

(The Path of the Ark #1) Introduction Hunger

by Ed Miller

This sermon introduces the significance of the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of God's presence and its connection to Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:04:29

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, 1 Samuel 1:13, 1 Samuel 3:1, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Topics: "Christian Journey", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by emphasizing the importance of absolute certainty and finding satisfaction in knowing the truth. He then introduces four symbols or pictures that represent different aspects of the Christian journey. One of these symbols is the attack on stragglers, highlighting the enemy's tactic of targeting those who feel left behind or inadequate. The speaker also mentions that the study will focus on following the Ark, not Noah's Ark, and aims to help believers understand God's heart and their own relationship with Him.

Transcript

...be gathering unto him. We know our hearts are blessed, we know our spirits are fed, when through this book by your spirit we see him. And so this evening again we commit our time unto thee, and we just pray that you might draw us aside, and draw us away unto our Lord Jesus.

We pray that tonight might be a visitation and an unveiling of thyself, and that we might by that revelation be transformed, be changed into his likeness. Thank you Lord that we can trust this evening to enable us to be detached from the cares of life and those things that would distract us. Turn our eyes we pray unto him, and we thank you in advance in Jesus precious name.

Amen. Well, we welcome you again to our little study, and for those that were not here last Tuesday evening, we finished our meditations on the book of Psalms. We didn't finish Psalms, we just finished our little look at that wonderful book of Psalms.

And so I thought we'd have a little break from the book studies. We're going to go back to book studies because that's my love, that's my heart. As some of you know, for the past year or so, I along with some others have been studying the path of the Ark of the Covenant.

In fact, we had a couple of Bible councils on the texts concerning this, and so what I'd like to do is sort of a break in the book studies, is share the results of all of that gleaning and gathering and fellowship that we had, and I'd like to spend the next six lessons on this great Ark of the Covenant and following the Ark. It'll make more sense as we unfold it. Now, we're going to proceed tonight as we try to do all the time, not only for those that are here, but those listening by tape, as if you have never read the Old Testament.

I assume you have, and I know many of you are all familiar with the background and all, but we try to run with the slowest of foot so that the Amalekites don't get us. Now, what do I mean by the Amalekites? That's a quote from Deuteronomy 25.18. Listen to Deuteronomy 25.18. It says, Amalek met you along the way and attacked all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and when you were weary. And there seems to be, among the tactics of the enemy, a special attack by the enemy on stragglers, a special attack on those who can't keep up and who are at the end of the line and sort of feel all the time like, oh, everybody's so far ahead of me and everybody knows more and I'm way back here.

And then the enemy just likes to jump out, you know, and ambush those who feel like they're at the end of the line. So, for those of you that are aware of the facts, just be patient, and review never hurt anybody, and so we're going to run with the stragglers so that we're all protected along the way and so we can all see together at the same time as God gives us light. Now let me begin then by assuming nothing, and when I say we're going to follow the ark in this study, we're not talking about Noah's ark.

We're not going to be studying the flood, though that is a wonderful study. I gave you a handout sheet, and if you'll glance please at page 3, they're back to back so it's really on the second page, but page 3, these notes are by a book by Mr. Salto. You notice the Hebrew word translated ark means a chest, and then he gives us some of the Bible names that he didn't even give all of them, but he gave some of them.

The Ark of the Testimony and the Ark of the Covenant and the Ark of the Lord and so on. Now let me just say a word about the handout sheets. Those handout sheets are for your information only.

Some people hand out notes so that you can follow through the teaching. I don't hand out notes so you can follow through the teaching. I hand out notes because I don't want to waste good time going over those boring facts.

And really that's all they are, they're just facts. And so reportedly, once or twice look at those sheets. That's just for your information.

You can look at them and then throw them away or you can follow them. I really believe that our brother has done a service to the church by doing all that donkey work and finding the chronology and where the ark was from its beginning and where it went and how long it took and so on. And it saves us a lot of donkey work.

Now obviously we can't follow, we can, but we're not going to follow the ark every step along the way. Though that would be very instructive. But we're actually going to begin our study somewhere toward the end of the journey of the ark.

And realize this, when we pick up our study, the ark of the covenant has already been around about 400 years. So we're really coming in at the end. And we're not studying really the trail of the ark, the path the ark took.

There was a flurry of inspiration when God first instituted the ark. And then I mean by a flurry of inspiration, for about 50 years when you read the Bible, you see the ark, the ark, the ark, the ark, the ark. And then all of a sudden, for 350 years, you don't hear anything.

There's silence. They don't use the ark. They don't consult the ark.

They don't follow the ark. They don't bring it. There's no reference to the ark for about 350 years.

And then all of a sudden, it's like the spotlight says, look at this. The ark, the ark, the ark, the ark, the ark. And the spotlight goes again upon the ark.

And there's a great flurry of inspiration. Many pages about the ark. And that's where we're going to pick up the story, in the second flurry.

And where the Holy Spirit seems to come back. Why does the Holy Spirit all of a sudden put the light on the ark again? After 350 years of darkness and of silence. And then all of a sudden, the ark, this, the ark, that, the ark, the other thing.

And the ark begins to move. And you can actually follow it. You can see where it's going.

That tells a story. And that's literally what we'll look at for the next six sessions. Why all of a sudden, this great emphasis on the ark.

For the first 40 years of awareness, we heard about the ark. During the seven year campaign for the land of Palestine, we heard about the ark. But then for the 350 dark ages, years, during the judges, we don't hear about it.

And now, we pick up at the end of the judges. In the days of Samuel. In the days of Eli.

Now, we want to start from squaring on and build. And so in a sense, I always call attention to this, because I don't know if I'm half apologizing. I don't want to apologize.

Lillian has trouble with these introduction lessons. I think they're important. And she always denies it.

I'm getting some faces made at me here. I think they're important, but I have to admit, it's not the meat. And so, then we look at some principles.

And if the land can enable you to stay with us as we lay the foundation. I really feel like it will add when we begin to look then at the unfolding of our dear Lord Jesus. So, let me just do a little of this donkey work.

And right at the start, we have a little problem, because we want to hone in on not so much the ark, as the path of the ark. The road on which the ark moved. And the reason I say we have a problem is, there's so much symbolism connected with the ark of God.

I don't know if you've ever studied the ark of God, but everything about it seems to say something of our Lord Jesus. The materials from which it was made. What was on the inside of it.

How it was carried. What it looked like. The shape.

The form. Everything about the ark seems to mean something. The sheet of wood, and the cherubim, and the rings, and the solid gold, and the rings, and the rods, and the lids, and the great poles.

Everything seems to tell a story. And I know some folks, they can just dive into the bible, and seem to go down so deep, and stay down so long, and come up with so much. I'm not like that.

I try to go down and stay a while, but I come up pretty dry. And so I like to stand back and see the big things. And I leave the little things to the theologians who can look inside and see the hypostatic union with the sheet of wood overlaid with ground and all that kind of thing.

Maybe that's there, maybe it's not. I'm not holding in suspicion our dear brothers and sisters who have seen this in the past. But for our purposes, it's enough to open your eyes wide and see the clear things.

The things for which there's no dispute. A hundred percent sure. And some of those things you say, I think this might picture such and such.

I don't have to say, I think this might picture. I'll tell you, I know. And we're going to deal with absolute certainty.

And it's going to be very gentle, of course. But I found in my own heart, and for the satisfaction of my soul, sometime, when you see that which is a hundred percent certain, there's the satisfaction that comes, and sometime you don't have to really roll up your sleeves and read into some of those details. They don't fall into place when you rest on what is certain.

For our introduction, for those who like some kind of connection, I'd like us to look at four symbols. Four pictures, and it's around these four pictures, all of a sudden, when God gives us these four pictures, the ark begins to move again. After 350 years.

And so they're important. And I'll ask you to put on your spiritual glasses, and ask the Lord to open your eyes, because we want to look through the facts in order to see these great principles. The real question we're answering tonight, what started that ark moving again? Because what started it moving then is what always starts it moving.

And then we'll look at where it's going, and what are the plans for that ark. And so, really, it's quite simple. I want us to see these four things.

If you understand what the ark was, if you understand what the temple is, if you understand Hannah, if you understand Samuel, because it's around the ark, the temple, Hannah, and Samuel, that God starts to move again. And so may God give us right. Let's begin then.

Very basically, I'll ask you to turn to Numbers chapter 10, if you would. Since we're going to follow the ark someplace, what's 100% certain about the ark? What's pictured by the ark? As I said, I'll leave the wonderful details of the ark to all you theologians, and you hermeneuts, and those who will get into all that detail. But for a simple thing, these two things are absolutely clear.

This is not my idea. This is the Holy Spirit's idea. I'll state it for you, and then I'll illustrate it.

The ark is a picture of the Lord Himself. See, I don't have to wonder about that. The ark is a picture of the Lord Himself.

Now, forget for a moment, and this is going to be hard, because some of you already have a mental picture. Forget for a moment how it was made, how it was transported, what it looked like. For our purposes, for a moment, it doesn't matter if it was a square, or a circle, or a triangle, or a block of wood, or

a piece of marble.

It doesn't matter about that. But whatever it looked like, what did it picture? And the answer is, it pictured the Lord Himself. Remember, it's chapter 10, verse 33.

Now, this is when Israel left Sinai, and we read, Thus they set out from the mountain of the Lord three days' journey, with the ark of the Lord journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them. The ark is going before them, and it's almost like it's a person, because it says the ark is seeking out a resting place for them. Not the golden lampstands, not the brazen altar, not the table of showbread, but the ark.

The ark is looking for a resting place for God's people. Same chapter, verse 35 and 36. When the ark set out, Moses said, Rise up, O LORD, let thine enemies be scattered.

That's verse 36. And when it came to rest, he said, Return, O LORD, to the myriad thousands of Israel. Rise up, O LORD.

Return, O LORD. You see, to Israel, the ark was a symbol of God Himself, the Lord Himself. When the ark went out, the Lord went out.

When the ark came back, the Lord came back. When the ark sought a place for them to rest, the Lord sought a place for them to rest. Turn, please, to chapter 14 of the same book.

As you know, this is the chapter, the record of the unbelief at Kadesh Barnea. Remember, when the spies returned from their 40-day spy mission, they were chicken-hearted and unbelieving. And God said to them, In effect, you spent 40 days spying out the land, and now for every day of unbelief, you're going to have a year in the wilderness.

40 days of unbelief, 40 years in the wilderness. And they didn't like that, and so in verse 40, they decided to change their mind. Here we are.

We have indeed sinned. We will go up to the place the Lord has promised. But it was too late.

Moses said in verse 43, The Lord will not be with you. And then you remember, they went presumptuously up the hill. They went anyway.

And so we read in verse 44, Neither the ark of the Lord, the covenant, nor Moses left the camp. You see, when Moses said, The Lord will not be with you, he meant the ark will not be with you. Because the ark is a picture of the Lord.

And the ark stayed back. The Lord stayed back. All through the record, we find the same thing.

In Joshua chapter 3, the ark is mentioned 10 times as they cross the Jordan, and they go into central Palestine to take Jericho. Listen to Joshua 3.11, as they cross the Jordan. It says, Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord the Lord is crossing ahead of you into the Jordan.

And you remember the record, when the ark went into the Jordan River, the Jordan rolled its waters back to make way for the ark. Later on, the psalmist described that in Psalm 114, verse 5. It says, The Jordan turned back. What is you, O Jordan, that you turn back? And then the psalmist answers in verse 7, Tremble on earth before the presence of the Lord.

You see, when the Jordan saw the ark, the Jordan saw the Lord. The ark is a picture of the Lord. And consistently as you read the record, all through Israel's history, when the ark led the way around Jericho, the Lord led the way around Jericho.

We're going to follow the history of the ark. But everywhere the ark appears, you can substitute the word Jesus. Everywhere the ark appears, you can substitute the word Lord.

And so when I say, in this little 6 lesson series, we're going to follow the ark, I don't really mean that. I mean, we're going to follow the Lord. We're going to follow the Lord Jesus.

Because the path the ark took is the path the Lord took. And so it's important to know, where is the ark going? And what's the ark up to? And what's the ark going to do? We want to follow the ark. Because to follow the ark is to follow the Lord Jesus.

There's one more general truth about the ark that I want you to see. Not only is it a symbol of the Lord himself, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus, but I'm going to ask you to turn to Exodus 25. Exodus 25.

And this is where God gave the commandments on how to construct the ark. All the details. Not just the outward visible form, but some of the spiritual truths as well.

Now let me state it for you and then illustrate it in the chapter. Not only is the ark a picture of Jesus, but the ark was made in the shape of a throne. In the shape of a royal throne.

The throne of a king. In verse 10 we read, they shall construct the ark of acacia wood, sheet of wood, indestructible wood. Now that doesn't sound too exciting.

The ark was in the shape of a box. Now if you picture in your mind just a plain chest of a specially selected wood, that's not important for the moment. It was about 3 inches short of 4 feet long and a little more than 2 feet wide and it was as tall as it was wide.

I know in your experience you've seen either a cedar chest or a toy box or a oak chest. Just picture it. It's a chest.

It's a box. It's a wooden box. And on top of the box there was a lid.

A lid made out of solid gold. Verse 17, Exodus 25 verse 17, it's called a seat. In fact the seat had a special name.

Not just a seat, but a mercy seat. A mercy seat of solid gold. If you have another translation it says propitiation.

The same title for our Lord Jesus. Now if you put a lid on a box and you call that lid a seat, don't you expect somebody to sit on it? I mean that's what a seat is. That's the whole purpose of a seat.

And so you're not going to understand the ark if you just see a box. It's a box with a seat on it. And somebody is going to sit on that seat.

Now that seat was quite fancy. Look at verse, chapter 25 verses 18 to 21. Follow please as I read this.

You shall make two cherubim of gold. Make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end.

You shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. And the cherubim shall have their wings spread upward covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another. The faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat.

Notice in verse 19 the cherubim pounded out of the ends of the mercy seat were the golden cherubim. Now don't get lost in the symbolism again. What do the cherubim symbolize? I don't know what your mental image is.

But for our purposes if you get this idea, some high created intelligence like the highest angel closest to God. You're probably technically wrong but you're in the right direction. The cherubim are just those creatures close to the Lord.

And don't picture them attached to the myriad. He didn't make a myriad of seat and then screw on two angels on each end. All I can picture is some clay, some model clay and you squeeze the myriad and then it gets fat at the end.

It's the same piece and then at the end they made the angels on both ends. Well they did that. They pounded the gold until the seat was flat and then the gold broke at each end and then they carved these beautiful angels, this cherubim, a cherub, one on each side.

And then the Bible says that the cherub that were carved on each side stretched their wings over the seat and their wings touched in the middle. I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of the mercy seat. In Hebrews 9.5 we read this expression describing them.

Cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. What I want you to picture is this. There's a box.

There's a lid. The lid is called a seat. And it has fancy arms, this seat.

And their angel arms, very fancy, very ornate. And then over the top of the seat made of the golden wings of the cherubim was a canopy. And what you have is a picture of an oriental throne.

You have the seat. You have the box. You have the fancy arms.

You have the canopy over the top. It's a king's throne. And then you add to that verses 14 and 15 of Exodus 25, there was a special way to carry it.

On these long staves, these long rods by holy priests. No doubt about it. This thing was fashioned in the form of an oriental throne, a king's throne.

Who was sitting on that throne? We don't even have to guess at it. Let's read it. Exodus 25, verse 22.

There I will meet with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony. I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. Later on in 1 Samuel 4, later on we are going to look at the first three chapters of Samuel.

So between now and then you might want to put a bookmark in there. 1 Samuel 4, it says the people went to Shiloh and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts. Try to get this.

Who sits upon this golden seat? And the answer is the Lord of hosts. God himself sits upon that ark. Listen to Psalm 80, verse 1. Give here a shepherd of Israel, thou who art enthroned above the cherubim.

Psalm 4. It's a picture of God sitting on this throne. Psalm 99, verse 1. The Lord reigns. He is enthroned above the cherubim.

Let the earth shake. Let me begin with this as a basic desire in my heart. I want us to follow the ark because the ark is a picture of Jesus.

And it's not only a picture of Jesus. It's a picture of King Jesus. Why is there so much inspired space? So much Bible.

Give it over to the movement of this ark. Because the ark has a goal. The ark has a destination.

It's just not arbitrarily being dragged here and there in the wilderness. It's going somewhere. It has a purpose.

It has a direction. It has a goal. And this ark is not going to stop until it rests and until it reigns.

That's where it's going. The ark is moving to the place where it can rest and where it can reign. The throne is searching for a throne room.

The throne is looking for a place to rest. A place from which he can reign. And so we're not only looking at Jesus.

We're looking at King Jesus. We're not only looking at King Jesus. We're looking at King Jesus on the move.

King Jesus going someplace. A throne moving toward a destination. I can't begin to tell you how instructive all of this is.

It's all on purpose. The Holy Spirit did this on purpose. It's designed this way.

And that ark began to move. That throne began to move. And it went in many different places.

And it wasn't happy until it finally reached one special place. And there it was established and there it rested. And Jesus began to reign as King.

Now hold on a moment and let's look at the second picture. We must also understand the Temple. We're talking now about Solomon's Temple.

If you want to get the maximum benefit from this little series, you not only have to see that the ark is on the move constantly, deliberately, decidedly, irresistibly. It's moving toward something. It's moving toward a goal.

And that goal is Solomon's Temple. When it finally reaches Solomon's Temple, there it will rest. Listen to 2 Chronicles 5.7. This is jumping ahead, but this is when it finally gets there.

2 Chronicles 5.7. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord into its place. Into the inner sanctuary of the house to the Holy of Holies under the wings of the cherubim. There was a Temple and the Temple had a heart.

The Temple was Solomon's great building and the heart of the Temple was the Holy of Holies. There is a Temple today and that Temple has a heart. The ark is moving some place.

What's the Temple a picture of? See the ark isn't just aimlessly wandering in circles. It's not just being dragged here and there by ruffians without the Lord's permission. It's moving constantly toward the place where it can rest and the place where it can reign.

That was a glorious day for God's people when the ark finally came to the Temple. Glorious day for God's people and a glorious day for God himself. Amazing to read and we will when we get to that lesson how they prayed that day.

How they sang that day. In fact, that's where music was introduced into the Hebrew church. That's the first time when that ark came into the Temple God said from now on we are going to have music.

And that's when music was brought into the people of God as a form of worship for everybody to sing. That's the day when the glory of God filled the Temple and the priests were driven out. No room for the priests.

That's the day we are talking about. Glorious day. The Temple was the place God longed to be.

The Temple was his resting place. The Temple was the place from which he would reign. And that's the path where the king ended his journey.

Where the ark ended and he took up his royal residence where he could rest and reign. Now, you've come far enough in the Lord. You've experienced him.

You've tasted of him. You've seen his precious word. You know the difference between grain and straw.

You know food. You know Christ. You know reality.

And you know already when we talk about the Temple what we are talking about right from the beginning when the Temple was a baby. Remember what the Temple was when it was a baby? Before it became a Temple what was it? It was a Tabernacle. And so God laid down all the principles when the Temple was a baby.

And when the Temple was a baby what was it? It was a house made out of skin. That's all the Tabernacle was. A house made out of skin that God longed to fill with his glory.

God has always desired to live in a house made out of skin and to fill that skin with his glory. And when that Tabernacle grew up and matured into the Temple it remained that great principle. A house of skin that God could fill with his glory.

Solomon's Temple is so instructive. We can't get into how it was built in silence and how it was quarried and every piece cut just right and fitted together in his furniture and glory and all the rest. The New Testament spells it out for us.

Listen as I quote these verses. Oswald Chambers said in the Old Testament those are gold nuggets. In the New Testament he says the Holy Spirit beats those gold nuggets into negotiable coins.

And so we have the full meaning in the New Testament. And if you wonder what I'm talking about. 1 Corinthians 6 19 and 20.

Do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God? You are not your own. You are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 3 16 and 17. Do you not know that you are a Temple of God? The Spirit of God dwells in you. If any man destroys the Temple of God, God will destroy him for the Temple of God is holy and that is what you are.

2 Corinthians 6 16. We are the Temple of the Living God just as God has said. 1 Peter 2 5. See folks in here getting blisters on their fingers.

1 Peter 2 5. You are living stones built up into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Peter 2 5. The ark is a throne. The ark is our Lord.

It's Jesus on the throne. The Temple, that's you. The Temple, that's me.

That's us. The people of God. And the King wants to rest and reign in his Temple.

The King wants to, that's where he's going. That's where he's headed. He wants to go to that Temple and he wants to fill it with his glory.

He wants to rest and he wants to rule. That's when God is happy. The Lord is talking about resting the Lord.

Not in this series. We'll mention that. The emphasis in this series is God wants to rest in you.

God wants to rest in his people. It's the Lord coming to rest and coming to reign in his people. How do we get to the place where God will fill us with his glory? How do we get to the place where God will set up his throne in our lives and rule through us? How do we get to the place where God is happy with us and settle down and at home, at rest in his Temple? There's a path.

That's why we want to follow this path. Because the path that it took in the Old Testament, in story form, is exactly the path God takes in our life before he can rest and reign in his Temple. It's glorious to see these marvelous pictures.

It's my prayer that two things will be accomplished as we go through this glorious record. First of all, that God's heart will be clearly understood. I don't want us to be fuzzy about where we are in the Lord.

Through this series, we ought to be able to see the stages by which God moves. And it should shed some light on our Christian experience. We ought to be able, when we're finished looking at these pictures, to see where we are in our relationship to the Lord and where he is in his relationship to us.

How close is he to resting and reigning? You can see from the history exactly where you are in the Lord. Maybe we haven't experienced that experience yet. Or God has come to rest in his Temple.

Through this study, you'll know where you are on the path, where he is. That's one thing I pray God will accomplish. The second thing, I hope we marvel.

I hope we stand in awe at the amazing love and patience of God. This is illustrated when you see the Ark. Oh my! How it was handled.

How it was treated. When you see the bumpy road over which the Ark went. Sometimes the Ark was forgotten for years.

Just forgotten. Sometimes it was irreverently handled. Sometimes it was superstitiously handled.

Sometimes it was just abandoned to the enemy. Do you realize that picture is our Lord Jesus? And our hearts have to ask, Lord, is it possible that we treat you like they treated the Ark? Is it possible that we give you such a bumpy road that they gave the Ark? Is it possible that unholy hands have dared to lay hold of you? Sometimes we wonder how he can put up with it. And yet, this is a revelation of the love and the patience of God.

Or what he endures before he comes to rest in his people. What's true of the individual is true of the corporate body. It's true of the church.

And how patient he is before he comes to rest. The Old Testament picture answers two of the most basic questions that we can ever have in our lives. The earnest Christian constantly asks this.

How can Christ be king of my life? And how can he be happy? That's the story of the Ark. He's coming to rest. He's coming to reign in his temple.

And so I just pray God will answer those questions. And so he comes to the heart of the temple, which is the holy of holies, where there he'll finally rest and set up his throne. You can see from the handout sheet, if we began at the beginning, then we'd be here longer than six weeks.

And so we're going to pick it up at the end. The more you understand the spiritual crisis that took place at the beginning of this second flurry, the more you'll understand what got God on the move again. The Ark is Christ, Jesus.

The temple is you. And I ask you to turn to 1 Samuel chapter 1, please. We look at the first three chapters.

Hannah is also a picture. We need to see what Hannah symbolizes. The reason I'm looking at the first three chapters of Samuel is that's where God picks up the flurry.

Here's where the Ark comes in. And all of a sudden, after 350 silent years, we get the Ark, the Ark, the Ark, the Ark, the Ark again. That's why we've got to start here.

Let me fill you in at this point on some of the background. When our story begins in the second flurry about the Ark, the Ark is not at Solomon's temple because there is no temple yet. The temple hasn't been built yet.

That's a spiritual reason for that. And so that which is spiritual is not pictured here by the temple. At this point, the spiritual side is pictured by the priesthood.

And if you understand that, you know what shape the spiritual side is in. The head of the priesthood at this time was a man named Eli. When you read the story of Eli, honestly, you don't know whether to rejoice or to reap.

Part of you wants to hug the old man, and another part of you wants to slap him around. You say, well, what's going on in this man's heart? Notice, please, in chapter 1, he doesn't have spiritual discernment. In chapter 1, Hannah comes with a burdened spirit.

It's a spiritual thing, and she's crying out to the Lord. Verse 13, as for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, her voice was not heard. And so Eli thought she was drunk.

There was no spiritual discernment. Then Eli said to her, how long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you. He missed the point altogether.

That was the priest. Notice chapter 3, verse 1. It says, The word from the Lord was rare in those days. Visions were infrequent.

God wasn't speaking. No word from God. No word from heaven.

There was no dream. There was no revelation. There was no prophecy.

In fact, it had been a long time since God communicated with his people. They were cut off. There was no word from God.

If you have a Tim James in chapter 3, verse 1, it says, The word was precious in those days. Don't misunderstand that. He's not saying precious, that is highly esteemed, highly valued.

The word was precious. No, I wish it was. It wasn't precious, highly esteemed.

It was precious in the sense of rare. There was precious few words from God. He wasn't speaking.

When you look at Eli, half of you say, oh, he's a good man. Good but weak. He knows the word, but he doesn't have a backbone.

I won't fill you in on all of it, but Eli had three responsibilities. At that time, he was the head of the state as a judge. He had the administration over all the people of God.

We read very little of his administration except how he involved his people in an ill-advised war. He blew it as the head of state. He was also the high priest, the guardian of the ark, the representative of spiritual things.

According to the record, he blew it as a high priest. The other record was that he was a father, a father of children. According to the record, chapter 229, it says, Thou honorest thy sons above me.

He blew it as a father. So that's the state when you open Samuel. The state's in turmoil.

The church is in turmoil. The family's in turmoil. Everything's upside down.

God's not speaking. Now that's why I call attention to this. First Samuel 3.2. It happened at that time as Eli was laying down in his place.

Now his eyesight had begun to grow dim. He could not see well. I'm sure that was literally true of the old priest.

But I can't read it without saying that it's spiritually true of the old priest as well. There you have an old priest representing the whole spiritual side, condemned by God, almost blind. Chapter 4, verse 15 tells us he's now 98 years old.

A 98-year-old priest, a run-out priest, almost blind. First Samuel 3.3 is graphic. It said the lamp of God had not yet gone out.

That's talking about more than the seven-pronged candlestick in the temple. There's a spiritual truth there. The lamp of God had not yet quite gone out.

It was flickering. It was ready to go out. And this is full of spiritual significance.

An old, dried-up priesthood. A blind priest. Fat, carnal.

Flickering light. This tells the story of a very parched land. A spiritual deadness and a dryness.

And another connection. In fact, next time we're going to look a little further at the extent of the deadness of that priesthood. I gotta believe the greatest thing written in the Bible about Eli was chapter 5.13. His heart was trembling for the ark of God.

And well it might. And well it might. And so we'll begin the priesthood.

Try to picture the spiritual condition. Yes? 5.13, that's not it? Try 3.13. It's a problem when I have Bible students listening to me. It's not? Take my word for it.

Thank you, Carrie. 4.13. I knew a mirror would come up with it. My wife just gave me a lecture.

I'm wearing my glasses. Anyway, let's get back to it. We begin then.

The priesthood is dead. It's cold. It's formal.

It's mechanical. You kick at my sacrifice. The offering which I have commanded.

No life. No living God. All is duty.

All is form. All is mechanics. Spiritual life dead.

The light's about to go out. Enter Hannah. See God's not just telling us a story.

We need to see Hannah because we need to see Samuel. Because Samuel's going to tell a new story and a new priesthood and a new life. And he's going to tell about how God is going to invigorate the people of God.

So we've got to start with Hannah. Who is Hannah? It's not enough to say, chapter 1, verse 1, I know who Hannah is. She's the wife of Elkanah.

Not enough. Who is Hannah? You say, I know who Hannah is. Chapter 1, verse 20.

She's the mother of Samuel. Closer. But not enough.

That's not who Hannah was. You see it's more profound than that. God is writing a spiritual story as well as a literal story.

And Hannah now, don't forget it's because of Hannah. It's because of the beginning of Samuel that something stirred up God and started him to move again. He hasn't moved for 350 years.

He hasn't spoken. He hasn't talked. He hasn't given a word.

He hasn't given a revelation. No dream. No vision.

Nothing. The heavens are glass. God is shut up.

Man is dark. The light is going out. The priesthood is dying.

It's corrupt. It's gone. And all of a sudden God opens the Bible and here's Hannah.

Hannah represents the deep cry of the woman heart. First Samuel opens up with the cry of a barren woman. A woman who's crying out for fruit.

For seed. For a baby. We sort of read that la la la.

Proverbs 30 describes four things that are never satisfied. Number one, shallow. Death.

Never satisfied. You can feed death and it'll never say alright I'm full. That's enough.

Can't take anymore. Death is never satisfied. Number two, a desert.

Crying out for water. You give a desert all the water it'll drink up more. It'll drink up more.

It's never satisfied. Number three, Proverbs 30, fire. You can feed fire and it keeps it.

I want more. I want more. Fire is never done.

No matter how much fuel you put on. The flame is not going to say alright I've had enough. I'm full.

I've had it up to here. The flame is not going to say that. Number four, Proverbs 30, a barren womb.

A barren womb. The cry of barrenness. The cry of fruitlessness.

The cry, the inability to give life. That's a pain literally only those who have it know. If you know anybody who's barren, try to enter into this.

They hurt. They hurt. They want, they desire this, this cry for fruit.

There is no pain, no desire, no longing greater than Rachel crying for her children. Now spiritually I'm not a woman obviously and I have no womb. But may I tell you I have felt the barrenness of a spiritual womb.

And I suppose if you've gone on in the world you have too. A heart that comes to the place where it desires to produce fruit from God and it doesn't. And it longs somehow to give issue and to have life.

Righteousness and holiness and a forgiving spirit and a patience and a character. Fruit, life. See that's how this book opens.

We just sort of read it as a woman named Sarah. This is not just a woman wanting a baby. This is not just a woman wanting to be a mother.

That's not going to get the ark of God moving. A woman wanting to have a baby and be a mother. There's a spiritual story being told here.

And the book opens up with a womb, a barren womb crying out for fruit. And not just fruit. Look at a prayer.

1 Tim. She greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. She made a vow.

And she said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy maidservant, remember me and forget not thy maidservant, but will give thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. A razor shall never come on his head. See she's not just a barren womb crying out for a baby.

She's crying out for a Maserite. She's crying out for a separated one. She's crying out for a priest.

She wanted this miracle. I like to read it this way. She said, Lord, if you give me fruit, I'll give you fruit.

If you give me fruit, I'll give it back to you. This is fruit from God for God. That's how the book opens.

With this deep cry, I want to bear fruit from God for God. I want to have something that I can turn around and give back to the Lord. Now don't be afraid to read these things with your spiritual eyes.

The ark has been stationary for 350 years. Along comes a woman who longs to have fruit. And all of a sudden the ark begins to move.

God always moves when there's a cry like that. When some barren womb cries out, I want fruit from God for God. It's a cry for life.

It's a cry for seed. It's a cry for issue. It's a cry for fruit.

What a glorious way to begin this book. With this deep insatiable desire to have fruit from God. Samuel, as you know, was the first part of the answer to that prayer.

Because the birth of Samuel was the birth of a priesthood. A priesthood that would replace the priesthood of Eli. A prophecy was given about Samuel.

Look at it. Chapter 2 verse 35. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in my heart and soul and I will build him an enduring house.

He will walk before my anointed always. When I understand this series, you need to understand the ark is the Lord Jesus. King Jesus, who is desiring a place to rest and a place from which he can reign.

You need to understand that the temple is you. The temple is me. The temple is the people of God.

You need to understand also that Hannah is a picture. Because the thing that got the ark moving in this book and the thing that gets the ark moving in our heart is the cry of a barren womb. Desiring fruit from God for God.

God has to move. When you have a cry like that, God can't sit still. When you desire fruit like that, God has to move.

And then God begins to move. One more picture and then we are finished. The ark is a picture of Christ.

King Jesus. The temple is a picture of you. Hannah is a picture of the cry that gets Jesus to start moving.

And then Samuel. Let's look at Samuel. He is also a picture.

Now Samuel is one of the great saints in the Old Testament. He will live long. He will do much.

He will suffer many things. God will use him to purify the public worship. God will use him to root out idolatry from the land.

God will use him to judge the tribes of Israel. To humble the pride of the Philistines. He will become the maker and the unmaker of kings.

But the principle of his useful life is spelled out in these early chapters. The principle of Samuel's life are right in these first three chapters. That becomes the key to his entire life in ministry.

Principle number one. Samuel is a little child. It's not too deep.

You read that? It's right on the surface. I know that's a fact. But it's more than a fact.

It's a great Bible truth. It's a great Bible principle. You see God had shut up heaven.

God was not speaking. God was silent. And God would not speak again until he found a capacity that could receive his revelation.

How glorious this is written. Samuel is going to become later on the head of a school of prophets. But it was all because he had this child spirit.

350 years God didn't speak and he's not going to start now by talking to some highfalutin prophet or some highfalutin judge or some old priest or some military leader. God waits and waits 350 years until there's a cry that comes up for fruit. Fruit from God for God.

And then God begins to move and he begins to stir. And all of a sudden here's a little child. A receiver.

A spirit. A childlike spirit. That's number one.

Number two. Graphic. Look at 1 Samuel 3. The lamp of God had not yet gone out.

Samuel was laying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. Do you see that? Try to catch the spiritual significance of this. Laying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was.

Where was Samuel's bedroom? I don't know what the commentaries say. People are afraid to suggest that anybody but the high priest once a year could get into the Holy of Holies. They say there must have been some way that we're not seeing here you know that he sort of slept in the outer court and they had these rooms for all the ministering Levites and so on.

Well you could say what you want. Alexander McClan. I give him credit.

He says the Hebrew plainly says Samuel slept where the ark was. Well don't be afraid of that folks. Because there's a story there.

There is a picture of a little child at rest before the throne of God. At rest where the ark was. What a place to have your bedroom.

What a place to rest where the ark is. God can't resist those two things. He's about to move now.

He's got a hungry womb. He's got a little child. A little child who has come to rest where the ark is.

One more picture and we're done. And this touches at the very heart of God. 1 Samuel 3. Verse 3. The Lord called Samuel.

3. 6. The Lord called yet again Samuel. Verse 8. The Lord called Samuel again for the third time. Verse 10.

Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel said speak for thy servant is listening. Three times there was only a voice.

The fourth time there was a voice and an appearance. Three times Samuel mistook the voice for the voice of man. Whatever you think of Eli, there was some wonderful advice he gave to Samuel, to that little child when he realized that he was listening to that rare revelation of God.

I don't know if there was a grief in Eli's heart that God wasn't talking to him, but talking to a little child instead. But Eli at least taught Samuel how to respond to the Lord's revelation. We ought to give him that.

Three times he heard a voice. The fourth time a voice and a manifestation. Chapter 3. 10.

And then Samuel responds, speak Lord for thy servant is listening. When you get the heart of a child, when you get the heart of a child at rest before the throne of God, and when you get a listening ear, God's going to move. God's going to move.

And that's how this book opens. This book opens with a woman crying out for fruit. With a little child.

With a little child at rest before the throne of God. Surrendered to the Lord. And a listening ear.

You want to follow the ark. That's what always starts it going. If you want it to move in your life, that's where it'll start.

The desire for fruit. A child spirit. A child at rest.

And a listening heart. And then God begins to move. And we're going to follow as God graces us.

We're going to follow every step from this point on now. We're going to watch the ark. Because where the ark goes tells a spiritual story.

You're going to see your autobiography when you see where the ark goes and what it does. And oh may God give us light on this. And so that's the introduction.

The ark is the Lord. King Jesus. The temple is you.

Hannah is the cry that gets God moving. The desire for fruit. And Samuel, a child's heart.

Resting. And a listening ear. Comments or questions? I'll call out in two weeks, Jim.

There's one lesson next week. Our Father, thank you for your precious Bible. This wonderful Old Testament.

Lord, these facts have just laid dormant here so long. We pray that you make your word come alive as we follow this ark to its resting place. As we see beyond the letter your heart, your ways, how you move in our

lives so you can rest in us and reign through us.

Oh, teach us these things we pray. Give us a cry like Hannah had. Give us a spirit like Samuel had.

And then move in our lives. Thank you now for the fellowship that we can enjoy as your children, as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Thank you for the physical refreshment which reminds us something died that we could live physically.

And we know you died that we could live spiritually. Thank you for the refreshments and for those that have provided them. We just commit our fellowship unto you now.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

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