

The Ark of the Covenant and the Cross of Christ

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true significance and purpose of the ark of the covenant and the need for a spiritual awakening in the midst of God's people.

Duration: 49:59

Scripture: Numbers 7:1, Numbers 7:89, 1 Samuel 2:29, 1 Samuel 3:13, 1 Samuel 4:1-2, 1 Chronicles 13:3, 1 Chronicles 15:1

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Eli, the last judge in Israel. Eli was a weary old man who excused sin in his own family and condoned it in the priesthood. He had become spiritually blind and lost his cutting edge. The preacher highlights how Eli's lack of spiritual discernment and prioritizing his sons over God led to a low spiritual state in Israel. The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God and honoring Him above all else.

Transcript

1 Chronicles 13.2, and David said, unto all the congregation of Israel, if it seem good unto you that it 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 Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us, and let us bring again. 1 Chronicles 13.2, and David said, unto all the congregation of Israel, if it seem good unto you that it 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 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. Let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul.

Now before we're able to explore the fascinating story that's contained in this 13th chapter of 1 Chronicles, and concluded in the 15th chapter, to which later we shall need to turn, it is imperative that we glance for a few moments at the historical background that leads to this particular critical juncture in the history of God's people. And to that end, will you come with me to the first book of Samuel in the fourth chapter, and I shall crave your careful attention just for a few moments while the foundational background is laid, that we might the more intelligently understand what the Holy Spirit has to say to us in the first book of

Chronicles. Remember, that is the way the Holy Spirit uses the Bible.

Deep calls unto deep, spiritual answers to spiritual. From the whole Word of God, there's the accumulative evidence. And so often we miss what the Holy Spirit has to say in any particular context, because we fail to see it in its setting, in the whole panoramic view of God's truth, revealed in the whole Bible.

We need to know the whole Bible, a holy Bible, not a Bible full of holes. Right from beginning to end. That's what makes the book live, because you see, you'll never understand what is contained in this passage until you've learned the language of the Holy Spirit in another passage.

That becomes the key. Now you'll remember the circumstance, as recorded here in the third and fourth chapters of the first book of Samuel, which tells the rather sad end of the last of the judges in Israel, whose name was Eli, both judge and priest. He was a weary old man who excused sin in his own family and condoned it in the priesthood, whose eyes were dim, who was blind.

He had become blind not only physically, but he had become blind spiritually. He had lost his cutting edge. He was a weary old man.

It tells us in the first verse of the third chapter that the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, and the word of the Lord was precious in those days. Now unfortunately it doesn't mean what it sounds as though it says. When it says the word of the Lord was precious, it doesn't mean that everybody was thrilled to bits to hear the word of God and laid great store by it and honored it.

That isn't what it means. A thing is precious when it is rare, when it's not easy to come by. Money, for instance, precious.

Gold and diamonds. Or for small children, ice cream. Anything is precious if it's hard to come by.

The word of God was precious in those days. Literally it means this, that a message from the Lord was a rare thing. A message from the Lord was a rare thing in those days.

Folk were no longer accustomed to listening to the voice of God. They never expected it. As the old weary priest, Judge Eli, went about his daily ministries, any expectation that God would speak had failed.

This was the unhappy situation. Even the young boy, Samuel, had never come to expect to hear the voice of God. That's why when the Lord called him, he never recognized it as God's voice.

He'd never heard God speak. He'd only heard the preacher speak. He'd only heard Eli.

And so naturally when God spoke, he thought it was Eli speaking. What a sad thing it is when boys and girls and men and women attend a Bible class or a Sunday school or a church service, and they have become acclimatized only to hearing men speak. And they have never been acclimatized to hearing God speak.

That's a sad state of affairs. Even sadder was the fact that Eli himself never anticipated that Samuel would ever hear God speak. For when Samuel came and said, what did you say? You called me.

He said, no, I didn't call you. Go back to bed and stop worrying. And then he came again when God spoke the second time, and he said, but you did call me.

And Eli was quite annoyed. He said, no, go back to bed and don't eat so much, late at night, and then you wouldn't dream. Go back to bed and stop disturbing my night's rest.

What a sad thing it is when a preacher never anticipates that God will speak, thinks that a small boy must be having dreams or hallucinations. Well, that was the situation when he didn't dwell upon that somber scene any longer. He had two wicked sons, and because he honored his sons above his God, he allowed them to enter the ministry.

Wherefore, God had said in verse 29 of the second chapter, wherefore, kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honorest thy sons above me to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people. Because, you'll see in the second part of verse 13 of chapter 3, his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. He was more concerned about the ecclesiastical advancement of his own children than the honor of God.

Well, no wonder things spiritually were to a low ebb in Israel. And it says this, verse 1 of chapter 4, the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and they pitched beside Ebenezer, it was an unhappy place where they pitched, Ebenezer, hitherto, hath, past tense, the Lord help me.

They were a people whose experience of the living God had indeed been relegated to the past tense. They were living on memories. They could only think back to the things that God had done.

They were living on capital. Oh, how often that happens. Wales, in my own country today, is largely living on the 1904 revival, it's all they can talk about.

Hitherto, hath, the Lord helped us. A way back nearly 60 years, that's all they can talk about of the living God, what he did then. They can't tell you anything that God's doing now.

Hitherto, hath. God never expects us to live only at Ebenezer. We can thank God for all he has done, but that's not the place to live.

They pitched beside Ebenezer, and they thought that memories of God's past glory would stand them in good stead now without satisfying the spiritual conditions. God never blesses you today because of spiritual conditions then. God can only bless you today by virtue of your spiritual relation to him now.

Never imagine that because you own the blessing of God yesterday, that you will automatically have the blessing of God today. God doesn't work on that plan. He is not the God of the past tense, he is God of the present tense.

It's what God is, present tense, in you now, that matters. Not what he was, nor what he did. The Philistines put themselves in array, verse 2, against Israel, and when they had joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines.

They were smacked to the ground by their enemies. And they slew of the army in the field about 4,000 men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemy.

You notice that that verse is full of it and us. It and us. Not of God, just it and us.

Because you see, their knowledge of God had been reduced to an it. The ark was just an it. Now, the ark represented God's covenant with his people.

Interesting to notice what is said about the ark of God. Keep your finger there in 1 Samuel 4, and look in Exodus chapter 29. It's a context that refers to certain offerings.

Verse 42 of Exodus 29, This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak there unto thee. There I will meet thee with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. I will dwell among the children of Israel.

I will be their God, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. The tabernacle was to be sanctified by the presence, not of it, the ark.

But the tabernacle was to be sanctified by the presence of the living God. This is the place, God said, end of verse 42, where I will meet you, not it will meet you, I will meet you, and I will speak to you there. I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.

I, verse 45, will dwell among you. I will be their God, and they shall know, verse 46, not that it, but I am the Lord their God, that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them, and I am their God. The tabernacle was to be filled, not with it, but the tabernacle was to be filled with him, with God himself.

Thou shalt hang up the veil, verse 33 of chapter 26, under the tashes, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil of the ark of the testament, and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. Thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place, in the holy of holies, in the tabernacle which will be sanctified by my glory and by my presence. Oh yes, the ark was a very wonderful and a sacred thing, but it was never designed to take the place of God himself.

You see, the ark contained God's covenant with his people. Beneath the mercy seat, sprinkled with blood, the ark represented the spiritual content of our faith, made available to us through the shed blood of the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. But the spiritual content of our faith that is made over to us by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is only valid by virtue of the presence of the living God.

And even the most sacred spiritual truths can become an it, and become cold and impersonal. The cross itself can become no more than a childish superstition. The very brazen serpent that God had commanded Moses to raise, that they might look and live, was turned into a source of idolatry, and had to be smashed, powdered, and cast into the river in the day that a spiritual awakening came to the land.

The most sacred truths can become no more than a topic of discussion, a source of theological estrangement between man and man, the moment you get it and you lose him. Even the blood of Christ, the precious shed blood of Christ, can become just a shibboleth, a word. And so long as you shout it loud enough, you're a good die-hard evangelical.

And yet there's absolutely no consciousness of evil. Oh yes, they had it. They knew the letter of the law, but they had lost the spirit of the law.

And so they said, let us get it that it may serve us. It to serve us. Not that he might be in the midst.

It to serve us. How easy it is to look to Christ, his death, his resurrection, all the mechanism of God's redemptive plan, and treat it like an it that is only designed to serve us. Let us fetch it that it may save us.

So the people said to Shiloh that they might bring from hence the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the spiritual content of man's faith, turned into no more than a heathen superstition. And they brought it into the midst. And what was the result? Verse 10.

The Philistines fought with it there to save us. And Israel was smitten. And they fled every man into his tent.

And there was a very great slaughter for their fellow Israel, 30,000 foot. And the ark of God, it, was taken, captured by the Philistines. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

So it didn't save us. It was captured by the enemies of Israel. Because it, apart from him, is nothing more than an empty superstition.

The cross of Christ, apart from the living Lord, can become nothing more than a superstition. Millions of people today will be bowing at the cross, and they won't know the living Christ. Millions.

Millions of people today will have it hanging around their necks, or tattooed on their arms, or hanging above their bedsteads. But it won't save them. For it, without him, is nothing more than a heathen superstition.

And the news came to Eli, the poor, weary old man. Verse 17 of 1 Samuel 4. And the messenger answered and said, Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck break, and he died.

And this poor, weary old man, who had become spiritually and physically sightless, died of a broken neck, just before he had time to die of a broken heart. And that was the last of the judges. He was an old man, and heavy, and probably his sermons were too.

And he had judged Israel forty years. And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, verse 21, and she named it the child Ishabod. The glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken.

The glory is departed from Israel. Oh yes, it without him is dead. Dogma without deity is dead.

Theology without theocracy is dead. The ark without God is dead. Well, the Philistines took the ark, we're told, in chapter 5, and they put it in the house of Dagon.

Now, the funny thing is this, the curious quaint thing is this, that God is never prepared to honor it without him in the midst of those who should know better. And yet God sometimes is prepared to honor it without him amongst those who don't know better. And Dagon had a pretty rough time.

Poor old Dagon was found on his face the next morning. And the head of Dagon, we're told, verse 4, both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold. Only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

If you have a marginal translation, you'll see the stump of Dagon means the fishy part of Dagon. So all that was left of poor old Dagon was the fishy part. For God was prepared to honor it in the midst of a people

who didn't know any better.

The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, it says, verse 6 of chapter 5, and he destroyed them. And he smote them with emeralds, even Ashdod and the coast thereof. And they quickly got rid of the ark.

They said, what shall we do with the ark? End of verse 8. The ark of the God of Israel. And they answered, let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about on a gath. And gath had a pretty rough time.

And they sent the ark, verse 10, of God to Ikron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ikron, that the Ikronites cried out, saying, they brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us to slay us and our people. End of verse 11, for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city, and the hand of God was heavy there.

And they said, at all costs, we must get rid of this thing. And verse 2 of chapter 6 says that the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, what shall we do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. Let's get rid of it.

And the diviners said this, verse 7, make a new cart and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home for them. In other words, they were to take two cows, who had newly born calves, and they were to tie up the calves, harness the cows to a new cart, to put the ark upon the new cart, and then they said, verse 9, see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then God hath done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened to us.

Just a sheer superstition, just a complete coincidence. And so with the two cows tied to the new cart, and with the ark on board, they let them loose. And in spite of the fact that the calves of the cows were tied up here, the calves were forgotten.

And the cows headed for Bethshemesh. And the cart came, verse 14, into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there where there was a great stone. They claimed the wood of the cart, and they offered the kind of burnt offering unto the Lord, and the Levites who lived there, for this was one of the cities of refuge in Israel, took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it.

But they were so ignorant of God's purposes, and so ignorant of God's word, for the word of God, God's message, the content of the Bible was so unknown to them, so rare, so precious, that it says, they satisfied their curiosity and looked in. And verse 19, God smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. 50,000 and threescore and ten men.

And the men of Bethshemesh, verse 20, the men of Bethshemesh said, who is able to stand before this holy God? And to whom shall he go but from us? And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirgith-Jerim, saying, the Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord, come you down, and fetch it up to you, let's get rid of it. And the men of Kirgith-Jerim came and fetched up the ark of the Lord, verse 1 of chapter 7, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill. Verse 2, it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirgith-Jerim, that the time was long.

It was twenty years. Twenty years, the ark of God was in the house of Abinadab in Kirgith-Jerim. That's how it got there.

And throughout those twenty years, after the death of Eli, King Saul reigned in Israel. But they did not inquire at the ark of God, for King Saul, as you will remember, was a substitute sovereignty, who contrary to the express will of God, was made king over Israel in place of God, who should have exercised his own theocratic reign in the midst of his own people, a redeemed people. But when Saul died his own miserable death, an attempted suicide, who was finally murdered by Amalekite, whom God had told him to destroy, but whom he had presumed to serve, David, the better neighbor than he, as he is described in 1 Samuel 15, came to the throne.

And David, who declares to us in Psalm 51 that in sin his mother had conceived him, that the one thing he needed more than another was that God should create in him a clean heart and a right spirit, when he came to the throne, he said to his people Israel, if there's one thing that we need as a people more than another, it's to get back to the God of our fathers. We must somehow bring the ark of God back to its rightful place, the spiritual content of our faith, the ark of God beneath the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, we must place it back into the holy of holies, and we must come again to the house of God to meet the God who meets us there and speaks to us and whose glory fills the place. And so David sought to bring about a spiritual awakening in the midst of his people.

Now that's the context. Thank you for your patience. Now we can look intelligently at this 13th chapter of 1 Chronicles.

Let us bring again the ark of our God to us. 20 years long it's been in the house of Abinadab, in Kirgith-Jerim, for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. For all these years we've lived self-sufficient, as though man was man by virtue what man is, and not by virtue what God is in man.

We must get back to the God who alone makes man, man. Verse 7, 1 Chronicles 13, for verse 4 tells us that the thing was right in the eyes of the people. They carried the ark of God, verse 7, 1 Chronicles 13, they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab.

And Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart. I say, where did they get this idea of a new cart from? Why did they carry the ark in a new cart? Where did they get the idea? They got it from the Philistines. They didn't get it from the Bible, because they were ignorant of the Bible.

They didn't know what God had said about the way things should be done. And so because they were ignorant of the Bible, they did the thing the way the world did it, the Philistines. You know, when the church becomes ignorant of the Bible, it becomes increasingly worldly.

Just as soon as people of God turn away from the authoritative statements of the Bible, you'll discover them aping the world and the spirit of the age in which they live. Whenever there is a spiritual awakening, the world copies the church. Whenever there is spiritual degeneracy, the church copies the world.

You'll discover that to be true. Nearly all our great social reforms that have been copied by the world sprang out of spiritual awakening. Education, hospitals, the aging, the waifs and the strays, the orphans, prison reform, all these things sprang out of spiritual men and women.

And the world copied them. But in days of spiritual degeneration, the church copies the world. And here were the people just awakening out of awful spiritual apostasy.

And they're still ignorant of the Bible, still ignorant of God's ways. Their motivation was pure and good, but they only knew the world's way of doing things. And the Philistines did it that way, so David says, we'd

better do it that way, we don't know any better way of doing it.

And of course, there were plausible reasons for believing that that was valid and legitimate. After all, it was a new cart, a brand new cart. If the world can give it a brand new cart, David thought, well, the least we can do is to give the ark of God a brand new cart, the very best cart that we can produce.

And they did it with all the sincerity in the world, but we have already discovered, many of us this week, that sincerity is not enough. David and all Israel played before God, verse 8 tells us, with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalters, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets, they were rejoicing, they were so glad, because their hearts were set to know God and to get back to God. Well, shouldn't they have been glad? Were they hypocrites? Were they insincere? Were they anything but genuine? No, they were all there.

Well, God must have been glad, God must have looked down with his smile of blessing upon them, and say, well, here are a company of people who really want to get back, and they want to do the right thing. When they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen 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 in the midst of all their rejoicing, in the midst of all their singing, all their gladness, because they were getting the ark back to its right place, and they were going to get back into their true relationship with God, suddenly God smites a man dead. And God answers all their sincerity, all their earnestness, all their enthusiasm, all their zeal, God answers them with death.

Well, isn't that bewildering? It was bewildering for David, verse 12, and David was afraid of God that day, afraid of God. But what does the Bible tell us? The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It's a wonderful day when the church of God begins to be afraid of God.

It's a wonderful day for any Christian boy, girl, man, or woman, when they are suddenly confronted with the awful, unrelenting, incorruptible holiness of God, and you fall on your face and you're afraid for the first time. You've treated God just like a playmate till now. Or just a sentimental daddy sitting on a cloud, looking benevolently upon his naughty children, but being too kind-hearted to rebuke them.

How many people have got this attitude towards God? As though you can say, hi, anytime you like. But forever God's people will ever begin to be holy, they have to recognize the nature of God's holiness, and when for the first time you see the unrelenting, incorruptible nature of God's holiness, it strikes terror into your heart. And David was afraid of God that day, and he cried in despair.

I'd done the best I knew, I mobilized all my sincerity, I whipped up the enthusiasm of my people, they were behind me to a man, we did all the best we knew to please God, and he's answered us with death. How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? What's the use of trying if God answers me with death when I do my best? Yes, but you see, David had to learn that his best wasn't good enough. So David brought not the ark home to himself, to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittites, and there it was for three months.

And David thought for three months, how can I get the ark of God back? I've tried, I did the best I knew, we brought the finest and the newest cart we could possibly devise, what can God want more than my best? But the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Do you know what he began to do? He began to read the Bible. He began to see whether God had other ways of doing things than his best, his sincerity, his enthusiasm, his zeal.

Chapter 15. And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, this is three months later, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, these are the words of a wise man.

David is three months wiser. None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto him forever. When did he get that from? The Philistines? No, the Bible.

And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord into his place, which he had prepared for it three months later. Verse 11. David called for Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, and for the Levites.

Verse 12. He said unto them, 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 it.

Verse 13. Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after thee due order. We sought him with all sincerity, we sought him with great enthusiasm, we sought him with great joy, we sought him with zeal, but we sought him not after thee due order.

Where did he discover that? From the Bible. 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 staves thereon as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord. No new cart this time, their best copying the Philistines, but as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord.

My dear Christian friend, I cannot impress this upon you sufficiently, that your zeal, your enthusiasm, your sincerity, no matter how much it may cost you, no matter how sacrificial it may be, will never be acceptable to God if you will not obey his word. God is not interested in your best when he has already declared to you categorically his will. And in these last two or three moments I'm going to lead you into what I think you will discover to be a most fascinating revelation of truth.

The children of the Levites bear the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord. So, number seven. Numbers chapter seven.

Now this is what the Holy Spirit has been seeking to teach us. Number seven verse one, 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. In other words, the tabernacle, the house of God that was to be glorified by his presence, was complete.

And the princes of Israel wanted to celebrate. Verse three, they brought their offering before the Lord. And this was the offering that the twelve princes of Israel brought.

Six covered wagons, six beautiful new carts, and twelve oxen. A wagon for two of the princes, for there were twelve princes, they clubbed together and each two brought one new cart. And for each one, for the twelve tribes, an ox.

So there were six carts and twelve oxen. And they brought them before the tabernacle. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, receive it, 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 Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them unto the Levites. Now, Levi had three sons.

The first son's name was Gershon, the second son's name was Merari, and the third son's name was Kohath. So if the Levites were divided into three houses, and there were six carts and there were twelve oxen, how many should each of the three sons of Levi have received of the oxen and of the carts? Six carts, twelve oxen, between three. Well, quite obviously, there'll be two carts and four oxen for each of the three sons.

Isn't that reasonable? Three sons, six carts, twelve oxen. Little bit of mental arithmetic. Two carts, four oxen, for each son.

What did God say? Verse seven. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon according to their service, just what we thought. Verse eight, here it goes wrong.

Four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari according unto their service. But that's the law. Verse nine.

Unto the sons of Kohath he gave none. No new cart for Kohath. No oxen for Kohath.

Because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they, the sons of Kohath, should bear upon their shoulders. No new cart for Kohath. They must bear upon their shoulders.

What are they to bear upon their shoulders? Numbers four. Numbers four, verse one. The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Take the sum of the sons of Kohath.

For from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers. Notice the ages. From thirty years old and upward, even until fifty years old.

Thirty years of age and upward, but not yet fifty. The sons of Kohath, who are to carry not on a new cart, but upon their shoulders, are to be thirty years of age and upward, but not yet fifty. How old was the Lord Jesus when he began his ministry? Thirty years of age.

The Lord Jesus said, John 8, 56, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto the Lord Jesus, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Thirty years of age and upwards, but not yet fifty.

When the camp setteth forward, verse five of Numbers four, Aaron shall come and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of the testimony with it, verse fifteen, and 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. They must be thirty years of age and upward, they must not yet be fifty, and they are to carry it upon their shoulders.

Now here's the last thing. Deuteronomy twenty-five. In the book of Deuteronomy, we get some further instructions.

I beg your pardon, it's the book of Exodus. Exodus twenty-five, verse ten. They shall make an ark of shittim wood, verse thirteen, after giving the exact description of how the ark was to be made, thou shalt

make staves of shittim 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 shall give thee. So the ark was to be made of shittim wood, on this side there were to be two rings, on that side there were to be two rings, and through these two rings on that side a piece of wood, through the two rings on this side a piece of wood, two pieces of wood. And the ark was to be carried upon two pieces of wood, and the two pieces of wood were to be laid upon the shoulders of men thirty years of age and upward, but not yet fifty.

That is how the spiritual content of man's faith, God's redemptive purpose, is to be borne. The ark which is beneath the mercy seat sprinkled with blood. And nineteen hundred years ago, a man, a man, God's man, thirty years of age and upward, but not yet fifty, went up a lonely pathway with two pieces of wood upon his shoulder.

And he took those two pieces of wood to the top of the hill called Calvary, across, that there might be a mercy seat sprinkled with blood, that you and I might have the spiritual content of our faith. God says, man's relationship to me is not re-established by the new cart copied from the finisteries. There is only one way.

It is the cross upon which the man died, thirty years of age and upward, who carried two pieces of wood upon his shoulder. There can be no new cart for Kohen. Because you did it not according to the due order, God answered your best endeavors with death.

It is the cross of Christ, where he died for us, and where we to all our sinful bankruptcy died with him. It is there and through that cross that you and I become the heirs, joint heirs with him, of his resurrection life. And only so can we offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

Isn't that a wonderful picture that God gives us in his word? Let us bow our heads and pray. It is to thee, Lord Jesus, we turn afresh. Sometimes we have been baffled and bewildered, because when we have sought to do our best and offer our best, the heavens have been brass, and God has seemed to answer us with death.

But now we understand. We did it in our ignorance of thy word. We tried to substitute self for Christ, it for him.

We thank thee for the one, thirty years of age and upwards, but not yet fifty, who carried those two pieces of wood upon his shoulders and went to the cross, that there might be born beneath the mercy seat sprinkled with blood the true spiritual content of our faith, redeemed through his death. Indwelt, filled, sanctified by his indwelling life, Jesus, the Lord, to whom we bow, for his name's sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26472.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/major-ian-thomas/the-ark-of-the-covenant-and-the-cross-of-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net