

just a gold box with stone tablets inside. God met Israel on *his* terms, and his terms were faithful obedience to his commands.

God's presence is never bound up in objects or idols. He has always sought for an obedient people who would approach him with a sincere heart of worship. Today, cold-hearted religion steeped in tradition and formalism makes the very same mistake that the Israelites made. They value the objects associated with worship, more than *the object* of worship – God himself.

### His Presence – Still Conditioned on a Covenant

Like all pieces of furniture in the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant is a picture of Jesus Christ. The fact is, Israel could never be completely obedient to the commandments of God. They were sinners and all the sacrifices in the world could not take away their sinful natures (Heb 9:9). For this reason, God always had a better covenant in mind.

📖 Jer 31:31-34. **Q.** What would God make with Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.** v33. What 4 aspects of the new covenant are found in this verse?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.** v34. Under this covenant, what would God do with sin and iniquity?

📖 Heb 10:29. **Q.** What is the blood of Christ called here?

📖 Heb 12:24. **Q.** What is Jesus the mediator of?

All the above aspects of the new covenant were made possible by the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled all the requirements of the law by living a sinless and perfect life. It was his death on the cross and the shedding of his perfect blood that sealed the new covenant for us. Man no longer has to attempt to keep the law, but rather to believe on Jesus Christ (the only one who *could* keep the law) for salvation.

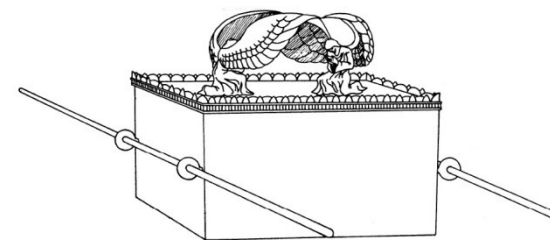
The righteousness that God once demanded is now given to us positionally the moment that we are saved, and is accomplished in us progressively by the indwelling Holy Spirit as we seek to be more and more like him.

📖 John 14:16-18. **Q.** What did Jesus promise for those that believe on Him?

God's presence is now given to us on the basis of the *new covenant*. In this new covenant, we are required to believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and God in turn, promises to give us his indwelling presence – the Holy Spirit. Jesus has become the substance of all the shadows seen in the tabernacle!

## The Ark of the Covenant

In one of our first studies in this series we learned that the tabernacle was the *centerpiece* of God's covenant with Israel. It was the fulfillment of God's promise to *be a God unto* them (Gen 17:7) and to  *dwell among them* (Ex 29:45). Just as the tabernacle was the centerpiece of God's covenant, the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat were the centerpiece of the tabernacle.



📖 Exodus 25:22. **Q.** What did God promise to do *from above the mercy seat*?

The mercy seat was a sort of lid which was set atop the ark of the covenant. When God met with Israel, it was immediately above the mercy seat. It was the place of his direct presence. The pattern for the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat were actually the first instructions that Moses received from God in regard to the tabernacle's construction.

📖 Alternate reading Exodus 25:10-22, and answer the questions below.

v10, 11. **Q.** From what materials was the ark constructed?

v15. **Q.** What was different about the *staves* in the ark of the covenant as compared to the other furniture?

v16. **Q.** What was to be put into the ark?


v18. **Q.** What figures were to be put on top of the ark of the covenant?

v22. **Q.** What did God promise regarding the mercy seat and the ark of the covenant?

### His Presence – Conditioned by a Covenant

📖 Ex 19:5,6. **Q.** What was the one condition that determined whether or not Israel would be a people for God?

A covenant is a legally binding agreement between two parties. In this case it is an agreement between God and Israel. This was not an agreement between two equals. God determined all the conditions for the covenant and graciously offered for Israel to partake in it.

 Deut 4:12,13. **Q.** What is another name for this covenant? Where was the covenant written?

God's covenant with Israel was summarized by the *ten commandments*. These commandments were the conditions on which God's covenant with Israel was made. If they would keep his commandments then he would set them apart as a people for himself, and he would be a God to them. If they entered into this covenant and failed to keep it, then they would bring upon themselves the judgment of God (Lev 26:14-46).


**Q.** Remembering Ex 25:16 from earlier, where were the ten commandments to be placed?

God promised to meet with Israel from the mercy seat. The mercy seat sat upon the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the tables of the covenant – the ten commandments. God was clearly illustrating that the coming of his presence in the midst of Israel was predicated upon their keeping of the ten commandments.

### **The Ark – Not Just a Gold Box**

Because God chose the ark for the covenant to be the symbol of his special relationship with Israel, he was very particular about the way in which it was handled. He demanded that it be handled with reverence (Num 4:15), and that it be covered by *the veil* whenever it was moved (Num 4:5).

Throughout the history of Israel we see the ark connected to multiple miracles.

 Alternate reading Josh 3:9-17. **Q.** What miracle is found here?


v10. **Q.** What was Israel to *know* from this miracle?


In Joshua 6:6-20 we see the ark involved in the fall of Jericho. In 1 Sam 5:1-4 the ark is involved in a judgment on the Philistines and their false god. On one occasion, God killed over 50,000 men for looking inside the ark (1Sam 6:19)


### **The Ark – Just a Gold Box**

The children of Israel came to realize that the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God were always associated with each other. But as time progressed they began to value the ark more than what the ark represented.

In 1 Samuel we read the sad account of a great defeat that Israel experienced while warring with the Philistines. Look up the verses below as we try to understand why God did not give Israel the victory.


 1 Sam 2:11,12. **Q.** What do we know about the sons of Eli?


In verses 12-17 we read about the terrible ways in which Eli's sons executed their priestly duties.  1 Sam 2:17. **Q.** What negative effect did the ministries of Eli's wicked sons have on Israel?


 1 Sam 2:29. **Q.** What did the prophet accuse Eli of in this verse?


The priesthood of God had become corrupted in Israel. Eli's sons *did not know the Lord* yet they ministered in the tabernacle. They committed fornication with prostitutes and profaned the offerings of God. Eli failed to control his sons and became unfaithful in his duties as well. Now, with this background information in mind, let's look at Israel's defeat in the hands of the Philistines.

 1 Sam 4:1. **Q.** How many Israelites were slain by the Philistines?

 1 Sam 4:3. **Q.** What did the Israelites believe would give them the victory?


 1 Sam 4:4. **Q.** Who was with the ark of the covenant?

 1 Sam 4:5. **Q.** What did Israel do when the ark was brought to the camp?

 1 Sam 4:7-8. **Q.** What did the Philistines believe happened?

 1 Sam 4:10. **Q.** How many Israelites died?

 1 Sam 4:11. **Q.** What happened to the ark and to Eli's sons?

 Knowing that the Ark of the Covenant was connected with many miracles in the past, why do you think it failed to deliver Israel from this battle?

Israel had become corrupt before God. They were transgressing his covenant and defiling his sacrifices. They failed to uphold their responsibilities as required by the covenant of God. As a result, God's presence *was not* among them and they fell at the hands of the Philistines. Even the Philistines associated the Ark of the Covenant with the mighty victories that God had given to Moses and to Joshua. The Israelites began to see the Ark as the source of God's power and not simply the representation of his power, predicated on their obedience to his covenant. Without their obedience to him, the ark was