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Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

Where is the Ark Today?

Where is the ark now? Indiana Jones dug for it in the sand. The Arch of Titus, erected by the Roman general Titus after he destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, depicts Roman soldiers carrying away the ark along with the rest of the tabernacle furniture; many historians believe the ark was then sold or melted down to finance the building of the Coliseum. Of course, treasure hunters still speculate.

I don't know about the physical Ark of the Covenant. But I can show you God's last word on the subject. Revelation 11:19 says,

The temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple.

This shows, not that God scooped up the literal ark of gold and tucked it away in a heavenly museum, but rather that all things once symbolized by the ark—God's own mercy and abiding presence with His people—are alive and well. In other words, what the children of Israel once sought in physical Jerusalem can now be found in spiritual Zion, in the

church. Why do we Christians possess no physical place to seek God's name? Why no tabernacle? Why no altar of sacrifice and Ark of the Covenant, to be carried about on our shoulders on poles?

Jeremiah 3:16 seems to foresee such a time as this, when,

...they shall say no more 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.'
And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again.

The reason is found in Jesus, who has fulfilled the Law, and provided a new relationship with God through His body. Recall this scene in Matthew 27:50–54, which records the last few moments of Jesus' agony on the cross:

Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.
And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook...

When Jesus died, invisible hands ripped the veil of the temple completely in half, exposing the ark. In this act, God sent a message that could not be ignored. The veil of the temple, had hung for centuries, from the beginning of God's covenant with Israel. As we have already studied from Exodus 25–31, God's blueprint for the tabernacle separated the holy place from the most holy place with an impenetrable veil. No one could go beyond that veil. In this place stood the golden ark of the Covenant topped with the mercy seat, the place where God's own earthly presence resided. This holiest place represented God's throne room in heaven.

And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. And you shall ... bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies (Exodus 26:31-34).

The veil sent a clear message—keep out! The veil screened the mercy seat from view. The embroidered cherubim were not just pretty decorations, but a threatening reminder of the angels who guard the Lord's presence (Genesis 3:24, Isaiah 6:2, Ezekiel 10:1–22). It could only be parted once a year, by only the high priest, and only for the purpose of making atonement before God. As long as the tabernacle stood, and as long as the veil obstructed the way, “the Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed” (Hebrews 9:8).

In other words, as long as the veil remained, God indicated that His people were held at a distance. Sure, He loved them and claimed them as His own. But, they were not redeemed from sin. The rules for approaching Him sounded less like a child resting in the embrace of his father, and more like a rubber-suited man handling radioactive material. In fact, as we have studied, when it was time to move the tabernacle, a special group of priests took down the veil and used it to cover the mercy seat (Numb. 4:4–6). The veil separated the ark from the people even during transit.

Only the blood of Jesus Christ could provide the redemption necessary to enter God's presence. Thus,

When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption... For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:11–12, 24).

When Jesus died on the cross and was raised, He entered the presence of God as a high priest to make atonement for our sins. And not just the tabernacle's earthly representation of God's presence—but the real presence of God in the real heaven!

That sacrifice and intermediation provided a brand new and wonderful way for mankind to approach God. No longer must we be held at arm's length. Now, through Christ, we have true redemption, and true fellowship with God. Where the Jews could not go, and where even the high priest hesitated to tread, Christians can enter boldly, into full fellowship with God our Father!

This is what the rending of the veil into two pieces represented. Jesus parted the veil separating man from God. It is joyful news, for Jesus shredded the barricade between us and God.

Since therefore brethren, 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, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:19–22).

While we should never enter God's presence flippantly, we can appreciate the close relationship He has provided through the sacrifice of Christ. It is a foretaste of heaven, when we "shall see His face."

This is why the least who is privileged to live under the new covenant in Christ, has it better than the greatest under the old covenant. How much better an opportunity God has granted us! It's not just that we don't need a box of acacia wood and gold to represent God's presence, but that we enjoy the presence of God in every place we go. Our hearts draw near to God in heaven, rather than upon an earthly platform.

And how much less excuse we have to ignore Him. While we must still enter on God's terms, the way to God's presence stands open. God invites you to look in and enter!

—*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

—*Corrie ten Boom*