

The ark of the covenant (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Simmonds, Peter (1936-1994)

[0 : 00] As the Lord should be pleased to help me. The book of Joshua, chapter 3, verses 3 and 4.

And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it.

Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go, for ye have not passed this way heretofore.

Lord, we tried a little this morning to bring before you the necessity of seeking the direction of the Lord God in all our affairs, that he would lead us and guide us and direct us in the right way.

And we tried a little the significance and the importance of this ark. And it is that which we would bear before you this evening, dear friends, the ark of the covenant, and how vitally necessary that is in the journey home to glory.

[2 : 08] We spoke a little this morning concerning that ark and that which was placed into the ark. the tables of the law, God's holy law, the pot of manna, and the Aaron's rod which budded.

And we spoke too of the five books of Moses that were placed within the ark. But now, this night, friends, we would come a little closer concerning it.

And that is, the overlaying, the top of the ark was of pure gold. And that pure gold sets forth, dear friends, as God intended it to, the mercy seat, Christ.

That mercy seat covered the ark. And how vitally necessary that is, dear friends, in the journey home for his dear people.

That is, a sacred and sweet knowledge of Christ in all his offices. As the law fulfiller, the mercy seat was spread over that holy law of God.

[3 : 58] And is that not so in Christ? Fulfilled the every jot and tittle of that law.

Fulfilled it in this, that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. You see, the blessedness of this ark, as it went before the children of Israel, it set forth Christ, going before his people.

Now how is it with us, dear friends, as we journey home? Is this what we long for? Are we in earnest concerning it?

Have we in some measure been dealt with by the Spirit of God to realize that we have broken every jot and tittle of God's holy law?

Dear friends, are you a sinner in God's sight and in your own? This is the solemn truth before us tonight, dear friends.

[5 : 17] Is it your desire and mine to have sin pardoned and put away? to have your interest in Christ made manifest?

For dear friends, if we're out of Christ, we're out of the secret and the pit will be our portion. That's the solemn matter. You see, it was the children of Israel that followed this ark.

There was a distance in between. They had to look toward it. They had to see the movement of it, the direction of it. And dear friends, that's what we need as sinners.

The movement and the direction of God's mercy toward us. no mercy, no heaven, no forgiveness, no heaven, no cleansing, no heaven.

is this your desire and mine? You see, friends, we can have a profession of 30, 40 and 50 years, but an outward possession, but no inward possession.

[6 : 45] Is this your desire and mine, dear friends, tonight? that the precious blood of Christ, bringing mercy and salvation, may be spread over your wicked heart and mine, that it may be his righteousness and his alone, which will cover your guilty soul.

Christ went before his people to Calvary, dear friends. Oh, may this be our earnest desire in his sight.

It's all very well, dear friends, to speak from a text and to open up the word of God for our ears, but oh, does it reach our hearts?

Is the life and power there? You see, we can be a good speaker, dear friends, but oh, where's the life and the power? Oh, where's the power? Oh, that we're returning to this, dear friends, in Zion today.

that there may be those that are sinners in the house of God. Sinners.

[8 : 12] This is where the work of grace begins, dear friends, with sin. That's where God begins, in conviction, for these blessed souls that have an interest in the finished work of the dear Redeemer.

Know what it is, dear friends, to plead at the mercy seat. I will meet with thee from above the mercy seat. Christ.

And that's Christ. That's where mercy is deposited in Christ.

What he has done in appeasing the anger of an holy God towards sin. Have you felt it? Do you know anything about it, dear friends, sin within you?

If you do, and you've been led this way a little, your eyes will be toward that ark, toward Christ.

[9 : 31] There will be a looking up. As we spoke of Jehoshaphat this morning, in a spiritual sense, dear friends, you'll know what it is to say, I've no might, no strength against this great enemy.

And what is that, self? Neither know I what to do, but my eyes are up under thee. Blessed ark.

And you'll know this distance. The distance between the people and the ark. We spoke of it this morning as being about two-thirds of a mile.

you'll know that distance. And I believe all the saints of God have known this distance. Oh, that I knew where I might find him.

That's the desire. You know a little of this, dear friend? This soul is an exercise soul. You're not one of those, are you, that you can always find God and always open the word of God and find something to suit your taste?

[10 : 41] Are you one of those? Contrary to the word of God, dear friend, and it's contrary to the truth in this text, they had to keep their eyes fixed upon the ark to see which way they were going.

They didn't know. faith, faith, faith, faith, this is the walk of faith, dear friend, faith upon the Son of God. Now these souls that know this exercise concerning self, concerning sin, and concerning Satan, will be brought into the deep waters, and there'll be deep waters of impossibility.

and we will come to that concerning the waters that were held back in Jordan.

In closing this morning, we felt the need and the desire to leave with you that blessed example. And that example was this, that as the children of Israel were to pass over Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests touched the borders of the water, the waters parted.

And dear friends, if you know this exercise of heart on account of sin, Satan, and self, you'll desire this, when the enemy comes in like a flood, you'll know this by experience.

[12 : 41] You'll know what sin is in the flood of it. You'll know what temptation is in the flood of it. And you'll know that self too wallows in it.

and it'll be your earnest desire to flee unto Christ to hide you, that he may be your hiding place. Now dear friends, what has he said in his word?

Sin shall not have dominion over you. Grace will reign. God's and it's that blessed ark in the midst of the waters dear friends.

The water on either side. Just as it was at the Red Sea, the children of Israel went across on dry land. And this blessed ark was there dear friends, the divine presence in the middle of Jordan.

what for? It kept the flood back. And that's what it does for poor sinners. You that are tempest tossed, devil tossed, self tossed.

[14 : 01] Dear friends, it's the blessed ark of God Christ that saves you from being overwhelmed and overcome by your evil wicked heart.

what do you have to cry out and say dear friends in these places of impossibility? Can ever God dwell here? Can ever God dwell here?

Is that the language of your soul? Yes, dear friend, he can. God can dwell there and he dwells in his son Jesus Christ.

God dwelt in that ark in his holy law. God dwelt there in that pot of manna, every provision to keep the people alive.

And he dwelt there in the Aaron's rod which budded. All the other rods were useless. They were withered, they were barren.

[15 : 09] Yet that body, the life of God in the soul, it'll not die. You may feel that it will. Can ever God dwell here?

Yes, he can. And he dwells, it is the life of the Spirit, that new life. I give unto them eternal life.

That is the indwelling. thing. And it is that, dear friends, which is that standard which is lifted up against the enemy that will come in like a flood.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. You say, oh, you know but little of my heart. well, dear friends, if you can speak like that, you're being taught, aren't you, by the Holy Ghost.

how do you know about your heart? How do I know about mine? It's by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the revealing of it.

[16 : 27] Friends, you may feel that God is about to destroy you. The children of Israel thought that at Pihar Heroth, that God was about to destroy them.

They got the Egyptians behind them, they got the mountains either side and the Red Sea in front of them. Going to destroy them?

No, friends. Almighty God has made a way. And Almighty God has made a way for poor sentar sinners.

whereby they may go across on dry land. No harm can come to them. And that is through his blessed son, the Lord Jesus.

Is he sweet and precious to you, poor son? Do you long to hear his voice? Do you long for him to say unto you, son, daughter, beloved?

[17 : 36] long for it again? You'll want to hear his voice. You'll come with a hymn writer where he says, tell me with thine own lips that thou hast chosen me.

you'll be brought to such a place, dear friend, there'll only be one that can help you, one that can do you any good.

A year, a few months ago now, we were brought into that place. there was only one that could do us any good, there was only one that could answer all the Lord's demands concerning myself, only one that could take away all the sin, only one that could suffer in my place instead, and that was Christ.

And I believe you'll be brought there in these spots and places, in these deep waters, in these places of impossibility.

The hymn writer says this, thou, O Christ, art all I want. Blessed spot.

[19 : 18] Now in this midst of Jordan, dear friends, and the time seems to be going rather quickly, I must bring before you concerning special and particular pathways that you may be led in.

Our text says, for ye have not passed this way here to for. Well, we spoke this morning and maybe that we shall have to leave that for today, but when you set out, called by divine grace, when you set out, in the path laid out for you, it's a path which is by faith, but there will be those particular and special pathways, dear friends, that you'll have to walk.

as you set out, and you'll have to walk them alone. And when you walk those paths, dear friends, you'll come to the spot where you need his help.

You'll need his direction, as we spoke this morning, but you'll need his help. You'll want him to be with you. And you'll come to the very waters of Jordan, in your feelings.

You'll come to the place of impossibility, as the children did at the Red Sea, and as they did at Jordan. An impossibility.

[21 : 19] Lord, I can't go. I can proceed no further. Lord, look at the river Jordan, it overflowing its banks.

And I've got to go across there. Lord, I can't do it. Well, poor self, it's left to you, you never will.

But what held back the waters? The ark of God. consider Aaron's rod for a moment.

What was that manifest? How was it manifest? It was the power of God. Aaron put it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and swallowed up the serpents, of the astrologers of Egypt.

Moses struck the rock with it, and out came the water. The mighty power of God demonstrated in that rod.

[22 : 50] And, dear friends, it's demonstrated in Christ. my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Look at the words, dear friend, look at the words, shall supply all your need. This is the word of God.

God is with the Lord. And this is the blessed provision for all his dear people.

Whenever they are in need, whenever they are brought into need by the leadings of the Holy Spirit, this ark, Christ, is with them in it.

in all their afflictions, he is afflicted. He goes before his people and is with them in the midst of their trial and tribulation.

[24 : 01] Now, is the one here tonight in that state and condition? you've got something before you, perhaps? You're in exercise concerning something?

You may be in this thing and you wonder whether you can ever endure, wherever you can go or continue, whether you can ever go, wherever you can continue.

this is where you are. How do you think that the children of Israel felt when they came to Jordan? It's an impossibility.

We can't get across there. Oh, yes, you can. It was God's appointed wife. And you'll see this, dear friends, as your path, which God has appointed, and he'll appear for you in it.

And you'll be brought to see the blessed reason why you can go that way. Because the ark went down into the waters and the waters parted and the waters were held back.

[25 : 23] and you'll find this, that all those things which you felt were a hindrance will come to nothing and they will be held back and you'll go over on dry land.

Friends, this is the blessed lot of the people of God. land. They go over on dry land. We must not conjecture that as you go by, if you see a wall of water perhaps, and you go along and along a dry path, do we not feel that the children of Israel would have looked at that water?

There may have been a fearing and trembling lest the waters were permitted to come over them as they journeyed. And you may be tried and perplexed concerning it.

But you'll prove this, dear friend, that God is a sovereign and what he does, he does perfectly. You'll come to no harm in it. And it'll redound to his honour and glory.

And when you're brought through in it, when you're upheld in this pathway, there'll be some stones to set up. You'll raise your Ebenezer.

[27 : 08] Now some of you that have passed this way, you've got some Ebenezers, haven't you? That you've had to set up. Why? You've raised them to the prize of his name.

And that's what Joshua did. Those stones were raised to the prize of his name. And these are Ebenezers. the hand of God demonstrated, made manifest, and sweetly applied in your case and experience.

And we would speak to, friends, concerning this river Jordan as the hour and article of death.

How often this solemn matter and solemn occasion is the matter of concern, concern, solemn concern and fear concerning your latter end.

And it's not only those in age that are brought there, you know. It is a solemn consideration with those that are younger.

[28 : 48] when they're brought into these spots and places to see the truth of this, that they are not fit to live nor fit to die.

Now I want to bring this before you those in age that may be tried and exercised in this matter. Look back.

you look back to the time he brought you out of Egypt, called you by his grace, where you believe the work of grace was begun in your soul.

You trace his dealings with you right down to the present time. Can you say this?

surely goodness and mercy hath followed me all the days of my life. who has held you up?

[30 : 09] Who has directed you and guided you? Remember those precious times when the Lord Jesus has been made sweet to your taste, God's love to Christ, where you've known a little melting down at the presence of the Lord in your soul, where you've been favoured to feed a little upon the word of God, a hope raised up in your heart that it will be well, a little hope raised up in the mercy of God concerning your standing, a little hope in the salvation of God that you'll see him one day as he is.

Cast your mind back. It's in accordance with scripture, dear friend, remembering all the way the Lord thy God has met thee these 40 years in the wilderness and now they were coming to the end of the journey and you may feel that you are too and you may question whether the work of grace has ever been begun in your soul.

You say, do you ever get into a place like that? Yes, I do, dear friend. And Satan is not slow to suggest it.

You see, if he can get at the very beginning of things, he knows this, he knows the word of God, you know. If he can persuade you that the beginning was wrong, he knows then he'll persuade you that the end will be wrong.

Dear child of God, you that are, you may be plagued and afflicted by the Satan concerning this, where does it drive you?

[32 : 19] You have to look back, don't you, all the way the Lord thy God has led thee, and you have to say, well Lord, if that was wrong, if that wasn't of thee, I got nothing, but blessed be his holy name, he gave it to you, and it stands to die, and you have to say this, Lord, if that sinks, I sink with it.

well now, he's brought you on thus far, will he leave you as you cross this Jordan?

Will he say to you, now I've brought you to the borders of the land, now you get over the best way you can, it's only a short distance, dear friends, he's not like that, he doesn't speak as man, these people were his peculiar, special choice, and he would see them safe home, and he'll see you safe home, and I believe this, that you'll know a little of the presence of Christ.

As you cross the Jordan, it'll be as it were upon dry ground, you'll feel the bottom, you'll feel the blessedness of that foundation, which is Christ, the foundation of your home, and you'll be taken over.

friends, he'll never leave you, nor forsake you. You see, he said to Joshua, in that first chapter, and what he said to Joshua, he said to the people of Israel, and what he said to the people of Israel, he says to each and every believer, that you'll reach heaven.

[34 : 33] therefore shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee.

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. You'll find him at Jordan. Yes, you will, and he'll take you safely home.

He'll complete the work. You see, the work is not complete, dear friends, until he receives you home. You'll get safely across Jordan.

I believe that is sweet to me, as far as Stephen is concerned. We read that the Lord Jesus, when he ascended up into heaven, sat down upon the right hand of God the Father.

Now, when Stephen was very close to his end, and under the persecution of the Jews, he looked up into heaven, and he saw the Lord Jesus standing, waiting to receive him.

[36 : 14] Have you thought about that? the Lord Jesus, getting up from his throne in glory to receive his beloved people.

You're not leaving for so. He waits for you, and he'll greet you with a kiss. but the time is gone.

And they commanded the people, saying, when you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priest, the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place, and go after it.

Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go, for ye have not passed this way heretofore.

We feel to have feebly spoken, dear friends, but may the Lord take the word, and apply it with divine power, and he shall have all the prize.

[37 : 37] Amen. May we be helped to conclude our service this evening by singing hymn number 462.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but thou art mighty.

Hold me with thy powerful hand. Bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore. Hymn number 462.

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