

Ark of the Covenant (Transcription)

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the principle of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and the need for a living, dynamic faith in the crucified and risen Lord to avoid spiritual decline and ritualism.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 13:1

Topics: "The Presence of God", "Restoration of Worship"

Description

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the significance of the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of God's presence and the necessity of restoring it to its rightful place in the lives of believers. He discusses the spiritual decline of the Church, drawing parallels between the historical context of Israel and the contemporary state of Christianity, where rituals often replace genuine relationships with God. Thomas warns against the dangers of detaching religious practices from Christ, urging the congregation to recognize that true faith must be rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus. He calls for a spiritual awakening that brings the Ark, representing Christ, back to the center of worship and life. Ultimately, he stresses that the essence of the Gospel is found in Jesus Christ, the living Word.

Transcript

Grab your Bible's and keep your fingers well lit.

"The Form of scripture is the Word of God; the Character of the Word of God is the Gospel, and the content of the Gospel is Jesus Christ." - Major Ian Thomas

So no matter where we turn in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, we may anticipate that the Holy Spirit who's gracious ministry it is to be our teacher will focus our attention on the person of the Lord Jesus. This is what makes the Old Testament in particular so wonderfully fascinating. If we don't recognize the principle that no matter where you turn in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit will want to introduce you to Jesus Christ, then the Old Testament can become intolerably boring. And for many it is because, they have never learned to understand the language of the Holy Spirit.

We will start in the Old Testament and move to the New. Often in order to understand what God is trying to say to us through the pages of the Old Testament, we must do a lot of research. It isn't always obvious what God is getting at. 1 Chronicles 13:1-5 David summonsed the people together and put forth a proposition, He said, Let us bring again "the ark of our God to us." And all the congregation said we will do it. So the proposition was right with all the people. So the theme is going to be how to get the Ark "back to

where it belongs."

Of course there wouldn't be any particular reason for doing that unless there were some spiritual significance: 1) in the Ark and 2) where it ought to be. Getting the Ark back to where it belongs/ back into its rightful context. We need to discover: What the Ark was all about, What the Ark contained, and Where the Ark ought to have been, and why. We also need to discover why it wasn't where it ought to have been. Why it was necessary to get it back. What had happened to it. So go back a few pages to 1 Samuel.

Here we have recorded the last days of Eli, one of the last Judges and priests. This was before the new era was introduced with the establishment, contrary to God's will and purpose, of a Monarchy in Israel. Saul became the first King of Israel, because they wanted to be like their neighbors (like the world/worldly). This was contrary to God's purpose for them, because Israel's king was God himself. But like so many today they didn't like to be different. They were slaves to conformity, and said, let's be like everyone else, so ultimately God granted them their desire, to the considerable impoverishment.

But before that took place, and before Saul became king, there was this man called Eli. It was a time of deep spiritual depression. The whole spiritual state of the land was in a state of pathetic decline. That is why this particular story is relevant to your day and mine. Without a doubt the Church of Jesus Christ in spite of all its: real-estate, hierarchy, and its organizational institutions is in a state of pathetic decline. For one thing, when the Church ceases to be a dynamic force, bursting with the life of God himself, when the church has become institutionalized, and everything has become respect, you will always discover that the Church copies the world.

In a state of spiritual decline, the Church always imitates the world. It's only in times of great spiritual awakening, that the world starts copying the Church. And we are in quite a state of spiritual decline now. But every kind of device is adopted by the Church which is characteristic of the world, in order to capture the world's attention. And that is always a very, very, very bad thing. We will see this is also particularly true to this generation we shall be discussing together. (10:30 on the recording) In 1 Samuel 3: "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli.

And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." It says "the word of the LORD was precious in those days. This doesn't mean it was held in high regard, rather it was a rarity to hear the word of God expounded, and no prophecy was given. The Bible by and large was a neglected book. There was religion but almost no revelation. Samuel was brought up in this time, he might have been about 12 years old at the time, and although he ministered to Eli he was unconverted.

It says in vs. 7 "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." In spite of the fact that he ministered to Eli and helped him in the temple, he was unconverted and it appears that Eli couldn't have cared less if he was or wasn't. Because, you see the situation spiritually was in such a state of decline and bankruptcy that so long as everyone went through the motions, nobody really cared whether there was any vital relationship between the individual and God Himself. The whole thing has been rigidified, the whole thing had been reduced to a process to a procedure to a religious externalist practice (a religious experience). There was no spiritual content.

"2And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was lying down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim so that he could not see,³ and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, and Samuel was lying down to sleep,

•The point of fact is the lamp of God should never have gone out. But you see it had become the practice to simply light the lamp in the temple for so many hours a day, then snuff it out. Saved the expense; you didn't need so much oil. This is another symptom you see of spiritual decline, when reality is reduced to ritual. There is a place for ritual, if it reminds you of reality. After all, the sacrament of baptism, if you like, is a ritual. But it is designed to remind us of the reality that a true believer has been buried with Christ, and raised with Him too.

Of course, the moment the ritual takes the place of the reality, and has no real spiritual content, then it becomes just a piece of pagan idolatry. The Lord's supper, the breaking of the bread, what we call the communion service, is a ritual. The Lord said, "do this in remembrance of me." Of course it is a ritual, but it's a ritual that is designed always bring us to the reality, the glorious fact, that the Lord Jesus once laid down His life "a ransom for many" and that His precious blood was shed upon the cross that we, through His precious blood, might boldness of access into the Holiest of all. But the moment the breaking of the bread, the Communion service, the Lord's Supper simply becomes a ritualistic device that takes the place of the reality of a living saving faith in the crucified, now risen all triumphant and soon coming LORD, of course it just becomes the object of our idolatry.

You see where ritual takes the place of reality, you will either disguise the ritual or you will deify it. And that, by in large is what has happened in the world today: Religious protestors have become so rigidified that the vast bulk of people aren't the slightest bit interested, so they pass it by on the other side of the road because they have got things so much more interesting and so much more attractive and so much more fascinating. But those who are religiously inclined, you see if there is no reality beyond the ritual then they will fight for their ritual because if you take away their ritual they've nether ritual or reality. So from then on they defend the system, because they don't know God. And this is what had happened in the days of this pathetic old man. (16:40 on the recording).

In Exodus 27: 20 God's instructions were very clear. "20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always."

It was a lamp that was never to go out.

In Leviticus 24: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually." But when your own relationship to God and obedience to His command has ceased to be a matter of any real importance, then token obedience will take the place of total obedience. How would you characterize your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus tonight? How would you characterize your practice of what you may describe as the Christian Faith?

Token? Or Total? If we really had courage enough to sit down and discover just how vast we have rigidified our own religious practice, we would be horrified. That's why we don't take time enough to sit down and do it. You see, the church has been reduced to a building. Isn't that right? When you give somebody instructions, you say go down the road and you'll see a "Church" on the right. Pass the "church" and take the second road to the left until you come to another "church" on the left.

What a crazy idea! Is that a church? Is the church made of bricks and mortar? The bible tells us very plainly that those who claim redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus and are indwelt by His Holy Spirit are thereby baptized as individual members in particular of the Body Corporate of which He is the

head and His presence though the Holy Spirit is the Light contents, so that every boy, girl, man or woman who is genuinely converted becomes a "Member" of the "Church of Jesus Christ."

So the Church of Jesus Christ is not a building, it's not an institution. The Church of Jesus Christ is a fellowship of men and women, boys and girls, whose flesh and blood is that which today makes incarnate the "living Son of God." If that is the "church," how can you "go to church." You can't "go to church," you are the church! There are times of course, in which the "church" comes together to worship, and it is right, proper and convenient, to have such a place as this. I am glad there is a building where we as members of the Church can come and study God's word, worship and then pray.

But this isn't the church, this is just a piece of real-estate. We are the church. That means the moment you are genuinely born again, you are never "out of church." But you see we have reduced it to token acknowledgement of the fact that there is a "church." And we say we "go to church" on Sundays. That means one hour or an hour and a quarter, or if you have an all age Sunday school perhaps two and a half hours, and you go into a building and you "go to church." Token. Of course if you want to spend the rest of the Sunday fishing, you can persuade the party to have an early morning service that gets you away quicker and you've already "been to church."

You see, Token: anything but Total. And if it isn't raining too hard on Wednesday prayer meeting, then of course you come for another hour token attendance to "church." And long since of course prayer meeting has ceased to be a prayer meeting hasn't it? People don't really come on "Wednesday prayer meeting to pray." Only last week I was talking to a bunch of kids and they said, "On Wednesday nights we used to have about 10 people to pray, but now the part is just to name somebody, and he just prays for everybody."

Token. I had dinner with a pastor of a church, a large church; it has about three thousand average on Sunday morning service. And I said, "Supposing you were to get up next Sunday, and with all the enthusiasm, with all the urgency, all the seriousness that you could muster, you would say to your people, the members of your congregation, 'there will be a meeting on Tuesday Night of this Church congregation which is absolutely vital to it's continuance and to it's spiritual wellbeing, and to it's proper function."

And as your pastor, I plead with you with all the urgency, all the seriousness that I can possibly muster, that every single one of you be there. It is absolutely imperative to the future of this church community.' I said when you've done that, how many do you expect out of your three thousand. He said Two or three hundred. And I know he is right, because you see for the last thirty-seven years I've been traveling from one "church" to another of every denomination of all parts of the world on five continents of the earth and I know quite frankly, and I know that when I preach to a congregation on Sunday, I can say goodbye to ninety percent of them, if I am going to preach every night for the following week.

Because on Sunday there is a token attendance, all they are doing is tipping their cap to God, and saying "nice to see you, see you next week." Right? (23:40) Now, does that have anything to do with bible Christianity? Absolutely Nothing. It has an awful lot to do with the kind of practice of religion that was being perpetrated by this pathetic old man Eli. But you see long since you, long since there had ceased to be any real spiritual content to the performance in which they were all engaged.

His sons were in the ministry. Wicked men, dishonest, immoral, and yet Eli who was responsible for their ordination tolerated their sin and their apostasy on the grounds of family expedience. He wanted his son's in the ministry. 1 Samuel 2: "12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." And Eli knew perfectly well they didn't know the Lord, but he allowed them to minister. And in times of great

spiritual depression, you see, as to whether or not a person has a personal relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as to whether he is genuinely converted, as to whether he has been cleansed in the shed blood of Christ.

As to whether he is really regenerate. As to whether really the life of God has been imparted to his redeemed humanity so that he can live day by day in the function and power of God the Holy Spirit. Whether or not he really believes the Bible, whether or not he is really going to proclaim it's message with an authority that derives from an un-shatter-able conviction that "THUS sayeth the LORD!" It is a matter of total indifference, so long as we can keep the institution going. Now this is the situation at this particular time.

1 Samuel 3: 3 "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; 4 That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. 5 And he ran unto Eli" You see God spoke, but he answered Eli. Why? Well very simple. You see nobody in the temple ever expected to hear anything but the voice of man. And the preacher, quite frankly, never expected anybody to hear the voice of God. So Samuel brought up in this aphotic condition hearing the voice of God, quite naturally thought it was the voice of man. He had never been accustom to hearing God speak. So when God spoke to him, he jumped up and he ran to Eli and said, "here I am you called me." And Eli said, "I didn't call you, lie down again" and don't eat cheese so late at night. So he went and lay down. Vs 6: "6 And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again." Don't bother me. Little wonder he never knew the LORD. Are you a Sunday School teacher? Does it really bother you whether your kids know the LORD? Or the men and women to whom you minister? If you're a Sunday school teacher, how long does it take you to prepare your lessen? Or quite frankly, have you learned that because the material is handed down to you from above, all you've got to be able to do, quite frankly, is to be able to read English reasonably well. And you can scan it over during your breakfast, with your lesson in one hand and a piece of bacon in the other. Token.

"7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. 8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me." And at last this pathetic old man perceived, wander of all wanders that the LORD had called the child. What an extraordinary thing he thought God has done it. Must be quite a surprise mustn't it? Under these lamentable conditions. But he had long since come to terms with a Godless society, and he had long since, even in his own family circles learned to live with sin.

"9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth." And of course this is an amazing thing, no mater how aphotic may be the condition in which you and I live. No matter how bankrupt maybe the institutionalized "church" to which we belong as it was in the days of the Lord Jesus, where Judaism was simply an aphotic, dead, ritualistic form of Christianity, where they preached the Messiah and they preached the Lord, but never knew Him when He came. They crucified Him. In spite of all that, no matter how depressing may seem the environment to which you find yourself, Again and again and again, GOD will Speak! And a boy hears, a girl there a man somewhere else will come alive. It's happened all down the centuries, quite incredibly. Because you see man is never indispensable to God (31 min). But God is always indispensable to man. It simply means that this is as in the case of Judaism an aphotic form of Christianity, those who had been entrusted the very oracles of

God; If it becomes totally aphotic, then God bypasses it. That's all, God isn't limited.

And if the Christian faith is rigidified into some institutionalized form, in which God has no place in it, He will move right out of it. That's what happened in the time of Martin Luther and the Great Reformation that swept the world. God simply walked out of the existence then, of the institutionalized form of religion. And the voice of God was heard again, clear and loud.

No credit to Eli. Eli was so insensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit when Hannah the mother of Samuel, came because she had never born a son and poured out her soul to God, she was in bitterness of soul. 1 Samuel 1:10 " 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.

"11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. 13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." So insensitive, that he thought a woman crying out from the bitterness of her soul to a living God was nothing no more, no less than a drunken woman. "15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord....vs 20 20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And in the discharge of her vow she brought him to the house of God vs 27 "27 For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28 Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." And God answered her prayer, and Samuel came to know the Lord. "19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. 21 And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord." So you see side by side with the: appalling aphoticey, and the degradation of the priesthood, and the scarcity of the Word of God, and the indifference of those upon whom should have rested spiritual responsibility to minister life; God was laying his hand upon a young boy and preparing him for His service.

1 Samuel 4:14 "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. 2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. 3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Thrashed by their foes upon the field of battle as a last resort, like so many, they turn to religion. And they said lets go get the Ark, lets go get it, and bring it, and it will help! And so they went to Shiloh to the temple, and they took the ark out of the temple, so that it might save them. So the Ark was wrenched out of its context. And their confidence was vested not in Him, but in it. (36:30 min)

Now we shall discover that the Ark and it's contents represent the marvelous provision that God has made for you and for me in the person of the Lord Jesus. The Ark is symbolic of our salvation. In a since,

comprehended in the contents of the Ark are the doctrines of the Christian faith.

Now in their need they took it, and they hoped it detached from Him, might help them. That is what you do when you cherish Christian doctrine, until they become no more than evangelical traditions but totally destitute of spiritual contents, because they have become severed from Christ. You see the moment you detach your Christianity from "Christ" even though it is bible believing, evangelical Christianity, you've got nothing no more no less than a dead religion around your neck! Because Christianity severed from Christ is bankrupt. The moment you've got a form of Godliness but deny the power there of, which is God Himself, you've got a legalistic strait-jacket, that may have taboos, and dos and don'ts but it is spiritually error. And the moment you've got a spirituality, that is detached from the person of the Holy Spirit, you've got a nauseating fall. Christianity without Christ is a dead religion, godliness without God, a legalistic strait-jacket, and spirituality apart from the Holy Spirit, is just a nauseating fall. That is it,...it!

If you've got a theology you see which is less than a Theocracy, then it won't be long until you are worshipping your theology but you won't be worshipping God. When your dogma is less than Deity, when your creed is less than Christ, when your religion is less than regeneration, then you've got it in the camp. And it will do as much for you today as it did for them then.

1 Samuel 4:3 "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." If it were the LORD who had smitten them, it would have been far wiser to get back to the LORD, than to try and get it to help them. But the people sent to Shiloh. Vs 4: "4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5 And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." You see their knowledge of the Lord had been reduced to a pagan superstition. And there is nothing so sacred in the Christian life, that cannot be used by Satan as the object of your idolatry. (40:20 min)

vs 6 "6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the camp. 7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore." The enemies of Israel, in their ignorance, new more than the people of God. They knew enough to identify it with Him. The people of God had detached it from Him.

Vs 8 "8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9 Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight." This for the Philistines was a cry, for them it represented Him. It represented the One who had delivered them marvelously out of the hand of the Egyptians. It represented the One who had marvelously led them through the Red Sea. It represented to them the One who had marvelously led them into the land of Cannon and chased their enemies from before their face! But not to the children of Israel, all they had was it. And God refuses to honor it detached from Him. And I don't care how sacred it may be, the thing that has become the object of your idolatry. It may even be your Bible, it may be soul winning, it may be missions, it may be your church, it may be your denomination. Detached from Christ, it's bankrupt, and God will refuse to honor it because God has chosen only to honor His Son, to whom He has given the

name which is above every name. He hath highly exalted Him, that only at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is LORD. And if however unwittingly you have substituted your churchmanship or whatever denomination it may be for Christ, God will not honor it. If no matter how unwittingly you have substituted your service to Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ Himself, God will not honor it. He refuses to honor it, when it has been detached from Him. Out of context.

By in large, God isn't particularly interested nor impressed with our activity. He is very deeply concerned about our attitude. It's not our religion God is concerned about but our relationship. What role does the Lord Jesus actually play in your life? Said the Pharisees one day to the Lord Jesus, When will the Kingdom of God come? (Luke 71: 20-) And they were thinking of it. He answered and said the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, it doesn't come with outward show, it can't be defined in terms of a human organization or an ecclesiastical hierarchy, or lots of real-estate. You won't determine by the vestments that men may wear nor the professions in which they may take part. The Kingdom of God does not come with observation, neither shall they say lo there it is or lo here it is, behold the kingdom of God is within you. (Christ is LORD, now). That is why you can never enter the kingdom of God without becoming part of it. Because the Kingdom of God is within you. And if you have entered the Kingdom of God by becoming part of it, then there is only one place for the King and that is in His chambers. And from that moment there is only one role for the King to play as the King in his Kingdom and that is to be KING! Which means that your: body, soul, spirit, your mind, emotion and will, the totality of your being as a man, every area of your personality, is yielded to Him without reserve. You present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, it's your reasonable service. You no longer ach for the word in which you live. You are not conformed to this world; you are transformed by the renewing of your mind by adopting an entirely new attitude that bows yourself out and bows Him in and gives Him total jurisdiction. And you allow the Holy Spirit to reestablish the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in every area of your being so that you step out in the dawn of every new day as a living member of His body (corporate) in which He is the head, a member of the kingdom in which Jesus is King. Anything less than that, God repudiates. (AMEN!) (46.23 min mark)

1 Samuel 4:10 "And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11 And the ark of God was taken; ([it], that God refused to honor in the midst of His own people, detached from Him was taken, captured by the enemies of God, fell into the hands of the Philistines.)...and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain."

Vs 12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. 14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. 16 And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? 17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

And this pathetic old man fell back and died of a broken neck just before he had time to die of a broken heart.

Vs. 18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. 19 And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered 21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. 22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

Ichabod, His glory has departed. Now where should the ark have been, if you turn in the book of Exodus 25: 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 26: 33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. 34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. The holiest of all, that was to be separated from the holy place, by the vail. That vail which was never to be rent until the day that Jesus Christ shed His blood, rose again from the dead and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, that there might be boldness of access into the very presence of the Holy God for all who would come by the blood of Jesus. The holiest of all, that symbolized the very presence of a living God. That is where the ark was supposed to be, and upon it the mercy seat, before which the burnt offering was to be made.

Exodus 29: 42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. 43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. 44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. 45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God. (Emphasis on the word I.)

That was where the ark was to be, it was to be in the place where the living God who delivered them out of Egypt would meet with them, commune with them and fill the place with His presence and with His glory. The holiest of all.

Exodus 30: 6 And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. You see the place for the ark was to be inseparable from the place where God would meet His people. It was not the ark in itself that was important, but the One that whose mercy and whose provision for guilty it was to seek.

Leviticus 16: 1 And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died; 2 And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put

them on. 5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. 6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. 7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. 10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. 11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: 12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: 13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: 14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail...Into the holiest of all once a year (Vs. 34) and never more on pain of death and he will do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock. And he shall sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness for the children of Israel and because of their transgressions in all their sins. And the ark was beneath the mercy seat that was to be sprinkled with blood, and within the ark were those symbols that God commanded Moses to place there, as being symbolic of the provision that God makes for a people who are cleansed in the blood of Jesus, because they have been sprinkled at the mercy seat, in the presence of a living God (57:20 min).

But the ark in the camp, detached from it's context, out of the holy place, no blood, no mercy seat, and you can have all the religion in the world, you can have all the doctrine in the world, you can have all the bible verses in the world so their oozing out of your fingertips, but if they are detached from the person of the Lord Jesus as the only one who is the living word, bring to finality the written word, there is no blood and there is no mercy seat. And the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. And though God refused to honor it in the midst of His own people, the amazing thing is that God honored it in the midst of His enemies. Because as far as they were concerned, it could not be detached from Him. Said the Philistines, "God has come into the camp" (i.e. 1 Samuel 4:7).

1 Samuel 5: 1And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. (And their god Dagon, had a pretty rough time.) 3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. 4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. He was a fish god, just the fishy part of him was left. No head, no arms. Poor old Dagon. He had a rough time, because vs. 6... "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof... vs 8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines

unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither. And they sent the ark of God to Ekron...vs. 10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. For in vs. 11..." for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

Then you know what happened, finally they took counsel. 1 Samuel 6: 7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine (milk cows), on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: ... 9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us. So they took this brand new cart, and they put the ark of God upon it, and a couple of cows, with their young tied up in the stall. Any cow will go at once to their young, but instead vs. 12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left... vs. 14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite...vs. 15 And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it... And they looked inside, 19 And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. 20 And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us? 21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, and fetch it up to you. 1 Samuel 7 1 And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab... 2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

And during this period, King Saul ruled in Israel, until failing to take his own life, he was murdered by an Amalekite and David the better neighbor than he, was placed upon the throne of Israel. He sought Israel's good and that spiritual awakening, that would get the ark back into it's right place and God back into the hearts of His people. And that is why he convened that great assembly, of which we read in the 13th verse of 1 Chronicles. Let's get the ark back where it belongs.

We want our doctrine within our Evangelical constituencies. We profess to be defenders of the faith, we can talk about justification by faith, we can talk about the need for a spiritual new birth, we can insist upon believers baptism, we can repudiate the liberalism of those who have departed from the authority of scripture, but I'll tell you something, that isn't really the problem. Above everything else the Church of Jesus Christ in this century, needs to get the ark back where it belongs. So that the doctrines that we cherish, and the religious practices in which we approach so very jealous, might once more be truly related to a person, Jesus Christ; given the rightful place as King in His Kingdom. So that we know this book not in terms of chapter and verse that we memorize, not in terms of some systematic theology that stands the test of fundamental evangelicalism but the Jesus of whom this book testifies may be given his rightful place and that you and I may recognize afresh that there is nothing valid, even in this very book itself, that has not been woven by His Holy Spirit, into the fabric of our being and clothed with our (could not understand).

We've got to get the ark, with all it's legitimate content back where it belongs. The place where God Himself meets His people and who's presence fills the tent with His glory. And know ye not that your

bodies are the temple of the living God? And to get the ark back where it belongs, simply means to get Jesus Christ back where He belongs. Sanctified as Lord in your heart and mine. So that we can say, "for me to live is Christ" because the form scripture is the Word of God and the character of the Word of God is Gospel but the only legitimate content of that Gospel is Jesus Christ. For me to live is Christ.

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