

Sunday 22nd November

Preparing for His Presence

Preparing the Place

1 Chronicles 15:1

After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.

Exodus 25:8-23

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. ([Exodus 37:1-9](#))

10 "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. **11** And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. **12** You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in its four corners; two rings *shall be* on one side, and two rings on the other side. **13** And you shall make poles *of* acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. **14** You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. **15** The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. **16** And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

Numbers 18 – Aaron's rod place in the ark

Exodus 16 – Jar of Manna

Exodus 25:16 – the Testimony – the 10 commandments

David prepared a place for the Ark of God – what was so important about this ark, that he prepared a place for it in the center of the nations capital? Well through the last few weeks we have been looking at preparing for His Presence, the tangible presence of the Almighty God, Creator of the Universe, Our Father. We have considered many things in parallel with looking at the pattern of the Tabernacle and the way it foreshadows, reveals in the natural what is true in the spiritual.

Dick Reuben has taken us deep into the meaning of the furniture and practices of the Holy Place, and we have shared the agape love feast, the covenant meal this morning, partaking of the Bread of Presence.

This meal which our Lord Jesus was so excited about sharing with His disciples before His crucifixion was set as an ordinance for the church to regularly prepare for His presence along with the teaching of the word as represented by the Golden Lampstand and the prayer, praise and worship represented by the Altar of Incense. This is the foundation of our fellowship meeting together, the *kononia*, the intimate coming together with Jesus to know Him.

We have Prepared the Way for His Presence by following the pattern revealed in the natural / physical, in the Holy Place to enter the Holy of Holies, and having done so we can boldly approach the very Presence of God.

What is revealed in the physical in this Ark of God? What does it tell us about the character, the form, the Presence of the Almighty? What or rather who are we seeking to approach?

We reflected last week on the fact that David did not do away with the Tabernacle of Moses. It remained in Gibeon with the Brazen Altar and all the practices of the Outer Court and the Holy Place intact. It is difficult for me to comprehend that God endorsed, and as we have read in *Acts 15*, will reestablish the Tabernacle of David, and at the same time keep the pattern of the natural to remind us the spiritual pattern. It is even more difficult to grasp that the Temple will be re-established with all of its practices, in the New

Jerusalem, even though Christ has made the one and only sufficient sacrifice. All I can concur is that the Almighty knows our need for pictures to point to the perfection of His plan.

Given that He has painted a vivid picture in all of the patterns in the Tabernacle, there is and has to be an incredible pattern / picture shown here in this Ark of Testimony for us to gain revelation from. It points to the very character and nature of our God and helps us understand why it has represented and often been the resting place for the tangible Presence of God.

The Ark of God represents five things in our lives:

- God's... Provision
- Protection
- Promise
- Presence
- Power

The Ark consists of two significant parts. The Ark itself, and the Mercy Seat. In total they speak of incredible beauty and yet complexity of God.

We read in *Exodus 25*, Gods instructions for the design and construction of this Ark of Testimony. Can you imagine trying to describe the construction of an item that depicted your very essence as a human being? Then try to imagine God wanting to portray His essence in an object which He did not want to become an idol and an item for worship. WOW what a task.

The Ark was constructed in Sinai by Bezalel ben Uri (*Exodus 31:2*) whose name interestingly means “In the Shadow of God” and Son of the Light.

The ark itself, the box is a type of Jesus who is our ark of covenant, it is also representative of what man in relationship with God should be as depicted in Christ. i.e. a person covered inside and out with the gold of His glory, having the law written inside our hearts, knowing His provision deep in our innermost being, and His protection through the anointing.

Slide – it’s dimensions were as we read

When I asked God why was it not completely square the impression I received was that whilst the depth and width were four square and we may be able to quantify some of the aspects of the character of God, I would never be able to get a measure of the breadth of His character.

Slide - The ark was made of acacia wood. The acacia tree was known to the Egyptians as the Tree of Life. Who is our tree of Life but Jesus Christ? It was known as this because the tree has many medicinal qualities consisting of psychoactive alkaloids.

As a representation of Christ the acacia is said in Jewish tradition to represent the characteristics God shared with mankind, but covered in pure gold, inside and out, is representative of the deity and purity of Jesus. The ark thus tells us an incredible story, that Jesus revealed to all mankind Gods intent to dwell in man.

The very poles that were to be used to carry the representation of the presence of God were also made of acacia wood covered by gold. This tells us that humanity clothed in the glory of God would carry Gods presence.

Slide – Slide Contents of the Ark

God said the Ark was to contain the Testimony *Exodus 25:16*– i.e. the tablets upon which was written the testimony of Gods plan for mankind. We call them the 10 commandments, but the reality is that these tablets were a statement of Gods divine plan for abundant life. They determined the freedom God gave to the nation. They determined the protection that God offered to His community from the effects of disobedience to Gods patterns.

These covenants formed the basis of all the other laws developed by Moses for effective communal living. The law contained in the ten commandments represents Gods holiness, it is at the very heart of His being. The only person to fulfil the covenant, to bear testimony to Gods character, was of course Jesus.

The fact that the law was placed in the heart of the Ark also foretells of Gods intent to place His Spirit in hearts of flesh so that they would follow His decrees *Ezekiel 36:26-27* Jesus was our living example of how this was to work as He only did what He saw the Father doing. *John 5:19-20 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.*

Slide - The pot of manna

In Exodus 16 we read how the people journeyed from Elim into the wilderness and started to complain against Moses and Aaron about their provision for their physical needs. God made provision by the miraculous supply of manna and quail, in exactly the right quantities each day, and on the sixth day just the right quantity for the Sabbath. If the people gathered too much it decayed.

His provision extended beyond food, their clothes never wore out, they were not sick, and He also provided water from a rock.

Yahweh wanted to include in the Ark a representation of His very nature to make adequate provision for His people.

It was placed in the heart of the ark, and our faith in His goodness and desire to provide needs to be in our hearts. He also placed it there to remind the people how fickle they were, how quick they were to lose faith and rebel, when things did not appear to be working our how they expected.

He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. *Exodus 16:18* – how incredible is Gods provision, it is one of grace, not according to our works in collecting what He has provided.

It was even in the gathering of God's provision that He underlined the principle of not working on the Sabbath. He said there will be no gain in trying to gather His provision on the day of rest. *Exodus*

16:27-28. So by having the manna placed in the ark, was a further pictorial reminder of Gods pattern of rest.

The manna was also a fore shadow of the Bread of Life being provided for our wholeness.

Slide – Aaron's rod

The rod was a symbol of authority, and also carried the testimony of the individual. As a shepherd of a flock, and as leader of a family, the rod was used to guide *Ps 23:4*

God wanted a rod, owned by His anointed leader, to be placed in the Ark as an everlasting reminded of His anointing and their rebellion. God wanted the people to remember His Anointed (Jesus) would be placed in the heart of man to guide and direct.

Numbers 18:4-5 tells us that God asked Moses to place the rods before the Ark so that He could rid Himself of the murmurings of the people against His anointed. He would do that by causing the symbol of Authority of His Anointed one to bud, blossom and bear ripe fruit.

The rod placed in the Ark was that of Aaron which had miraculously budded, blossomed and bore ripe almonds.

The almond tree in Israel was the first to blossom in spring, and is mentioned in *Jeremiah 1:11*. It speaks of a foretelling of a new season, and is indicative of the prophetic gifting. Gods leadership will guide and direct because of His ability to know the plans of God. So why would the people wish to rebel against Gods leading either by His Anointed leader, by Jesus, or by His Spirit in the hearts of the believer? The fact is that people do rebel, so God placed this picture in the ark to remind us of His provision of insightful leading and yet people still rebel.

Summary The Ark of Testimony

Slide – Contents

In this wooden box, covered with gold inside and out, we have a representation of the GOODNESS and the HOLINESS of God.

We have His incredible goodness in revelation of the plan for our lives to live in safety, in prosperity, in abundance, with His protection, His provision, and His guidance.

We have the revelation of the HOLINESS of God, His standards, His created plan, His purity.

We also have the reminders that man rebels against God on every front, and we fall short of living to His standards and accepting His provision and guidance.

We are embarrassed, ashamed of our tendencies to rebel against a GOOD and HOLY God, and deserve JUDGEMENT, but God places the lid on the box, the reveals the pinnacle of His character in MERCY.

Slide - Scriptures

Exodus 25:17 "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width. **18** And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. **19** Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it *of one piece* with the mercy seat. **20** And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. **21** You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. **22** And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

Slide – Picture of Mercy Seat and Description of Construction

The Hebrew word *kapporeth* was translated Mercy Seat by Tyndale but actually means the the thing of wiping out, or the thing of cleansing.

The lid on this box represents the covering that God has placed over mans inability to meet, in his human ability, His standards. In more ways than one God is saying to the angelic hosts “It’s okay boys, I’ve got it covered” and Tyndale rightly determined this was the evidence of Gods incredible MERCY to mankind.

In the NIV the word *kapporeth* is translated the atonement cover, which speaks inadequately of the work complete work of Christ in the removal of sin.

Annually in the Tabernacle at Passover, the blood of a Lamb was sprinkled on the lid of this box revealing HOW God would more than just cover our sins but actually wash them away.

The Mercy Seat was made of PURE gold, revealing the purity of Gods character in MERCY towards His creation.

Gold refines us to be like Him, He wants purity in us, WHY? Because pure gold is malleable, it can be shaped easily, a goldsmith will add impurities to gold to make it hard, but God refines to make us soft. The softer we are to His touch, the less the hammering will feel like a beating. One ounce of pure gold can be beaten out to 50’ by 80’. Pure gold does not tarnish.

The cherubim were shaped with wings outstretched looking towards the cover/seat. The job of the cherubim was to protect, encircle, the Holiness of God. Pictorially we have a representation of the angels looking towards the holiness of God as contained in the box, but seeing first Gods incredible Mercy and the work of the blood of the Lamb.

Note this – the lid was exactly the same dimensions as the box, not one jot bigger, not one jot smaller. 2.5 cubits by 1.5 cubits. Perfectly formed to cover the representation of the Holiness. Gods mercy, His work of removing our sins is exactly the same in proportion to His Holiness.

Ponder on that a moment, Gods Mercy is as big as His holiness, there is not one thing in the lives of those called to Him that cannot be covered and dealt with by His mercy.

Even though His holiness demands justice and judgement, we should join the cherubim with arms raised and faces towards the blood of Christ and see the size of Gods Mercy. Through His Mercy He makes available the Protection, Provision and Promise contained in the Ark, and because of that He reveals His POWER AND HIS PRESENCE at the MERCY seat.

We could not receive Mercy without their being judgement.

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.

The story is told of a politician who, after receiving the proofs of a portrait, was very angry with the photographer. He stormed back to the photographer and arrived with these angry words: "This picture does not do me justice!" The photographer replied, "Sir, with a face like yours, you don't need justice, you need mercy!"

We do not deserve His Mercy. We cannot earn His Presence. All we can do is recognize His holiness and accept our unworthiness in worship, that draws Him near.

The full weight of Gods glory would kill everything of the flesh in us, so God reveals His glory in His Face. His Face is one of Mercy. When Moses asked to see the glory

Exodus 33:18-19 God made His GOODNESS pass before Him

When the angels announced the coming of Gods glory in the birth of Jesus

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest ... and GOODWILL to all men.

James 2:13 tells us that mercy triumphs over judgement.

The Psalms tell us much about Gods mercy

Ps 103:17 – mercy is eternal

Ps 108:4 – mercy knows no bounds

Ps 115:1 we give glory to His Name because of His Mercy

Lam 3:22 new every morning are His mercies

Luke 1:50 He extends His mercy from generation to generation.

A place that welcomes His Presence is one that accepts and demonstrates His Mercy.

Part of our worship is reflecting His Mercy to each other and to those who are not saved.

Luke 6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Is the high call upon our lives. Be holy because I am holy, is a promise and a challenge, we can only become holy by accepting His mercy and gratefully seeking to please Him. We will please Him most by extending His mercy to others also in gratitude for the mercy He has shown us.

Slide – Numbers 7:89

In that place of MERCY God chose to show His presence in the shekinah glory cloud, it is the place of tangible presence, it was the place where God spoke to Aaron and Moses.

Lord have mercy on us, invites His Presence.

Lord show us Your mercy, invites His Presence

Being merciful as He is merciful positions us correctly for His Presence to be revealed.

Lifting Jesus high will draw men to Him

LOOK FOR HIS MERCY