

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

Text: 1 Samuel 4:4

INTRO: Moses had been given a pattern for the ark, EX 25:10-22. EX 37 tells of the actual construction of it. The ark was a wooden chest covered with gold. The top was called the mercy seat (cp county seat). It was of pure gold with a golden cherub at each end facing the mercy seat, with their wings covering the mercy seat. The stone tablets containing the 10 commandments were kept inside along with Aaron's rod & a bowl of manna. The ark measured approximately 4'X2 1/4 X2 1/4.

It was in connection with this ark that God communed with His people, EX 25:21-22.

The ark was carried before the Israelite nation as they crossed the Jordan River into the promised land, Josh. 3. It was there when the walls of Jericho fell, & was possibly there for some of their other victories as well.

I. AN ERRONEOUS VIEW OF THE ARK.

- A. On the occasion of our text, the Israelites had not carried the ark with them into battle & they had been defeated, 1 Sam. 4:2.
- B. The elders of Israel asked the right question but they settled for the wrong answer, vs. 3.
- C. This incident was God's providential way of fulfilling the prophecy given earlier to Samuel re Eli & his sons. READ 3:11-14; 4:11-18.
- D. Both the Israelites & the Philistines apparently thought there was something magical about the ark.
 - 1. The Israelites, vs. 4-5
 - 2. The Philistines, vs. 6-9
- E. Having the ark brought no magical victory to Israel vs 10-11
- F. Capturing the ark brought no magical good luck to the Philistines, 5:2-5.
 - 1. The city of Ashdod sent it to Gath, vs. 6-8
 - 2. Gath sent it to Ekron, vs. 9-10

3. Ekron sent it back to Israel, vs. 11

G. Having the ark was of no value to Israel unless they obeyed the commandments contained in it. To have the ark & not know what it meant was worse than worthless to Philistia.

II. SOME MODERN APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE.

A. The Bible. Many look on it as some sort of good luck charm

1. Brides carry it at weddings. But unless the marriage is built on its truths, it won't help.
2. Soldiers carry it into battle, but unless their lives are influenced by it, it is of no value.
3. Almost everyone wants a few mild passages read over their dead bodies, but if their lives have not been lived in accordance with its teachings, it supplies no real hope for them.
4. Its only real value is in reading & heeding.
READ JAMES 1:21-25

B. The Lord's supper. Some "Christians" seem to view the L.S. as some sort of magical method of being right with God. They seem to think it will make up for all the things they do not do.

1. Some have no interest in Bible classes, evening worship services, gospel meetings, etc. but wouldn't think of missing the L.S.
2. The L.S. can be worse than useless if it is not spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 11:27-29.

C. Prayer "in the name of Christ." Some are inclined to think there is some magic in tagging the name of Jesus on to the end of a prayer. Don't get me wrong. I'm not opposed to saying our prayers are in His name. But, are they?

1. Many miss the point. To pray in His name is to pray by His authority. Because He said to. Like He said to. Ask for the things He authorized us, etc.
 2. Some seem to think the preacher's pray is somehow more potent than that of others. James 5:14-16
- D. Baptism. Most of our religious neighbors under value baptism. Almost ignore it. But brethren tend to often over value it.
1. Scriptural baptism does indeed stand between the alien sinner & the forgiveness of sins. In that regard, it cannot be over emphasized.
 2. But it does not take the place of other acts of obedience: faith, repentance, confession of Christ, etc. Without these, baptism is not even valid.
 3. Baptism does not wash away marriages. Some folks decide to unscripturally destroy their marriage & later contract an unscriptural one. It is often mistakenly thot that baptism will wash away their Scriptural marriage & make the unscriptural one Scriptural. There is no such magic in baptism.
 4. Baptism does not guarantee eternal salvation; does not take the place of faithfulness, Rev. 2:10.

CONCLUSION: Having the ark of the covenant was important to Israel, but it could not take the place of obedience.

The L.S., prayer, baptism... are extremely important & necessary for us, but the do not take the place of other aspects of God's revealed will. Paul preached--& folks need to obey "the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:27).

La Porte, TX, October 2, 1983

Exton, PA, October 28, 1984

Shively, Louisville, KY, December 4, 1985 (meeting)

Exton, PA, August 18, 1991

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, July 11, 1993

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, December 7, 1997