

Lesson 9: The Ark of the Covenant and its Articles

Read: Exodus 25:10-16, Hebrews 9:3-4

Within the Holy of Holies, shielded from the eye of the common man, was one piece of furniture comprising two parts: the Ark of the Covenant and the atonement cover (or “mercy seat”) on top of it. The ark was a chest made of acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold inside and out. It was 3 feet, 9 inches long and 2 feet, 3 inches wide and high.

God commanded Moses to put in the ark three items: a golden pot of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written.

Although the Ark and the atonement cover comprise one piece of furniture, we will study them over two lessons. Today we will cover the contents of the Ark and next week we will discuss the atonement cover.

Discussion:

1. Read Exodus 16:2-5 and 13-36 about God’s provision of manna in the desert. Why did God command Moses to put the manna in the Ark? How was this a reminder and a warning?

2. Read Numbers 16:1-3, 17:1-10. Why did God command Moses to put Aaron’s rod in the Ark? How was this a reminder and a warning?

3. Read Exodus 19:5-8. In light of these verses, why were the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments put in the Ark? How was this a reminder and a warning?

The three items revisited

These three articles were preserved in the ark throughout Israel's history as an unpleasant symbol of man's sins and shortcomings, a reminder of how they rejected God's provision, authority and right standard of living. It pointed to man as a helpless sinner. However, the three items in the ark that served as a sore reminder of man's shortcomings have taken on a different meaning since Jesus Christ redeemed us from our sins. Let's look at the three articles again and see how they point to Christ.

4. *Manna*: Read John 6:32, 48-50. How does Jesus fulfill the picture of the manna? Reflecting on the Israelites' behavior toward the manna, how should we respond to Jesus?
5. *The budding rod*: Read John 6:38 and Mark 14:36. How is Jesus' attitude different from that of Korah's in Numbers 16? How was the budding rod a projection of Christ?
6. *The Ten Commandments*: Read Romans 3:20-26. How did Jesus fulfill the Ten Commandments and establish a new covenant between believers and God?