

## Virtual Prayer Meeting for February 1, 2023

SONG: "Majesty"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zygFGyT7F8>

SONG: "When the Roll Is Called up Yonder"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwuUHtRXDFE>

Once more the weather in February has frustrated our ability to meet together for prayer and Bible study.

**I was listening to J. Vernon McGee** yesterday and thought we might all benefit from an observation he made in regard to the Ark of the Covenant and its move by King David to Jerusalem and its subsequent installation in the Temple, which Solomon built at David's instruction from the Lord. First Chronicles 6:31 sums up a passage in which we are told the names of the people David appointed to serve in the tabernacle "after that the ark had rest." In 1 Chronicles 28:2, we read of David's God-given desire to build the Temple that was prohibited by God because he was "a man of war" (vs. 3). Verse 2 expresses it: "Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me*, I *had* in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building." Notice the word "rest," because that was the focus of McGee's remarks.

**First, a little background**, hopefully not too much. The ark, built in Sinai at God's direction, led Israel through the wilderness. With the mercy seat as the lid to the ark, a cherubim at each end wings extended, the ark represented the visible presence of God with His people. When the ark arose, the children of Israel would advance and follow. Numbers 10:35 expresses it this way: "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." A couple of chapters later, Moses tells us, "But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp" (14:44). When the children of Israel were going into the Promised Land, crossing the Jordan River at flood stage, the ark "went before the people" (Josh. 3:6). Joshua explained that the people would "know that the living God is among you" (vs. 10) and would drive out the inhabitants of the land as a result of the miracle they would see. "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan" (vs. 11). Joshua was reminding God's ancient people that God is "Lord" of all the earth. "Lord" translates the Hebrew word אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), a word meaning master, a general recognition of superiority. God rules the earth, is what he was saying. Don't fear any enemies because God is superior to all. Later in that chapter, the ark is called "the ark of the testimony," the first term God used for the ark in Scripture (Exod. 25:22). "Testimony" translates a Hebrew word that carries the idea of "reminder, warning sign" (Schultz, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, p. 649). Schultz, says the reference is clearly to the two tablets of the Law, the Ten Commandments, which were placed inside the ark (Deut. 10:5). The tablets are called "the two tables of testimony" (same word) in Exodus 34:29. Deuteronomy 9:15 calls

them “the two tables of the covenant,” a word that pictures a legal agreement. The ark contained, besides the two tablets of the Law, the original copy of the Law written by Moses (Deut. 31:26), “presumed to be the Pentateuch [Genesis—Deuteronomy] in full” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 1065), a pot of manna (Exod. 16:33-34), and Aaron’s rod that budded (Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:4).

**The ark typologically represents** the presence of God with His people. Its contents represent God’s holiness and truth—the Law, Jesus’ life—the manna, and Jesus’ resurrection—the rod that budded. We know the manna represents the life of Jesus because of what Jesus told the people in John 6, when they were seeking a miracle to verify His identity. They said, “Our fathers did eat manna in the desert” (vs. 31). Jesus’ response was clear: “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.... I am the bread of life” (vss. 32-35). Aaron’s rod demonstrated life (flower and fruit) from a dead, cut-off almond rod (read the account in Numbers 17:1-13 to get the power of life from death).

**The ark had two staves** (the Hebrew original means a separate piece), made from the same acacia wood (“shittim” in Exodus 25:13) as the ark itself and overlaid with gold. The staves were to be inserted in the cast gold rings at each corner of the ark and were to be used by the Levites who carried the ark. Recall when David first attempted to transport the ark from Kirjathjearim, where it has been since the Philistines returned it after capturing it when Eli and his two wicked sons died (1 Sam. 5:1). The ark had been there over twenty years; there is no indication Saul made any attempt to move it to Jerusalem. David did, however, and without concern for the proper method of transport. The ark was put on a new wood cart pulled by oxen. Uzzah, in whose father’s house (Abinidab) the ark had been for all those years, reached out to steady the ark and was struck dead. First Chronicles 15:15 tells us “the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.”

**When Solomon completed the Temple**, a great worship service was held. “They brought up the ark” (2 Sam. 5:5) and placed it “into the most holy place” (the Holy of Holies) and “drew out the staves of the ark” (vs. 9). Exodus 25:15 indicates they were never to be completely removed. Gill suggests they were pushed to the rear (assuming the ark was situated front to rear), still in the front rings, so that only the high priest on the Day of Atonement could see them dimly, using them to locate the ark itself, overshadowed as it was by the wings of the cherubim. The writer of Second Chronicles informs us that in Solomon’s time, “There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel” (vs. 10).

**We do not know what happened to the ark of the covenant**, despite the iconic film “Raiders of the Lost Ark.” Ethiopian Christians believe the ark is located at Axum, Ethiopia, in the Church of St. Mary of Zion. The town, in northern Ethiopia’s Tigray Region (<http://s3.timetoast.com/public/uploads/photos/2178082/islam-aksum-map-0-700ad.jpg?1328387695>), is ancient, and the story is that a mythical son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba transported the ark there for safekeeping. That is doubtful. Rabbinic legends abound. Some suggest it was carried to Babylon in the Captivity. Others believe

it was hidden somewhere on the Temple Mount with its crevices, tunnels, and caves so as *not* to be taken by the Babylonians.

**Jeremiah, however, I think**, points us in the right direction. In Jeremiah 3, he prophesied, “And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit *it*; neither shall *that* be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (vss. 16-17). He is describing the millennial kingdom. If the ark represents the presence of God among His people, and it surely does, there will come a day when the symbol is replaced by the reality. There will be no more need for the shadow when the real has come. Jeremiah 24:5 says, “And I will give them an heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.” In Revelation 21:3-4, John recorded, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

**While the staves of the ark were withdrawn** (but not completely) when the ark was installed in the Temple, it was but a prelude to the final rest. The writer of Hebrews reminded, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (4:9-10). Verse 3 puts it plainly: “We which have believed do enter into rest ... finished from the foundation of the world.” Believers have rest. Salvation is secure. Its work is finished.

SONG: “Haven of Rest”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zeyp0Kg10cU>