

THE STUDY OF THE TYPES

BY

ADA R. HABERSHON

CHAPTER 8

The Ark of the Testimony

ALTHOUGH it is helpful to compare the types one with another, it is also necessary to study each one separately. For example, in the Tabernacle it is well to examine each piece of furniture, and to trace through the Word the various references that are made to it.

We shall thus notice several allusions to the Candlestick, from the time it was constructed in the wilderness to the time when it was used at Belshazzar's feast, and the handwriting of judgment was seen "**over against the candlestick.**"

This was a solemn warning against that which had been dedicated to the service of the Lord being used for other purposes.

In the same way we shall see the Brazen Altar in the time of Solomon, Ahaz, and Hezekiah - used by Solomon when offering a thousand burnt offerings; set aside by Ahaz, and an altar copied from a heathen king substituted for it; then restored and cleansed by Hezekiah amidst songs of rejoicing.

The condition of the people might be judged from the value that was set upon GOD's altar; and it is the same now; for if the substitutionary work of our Lord JESUS CHRIST is thought little of, spiritual life must be feeble in the Church or in the individual.

The Ark of the Covenant is however the object which is most frequently alluded to, and is very full of spiritual teaching in the various incidents in its history, as we follow it through the wilderness and the Jordan to Gilgal, round the walls of Jericho, to Shiloh; then to the land of the Philistines, and back again through Bethshemesh, Kirjath-jearim, and the house of Obed-edom till it finally rested in its place in the tent in Jerusalem and in the temple of Solomon.

The history of the nation was intimately connected with the history of the Ark.

If it were in captivity, they were in trouble and distress; but when it occupied its right place, they were prosperous and happy. While in the Tabernacle and Temple every whit uttered His glory, the Ark more than any other object there, seems to foreshadow the Lord JESUS.

There is no doubt as to its being a type of Himself.

The purpose for which it was made proves this; for GOD said to Moses, "**There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat.**" We read in Romans 3 of Him "**whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation - or mercy-seat - through faith in His**

blood. He Himself is the throne of grace, where GOD meets with the sinner; He is GOD's meeting place with man.

It is noticeable that the apostle speaks of Him here under the title of "**Christ Jesus.**"

The order of His name is not without meaning; and this speaks of the anointed and exalted One, who once was the suffering Man on earth. The name JESUS is not here used alone - for that would speak to us of His life of humiliation on earth; nor is it put first, still emphasizing His character as the suffering One; but it is "the Man in the glory" that is now the mercy-seat where we may obtain mercy for the past, and grace for the present and future.

The Ark was made of shittim wood, *or acacia*, overlaid with gold; and this is generally taken to represent the twofold nature of our Lord, the human and the Divine. It has been said that the materials of which it was composed represented His person; the purposes for which it was used, His work.

The Ark was the place where the tables of stone were safely deposited when GOD gave them a second time to Moses. On the first occasion when he came down from the Mount and heard the sound of shouting in the camp, he dashed the tables of stone in pieces - emblematic of the way in which the people were breaking GOD's law, as man has always done. The second time provision had been made. The tables were put straight into the Ark, and Moses adds, "**There they be**"; reminding us of Him of whom it is said, "**Thy law is within My heart**" - the only place where it has been kept unbroken.

But the tables of stone were also the covenant; and it was under this aspect that Solomon spoke of them when he said, "**I... have built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel, and in it have I put the ark wherein is the covenant of the Lord, that He made with the children of Israel.**" The tables of the covenant were safe within the ark, reminding him that GOD was a GOD that kept His covenants (II Chronicles 6:10, 11, 14).

Israel might fail, but GOD would never fail.

We are not under a covenant as they were, for it has long since been proved that man could never keep his part; but CHRIST has become for us "**a surety of a better testament** (covenant)," which is between Himself and His Father.

A promise, on the one hand, of eternal life, which GOD that cannot lie promised to His Son before the age began - a gift which was given to Him for the Church then (Titus 1:2; II Timothy 1:9); and, on the other hand, the guarantee from the Son that He would keep that which the Father had given Him.

The covenant with Israel was safe in the Ark. The promises of GOD to the Church "**in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen.**"

Other things were in the Ark in Tabernacle days - the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded; proofs of GOD's wilderness provision and His choice of the Anointed One. But in the Temple we

find they were no longer there; probably because these two things had been laid up before GOD as a token against the rebels, and there will be nothing to remind of this in the glory.

The Cherubim were of one piece with the solid gold of the mercy-seat. Several different interpretations are given of the Cherubim. Some look upon them as the attributes of GOD; others as His executive upon earth; and others as emblems of redeemed man. The fact of their oneness with the mercy-seat and their being represented on the vail, and therefore being rent with it, rather points to the last interpretation; and the figures of the living creatures in Ezekiel and Revelation 5, also seem to justify this conclusion, as they picture perfect ministry on earth or in the glory.

The three persons of the Trinity in type are all linked together in connection with the Ark; for while it foreshadows the work and person of the Lord JESUS, the cloud that rests above it seems to typify the HOLY SPIRIT: and GOD spoke to the people from above the mercy-seat.

The type would not be complete if there were nothing in it to speak of the death of our Lord JESUS CHRIST; but we have this also, for it was a "blood-stained mercy-seat."

The blood of the sacrifices - first of the bullock, then of the goat - was sprinkled upon it on the day of atonement. The Cherubim bent their gaze upon that blood, and GOD's eye rested upon it; and because of the blood He could accept the people. It was an atonement, or covering; for GOD Himself cannot see through the precious blood.

It is an all-sufficient covering for our sin; so that we read, "**On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.**" It might be said in this type as at the passover, "**When I see the blood, I will pass over you.**" In each the blood was for the eye of GOD alone; for none might enter the Holiest of All save the high priest, and he only on this one occasion.

The Ark was never exposed to the gaze of the people; for even when carried from place to place it was covered with the vail, the badger skins, and the cloth of blue. When the Tabernacle was to be removed, the vail would be lowered upon the Ark, that none might look upon it; and so the vail of His Incarnation covered our Lord when here on His journeyings.

The Ark was also protected by badger skins, like the Tabernacle itself. A twofold meaning is given to these skins: first, that their unattractive exterior represented our Lord's humiliation, which hid the glory so that He was despised and rejected of men; second, that they were that which protected from all contamination with evil - and probably there is truth in both interpretations.

Above the badger skin was the cloth of blue; and as it was carried on the shoulders of the priests, that one spot of blue would be conspicuous in the midst of the congregation, for it was the only piece of furniture so covered. The blue is always taken to represent the heavenly; and we know that when the Lord JESUS was on earth this was indeed His character (John 3:13). As we carry Him about now, our testimony is to be pre-eminently a heavenly one.

The Ark was to be the centre of the encampment - "**Jesus... in the midst**"; and when the camp

journeyed, "**as they encamp so shall they set forward, every man in his place.**" If everyone takes his right position in relationship to the Lord Himself, they will also be in the right place with reference to their fellow-Christians.

Once in the wilderness journey we hear of the Ark leaving its central position and going in front of the people; and then it was as a rebuke to Moses for having suggested that they needed anyone but GOD Himself to be to them "**instead of eyes,**" and to search out a resting-place for them (Numbers 10:33) GOD did not approve of anyone else choosing their way, and so changed the order of their encampment. "**And the Ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.**"

But there may be also here a picture of what our Lord Himself has done in going before His people in that wondrous three days' journey of His death and resurrection. Truly by it He has found for them a resting place, and has gone on before to prepare a place for them.

We next have the account of the Ark in Jordan. The words in Joshua 3 remind us of Hebrews 12:1, 2, "**When ye see the Ark . . . go after it.**" We are to "**run, . . . looking unto Jesus.**" Here again the Ark went first, and remained until "**all the people were passed clean over.**" CHRIST is "**the Author and Finisher of our faith**" - the Beginner and Completer; He is "**Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.**"

The children of Israel were told to sanctify themselves; we are to "**lay aside every weight.**" The Ark went into the Jordan and remained there, that everyone of the people might pass over on dry land; He "**for the joy that was set before Him,**" of bringing "**many sons unto glory,**" "**endured the Cross.**"

It is in connection with this scene that we for the first time have mention of "**the Lord of all the earth.**" It is a title only used in connection with the children of Israel in their land.

For the first time as a nation their feet stood there; and for the first time GOD took this name. In connection with the return of Israel to the land, when they will become the centre of blessing for the whole earth, the title is again made use of in Isaiah 54:5; Micah 4:13; Zechariah 4:14; 6:5.

During the captivity He is repeatedly called "**the God of Heaven.**" Immediately after the passage of the Jordan we read of the Ark being carried round the walls of Jericho. Day after day it was carried in solemn procession round the city, once each day, till on the seventh day the priests bare it round seven times, and the walls fell to the ground. Jericho, we are told, means "*fragrant with spices,*" and may represent the allurements of the world which are so often spread before the believer when he has crossed over Jordan and stands in the land.

We are not commanded to fight against the world, but to carry CHRIST with us against the temptations, and we shall gain the victory. John says, "**Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**"

In this last sentence we have His twofold nature; and this, as we have seen, was represented in the shittim wood and the gold of which the Ark was composed.

Shortly after Jericho was taken, we read of the disaster at Ai through the over-confidence of the people, and their underestimating the enemy; and when Joshua is overwhelmed with their failure and defeat, he falls on his face before the Ark in confession. We know that the throne of grace is the place where we may come to obtain mercy for past defeat and grace for future victory.

In Joshua 8:33, 34, we find that the Ark is in the midst when the blessings and cursings are read to the people, "**according to all that is written in the book of the law.**" He whom the Ark symbolized will be in the midst as the Judge, in the day that GOD hath appointed, "**in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained**"; and He is now in the midst of the Church, as John saw Him walking in the midst of the candlesticks, judging their works, and pronouncing blessings and warnings.

In I Samuel 4, we have a description of the Ark falling into the hands of the Philistines. "**The Ark of God was taken**"; or, as the Psalmist describes it, GOD "**forsook the Tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand.**"

So we read that the Lord JESUS was taken.

It was true of the Philistines as of the enemies of the Lord, "**Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.**" Both of the Ark and of Him whom it foreshadowed it might have been said, "**Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken.**"

The Israelites "**fled every man into his tent**"; and "**they all forsook Him, and fled.**" But though in the fourth chapter we read that the Philistines proved stronger than Israel, in the following chapter we read that Jehovah was stronger than Dagon. The idol fell when GOD's Ark was placed in the temple; and so when CHRIST comes into the heart the idols fall. This is very different from what the hymn says:

". . . I have all my idols torn
From my heart,
and now He keeps me by His power."

It is His presence alone that can do it. The strong man armed may keep his palace, but when the Stronger than he comes in, He overcomes him. We are not able to turn out the strong man, or to tear down the idols. Even if we were able to empty the house, unless His presence fill it, the evil spirit would return once more. Reformation is not sufficient; there must be CHRIST in the heart.

When in the garden the chief priests and Pharisees came to take Him, He had only to proclaim His name, "**I AM,**" and "**they went backward, and fell to the ground;**" showing that the same Divine power dwelt in Him as in the Ark of old.

Its history at this time furnishes us with a wonderful illustration of the truth of II Corinthians 2:15, 16. "**We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour**

of life unto life." During the seven months that it dwelt in the land of the Philistines the Ark brought nothing but death and destruction. It was carried from place to place; but the judgments grew worse.

What a contrast to the history of its sojourn in the house of Obed-edom, where it brought nothing but blessing!

To the Philistines it was "**the savour of death unto death**"; and to Obed-edom, "**the savour of life unto life.**" "**All that pertaineth unto him**" came in for a share of the blessing; and it became noised abroad, so that the king heard of it. So will it be with the one in whose heart the Lord has made His abode - others will hear of it, and will want to have the same blessing.

Here the type fails; for Obed-edom had to lose the Ark from his house when David took it to Jerusalem, though we do not hear that he lost the blessing. "**We will come unto him, and make our abode with him,**" is the promise to each one who loves Him and keeps His words; and if others gain the blessing through us, we shall not be the losers.

The judgments that fell in connection with the Ark are very suggestive. The men of Bethshemesh were smitten for looking into it; showing that it was too holy to be gazed at with curious eyes. "**No man knoweth the Son, but the Father**"; and the mystery of His Incarnation and Godhead is one into which we must not try to examine too closely. How many have gone astray by endeavouring to intrude into these things!

If Moses was not allowed to approach the burning bush to "**see... why**" it was not consumed - for GOD said, "**Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground**" - surely this far greater mystery should be treated with still deeper reverence by us.

The judgment that fell upon Uzzah would never have come if GOD's directions had been followed.

In sending home the Ark the lords of the Philistines had set it upon a new cart drawn by two milch kine; and "**the kine took the straight way . . . along the highway, . . . and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.**" In fetching the Ark from Kirjath-jearim David forsook the old-fashioned way which GOD had commanded. He had said that it was to be carried on the shoulders of the priests; but David used the new cart in imitation of the Philistines. When the kine stumbled, the Ark shook, and Uzzah put out his hand to take hold of it, and was smitten before the Ark. What may be allowed in His enemies will not do for His people who have His law.

As one has said, "The nearer a man is to GOD, the more solemnly and speedily will he be judged for any evil: judgment must begin at the house of God." To try and improve what GOD has instituted, by copying the religion of the world, is sure to bring judgment: yet how many are doing this at the present day!

David was greatly afraid at this manifestation of power, and was like Peter when he cried, "**Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord**"; but he learnt the lesson which GOD

intended: for in I Chronicles 15, we find him telling the people that the judgment fell because they **"sought Him not after the due order."** And he tells them that **"none ought to carry the Ark of GOD but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God";** so **"the children of the Levites bare the Ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD."**

There was no difficulty this time; for **"God helped the Levites that bare the Ark"** as He always helps those who follow His directions.

Reference is made in the 132nd Psalm to the bringing up of the Ark from the house of Abinadab, **"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah (Bethlehem): we found it in the fields of the wood"** (Kirjath-jearim). David was full of joy at the prospect of having it in his possession.

There is always rejoicing when we can say with Philip, **"We have found Him."** The subject of ministry before the Ark is too large a subject to be touched here.

When the man after GOD's own heart was rejected by Jerusalem, and the usurper was received in his stead, the Ark of GOD was carried out of Jerusalem, and with the rejected king crossed over the brook Kidron; reminding us of Him who in the darkest hour of His rejection crossed over the brook Kidron with His disciples (John 18:1).

When the temple was finished and dedicated to the Lord, we find that the Ark was brought into its place, and set in the centre of the scene which so wonderfully foreshadowed the day when GOD's Temple will be finished, and the redeemed will be gathered round Himself in the glory.

In John's vision he caught a glimpse of the Ark; for **"the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His Temple the Ark of His testament."**

When that day comes there will be **"no more [need to] carry the Tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof";** for the Lord GOD will have **"given rest unto His people."** As He chose the Levites of old, He has chosen us to bear His name now; but the time for our testimony will then be over.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
