



3. The Means of Access to God.

Whether the Ark of the Covenant still existed in the time of Jesus or not is unclear. In Josephus' account of the Roman general Pompey entering the Most Holy Place before the time of Christ, he mentions the presence of the golden table and lampstand, but not the Ark of the Covenant (*Antiquities of the Jews* 14.4.4). The original Ark may have been destroyed or carried off in the fall of Jerusalem recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:19. Jesus' life and death,

however, introduced a new and profound opportunity to mankind. Jeremiah had prophesied about a time when the people would no longer have to look to the Ark. Generations of souls had not been granted access to the most holy part of the temple before the time of Jesus' death. Yet, the Bible tells us that when Jesus died, **“the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split”** (Matt. 27:51). This event demonstrated what Jesus offered to mankind—access to God. *Was mankind no longer separated from God because of sin?* No, but a means of access to God had been opened. The Hebrew writer tells us that in Jesus' death He opened the way of access to God. He declared, **“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”** (Heb. 9:24). Christ offers mankind the way to access the holiness of God. The lesson is that while God still requires obedience, and is still separate from sin, through Christ (and Christ alone) there is access to God. All human beings must take advantage of the opportunity that is granted to us to attain access to God through faith and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Failure to do so leaves us cut off from access to God.



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We are so glad that you joined us today.

ISSUE

15.46

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

November 17,
2013

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow



Lessons from the Ark

By Kyle Pope

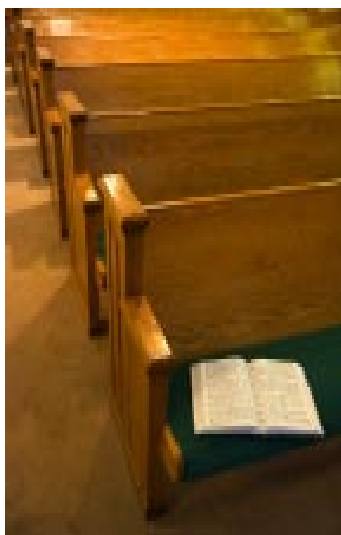
In 1981 a movie came out that was a fictional adventure entitled *Raiders of the Lost Ark* about an adventurous archaeologist named Indiana Jones who gets caught up in a search for the biblical Ark of the Covenant. The film was not only the top-grossing film of that year, but has remained one of the highest grossing films of all time. Most people have seen the movie and could tell the highlights of its storyline. Fewer people, however, could relate the true lessons that the real Ark of the Covenant teaches us.



What Was the Ark of the Covenant?

The Ark of the Covenant was a wooden box overlaid with gold that God commanded the Israelites to construct after their exodus from Egypt. It sat in the most holy part of the tabernacle (and later in the temple). On its sides were rings into

which two wooden poles, also overlaid with gold, were inserted. On top of the chest was a lid called the “mercy seat,” with two angelic figures called “cherubim” on each end of the lid. While the Bible doesn’t give a detailed description of these cherubim, we know they had “wings” stretched out towards one another (Exod. 25:20). In many ancient Near Eastern cultures cherubim were portrayed as creatures



with the body of a lion, wings of a bird, and the head of a man. The Ark contained the tablets of testimony, Aaron’s rod that budded and the golden pot of manna (Heb. 9:4). A complete description is given in Exodus 25:10-22.

The Ark was a sacred object around which all Israelite worship of God centered. It was sacred, not because of its beauty or as some type of idolatrous relic to be revered. It was sacred because it was the place where God spoke to Israel. Referring to the “mercy seat” God said, **“there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel”** (Exod. 25:22, NKJV). The Ark could only be carried by the Levites, the tribe from which all priests were to come (Deut. 10:8). It was placed in the most holy place of the tabernacle, then later in the most holy place of the temple. The High Priest came before the Ark once a year, after offering a sacrifice for sin (Lev. 16:2-3; Heb. 9:7). While God’s presence fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24), during the time God’s covenant was in place with the Israelites, His presence was focused in a special way upon the Ark of the Covenant. In the destruction of the city of Jericho the Ark of the Covenant was carried by the priests as they marched around the city seven days leading to the collapse of the walls in accordance with God’s command.

What lessons does this ancient object of Old Covenant worship teach us today?

1. Obedience. When the Lord revealed how the Israelites were to construct the Ark and then how it was to be



used, the Lord expected obedience! Scripture tells us that Bezaleel, an Israelite craftsman, followed every detail of the instructions that the Lord had given (Exod. 37:1-9). Years later God’s expectations of absolute obedience were further underscored. A man named Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark as it was carried on an ox-cart. Uzzah was not authorized to touch the Ark and because of this the Lord struck him dead! (2 Sam. 6.) The Ark teaches us that God demands our obedience.

2. The Holiness of God. Scripture tells us that the Ark was a symbol of the heavenly realities of God’s glory. The Hebrew writer describes the various objects that were in the two chambers of the tabernacle (and later the temple) called the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. In describing these things he calls them **“copies of the things in heaven”** (Heb. 9:23). It is unclear if this is literal or these objects symbolized spiritual realities of things in heaven. It is clear that in several passages in the Old Testament

God is described as the One who **“dwells** (or **“sitteth”** KJV) **between the cherubim”** (Psa. 99:1; cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Psa. 80:1; Isa. 37:16). One principle this clearly illustrates is God’s separation from sin. *Do we remember what happened after Adam and Eve sinned?* Before their sin they enjoyed direct access to God in Eden. God’s nature, however, is such that *any* violation of His word cannot be tolerated. Sin cannot come into His presence. When the man and woman were expelled from Eden we are told that God **“placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life”** (Gen. 3:24). The Ark symbolized God’s separation from man because of sin and the absolute holiness of His nature.