

The Doctrine of the Ark of the Covenant

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Preface: The Ark of the Covenant is one of the most important symbols of the Old Testament. It was designed to represent the most important and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, including the person of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice and the Angelic Conflict. As you read through this doctrine, you will be amazed at the parallels. All of the furniture in the Tabernacle represented Jesus Christ and various aspects of His Work on the cross; however, the Ark of God, the Ark of the Covenant, was the most striking shadow image.

I found two things in particular fascinating: (1) the Jews did not worship the furniture of the Tabernacle in any way; whereas, their heathen neighbors would construct this or that idol, and then bow down to it and even offer up their own children to it. Although the Jews fell into some very reprehensible behavior, including idolatry, they knew not to worship these objects. (2) Even more fascinating is, this Ark of

God, the most holy of the Tabernacle furniture, was not to even be seen by the Jews. It was not on display. It was in a room (behind a set of curtains) in a Tabernacle, and only the High Priest, once a year, would come into this room (called the Holy of Holies) and sprinkle blood on the alter of the Ark. Ceremonially, this was the only time any person was to see the Ark.

If you are looking for a short explanation for the Ark of God, you may want to proceed directly to the **summary**.

Topics:

- [A Physical Description of the Ark](#)
- [False Theories of the Ark](#)
- [The Contents of the Ark](#)
- [Names for the Ark of God](#)
- [The Three Stages to the Construction of the Ark](#)
- [The Day of Atonement](#)
- [The Ark Leads Israel](#)
- [The Ark Did Not Go with the Israelites on Every Occasion](#)
- [Summary Points on the Ark of the Covenant](#)

Charts:

- [The Hebrew Word for Mercy Seat and Additional Background](#)
- [The Movement of the Ark of God](#)
- [Ark Addendum: The Time Problem](#)

1. The Ark is first mentioned by God in Ex. 25 when a description of it is given to Moses. Moses was to commission certain men to construct the furniture of the Tent of Meeting, and the first piece of furniture described was the Ark.



The most important thing which this picture tells us is that the Ark was overlaid with gold and that the cherubim and the mercy seat are made of gold. From <http://www.ebibleteacher.com/images/arkgold.jpg>; and, apparently, it was created for the Passion Play, found at <http://www.greatpassionplay.com/>

2. The Hebrew word for *Ark* is אָרוֹן (אָרוֹן) [pronounced *uh-ROHN*], which means *ark, chest*. Although usually a masculine noun, this is also found in the feminine gender. Strong's #727 BDB #75. Other uses for אָרוֹן would include:
- 1) A chest wherein money offerings were kept (II Kings 12:10, 11 II Chron. 24:8, 10, 13, 14).
 - 2) The sarcophagus or mummy case for Joseph (Gen. 50:26).
 - 3) Therefore, the primary meaning of אָרוֹן is *container* or *chest*.
 - 4) This is *not* the same as the word used for Noah's ark. That is תֵּבַח (תֵּבַח) [pronounced *tay^b -VAW*], which means *an ark, a chest*. Tê^bvâh is used only for the ark which Noah built (Gen. 6–8) and the ark in which Moses was placed as an infant (Ex. 2:3, 5). Strong's #8392 BDB #1061.
3. Physical description (Ex. 25:10–22):
- 1) The Ark would be made first from Acacia wood, and would have the dimensions 2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 cubits. Since a cubit is approximately 18 inches, this would give us the dimensions 45" x 27" x 27". Less precisely, it would have been approximately four feet long, two feet high and two feet wide. Ex. 25:10
 - 2) The Ark would be overlaid with gold inside and out, and then there would be an additional gold molding around it (Ex. 25:11). It is unclear in the verse whether this molding was around the top, middle or bottom. However, the Ark stood upon four legs (called *four feet* in Ex. 25:12). Logically, given v. 12, this molding would have been around the bottom and would have included four legs.
 - 3) Since the Ark had to be moved occasionally, and since men were not to touch it, rings were added to it to allow for it to be moved (poles would be placed through the rings and men would lift the poles, thus lifting the Ark).
 - (1) The four rings were made of gold and attached to the bottom of the Ark to its four legs, two on each side (Ex. 25:12).
 - (2) Poles were made out of Acacia wood and then overlaid with gold. The two poles (I assume that it is two) would be placed through the rings and men would carry the Ark by lifting up the poles. I have this visual recollection of Cleopatra being carried on a throne which was carried by several men in very much the same way. In any case, these poles were to remain in the rings of the Ark. Ex. 25:13–15.
 - 4) On top of the Ark was attached a *mercy seat* or a *propitiatory seat* which was 2 cubits by 1.5 cubits (or, 36" x 27"). *Mercy seat* is actually one word in the Hebrew, and we will cover that below:



The images herein found are educated guesses as to how the Ark of God actually looked. Taken from <http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/arkofthecovenant.jpg>.

The Hebrew Word for Mercy Seat and Additional Background

Kappôreth (כַּפֹּרֶת) [pronounced *kap-POH-reth*] means *cover, lid*, and we find it used exclusively in the Bible for the *mercy seat* of the ark of the covenant. This lid covers are transgressions of the law and our rebelliousness and our dismissal of God's provisions; and God sees only the complete *covering* over the Ark; He sees the gold plating over the acacia wood and He is *appeased*. Kappôreth is found in Ex. 25:17–22 26:34 30:6 31:7 35:19 37:6–9 39:35 40:20 Lev. 16:2, 13–15 Num. 7:89. Strong's #3727 BDB #498.

The Hebrew Word for Mercy Seat and Additional Background

This word comes from the verb *kâphar* (כָּפַר) [pronounced *kaw-FAHR*] and it literally means *cover, placate, pacify*. We find this word used one time in the Qal stem back in Gen 6:14 where the verb clearly means *to cover [with pitch]*. This word is found in the Piel back in Gen. 32:20 where Jacob sends a present¹ to Esau to *appease or placate* Esau. Recall that the Bible was written by God the Holy Spirit and when dealing with words of great spiritual import, the Holy Spirit reveals their meaning early on in the Bible, cognizant through omniscience, that certain words, like *kâphar*, would come to take on a meaning of their own. These first two uses allow us to reel ourselves in from developing some meaning which is too far afield from its true meaning. There are two sides to this verb; when man *kâphar's* for himself, he *appeases* Yahweh because the man's sins have been *covered over*. When God *kâphar's* sin or iniquity, He covers over the sin or iniquity. In the Old Testament, forgive would have been too strong of a word, as Jesus Christ had not entered history yet as the God-man. Therefore, the temporary covering over of a sin allowed for a future yet permanent disposition of sin. Strong's #3722 BDB #497.

Therefore, *kappôreth*, or *mercy seat* refers to something which covers over something else. Given the context of the use of *kappôreth*, it is obviously related to our actual sins and our sin nature. In Old Testament times, there things were covered over until God came with a new and better promise of redemption. More specifically, in Old Testament times, the priest offered animal sacrifices which covered over specific sins, but when our Lord came, He took away sin once and for all. **By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God...For by one offering, He has perfect for all time those who are sanctified** (Heb. 10:10–12, 14).

[Return to Topics](#)

www.kukis.org

[Return to the Chart Index](#)

[Exegetical Studies in Samuel](#)

- 5) You may have noticed that the mercy seat on top of the Ark covered the width of the Ark, but not the length. On each sides of the Ark top, there would have been an additional 4.5". One each side of the mercy seat was sculpted a cherub (*cherubim* is plural), which is representative of an angel. They probably looked essentially human in appearance, apart from the wings (see Ezek. 1:5). It appears as though the mercy seat and the cherubim were fashioned as one piece, or were fitted together to make one piece. The cherubim faced one another, but they looked down at the mercy seat. Their wings covered the mercy seat. Ex. 25:18–20



The Ark of the Covenant is on the right in the background. This is not an accurate representation of how the furniture was kept in the Tabernacle.

4. False theories of the Ark:

- 1) It might be argued that the Ark was an idol which was worshipped by Israel instead of the golden calf. However, in the formal writings of Moses,

¹ Recall that this was quite the gift: 200 female goats and 20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 20 milking camels and their colts, 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys (Gen. 32:13–15).

the Ark was not designed for that purpose; and when the Israelites began to treat the Ark with that intent, the Ark was taken from them (I Sam. 4–7).

- 2) There is another theory that the Ark bore only a slight resemblance to that which what we find in the Pentateuch. It is maintained by some that the Ark was more of an empty throne for Jehovah God to sit upon. Therefore, the Cherubim would have had to have either been a matter of the imagination of some writer during the days of Solomon,² or the description, where their wings covered the top portion of the Ark, the mercy seat, had to be wrong. Two of the men who developed this theory in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Reichel and Meinhold, claimed that, at Mount Sinai, Moses had this rock throne for Jehovah. When the Israelites set out from Sinai, they then constructed a portable throne so that God would travel with them. They further maintained that Jehovah was visibly seen upon this throne. I don't know why or how they would assert that, but I don't think it is really worth my time to track down their books to find out. Others joined in agreement (notably Martin Dibelius and Hermann Gunkel), who claim that the Persians and other ancient peoples also had empty thrones for their gods, and I guess conclude that Israel simply copied them. The second main justification is that God spoke from this throne on occasion. You may wonder, from where do these guys get this stuff? It is simply negative volition toward the truth. Generally speaking, you take the Bible as it is, and the descriptions and purpose for a particular construction as it is stated. Some people look for recognition in a variety of ways. Unearthing some new doctrine or theory from the Scriptures is one way. Now, I firmly believe that there are still some important truths embedded in the Scriptures, and that there are many passages where the exegesis can be more accurately presented. But presenting some oddball theory which flies in the face of orthodoxy is quite another thing.³ ISBE's simply refutation: *...empty thrones of the gods are found only among the Aryan people, and all of the passages of the OT which refer to the ark can be easily explained without such a supposition. This view is to be rejected particularly for this reason, that in the OT the ark is always described as an ark, and never as a throne or a seat; and because it is absolutely impossible to see what reason would have existed at a later period to state that it was an ark if it had originally been a throne.*⁴ Let me add that, the only time Israel imputed a different meaning to the Ark than was clearly intended by Moses, they would soundly defeated by the Philistines (to be discussed later in this doctrine) and the Ark was taken from them.
5. Twice in the context of Ex. 25, that God would tell Moses that he is to place in the Ark the testimony that God would give him (Ex. 25:16, 21). This testimony ended up being more than the written word.
 - 1) The first item placed in the Ark was the *testimony*, which was the Ten Commandments, which had been carved into stone. This is the only item mentioned in the Old Testament. Ex. 40:20 Deut. 10:1–5
 - 2) Interestingly enough, there are two other items which were originally placed into the Ark which are not specifically named as being put into the Ark in the Old Testament but only in the New. We are told in Heb. 9:4 that inside the Ark were three objects:
 - (1) A golden jar which held manna (this represents the provision of God). Now we are told, in Ex. 16:32–33 that a jar of manna was placed before Jehovah and was to be kept **throughout your generations**. Aaron placed it before the testimony (which would either be the two tablets of stone or that which Moses wrote down, quoting directly from God).

² Latke, *Biblische Theologie*, 1835, p. 333; Popper, *Der biblische Bricht über die Stiftshütte*, 1862.

³ The fundamental truths of Christianity have existed for thousands of years, and have been understood by some throughout thousands of generations. The precise manner of salvation was not as clear in the Old Testament as it was in the New, but salvation was still a matter of positive volition resulting in faith toward Jehovah God. In the New Testament, we have a better grasp of this. So, whatever new doctrines or truths which are unearthed should be in complete compliance with what God has revealed to us thus far. We have problems when some charlatan comes along, *discovers a new truth*, and then begins to falsely interpret other passages and to change orthodoxy. It is from these sorts of new truths that we get cults and cultic behavior (Jehovah's witnesses and charismatics are prime examples of this).

⁴ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I; p. 243.

- (2) Aaron's rod which budded (this represents resurrection from the dead).⁵ In Num. 10–11, during the march of Israel towards the Land of Promise, we have Korah's rebellion, and God's swift and sure judgment of Korah and his family. There were some who were still uneasy about this judgment, so Moses took a staff from each member of the twelve tribes (including Aaron's which was the tribe of Levi), and placed all twelve of them in the Tent of Meeting. On the next day, Aaron's staff had budded, had blossoms, and fully grown, ripened almonds on it. The point of this was that God would choose Aaron as His first High Priest, and He did not want the other tribes to grumble, because Aaron was the brother of Moses. However, behind all of this is the idea of resurrection, where not only did the dead rod bud, but it produced almonds. In Num. 17:10, it is clear that the rod of Aaron was kept back in the Tent of Meeting, but it is not clear that it was placed into the Ark of the Covenant.
- (3) The tables of the covenant (the Ten Commandments). These represent the perfection of God's requirements and our failure to meet those requirements.
- 3) At the time when the Ark was moved from a tent to the Temple of Solomon, the only thing which remained in the Ark was the stone tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments. I Kings 8:9 II Chron. 5:10
- 4) The book which Moses wrote (Exodus through Numbers) was placed next to the Ark. Deut. 31:24–26.
- 5) Again, just as with the Ark itself, there are false theories concerning this. There are those who vehemently maintain that the tablets of stone written by God did not exist, and, even if they had, the Israelites would not have put them into a chest which could not be opened up for viewing. What is not understood by these critics is that often, for ancient business agreements, there would be as many as three copies. The two parties each had a copy and a third copy would be kept sealed in a secure location, in case there were a reason to appeal to it later (Jer. 32:11–14 gives us an example of a sealed copy of a real estate agreement which was kept in a secure location). ISBE is a source of a number of oddball theories, e.g., in the ark were meteor stones (in which would be divine power), a stone idol of Jehovah God (which makes a great deal of sense, given that the Law expressly forbade idolatry), stones indicating some alliance of the tribes, etc.⁶ Surprisingly enough (to me, anyway), the only theory which ISBE gives some credence to is the one about meteor stones. A stone flying from the heavens would be seen as a sign of an agreement between God and Israel, and therefore be kept to signify this agreement. However, none of this has any supporting evidence in the Scriptures, which, even as simple historical documents, should be given more credence than the imagination of a critic of 3500 years later.
6. In the Greek, there is only one word for *ark*, and that is *kibōtos* (κιβωτός) [pronounced *kib-oh-TOSS*]. It is used both for the ark that Noah built (Matt. 24:38 Luke 17:27 Heb. 11:7 I Peter 3:20) and for the Ark of the Covenant (Heb. 9:4 Rev. 11:19). This explains why we translate the two Hebrew words with only one English word. Strong's #2787. The Ark of the Covenant
7. Various names for the Ark of God:
- 1) The *Ark of the Testimony* (Ex. 25:16, 22). This is the first formal name given to the Ark of God and it refers to the doctrinal information inherent in the Ark itself. It was a testimony as to God's character and God's plan. This was the name given to the Ark prior to Israel's movement from Sinai. This name is found 14 times in the Old Testament.
- 2) The *Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah* (Num. 10:33 Deut. 31:25–26). A covenant is an agreement made between two parties, and this Ark was a testimony to God's promise to redeem all of Israel. It is so used 31 times in the Bible. After Moses had received the Law from Jehovah God directly, and after Israel set out towards the Land of Promise, the Ark was consistently called the *Ark of the Covenant*, and it is so called 27 times in Scripture. Part of this had to do with the fact that Moses placed the two tablets of stone, with the Ten Commandments upon them, into the Ark (Deut. 10:1–5).
- 3) The *Ark of Y^howah* when Joshua knelt before the Ark after Israel's defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:1–6) and during the time that it was returned to Israel from Philistia (I Sam. 6:6, 21).

⁵ Thieme says that this represents rebellion, but I don't buy that. He actually teaches that these items represent the various aspects of sin: (1) the pot of manna is the rejection of God's provision; (2) Aaron's rod that budded represents the sin as rebellion against God; and, (3) the Tablets of the Ten Commandments represent sin as a transgression of the Law.

⁶ ISBE does not subscribe to any of these theories, it merely presents them.

- 4) The *Ark of God* during a time when visions and words from Jehovah were infrequent (I Sam. 3:1–3) and King Saul called it that in I Sam. 14:18. It was also called the *Ark of God* and the *Ark of Y^ehowah* when David brought the Ark back from the house of Abinadab (II Sam. 6). The name, *Ark of God*, is found 34 times in Scripture.⁷
- 5) The *Ark of Your Might*, during Solomon's dedication of the Temple (II Chron. 6:41; see also Psalm 132:8).
8. God spoke to Moses from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim. In the Law, Moses is very careful to separate the voice of God from the Ark itself—i.e., the voice came out of midair and not from the ark itself. It is probably from the Ark that God dictated the book of Leviticus to Moses. Ex. 25:22 Lev. 1:1 Num. 7:89
9. It is important that we distinguish between the Ark itself and God.
 - 1) On the one hand, the throne of God is said to be above the Ark, or above the mercy seat.
 - 2) God also allowed for His Ark to be taken from Israel in battle (on one occasion; the second time this was done, it was unauthorized).
 - 3) God occasionally used the Ark as a meeting place between Himself and a particular believer (and these would be rare occasions; once a year when the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat), as the Ark was more closely associated with the character and person of God than any other piece of furniture in the Tabernacle (the *Tent of God*) (Ex. 25:22 Lev. 1:1). However, bear in mind that God was in no way confined to the Ark nor did He occupy the Ark in some special way. By virtue of what the Ark was and where it was (in the Holy of Holies), it was a particularly convenient place from which to speak to Moses (for instance).
 - 4) A good modern-day equivalent might be your personal Bible. God often speaks to you through His Word, whether through being taught or, on occasion, through your personal reading of His Word. This does not mean that God indwells or inhabits your Bible in some goofy, ethereal way. The mere existence of the Ark in the Tent of God (and later on, in the Temple of God) did not guarantee *God's presence* or blessing to Israel no more than owning a Bible makes you a Christian.
10. When the Tent of God was set up, the Ark of God was to be placed in the *Holy of Holies*, which was a compartment inside the tent that no one, apart from the High Priest, could go into. Ex. 26:33–34 40:3, 21 Lev. 16
11. On the other side of the veil was the Incense Altar. Ex. 30:1–6 40:5
12. Just like the priests, the furniture of the Tent of Meeting were anointed with oil to indicate that they were to be put into God's service. The idea being conveyed here is that, apart from the ministry of God the Holy Spirit (Who is often represented by *oil*), these furnishings are nothing; they are meaningless. In the same way, a priest of God is worthless apart from God the Holy Spirit. Ex. 30:25–30
13. There were three stages to the construction of the Ark:
 - 1) The planning stage, where God gave Moses the details as to how the Ark was to be built (Ex. 25).
 - 2) The choosing of the workmen to do most of the work on the Ark (and the other pieces of furniture).
 - (1) First, God told Moses who was going to do the work. Ex. 31
 - (2) Then Moses called to the people to participate in this project. Ex. 35:10–19
 - 3) Finally, we have the actual building of the Ark itself. The workmen's names, by the way, were Bezalel and Oholiab. Ex. 37:1–9
 - 4) It was God's intention for this to be a further analogy to the sacrifice of His Son. We initially have the plan of God, which set forth the creation of man, the foreknowledge of man's fall, and the provision. The provision was Christ Jesus, the God-man, Who would come to the earth in the fulness of time. Then we have the actual fulfillment of the plan of God in the person of Christ in the gospels.
14. The Levites had unspecified duties involving the various articles of furniture, including the Ark of God. Num. 3:25–37 Deut. 10:8–9 31:9
15. Bear in mind that the Ark and the Tent of God were constructed while Israel was camped in the Sinai Desert during the time that Moses spoke with God on Mount Sinai. Then the Ark went with Israel as they moved through the desert towards the Land of Promise. After the Ark and the articles of furniture and the Tent of Meeting had been constructed, then they had to be moved with Israel. In Num. 4:5–6, the moving of the Ark

⁷ I did not personally count these up; I took the numbers from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, pp. 305–306.

is described (see Num. 4:4–15). When they traveled, the Ark of the Covenant went before them (Num. 10:33–36). See also Ex. 37:1–9 Num. 33.

16. The most important function of the Ark of God was on the Day of Atonement. Lev. 16
 - 1) The Day of Atonement was a yearly occurrence wherein the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies. This was to take place on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 16:29 Num. 29:7). **The High priest only enters [into the Holy of Holies] once a year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance** (Heb. 9:7). Whereas, only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies, as the sacrifices that he performed were representative of that which was to come, **we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the House of God** (Heb. 10:19b–21).
 - 2) This day was a Sabbath to the people of Israel, meaning that God completed all of the work which needed to be done and the people did not work at all. Lev. 23:26–32 Num. 29:7 Heb. 4:9⁸
 - 3) The ceremony of the Day of Atonement is first presented as a ceremony for Aaron, following the death of his sons, but God added that this would be an annual event to be observed by all of Israel (Lev. 16:1, 29–34).
 - 4) Part of this annual event included the sacrifice of seven male, one-year old lambs. Seven is the number of perfection and the lamb represents our Lord Jesus Christ. With the lambs there was to be a grain offering as well. This is mentioned in Numbers but not in Leviticus. Num. 29:8, 10. The sacrificial lamb always pointed toward of our Lord: **Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your empty manner of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of an unblemished and spotless lamb—the blood of Christ** (I Peter 1:19).
 - 5) The High Priest who performed this ceremony would have to bathe and then put on a special set of holy garments (Lev. 16:4). This set the High Priest apart and was a shadow image of holiness of He Who was to come. **For it is proper that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those [mortal] High Priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself** (Heb. 7:26–27).
 - 6) He offers up two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for burnt offering (Lev. 16:5, 7). The two goats are presented to the Lord at the doorway to the tent of meeting. One goat is offered as a sin offering and the other is the scapegoat who is presented alive before the Lord and then sent into the desert wilderness (Lev. 16:7–10). The two male goats are chosen based upon lots which were thrown, which, at that time, represented God's will in the matter (Lev. 16:8).⁹ The first goat, of course, represents our Lord's payment for sin; and the second goat represents two things: (1) that the payment for sin has not been offered yet, so the goat is alive; and, (2) the payment of sin would fall upon one whom the Lord has chosen.
 - 7) The High Priest also offers up a bull offering for himself. Aaron was not pure or holy and the blood of the bull covered over his sins. Although Aaron makes atonement for himself and his household (who are the priests to follow him, and thus sets them apart from all of Israel), he offers up the bull for himself alone to identify the High Priest closely with the blood of the bull. The bull represents the power and strength of our Lord. We are so used to Him being represented by a meek lamb, but He is herein presented as a bull. Lev. 16:11. **For the Law appoints men as High Priests, who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, designates a Son, made perfect forever** (Heb. 7:28).
 - 8) Now, even though Aaron offers the bull up for himself, he enters into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull on his finger and he sprinkles this blood upon the mercy seat, which is on top of the Ark. He

⁸ Heb. 4:9 reads: **There still remains a Sabbath day for the people of God.** Because I have seen this verse misused and misquoted over and over again, I am weary of presenting it as a reference text. However, the Sabbath which remains for us is the rest which we enter into by believing in God's Son. **For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through the same example [as the Israelites] of disobedience** (Heb. 4:10–11). It is imperative to consider the context of any verse.

⁹ The entire second half of the book of Joshua is the parceling out of land to the various tribes as God wills. This is done by throwing lots.

does this seven times. The seven times is the number of perfection and the blood on his finger more closely identifies Aaron, the High Priest, with the sacrifice of the bull. Lev. 16:11, 14.

- 9) Between the time of slaughtering the bull and sprinkling its blood on the mercy seat, Aaron is to take a fire pan full of hot coals from the altar, along with two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. The incense is placed on the fire of the coals before Jehovah, and the cloud of incense covers the mercy seat, so that Aaron does not die. The smoke from the incense represents the sweet savor of the sacrifice of our Lord to God the Father, which indicates that God the Father is satisfied with His death. The smoke covering the mercy seat does two things: (1) Aaron, the first High Priest, so that he can perform this ritual and does not die from looking upon that which is so holy; and, (2) it represents the thick darkness which covered our Lord at His crucifixion when He was being judged in our stead for our sins. Lev. 16:12–13.
- 10) It is at this time that the goat is actually offered. The goat is offered for the sins of the people of Israel. The blood of the goat is also sprinkled upon the mercy seat as Aaron did with the blood of the bull. This indicates that the two sacrifices are actually but one sacrifice. The goat is offered for the people and as an atonement for the holy place (the Tent of Meeting). The idea is that this was simply an imperfect, earthly shadow of what was to come. The offering purified the people and the Tent of Meeting. Lev. 16:15–16.
- 11) When Aaron **makes atonement in the holy place, no one is to come into the Tent of Meeting until he comes out, so that he may make atonement for himself and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel** (Lev. 16:17). This emphasizes that our Lord offered up Himself alone. It is His payment alone which pays for our sins and it is what only He can do on our behalf. Now Aaron, being a man, had to make atonement for Himself, so the slaughter was for Aaron, his household and all the assembly of Israel, which represents all of those who are saved.¹⁰
- 12) Then some of the blood of the bull and the goat are placed upon the horns of the altar. The blood is also sprinkled upon the altar seven times. Just as we are allowed to see some of the sacrifice of our Lord (theologically), Israel could observe this portion of the ceremony. Lev. 16:18–19.
- 13) Once all of this has been completed, Aaron offers the remaining live goat to our Lord. He lays **his hands on the head of the live goat and He confesses over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions with regards to all their sins. And he lays them on the head of the goat and sends it away into the desert wilderness by the hand of a man who is ready** (Lev. 17:21b). This goat bears the iniquities and is released into the desert wilderness, representing the resurrection of our Lord. This is why it is a second goat. The two goats represent One Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who exists forevermore as two separate but united natures. The first goat which is sacrificed is His offering on the cross and the second goat, the scapegoat, is His resurrection.
- 14) Now Aaron, who is also a type of Christ, **removes His linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and he will leave them there** (Lev. 16:23b). This represents the body of our Lord which remained in the grave for three days and three nights, although His soul and spirit left His body. In I Peter 3:18–20, we have the soul of our Lord, after having been put to death in the flesh, making a victorious proclamation to the spirits who were in prison. On the cross, Jesus said two things which indicate where His soul and spirit went at His death. He said, **“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.”** (Luke 23:46). This indicated that His spirit went to God the Father when His human body died. He also told the thief on the cross, **“Today, you will be with Me in paradise.”** (Luke 23:43b). Paradise, which is also known as Abraham’s bosom, is a compartment of Hades where all believers went prior to the resurrection. The soul of Jesus went into paradise, as did the soul of the thief on the cross.
- 15) While still inside the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is then to bathe and put on another set of clothes, again representing the purity (sinlessness) of our Lord as well as the resurrection in a new body (a resurrected body, which is somehow made out of the human body).¹¹

¹⁰ An important distinction here: our Lord offered Himself up for all mankind; however, the atonement here represents His sacrifice being applied to just the elect. That is, those who do not take advantage of His offering are not saved, even though His sacrifice would be for all mankind.

¹¹ Paul describes the human body as a seed which is sown in the ground; it is raised a resurrection body, which is related to, but very different from the body which was sown. I Cor. 15.

- 16) Once Aaron comes out of the Tent of Meeting, he then offers the ram as a burnt offering. (Lev. 16:3b, 5, 24–25).
 - 17) The one who offers the scapegoat into the desert wilderness is to wash himself as well (Lev. 16:26). Again, the purity of our Lord in His offering of Himself is emphasized.
 - 18) Finally, the remains of the bull of and goat which were offered are taken outside the camp and they are burned completely in the fire. This emphasizes the completeness and finality of the sacrifice of our Lord. The one who does the burning must also cleanse himself before returned to the camp. Lev. 16:27–28.
 - 19) This atonement is to be done once a year by the High Priest. The time interval is representative of the fact that this occurs but once. **For by one offering, He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified** (Heb. 10:14). However, the ritual must be repeated as a teaching aide. The idea is that generation after generation of Israelites are to observe this ritual, not fully grasping its significance until our Lord offers Himself up one time for all.
 - 20) The sacrifices of this day (and the other sacrifices) were shadows of that which were to come. **For the Law, since it is only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, they would not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins** (Heb. 10:1–3).
 - 21) What the day of atonement represents is described in Rom. 3:24–26: **Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publically as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This demonstrated His righteousness because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed, for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**
17. The movement of the Ark is covered in the chart below:

The Movement of the Ark of God		
City	Approximate Date	Scripture
The Ark was constructed in the Sinai desert near the mountain where God spoke to Moses. God’s Presence in the form of a cloud dwelt above the Tent of Meeting (wherein was the Ark). The Ark went with Israel as they traveled through the desert toward the Land of Promise.	1445–1406 B.C.	Ex. 37:1–9 40:2, 17, 37–38 Num. 10:11–12, 33–36 33:1–49
South of the Land of Promise (south of Judah) in the wilderness of Paran. When Israel attacked the Amalekites and Canaanites in what would eventually be southern Judah, the Ark did not go with them (this would have been a call made by Moses). They were beaten, but their defeat had to do with their disobedience to God and not that the Ark remained in Israel’s camp.	1443–1442 B.C.	Num. 13:3 14:39–45
East of the Jordan	1406 B.C.	Num. 33:49
The Ark crosses over the Jordan. Those carrying the Ark would first stop when their feet were in the water of the Jordan and the Jordan River was cut off. The priests who carried the Ark stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:17b).	1406 B.C.	Joshua 3

The Movement of the Ark of God		
City	Approximate Date	Scripture
Gilgal	1406 B.C.	Joshua 4–5
Into battle against Jericho. The Ark was probably returned to Gilgal after this.	1406 B.C.	Joshua 6
Shechem for the cursings and the blessings delivered from Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal	1405 B.C.	Joshua 8:30–35
Shiloh, as a more permanent home	1400 B.C.	Joshua 18:1 22:12 Judges 18:31
Bethel, probably as a response to Benjamin's degeneracy	1380 B.C.	Judges 20:18, 26–28
Returned to Shiloh, where it remained for most of the time period of the judges	1380–1021 B.C.	I Sam. 1:3, 9
When Israel was defeated in battle by the Philistines, the army of Israel took the Ark back with them to Eben-ezer, where their troops were stationed, for good luck.	1021 B.C.	I Sam. 4:1–9
The Philistines took the Ark in battle, killed two of the priests (who were both very degenerate), and brought the Ark to Ashdod, then Gath and finally Ekron. Men in those cities were struck with both mental illnesses and overt cancerous tumors.	Circa 1021–1020 B.C.	I Sam. 5
The Ark was then returned to Beth-shemesh in Judah, which is just south of Judah's border with Dan. The five rulers of Philistia followed the Ark to see if it would return on its own to Israel (they put it in a cart pulled by two cows).	1020 B.C.	I Sam. 6

The Movement of the Ark of God		
City	Approximate Date	Scripture
<p>The Ark, rather than being taken back to Shiloh, was put into the care of to the house of Abinadab, in Kiriath-jearim, and more specifically in Eleazar's, his son, care, for 20 years.¹² Kiriath-jearim is located in Judah right at the border of Dan, Benjamin and Judah, only a few miles northeast of Beth-shemesh. It is very likely that Shiloh was destroyed at this time. It appears as though the Tent of Meeting and the articles of furniture survived (I Kings 8:4 I Chron. 16:39 21:29), but they do not appear to have functioned during the time of Saul and David. We might guess that the Tent of God was moved in a hurry and not set up again for several decades, out of fear that the Philistines might renew their attack against the priests of God. We will see that the Tent of God is set up at least during the reign of David.</p>	<p>1020–1000 B.C. or 1063–1043 B.C.¹³</p>	<p>I Sam. 7:1–2</p>
<p>There are two interpretations of this passage: (1) It appears as though the Ark eventually was returned to Shiloh, although that is never stated outright. Saul fetches the Ark, but it is unclear from where or to where it is fetched. Because Saul speaks to Ahijah, who is in the priestly line, we might guess that the Ark was in Shiloh again. However, Saul may have spoken to Ahijah simply because he was a priest, regardless of where the Ark was.</p> <p>(2) Now, what appears to be the case, is that Saul turned to Ahijah, and asked for him to fetch the Ark. It appears as though (from v. 19) that Saul then changed his mind. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that the Ark was in Shiloh, nor is there a reason to assume that the Ark was moved either to Shiloh or to Saul at this time (the Ark is not mentioned again with respect to Saul).</p>	<p>1010 B.C.</p>	<p>I Sam. 14:18–19</p>

¹² This time frame *seems* to be suggested by I Sam. 7:2, and is adhered to by E. W. G. Masterman (who wrote an article on Kiriath-jearim in ISBE—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. III; p. 1812). J. D. Douglas in his own New Bible Dictionary, also holds to this time frame: *The New Bible Dictionary*; editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.701. However, this time frame will require some serious discussion in this doctrine.

¹³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 309.

The Movement of the Ark of God		
City	Approximate Date	Scripture
David brings the Ark from the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim, which, if it were there for only 20 years, then this would shorten the rule of Saul considerably over what we thought. ¹⁴ I have assumed that was the case and have taken my dates backwards from the reign of David to the time of the judges. Another option is that the Ark had been moved by Saul (I Sam. 14) and then returned when it didn't help his situation. This passage is not really clear as to what happened with the Ark after Saul spoke to Ahijah.	1000 B.C.	II Sam. 6 7:2 11:11 I Chron. 13:1-7 II Chron. 1:4
For a period of about 3 months, the Ark was kept at the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, because David was afraid.	1000 B.C.	I Chron. 13:11-14
David did not bring the Tent of Meeting along with the Ark. David pitched a tent specifically for the Ark and kept it there. Where David brought the Ark to was Jerusalem, also called the city of David.	1000 B.C.	II Sam. 5:5-9 6:16-17 I Chron. 15:1-3
It does appear as though David constructed some sort of Tent of Meeting, which appears to have been a worship center.	1000 B.C.	I Chron. 15:14-16:6
It appears as though there were two centers of worship during the early reign of David—one with the Ark in Jerusalem and one at the Tent of Meeting in Gibeon.	1000 B.C.	I Chron. 16:37-40
When David was forced out of Jerusalem by his son Absalom, the priests, led by Zadok, brought the Ark to David. David told them to return it immediately to Jerusalem. ZPEB: <i>The king refused to treat it as a talisman or palladium, placing instead his trust directly in God.</i> ¹⁵	Circa 975 B.C.	II Sam. 15

¹⁴ We do not know how long Saul ruled. It is assumed that he ruled over Israel for 32 or for 40 years (I Sam. 13:1 Acts 13:21). Now, the actual dates for the Old Testament passage have been lost. I Sam. 7:1-2 make it seem as though the time of Saul's reign must fit within a 20 year period of time, as the Ark seems to stay in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years and Saul is not yet king. Given that David brought the Ark to Jerusalem (the city of David) after ruling for 7.5 years in Hebron (II Sam. 5:5), it seems possible that Saul ruled for as few as 10 years. However, this would clearly contradict Acts 13:21. This will be discussed further as an addendum to this chart.

¹⁵ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 310. A *talisman*, by the way, is a figurine, a stone or some carved object with supernatural powers; and a *palladium* is anything which is believed to provide protection or safety. I had to look these up.

The Movement of the Ark of God		
City	Approximate Date	Scripture
There appears to be a time during the reign of David when the Ark was at the Tent of Meeting, although it is not clear where this was. Given that Zadok, the High Priest, and several other priests, brought the Ark to David during his exile, this would indicate that David authorized the move of the Tent of Meeting to Jerusalem.		I Sam. 6:31–32
Solomon began, during the 4 th year of his reign, to build the Temple and completed it after seven years of work. At that time, he moved the Ark into the Temple, along with rebuilt articles of furniture and articles from the Tent of Meeting. This seems to be the most solid date of all. This was the first appropriate home for the Ark for 70 years.	960 B.C.	I Kings 8 II Chron. 5
The Ark is mentioned only once after the reign of Solomon. It appears as though the priests were in charge of the Ark, but that it was not kept at the Temple built by Solomon (no telling how long this situation continued). It is possible the Manasseh removed the Ark (II Chron. 33:7) and that Josiah, one of the last kings over Judah, returned the Ark to Solomon's Temple.	610 B.C.	II Chron. 35:1–7
We presume that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Ark when he burned down the Temple.	586 B.C.	
The post-exilic Temple had no Ark.	516 B.C.–70 A.D.	Josephus, <i>The Jewish Wars</i> V. 5
Modern Jewish synagogues have <i>arks</i> which are located on whichever side is closest to Jerusalem and they hold a copy of the Torah.		
The Ark will be replaced by Jehovah's rule over the earth.	Millennium	Jer. 3:15–17
The Apostle John saw a vision of the Ark of the Covenant in the new heavens after God's final judgment. Recall that this is a vision, and may simply indicate (i.e., <i>be symbolic of</i>) the final accomplishment of what the Ark stood for (the first advent of the God-man, Christ Jesus, followed by His death for our sins and His resurrection).	Millennium	Rev. 11:18–19

[Return to Topics](#)

www.kukis.org

[Return to the Chart Index](#)

[Exegetical Studies in Samuel](#)

Ark Addendum: The Time Problem

We have run into one very serious problem, and that is one of time agreement. How long was the Ark here or there? The main problem is, how long was the Ark inactive after its return to Israel.

I Sam. 6	The Philistines, after being struck by God, returned the Ark to the Israelites; it came to the nearest settlement along the road, which was Beth-shemesh. Many of the people at Beth-shemesh were slaughtered because of how they dealt with the Ark. Because of this, they decide to pawn the Ark off on another city of Israel, and the Beth-shemeshites contract the people of Kiriath-jearim to take the Ark.
I Sam. 7:1–2	The men of Kiriath-jearim come down and take the Ark and bring it to the house of Abinadab and Eleazar, his son, is consecrated to keep the Ark. Although Samuel plays no part in this, he is mentioned in I Sam. 7:3 (after the Ark is taken to Kiriath-jearim) and in I Sam. 4:1, prior to a battle between Israel and Philistia which was the beginning of all of this. Furthermore, Eli's sons are said to have died in this battle (I Sam. 7:17) and Eli himself dies when he hears about his sons (I Sam. 4:18). My point is that the Ark was taken while Eli was still alive (although he was old) and Samuel was beginning to take over his duties. All of this would have been prior to the rule of King Saul.
I Sam. 6:1	The Ark only stays in Philistine controlled territory for 7 months.
I Sam. 7:1	The Ark is taken to the house of Abinadab on the hill in Kiriath-jearim.
I Sam. 7:2	The Ark is said to have remained in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years—or so it appears (this will be discussed as an addendum).
I Sam. 13:1 Acts 13:21	Saul is selected king over Israel and rules for 40 years (or, possibly 32 years).
I Sam. 16:13 25:1	David is anointed king by Samuel, although he does not yet become king. During the interim period, Samuel (who anointed David) dies.
I Sam. 31	Saul and his sons die.
I Sam. 2, 5	David is first made king over Judah, and then over all Israel.
I Sam. 6:4, 12–17	David brings the Ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill . There is reason to believe that the Ark was moved from Kiriath-jearim for awhile and then taken back prior to David having the Ark brought into Jerusalem. Recall the Saul called for the Ark, but it was never clear as to what happened with it (I Sam. 14).

The problem: Now, here's the problem (if it isn't obvious to you already): The Ark was seized by the Philistines while Eli was still alive and Samuel was beginning his ministry. Samuel then anoints Saul, who then rules for 32 (or 40) years. David takes eventual control over all Israel (which would have been a period of several years) and then retrieves the Ark from the house of Abinadab. If the Ark was only in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years, then we have a problem, as the time period covered would have been around 40 years.

Ark Addendum: The Time Problem

The solution.

I Sam. 7:2 reads: **And it was from the day that the Ark remained at Kiriath-jearim that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah.** This does not mean that the Ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim for only 20 years. What it means is that Israel was concerned about this problem and their problems with the Philistines for another 20 years and then Samuel spoke to them about their idolatry. In other words, the 20 years covers the time between vv. 2 and 3 in I Sam. 7, not the time that the Ark was in Kiriath-jearim. It was 20 years after the Ark was taken here that Israel changed her mind over her sins, and then decisively defeated Philistia in battle. The end result was that the Ark remained in Kiriath-jearim but Israel was not harassed by the Philistines for the rest of the life of Samuel.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart Index](#)

18. The Ark was important in leading Israel on specific occasions. It is important to note that the Ark was borne by priests on all of these occasions.
 - 1) Through the desert toward the Land of Promise (Num. 10:33–36). Interestingly enough, the Ark was always a three day journey in front of Israel during the desert movement (Num. 10:33).
 - 2) Across the Jordan (the Jordan dried up when the priests carrying the Ark stood in the Jordan). Joshua 3
 - 3) Into battle against the city of Jericho (Joshua 5–6). It is important to note that all the males of Israel were circumcised prior advancing against the Canaanites.
19. The moving of the Ark was not something which was undertaken lightly. Those who moved the Ark could not touch it, and it was covered by a skin while being moved. Again, the Ark represents Jesus Christ more perfectly than any other piece of furniture. The gold, which was about the inside and the outside of the Ark, represented His deity, which man could not come into direct contact with. In fact, man cannot even gaze upon the glory of God, due to his imperfection and resident sin nature; therefore, the glorious Ark was covered up when it was moved (Num. 4:5–6). Interestingly enough, there is nothing said of a covering when the Ark was a part of the conquering of Jericho in Joshua 6. I would assume that the Ark was carried about the city uncovered.
20. I need to point out that the Ark did **not** go with the Israelites on every occasion.
 - 1) It did not go with them on their first military advance into the Land of Promise. This was not because of an oversight, but because Moses would not allow it. Moses specifically told the men not to go into the Land of Promise to try to take it on that occasion. Israel was soundly defeated. Num. 14
 - 2) Near the end of Israel's wanderings, as the Israelites came north along the east side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River, they fought in several battles in order to continue their journey (although they attempted to first settle the matter peacefully). First Israel conquered Arad (Num. 21:1–5); then they conquered Sihon, the king of the Amorites (Num. 21:21–33); and finally Israel warred against and conquered Og, the king of Bashan (Num. 31:33–35). It is important to note that the Ark was never mentioned in connection with these battles.
 - 3) The Ark is not mentioned in connection with Israel's slaughter of Midian (Num. 31). There is no reason to assume that it took any part in the battle against Midian.
 - 4) The Ark did not go with Israel into every battle in Canaan. That is a misinterpretation of Num. 10:33–36, which simply describes the movement of the Ark through the desert wilderness. The Ark played an important part in the ceremony of the naming of the cursings and blessings on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:30–35) and is never mentioned again in the book of Joshua.
 - 5) The Ark is mentioned but one time in the entire book of Judges. Although it is mentioned late in the book of the Judges, time-wise, it is early on during the period of the judges. Israel went before the Ark of the Covenant to determine whether or not they should go to war against their brothers, the Benjamites. It was determined that they should and the Benjamites, as a tribe, were almost wiped out. Judges 20:18–28

21. There was a long time period during which the Ark is practically not mentioned. Between the period of time following the ceremony which took place on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal to the time of Eli (or, between Joshua 9–I Sam. 2), the Ark is mentioned but once (in connection with the civil war between Israel and Benjamin). This would suggest that Israel went through a very dark period in their history, which they did during the time period of the Judges. This is nearly 400 years.
22. There appears to also be a long period of time when the Ark was not in the Tent of Meeting. The army of Israel removed the Ark when at war with the Philistines, the Philistines captured the Ark but then returned it. However, when the Philistines returned the Ark, it did not go back to the Tent of God, it went to the house of Abinadab. It does not appear as though Saul had anything to do with the Ark, which would be expected, given his lack of spiritual discernment (Saul left most everything that was spiritual under the charge of Samuel).
23. When David brought the Ark back from the house of Abinadab, it was not without incident. One of the men who was involved in the transport of the Ark reached out to steady it when it became unstable, and God struck him dead for that. ZPEB comments: *Indeed, while the Philistines' innovation of a cart might be excused through ignorance, the Israelites' failure to observe the precise Pentateuchal instructions for carrying it could not; and Abinadab's descendant Uzzah was struck down for his resulting sacrilege, even though well intentioned.*¹⁶ David was both angry and afraid of God, and temporarily kept the Ark at the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. II Sam. 6:2–7.
24. After three months, and after David observed how God had blessed Obed-edom, David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, also known as the city of David, and kept it in a tent, but not *the* Tent. It appears as though David authorized worship involving the priests in Gibeon (which is in central Benjamin), but there is no mention of the Ark in connection with that center of worship (I Chron. 16:37–43).¹⁷ The Ark is said to still be in Jerusalem, and the introduction of the Ark to Jerusalem was accompanied by sacrifices and celebrations (I Chron. 16:1–3). David later spoke of building a permanent residence for the Ark (I Chron. 17:1–2), but this was not to be until the time of Solomon, his son. Nathan the prophet told David specifically that he would not build a Temple for the Ark (I Chron. 17:3–12). David, near the end of his life, urged his son, Solomon, to build a Temple for Jehovah and the Ark of God (I Chron. 22:6–19). David also made a public declaration to that effect (I Chron. 28–29). In I Kings 6:1, we have the building of the Temple, which occurred 480 years after Israel came out of Egypt. Solomon began to build the Temple in his fourth year, and he took about seven years to build it. This gives us about 70 years during which the Ark was separated from the Tent of God and the other articles of furniture.
25. It is interesting to note that, from I Kings 9–II Kings 25, the Ark is not mentioned even once.¹⁸ This covers the time period of the end of Solomon's reign, the divided kingdom and up until Judah has been removed from the land. We may infer from that, that Judah had become increasingly degenerate (as Biblical testimony will bear out). Prior to the time of Josiah, the Temple had fallen into disrepair, the book of the Law, as written by Moses, had been misplaced, and Passover had not be observed for a long period of time. II Chron. 34–35 deal with the restoration of these things to Judah. Many refer to this time period as the Josiah revival, although the term *revival* personally makes me cringe.
26. It is also interesting to note that there are only two references to the Ark of God after II Chron. 35; once in Psalm 132:8 (a psalm of David) and once by Jeremiah foretelling that one day in the future, there would be no Ark of God—instead, Jehovah God Himself would rule on the earth (Jer. 3:15–17).
27. There is apparently a Temple of God in heaven, in which is the Ark of the Covenant, which the Ark of the Old Testament and Temple of the Old Testament are copies. Now, this is part of the vision that John sees in Revelation 11:19, accompanied by flashes of lightening and the sound of thunder; therefore, it is not necessary for there to be the actual existence of this in heaven. This could simply be a part of his vision.

¹⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 310.

¹⁷ It is interesting that the book of Chronicles deals more with the Ark and the Tent of Worship, whereas Samuel and Kings concentrate on the more secular cares of Israel. One might even draw parallels between Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, where Christ is presented respectively as the King (a fulfillment of prophecy), as a man, and as God.

¹⁸ The Hebrew word *ʾārōwn* (*ark, chest*) is mentioned in II Kings 12:9–10 and in II Chron. 24:8, 10–11, but this reference is to a chest and not to the *Ark of God*.

28. Detractors: Certain *scholars* have certain theories, which the Ark, as I have given to you, contradicts. They have theories that the Hebrew religion *evolved* in a specific way. We see Old Testament revelation as a unified whole, and, with additional study, as a progressive revealing of God's will and purpose. However, there are some which do not believe this and, in particular, object to the name, *Ark of the Covenant*, being found in the earliest of passages. Apparently, it is their belief that the covenant really came a long time after Moses, and early manuscripts referring to the *Ark of the Covenant* cause their problems for their theory. There are also scholars, perhaps the same ones, who believe that the Ark and the Tent of God (the *Tabernacle*) were conceived of and built independently of one another. These theories, obviously, contradict the clear teaching of Scripture.¹⁹ So that you understand what is going on here, these scholars reject the idea that God revealed Himself to man directly; therefore, they have to come up with something that makes sense to them. The Jews have to be seen as any other primitive group of people who had a primitive religion and this religion had to progress in a manner similar to the heathen around them. Since these scholars makes assumptions such as these, they cannot accept that there are holy objects in Israel's early history which are not worshiped, as heathen worshiped their idols. It does not fit into their assumptions; therefore, these scholars must come up with some very convoluted explanations as to the history of the Ark. Bear in mind that, there is no evidence for their interpretation of history (documentary hypothesis,²⁰ a fundamental doctrine of these scholars, is a topic for a whole other discussion).
29. **Summary:** Now let's see if I can summarize, so that we can see the forest through the trees:
- 1) The Ark of God was one of the pieces of furniture of the Tent of Meeting which represented the God-man, Christ Jesus.
 - 2) It was built out of Acacia wood (which represented Christ's humanity) and overlaid with gold (which represented His Deity).
 - 3) Inside the Ark were three items: (1) the tablets of the Law, representing God's perfect standards and our inability to reach these standards; (2) a golden pot of manna, representing God's perfect provision for us (manna was a perfect food); and (3) Aaron's rod which budded, which represents the resurrection from the dead (the rod was a dead staff on which buds came forth).
 - 4) On the Ark was a mercy seat and on both sides of the mercy seat were two angels, or cherubim. The mercy seat represents our point of contact with God (which is upon the Ark itself, above the three items mentioned); and the cherubim represent the angelic conflict, of which we are a part.
 - (1) The Angelic Conflict refers to the fact that we are a part of an unseen conflict.
 - (2) Our very actions are being observed and even discussed in heaven by elect and fallen angels.
 - 5) The Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, which was a room inside the Tent of Meeting. Only the High Priest went into this room once a year on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat, which represents the blood of our Savior for our sins.
 - 6) Because the Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, it was not seen by the Israelites as Christ had not come yet. The Ark was a shadow image of the Christ to come, and the most exact image of God of the Tabernacle furniture.

[Return to Topics](#)

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[Return to the Chart Index](#)

[Exegetical Studies in Samuel](#)

¹⁹ I don't really have any references here to explore this further. There are thousands and thousands of books which present false theories, and one does not have time to read them all. However, if you have an interest in these sorts of theories, Josh McDowell deals quite handily with Documentary Hypothesis and Form Criticism in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol. 2, A Ready Defense* and *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. You won't need all three books; it is the same material packaged in three ways. I guess I should warn you that McDowell's outline system is somewhat disconcerting.

²⁰ Documentary Hypothesis assumes that Moses did not write the book of Moses, but that at least two different writers wrote the Pentateuch, long after it was supposed to have been written; and that another editor pieced their works together, throwing in his own religious slant in the process. Even though this is an attack on the most fundamental doctrines of inspiration, many seminaries (wrongly) hold to these theories.