount Zion, he said in essence, Asaph, you and your relatives stay here. Zadok, who was the fine man, you will be the priest at the tabernacle of Moses. Heman, you and Jaduthun are with him.

Isn't that interesting? Asaph didn't choose to be where he wound up. It was appointed to him by the Lord. Everyone who belongs to the Lord is part of the restoration work of God because to be in Christ is part of this restoration.

But brothers and sisters, there are some who are called, elected if you will, to come in the way of restoration in a great way, very specifically. To serve in a place maybe as out of the way as the house of Abinadab on the hill or even in a place as peculiar as the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite or even in a place as strange, and this is going to sound funny at first, but I'll explain it, as Mount Zion in Jerusalem. You say, what are you talking about? Jerusalem.

Of course, Jerusalem. Now, in those days, we look back 3,000 years and say, oh yeah, Jerusalem. But don't you understand that in those days, Jerusalem wasn't Jerusalem.

It was just the Jebusite city that David had just taken. There's nothing written in the books of Moses about Jerusalem. There's lots in the books of Moses about the tabernacle of Moses.

What would make someone want to go to that city? We say, well, of course, but David took it, and David erected that tabernacle. But don't you see, we look back at David, and he's now David, but then he was a 37-year-old guy who'd taken over in place of Saul. He hadn't become David yet, in essence.

The Lord knew he was David. The men who loved him and who served with him and lived in the cave with him, they knew he was David. But look how easy it was for Absalom to lead the whole nation against this one.

Yes, he was then, in reality and before God, the king. But Israel continued to go to the high place. And to prove it, all you have to do is see what Solomon did when he became the king.

He was a young man. He became the king. He went directly to the high place at Gibeon, the tabernacle of Moses, and offered 1,000 burnt offerings.

And he laid down that night in that place and went to sleep. And the Lord appeared to him and said, What do you want? Ask me whatever you want. I'll give it to you.

And he said, I want a hearing heart, wisdom, and understanding. The Lord was so pleased at that request. And he said, Because you've asked for this, I'll give you the rest too that you didn't ask for.

And he woke the next morning, and behold, it was a dream. And he arose and went directly to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, stood before the ark, offered peace offerings and burnt offerings, and made a feast for his friends. Now, brothers and sisters, the first thing that Solomon did when he got wisdom was to leave the empty tent that seemed that the whole world, the whole nation, to them that was the tabernacle, and to go and to stand before the testimony of Jesus, that which speaks of the testimony of Jesus in the place of God's choosing and worship there.

Well, this brings us to ourselves. I have a feeling, I think, I believe, I trust that I'm in a room filled with people who have been appointed to the restoration work of the living God, who are part of perhaps a remnant that the Lord has called after himself and said, Now come after me. Follow me.

I want to do so much in you and through you, if you'll allow me. People that he will lead until they turn to the right or turn to the left. You say, Well, you don't understand the people that I meet with.

We're never going to turn to the right or to the left. We're going to follow the Lord the whole way. Bless you.

No one else has done that. Everyone else eventually. It used to take several generations, now it just takes a little while.

Has turned to the right or to the left. What do you do when the people that you're with have turned to the right or to the left? Do you think that you could overcome in the midst of brothers and sisters that the Lord has put you with and love him with all your heart and remain uncompromised and love your brothers and sisters with all your heart, with the love of Jesus, and prove to the whole world that the Father sent the Son because we are one. And prove to all men that you are his disciple and that you follow him wherever he goes, which is usually to the cross.

The Lord calls a remnant to himself, and I believe he's called you. It's one of those things, if you see it, if you see it, you've been called. If you don't see it, it's okay.

It's okay. No one can see anything that the Lord hasn't given them to see. But once you see it, once you see the Lord's purpose, once you see his ways, once you see his person, then what else can you do but cast yourself upon him and say, Oh, Lord, I'm yours.

Lord, my heart's yours, all that I am, all that I have. Oh, Lord, restore, like this man, Asaph. Oh, Lord, God of hosts, restore us.

Cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved. Our God is a God of restoration. And perhaps the time between now and when he comes is short, but there's much that he desires to restore.

You know, we don't restore, God restores, we recover. It's like a physician and patient relationship. The physician restores, the patient recovers.

But the Lord has much that he would recover if people would just come to him and say, Here we are, Lord. Here I am. Lord, I'm your freewill offering.

I belong to you. Lord, I see what you're about. I see your purpose.

Oh, Lord, put me in it. Bring others. And Lord, don't stop until you've satisfied your heart.

Let's pray. Lord, in ourselves, Lord, we feel and we know that we are full of frailties. Lord, we are not capable, not able.

Lord, we'll walk off into a ditch or a pit. Lord, we need you. Lord, we know that you haven't revealed your purpose to us, your ways to us, your person to us, but that you intend to bring us into the reality.

Lord, we don't want to be standing before you one day and finding out that we were just involved in that which was an empty pit. But, Lord, in your house, where you have all the headship and all the preeminence and all the centrality, Lord, where you have first place in everything, oh, Lord, restore us. Cause your face to shine upon us, Lord.

And we will be saved. Amen.

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