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## The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant was the holy chest Moses built out of Acacia wood to house the word of God. The ark held only the two stone tablets upon which God wrote the Ten Commandments on the holy mountain in Sinai. Together, the ark and the Testimony constituted the holiest object in the Hebrew religion. When Solomon later built the first Hebrew Temple, he housed the ark in the center of the building's holiest chamber, the place called the "Holy of Holies".

"Then Solomon called the elders of Israel together in Jerusalem to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord up (to the Temple) from the Citadel of David, which is Zion."

"There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets Moses had placed in it at Horeb, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord had made with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt..." (1 Kings 8:1-9).

The Lord had to write these stone tablets twice. The first set, Moses cast down and shattered out of anger when, on his return, he found the Israelites in revolt and making preparations to return to Egypt. After quelling the revolt, Moses went back to the mountaintop and secured another set from God. It was this second set of stones that were housed in the ark.

The allegorical meaning in this replacement and its necessity was prophecy. It prepared the people of God for a second Testimony.

When we speak about the word of God today, we think of the Bible, but Moses was not permitted by God to put the Bible (the 'Torah') into the Ark of the Covenant -- only the Ten Commandments. The Torah (the book of the Law of Moses) was stored outside the ark on a table. This separation revealed

a scripture divided.

That division illustrates the two different natures of what we call 'the word of God'. There is inspired word where God moves men to speak in His name, and then there is a word that comes down from heaven directly where God speaks to us Himself in person. Only the latter was eligible under the rules of Moses to be housed inside the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ten Commandments were shown by their presence in it to be greater than all other writings of scripture. The Ten Commandments were eternal. The Law was temporary.

God commanded this separation in preparation for the Testimony of Jesus Christ -- the unfinished Testimony of God that He had ordained should come down from heaven to complete the Ten Commandments.

We learn in the Old Testament that at Sinai, God intended to come down the mountain in person at the time of Moses to complete His Testimony, but, terrified by the theophany that began to unfold before them as He initiated His descent (the lightning, the earthquakes, the mountain exploding in fire and all the rest) the people pleaded with Moses to stop God's approach and asked Him to see if God could send an intermediary in His place.

Moses went to God with the request and God agreed to it. That is what structured Jesus into the Law. It was that agreement that promised the Jews and the House of Israel a Messiah. It also made the Hebrew religion temporary. The Hebrew religion became a prophecy of God's true religion yet to come - a religion that the Messiah would bring down from heaven.

Jesus was the intermediary God promised. But when He came, He turned out to be much more than an intermediary. He turned out to be God Himself in the flesh. Coming down from heaven as God, Jesus, was supremely qualified to complete the missing Testimony (the Gospel) and also to make the unblemished sacrifice necessary to cleanse mankind of Satan's mortal contamination.

The Ark of the Covenant, then, defined the covenant. And in that definition, it made the Ten Commandments greater than anything else that surrounded it in the Hebrew religion. When Moses commanded the Israelites to "hold fast to God's covenant", he was ordering them to obey the ten sacred articles of God housed in the Ark, but far more importantly, the Gospel of Christ which completed that Testimony.

In returning with the completed Testimony, Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic covenant's prophecy and the meaning of the Hebrew religion. He drew God's people out of the Mosaic religion and into His own. That is what is meant when Moses said:

"Put this question, then, to the ages that are past...Was there ever a word so majestic, from one end of heaven to the other?...Has any god ventured to take to himself one nation from the midst of another by ordeals, signs, wonders, wars with mighty hand and outstretched arm, by fearsome terrors...? (Dt. 4:32-34)

Everyone who turns to Christ and is baptised in His name breaks with the Mosaic Law. In dying with Christ Christians die to the Law (the Torah), and are reborn into the faith of Christianity. We pass from Law to Spirit. We are ruled thereafter only by God's personal Testimony - the 'Good News', the Gospel Jesus preached (Acts 15:1-29).

Refused entrance into Herod's Temple in Jerusalem, the Lord ordered His Word placed inside each Christian soul, moving the Holy of Holies from the structural Temple to a place inside each Christian heart. The move was permanent. It will never be reversed.

Jesus and God are the Temple. There will never ever be any other person or structure that can replace them. The people themselves house the Temple in the Christian religion. That will never change. Not on earth nor in heaven.

The Ark of the Covenant disappeared when Solomon's Temple was burned to the ground by Nebuzaradan and his forces in the summer of 587 B.C. Its passing was noted by the prophet Jeremiah who voiced no regret for its apparent destruction:

"Come back, disloyal children -- it is God who speaks -- for I alone am your Master. I will take one from a town, two from a clan, and bring you to Zion. I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and these shall feed you on knowledge and discretion. And when you have increased and become many in the land, then -- it is God who speaks -- no one will ever say again: Where is the Ark of the Covenant of God? There will be no thought of it, no memory of it, no regret for it, no making of another." (Jer. 3:14-17).

The Jewish people, ignoring Jeremiah's personal declaration regarding the Ark, refused to let go. They firmly believed it would resurface during the Messianic Age (in association with the Intermediary promised by Moses in the Torah, cf. Deut. 18:15+, etc).

Fueling this belief, the apocryphal 2nd Book of Maccabees contains a passage describing how Jeremiah and a group of his followers saved the ark from Nebuzaradan's torches. According to that account, they spirited both the ark of the covenant and the tent (the tabernacle which was not known to exist after the building of Solomon's Temple) out of Solomon's temple at the last minute and transported them to a cave in the desert, sealing them there where they would one day be revealed to an unknown posterity:

"We find in the archives that the prophet Jeremiah...(wrote a) document (that) described how the prophet, warned by an oracle, gave orders for the tabernacle and the ark to go with him when he set out for the mountain which Moses had climbed to survey God's heritage. On his arrival, Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling, into which he brought the tabernacle, the ark and the altar of incense; afterwards blocking up the entrance" (2 Macc.2:1-5).

"Some of his companions came up to mark out the way, but were unable to find it. When Jeremiah learned this, he reproached them: 'The place is to remain unknown' he said 'until God gathers his people together again and shows them his mercy. Then the Lord will bring these things once more to light, and the glory of the Lord will be seen, and so will the cloud, as it was revealed in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Holy Place might be gloriously hallowed' (2 Macc.2:6-8).

The Jeremiah prophecy and the Maccabean prophecy are the only two biblical references relative to Jeremiah concerning the ark of the covenant. There was a third passage in another apocryphal work in relation to the Maccabean verse, but that is now lost to history. The ark has never resurfaced, confirming Jeremiah's personal writing.

Jeremiah's own written text guarantees that the ark's disappearance will be permanent. The Maccabean verse, apocryphal to most Protestants, foresees it resurfacing in association with the cloud at the end of time.

A verse in the Book of Revelation seems to confirm the return prophesied in the Maccabean text, predicting the ark's ethereal appearance in the sky as a part of the theophany that accompanies Christ's "Second Coming" in response to the sound of the 7th trumpet.

"Then the sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and the Ark of his Covenant could be seen inside it. Then came flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and an earthquake, and violent hail." (Rev. 11:19).

In other words, it will be seen in the sky at the end of the world.

"A voice shouted from the sanctuary, 'The end has come'. Then there were flashes of lightning and peals of thunder and the most violent earthquake that anyone has ever seen since there have been men on the earth. The Great City was split into three parts and the cities of the world collapsed; Babylon the Great was not forgotten: God made her drink the full winecup of his anger. Every island vanished and the mountains disappeared; and hail, with great hailstones weighing a talent each, fell from the sky on the people." (Rev. 16:17-21)

The temple of Solomon (the only temple ever to house the ark) was burned down when the Jews were taken in captivity to Babylon. When they returned from Babylon 70 years later, the temple they built did not contain either ark or Testimony. The same is true of all the subsequent structures on Mt. Moriah the Jewish people used afterward for sacrifice (including the temple built by Herod at the time of Christ). None housed the Testimony.

That fact left the Holy chamber in Herod's temple empty. It was in that naked form that it awaited the Testimony of the Messiah. But when Jesus arrived, He was not allowed in by the servants who were the caretakers of the building. Instead, just as the parable revealed, they rejected Jesus and killed Him, thinking the inheritance would then be theirs.

Thus now empty and meaningless, the structural temple in Jerusalem was allowed by God to be destroyed. It was burned to the ground by the Roman army. It has no meaning anymore because it has been replaced by another, Jesus, Himself -- a spiritual temple that is eternal.

Since the people of God house the word of God in themselves, there should be, as Jeremiah asserted, no future need for an ark of the covenant. The people themselves are the ark in the Messianic Age. The same is true in the kingdom of heaven.

Just as the need for a tabernacle of Testimony (the tent that housed the ark during the journey across Sinai) ceased to be necessary after the Temple of Solomon was built to house the Ark, so the Ark itself was no longer necessary once Jesus had taken the testimony out of it and placed it inside His people's hearts.

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**"I Tell You Most Solemnly,  
Whoever Keeps My Word Will Never See Death"**

*John 8:51*