

Ark of the Covenant - Part 4

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the significance of the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of God's presence and the necessity of divine sending and obedience in ministry.

Duration: 1:05:06

Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:12, 2 Samuel 6:14-15, 1 Chronicles 15:1-2, 1 Chronicles 15:11-12

Topics: "Ark Of The Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking the truth of God's word rather than being entertained by inspirational talks. He criticizes the tendency of Christians to rely on preachers who simply deliver sermons without delving into the Bible themselves. The preacher uses the example of David's experience with the Ark of God to illustrate the need for genuine dedication to God's principles. He suggests that despite the advancements in technology and organizational skills, the Church is not making a significant impact on the world because it may be going about things the wrong way.

Transcript

The man in the Golden Park divinely sees that relentless witness day by day throughout all those weary years in the wilderness, 40 long years. There was the witness that God gave, in spite of all their rebellions, in spite of all their waywardness, sealing them as his redeemed people whom he had brought out of Egypt that he might bring them in to Canaan. Divinely seen.

Aaron's rod that batted. Divinely sent. You can separate a man from his ministry, but if a man is sent, you can't separate his ministry from God.

The rod will keep on batting, because the ministry of a man who is sent has its origin in God himself. One of the most fascinating illustrations you have of that, of course, is in John the Baptist. You know how he was described in the very beginning of John's Gospel? There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

He was a sent one. He was faithful to his office and he was faithful to his person. Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

And they separated the man from his ministry. Very effectively, they cut his head off. But you know, it tells us in the tenth chapter of John that they sought again to take the Lord Jesus, but he escaped out of their

hands, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there he aboded.

And many resorted to the Lord Jesus and said, John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true, and many believed on him there. So you see, long after they had beheaded John and separated the man from his ministry, the rod was still batting. Men, women, boys and girls went on believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

They said, there was nothing particularly sensational about John. There was no miracle that he did. He wasn't particularly spectacular.

He was a little unusual in the clothes he wore and the food he ate. But everything he said was true. He was sent, divinely sealed, divinely sent, sent to the Holy Spirit as they ministered to the Lord and pastor.

The Holy Spirit said, separate me, Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called. So they being sent, sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed into Seleucia, and from thence they sailed aside. And long after Saul, dying probably the death of a martyr, and long after Barnabas had passed away, there was a church in Corinth, there was a church in Ephesus, there was a church in Thessalonica, there was a church in Galatia, there was a church in Rome, and all down the centuries, God's people worldwide had been blessed by the ministry of the man who was sent.

As we study the epistle, written as he, a holy man of God, was moved by the Holy Ghost. Divinely sealed, divinely sent, the man in the golden pot, an errant rod that batted, and the tables of the covenant, divinely sanctified. For these tables that God commanded Moses to place in the ark of the testimony were those that were rewritten by God, to replace those that lay in fragments at his feet in the presence of an idolatrous people worshipping a golden card in the womb.

But what the law could not do, through the weakness of the flesh, God sending his own Son, and in the likeness of simple flesh and poor sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, governed by an entirely new principle of life. For as much as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but rewritten by God himself in the fleshy tables of the heart. Because only as you and I receive the resurrection life of our once crucified but now risen Lord, by the presence of his Holy Spirit, are we restored by his presence to that moral competence that makes the demands of God's law a working proposition.

For if we walk after the Spirit, we shall no longer fulfill the lusts of the flesh. As we reckon ourselves in Christ, our vicarious, suffering Savior, to be dead to that old sin principle that once held us in the bondage of Egypt, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. So we allow him to be who he is, and do what he does, and we share his righteousness.

As we yield now the members of our body, not to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but we yield now the members of our bodies to God as his instruments of righteousness. It's a new principle of life, divinely sealed, divinely sent, and divinely sanctified. And it all has to do with the presence of the living God by his Holy Spirit dwelling within our heart.

For our sealing as the purchased possession of Jesus Christ cannot be detached from the person of the Holy Spirit. The validity of our call that we have been sent of God cannot be detached from the person of

the Holy Spirit. Any righteousness that we may display, any measure in which we give a valid expression of God's person by what we do and say and are, derives exclusively from the presence of his Holy Spirit within our heart.

In other words, the Ark, with all its content, must be in context. And the place, as we've seen, for the Ark was in the holiest of all. The place where God was, who met his people and filled the temple with his glory by his presence.

And the Ark, with its content, could never be detached from his person, and it must always rest beneath the mercy seat, sprinkled with blood. Because, not by any works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he said, by the washing of regeneration, the renewing to our human spirits of his Holy Spirit, whom he shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, with whose blood the mercy seat has been put. Redemption, the premise of our spiritual regeneration, his atoning death, the first prerequisite of our spiritual resurrection, as our living Lord comes to take up residence within our humanity, and by his presence seal us, tend us, and sanctify us.

But the Ark was out of context. Because, as at the earlier part of the week we discovered, at a time of spiritual decline, under the miserable ministry of that pathetic old man Eli, ritual had taken the place of reality, and token obedience had taken the place of total obedience. And their trust had been placed in it, detached from him.

And the Ark fell into the hands of God's enemy. And finally restored, it was placed in the house of a man called Abinadab, and there it was for twenty years, throughout the whole reign of King Saul, the first of the kings of Israel. A man whom God repudiated, as well you know, because he presumed to find something good in what God had condemned.

When Saul came to the throne, God said, I remember Amalek, and God's judgment was upon Amalek. Because Amalek, as many of you will remember, no matter where you find him in the Bible, as the seed of that profane man Esau, always represents that carnal attitude of mind that is boastful, egotistic, and self-centered, and self-sufficient. The flesh.

Esau, the one who despised the birthright, the one who should have been as the firstborn, the one through whom the seed of Abraham should have come into this world, the Lord Jesus, but instead he threw it all back into God's teeth. He said, I don't need that kind of intervention. I'm the kind of man who's got what it takes.

I don't need religion as a crutch, and I don't need anything that God can do for me. A miserable specimen, of course, said he liked Jacob. He needs a crutch.

He can have it. And for a mess of pottage, he sold his birthright. And God said, Esau have I hated, Jacob have I loved.

Jacob the twister. His name means cheat. God said, I loved him.

I could do nothing for Esau because he never saw any need in his own heart. He was a profane man. But Jacob I could love because if everybody despised Jacob, nobody despised Jacob more than Jacob despised himself.

And he would cry out sometimes in the anguish of his soul and say, God if only, if only there was some blessing that could change my life and change me into the man I would love to be. That's the blessing that I need. And God said, I can do something for Jacob.

And he wrestled with God. And he said, I will not let you go until you bless me. And God touched him, and he limped, and changed his name, and changed his heart.

And Jacob the twister became Israel, prince with God, father of the twelve tribes, and of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham. In the line of Israel, Jacob the twister. Jesus was born to be the savior of the world.

But Esau, grandfather of Amalek and all his ilk, God has repudiated forever. God said, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel. Now ghosts might Amalek utterly destroy all they have, spare them not, slay both man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel, and ass.

And you will remember the story. For Saul took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and he utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and the best of the oxen, and the best of the fatlings, and the best of the lambs, and all that in his estimate was good of what God had condemned.

And he would not utterly destroy it. But everything that in his estimate that was vile and refused, that they destroyed as well. And Saul committed the sin of the church of Jesus Christ.

He presumed to find something good in what God had condemned. He said, God is unjust in saying that in man's flesh dwells no good thing. There's something salvageable about what I am, apart from what Christ is.

That was the sin of Saul. The Lord Jesus said, without me you can do nothing. Because without me you are nothing.

That's why the Lord Jesus, though God, when he became man, made himself nothing. All that a man is without God. But, of course, the flesh repudiates this.

Because man fell into sin when he believed the devil's lie that a man can be man without God. And the sin of Saul was that he presumed to find something good in what God has condemned. And God rejected him, and gave his crown to the one whom he described as the better neighbor than he.

Who was that? David. And Saul, who was such a promising young fellow as we introduced to him in the ninth chapter of the first book of Samuel, becomes a wicked, evil, bitter, self-centered old man. And in attempting to commit suicide, is finally murdered by one of those whose lives he spared.

An Amalekite. Because, you see, you can take pity on the flesh, but the flesh will never take pity on you. And David, the better neighbor, assumed the throne of King Saul.

The better neighbor. How's the better neighbor described? The better neighbor. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness.

According unto the multitude of my tender mercies, block out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is never before me against thee.

The only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shaken in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and there is none.

Purge me with it, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me, God, what I don't have, a clean heart." That was the best neighbor in Saul.

King David, who in a moment of abysmal weakness, committed murder that he might commit adultery, and laid bare his broken heart to a holy God, he said, in my flesh dwell no good. In sin did my mother conceive me. I'm rotten, rotten, rotten through and through.

God said, you're right. That's why I can do something about it. I can't do anything to Easter.

He's fully self-satisfied. He's holy enough. But I can do something to you, David, as I could do something to Jacob.

For a broken heart and a contrite spirit, God does not despise. God can do nothing to any man or woman or boy or girl who's never admitted their own bankruptcy. God said, David, I can do something to you.

And he restored to him the joy of his salvation. And David, the better neighbor, became king. And one of the first things he did when he assumed the throne of the man whom God had rejected, was to get the ark back where it belonged.

For one Chronicles 13 tells us, David consulted with the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, if it seem good unto you, and that be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and the Levites, which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us, and let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. Said David, with his impassioned pleading, people, let's get back to the God to whom we belong.

And all the congregation said that they would do so. For the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. And David gathered all Israel together from Shihosh of Egypt, even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirgizshir, and where all these years it had been in the house of Abinadab, as that self-centered, egotistic, bitter old man, King Claude, presumed to find something good in what God can give, and despised God's counsel.

A man of the flesh. In the seventh verse of the thirteenth chapter of 1 Chronicles, they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab. And Uzzah and Ahio braved the cart, and David and all Israel played before God.

With all their might, and with singing, and with hearts, and with psalters, and with cymbals, and with cymbals, and with trumpets, with immense enthusiasm, and with utmost dedication, and with a united voice, the people were behind David as they led the ark of God back to the place where it belonged. And they sang, and they danced, and they played. And when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark, for the ark had stumbled, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him because he put his hand to the ark, and there he died before God.

And David was afraid of God. That day, and almost in despair, he cried, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? I've mobilized this people, they're behind me, to a man. With joy and with dedication, we were bringing this God's ark back to where it belonged, and God has answered us with death.

And he was afraid. It's a wonderful moment in a person's life when, for the first time, he was afraid of God. See, the trouble with the Church of Jesus Christ today is that we are no longer afraid of God.

By and large, within the evangelical constituency, Jesus Christ is simply a constitutional monarch to whom every now and again, with great fervor, we sing the national anthem. And then, when the pomp and the ceremony is over, we get down to the hard business of running the show, and he is never concerned. We are no longer afraid of God.

We can listen to the sermons, and sing our hymns, and make our vows, and go out to forget that we were ever in his presence. The gospel has been reduced to something cheap and nasty, and faith in Jesus Christ has become easy belief, isn't it? And all you've got to say, no matter how wickedly you may have performed, is this, it's under the blanket, and pursue your results. Nobody is afraid of God, but David was that day.

Because in the midst of all his enthusiasm, in the midst of all his dedication, in the midst of all his noble ambitions, God answered with death. He said, how can I bring the ark of God there? I've tried so hard. I've organized to the uttermost of my ability.

I got these people together. I swayed them. I persuaded them.

And David brought not this ark home to himself in the city of David, but he carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. Three months.

How can I get the ark of God home? I've done my best, and he had. I don't believe, in point of fact, there was an answer to insincerity in all that David tried to do. He'd done his best, and God answered him with death.

Is this your problem? You say, quite frankly, as a Christian, I know myself in my better moments, in my honest judgment, as a Christian, to be a complete failure. I don't mean that I don't go to church. I do.

I don't mean that I don't put my dollar in the plate. I do. I don't mean that I'm insincere.

I don't mean that I don't genuinely love Jesus Christ. I do. But, quite frankly, my life doesn't register.

I know perfectly well that, even though I do it with no little sincerity, my practice of the Christian faith is formal. It's almost ritualistic. There's nothing of the glow of God about my relationship to Jesus Christ, and, quite frankly, when I step out into every new day, it's just to another day, like every day that's ever been, and there's nothing in my experience of the adventure of the Christian life of which I've heard so much.

Quite frankly, my life as a Christian is a write-off, and if there is nothing more to Christianity than this, there's not much to it. I subscribe simply to a religion, and I'm hopeful that my subscription is adequate to get me to heaven. But, quite frankly, if the perpetuation of the church or the evangelization of the world were in any measure dependent upon me, God help the world, it'll mean it, because I'm a total liar, and I'm baffled, and I am bewildered, because, quite frankly, I've been challenged again and again.

I've been to the front, and I've been to the back. I've had my left hand up, and I've had my right hand up. I've done it with my eyes shut, and I've done it with my eyes open, and I've done my best! God knows I've done my best.

Yet, when I pray, it's just as though my words bounce off the seat. What I witness again and again is to no effect, and anybody who appears to be impressed, within a matter of weeks or months, it's all chiseled out, and I'm so tired, I'm such a cripple. That's your problem? That's never the problem of anybody who doesn't really care, because anybody who doesn't really care, and has settled for the wilderness, is always wholly enough, by their own sense.

I'm talking about that boy, that girl, that man or woman, who, deep down in their hearts, have a holy, unshakable ambition to be just what God wants them to be. But they've tried so hard, and with so little success, that they're too tired to try anymore. David felt like that.

After all, he'd gathered the whole nation behind him. Everybody, to a man, endorsed his ambition to get the ark back where it belonged. And God answered them with death.

Well, I've got good news for you. Three months later, David got the ark back where it belonged. And something had happened in those three months.

David had been busy. Do you know what he'd been doing? Reading the Bible. Not listening to sermons.

Not getting a shot in the arm. Not seeking counsel, and trying to get somebody to encourage him. No, he just got to the Bible and did some solid, sound Bible study.

That's what he did. That's what happened in three months. The one thing that the average Christian is never prepared to do, the one thing that the average church congregation is never prepared to do, they want preachers who just preach sermons.

But the idea of getting to this book, and really discovering what God has to say, not what other men say about God, or what other men say God ought to have said, but who are prepared, really, to go to this book and allow the Holy Spirit to introduce them to those unbreakable principles from which God will never, under any circumstances, depart. There are so few who are prepared to do that. That's what David did.

He said, if I have mobilized to the uttermost all my enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm of this people, and with the complete dedication of everybody behind me, we've tried to our uttermost to do what we believe will please God, and God answers us with death, we must be making a mistake somewhere. That's a reasonable supposition. And if in spite of all our enthusiasm, and all our dedication, all our promotion, all our organizational and business acumen, with all the electronic devices, and the modern hardware, with our jet planes, and our radio, and television, our computers, if with all this the Church of Jesus Christ is making such little impact upon the world in which we live, and God appears to be so little interested in our efforts, there remains just the slight possibility that we might be going about things the wrong way.

And that's what David is saying. And he said, if we have been going about this the wrong way, then the best thing to do is to find out things slightly. And of course the way to find out is to go to the book which God has given to us that contains this in practice.

So he did a little Bible study. That's what we've been doing this week. It would have been very much simpler for me to come and give you a series of nice inspirational talks with strings of funny stories, and

sob stories, and tear jerseys, and you've all gone away, all mixed up inside, just as though you'd been to the playhouse or watched the television.

You'd have had a nice evening out, right? But you see, God isn't in business for that. He's not a glorified religious playhouse. Truth sets men free.

And I'd rather have half a dozen people who grasp the principle, let God loose in terms of a man's humanity, than entertain 10,000 people night by night with a little religious gymnastics. David got down to some solid Bible study, and he made some very wonderful discoveries. You just turn over the page, chapter 15.

1 Cranston, chapter 15. David, verse 1, made him houses in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and he pitched for it a tent. Then David said, none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levite, for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever.

And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for. In other words, three months later, David set out to do again what he had failed to do three months before, because God had answered him with death. Why? David, verse 11, called to Zagoth and Abiath, the priest.

He said to them, verse 12, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites. Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for. Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

David said we were going about it completely the wrong way. We sought him not after the due order. It isn't that we didn't seek him, we did.

It isn't that we went enthusiastic about it, we were. It isn't that we were not dedicated, we were. But we didn't do it after the due order.

For some strange reason, we didn't give one moment's thought to what God wanted. We gave him what we thought he wanted, and he wouldn't take it. Is it relevant to find out what God wants before you give him what you think he wants? So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, and the children of the Levites bear the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the stake thereon as Moses commands, according to the word of the Lord.

How do they do it? They bear the ark of God upon their shoulders. How did they try to do it three months before? They carried the ark of God in a new car. Well, where did they get that idea from? Where did they get the idea of carrying the ark of God in a brand new car? From the Philistines.

That's exactly how the Philistines got the ark of God back out of their hands, into the Israelite camp. They took a brand new car, and they stuck, do you remember, two cows with young, and they detached the calves from the cows, tied them up in the stall, and they put the brand new cart behind the cows, and they said, if God be God, in spite of the fact that their young are tied up in the stall, these cows will take the ark back to where it belongs, on a brand new cart. That was a Philistine idea, and in time you see a spiritual decline.

The Church copies the world. It'll copy its dress, it'll copy its hairstyle, it'll copy its music, it'll copy all its gimmicks, it'll copy all its organizational ideas, it'll jump on the world's bandwagon. But in times of spiritual awakening, the world copies itself.

The children of the Levites bear the ark of God upon their shoulders, as Moses commanded, according to the words of the Lord. Well, where did David find that out? Read in the Bible. Would you turn with me to Numbers chapter 7? Numbers in the 7th chapter.

It came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them and sanctified them, that the princes of Israel, verse 3, brought their offering before the Lord. Now, this was when the tabernacle that God had ordained had been completed, finally, by Moses at God's command. And in celebration of this fact, the twelve princes brought their offering before the Lord.

And this was the offering that the twelve princes brought. Six covered wagons, and twelve oxen. A wagon, a brand new cart, for two of the princes, and for each one an ox.

In other words, there were twelve princes, and each of the princes gave an ox, and then two by two, the princes each produced a wagon. So there were six wagons and twelve oxen. And they brought them before the tabernacle.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying this, Take it of them that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and thou shalt give them unto the Levites to every man according to his service. And so Moses took the wagons and the ox, and he gave them to the Levites. Now, Levi had three sons, and they were divided into three groups, each with specific responsibilities.

One son's name was Gershon, the second son's name was Merari, and the third son's name was Kohath. And so under Levi, Gershon, Merari, and Kohath each had particular responsibilities. So the six wagons and the twelve oxen had to be divided between the three sons of Levi for the service of the tabernacle.

Well, how would you divide six wagons and twelve oxen between three sons? How would you do it? Six wagons, twelve oxen between three sons. Well, let's see how Moses did it. Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon according to their service.

Two wagons, four oxen. Well, that sounds right. There were six wagons and there were three sons, so it would seem reasonable that two should go to one of the sons, and four oxen.

Okay, he's right. Two wagons, four oxen. Then it goes on to say, but four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari according to their service.

Well, that's a lot. Two wagons and four to Gershon, four wagons and eight to Merari. What's over for Kohath? None.

And to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonging to them was that they should bear upon their shoulders. In other words, no cart for Kohath. Now, what do we know about the sons of Kohath? No cart for Kohath.

Look at chapter four. Numbers chapter four and verse one. The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi after their families by the house

of their father.

This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath, verse four, in the tabernacle of the congregation about the most holy thing. When the camp set it forward, Aaron shall come and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the testimony with it. And, verse 15, when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it.

But they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath. But there's no cart for Kohath.

What they bear must be borne on the staves of wood on their shoulders. Verse three, from thirty years old and upward, even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. In other words, not less than thirty, not more than fifty.

How old was the Lord Jesus when he began his ministry? Thirty. Said the Lord Jesus, John 8 to the Pharisees, Before Abraham was, I am. And said the Jews to the Lord Jesus, Thou art not yet fifty, lest thou see Abraham.

Not less than thirty, and not yet fifty. And the burden is to be borne on the shoulders. Exodus 25, instructions that God gave to Moses.

Verse ten, Exodus 25 and verse ten, They shall make an ark of chipping wood, and then the exact dimensions are given and its specifications. In verse thirteen, Thou shalt make staves of chipping wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

The staves shall be in the rings of the ark, they shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I give thee. Manna in a pot of gold, Aaron's rod that thighteth, and the table of the cup.

And thou shalt put the mercy seat above, upon the ark, verse twenty-one. In the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there, there, there, will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony.

So the ark was to be made with rings on either side, and there were to be two pieces of wood. And these two pieces of wood were to be threaded through the ring, and the ark that contained that which symbolizes our salvation, sealed, sent, and sanctified, were to be carried on two pieces of wood, resting on a man's shoulder, not less than thirty, and not more than fifty. Does that tell you anything? On that day when the Lord Jesus was crucified, you'd have seen him trudging towards the hill outside of City Wall, a man not less than thirty, but not yet fifty, with two pieces of wood on his shoulder.

There's no count for Kohat. And that, of course, is why God answered David's noblest endeavor with death. Because neither money, nor man, nor men, nor material, no matter, can ever be a substitute for God's man.

His son, Isaiah, not less than thirty, not yet fifty, born at Bethlehem in the city of David, this man, the Word Incarnate, God who was made flesh and dwells among us, bore on his shoulder the prize of our redemption, the cross on which he died. That on the grounds of that redemptive transaction, you and I reconciled to God might receive, as his free gift, that Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed, that Holy Spirit by

whom we are sent, and that Holy Spirit by whom alone we may be thanked. And they got the ark home to where it belonged, and they were filled with rejoicing.

Everybody rejoiced. The children of the Levites bore the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord. So David and the elders of Israel and the captains over thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy.

And you will remember that it was when the ark had been restored to its place that David then sang that marvelous song of praise that we have cited in our morning session. On that first day in the 16th chapter 1 chronicles, David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people, sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Glory ye in his holy name. Let the heart of them that rejoice seek the Lord. Be you mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, even of the covenant which he made with Abraham.

And it is oath unto Isaac and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, because what God spake in verses to Abraham became the truth and the law to Jacob, and the proof to a thousand generations. And David had got the ark back where it belonged. Why? Because he took time out to find out what God wants, and there's nothing quite so fulfilling in the heart of man as to take time out and let God speak to you through his word, and discover his terms of reference.

That's why David was a better neighbor than Saul, who presumed to find something good in what God had condemned, who, like the 250 men of renown in the church in the womb, were holy enough. There was just one sad aspect to this story, and it's quite interesting in conclusion. You'll find it in the second book of Samuel and the sixth chapter.

The second book of Samuel and the sixth chapter is a parallel record of the events that we have just been examining in the 13th and the 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of one promise. End of verse 12, so David, this is chapter 6 of 2 Samuel, so David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with gladness. And verse 14, David danced before the Lord with all his might, and David was girded with the linen ephod.

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet, and God didn't answer them with death, God answered them with his smile of approval. A man, not blessed we say, but not yet fifty, with two pieces of wood on his shoulder, bearing the ark of the covenant. And God said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

And as the ark of the Lord, verse 16, came into the city of David, Mishael, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord. And she despised him in her heart. She was the seed of the old regime.

She belonged to King Saul in all his ways, the man who presumed to find something good in what God had condemned. And as with God's smile of approval, David took the ark back to where it belonged. Mishael was peeking through the window with a smear on her face and a smear in her heart, waiting to mock him and accuse him with her sarcasm.

Say, wherever there are men and women and boys and girls so wise enough to go to God's word and discover what God's terms of reference are, wherever there's a boy or girl or man with any given congregation or company of God's people who are prepared with an open heart to recognize that apart from what he is, we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, that man in himself is utterly bankrupt and destitute, that only God's man, not less than thirty, and not yet fifty, with two pieces of wood on his shoulder, who went the way of the cross, triumphed gloriously, rose again from the dead, ascended to be with the Father, that in the person of his other self, the Holy Spirit, he might reinvade the human soul till we become a body wholly filled and flooded with God himself. There was never a group of men, women, boys and girls who were prepared to meet God on God's time. But sitting in the congregation, there'll be Mishael looking through the window with a smear, a sneer on her face and a sneer in her heart, saying, Stop a month! It's the seed of the old regime.

It's the champions of the status quo. It's those who are still giving service to the old Adamic nature and still worship the flesh in the practice of their Christian faith. They'll sneer through the window.

Oh yes, and you and I should be warned, for remember if there were two, Caleb and Joshua, who prepared to go out of the wilderness and make a reconnaissance with the land of Canaan to discover that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, everything that God had said, there'll be ten, there'll be ten who'll come back and bring an evil report and say, the giants in the land, they're in the wilderness. They'd say, I'll warn you something. If you're a man, if you're a woman, if you're a boy, if you're a girl who wants to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sold out to Jesus Christ, so the only one whom God is prepared to honor, he, Christ God's son, is established in all his sovereignty as king in his kingdom, I want to tell you something.

Down every street you walk, there'll be Mishael sneering through the window. In almost every Christian committee upon which you may serve, there'll be Mishael sneering through the window. David returned to bless his household, verse 20, and Mishael, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, how glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids and his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovered himself.

You really did make a fool of yourself, frankly behaving as though you are nothing and have nothing and can do nothing. When you're the king, David said to Mishael, it was before the Lord which chose me before your father, who presumed to find something good in what God had condemned, and who was murdered by one whose life he spared before he had time to commit suicide. It was before the Lord which chose me before thy father and before all his house to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord over Israel.

Therefore will I play before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than that, and will be buried in my own sight, because God has shown me exactly what pride I am. I am nothing, I have nothing, and I can do nothing. For the only one whom my God honors is a man not less than 30, but not yet 50, who bore two pieces of wood on his shoulder, that beneath that mercy seat, sprinkled with his blood, there might be given to us that ark that contains all that God provides for a redeemed people, healed, sent, and satisfied.

Therefore Mishael, the daughter of Saul, had no child, and for the day of her death she died as barren as she lived. For as Cain mocked Abel, and Esau mocked Jacob, and Ishmael mocked Isaac, so Mishael mocked David, who sneered through the wind. When God's servant, who took time out to find what God wanted, got the ark back where it belonged, and I suggest to you tonight that you're in one of two places.

You're either with David, in the holiest of all, rejoicing in the contents of that ark which is yours beneath the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, or you're numbered amongst those who are sneering through the wind.

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