

# 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.

This may seem to you to be a long text, but friends, it is not my desire, nor I believe my instruction, to deal with every word of it.

But may we, by the Spirit this day, be enabled to meditate upon it as it shows forth the believer's walk.

[ 1 : 47 ] Moses, the servant of the Lord, had been taken home to glory.

Under God, he had led the people of Israel out of Egypt. And during that long journey, those many years, the mercy of God to his people was made manifest.

And they had in their journeyings come close to the promised land of Canaan. And God's promise to Moses was that he would see the land.

He wouldn't enter in, but he would see it. And God fulfilled that promise to him. And he raised up this blessed man Joshua in his stead.

The Ark of the Covenant, dear friends, was the same under Moses as it was with Joshua. The same God, this same Ark.

[ 3 : 21 ] But there was to be a change in the journey, in the journeyings and the manner of it.

I would just remind you that under Moses, the Ark of the Covenant was within the midst of the gathering. Six tribes that went before it, then the Levites and the Ark, and then six tribes behind it.

But now, the Ark of the Covenant was to go before the people. And I believe, dear friends, this points to the work of grace in the soul.

And it points to the manifestation of that work of grace, not only by calling out of nature's darkness into his glorious light, but it also points to new paths by which the people of God have to tread, some of them.

Some of them in particular, but generally too, the people of God have to tread an individual path.

[ 4 : 58 ] everyone born again of the Spirit is one chosen before time began.

And that electing love and electing choice is within the heart of every poor soul, whether they may be in the midst of the world or in a profession of religion.

So that they're in the midst, midst of the people. the blessed work of grace will be made manifest in due time, but yet they're in the midst.

They go along with the people, not yet made manifest. But there's a time when we shall walk in a pathway, for you have not passed this way heretofore.

And that'll be a new pathway. Why? But with those few comments, dear friends, I will come to this.

[ 6 : 23 ] this Ark of the Covenant. It was an essential and vital part of the journeyings of the people of Israel through the wilderness.

It was an essential and vital part for the children of Israel as they neared the Promised Land. and as they walked towards Canaan.

Now what was in this Ark? This Ark was that which was appointed of God and he gave instruction to Moses concerning it.

But this Ark Enclosed Enclosed Vital Truth The Ark, dear friends, carried by the Levites Enclosed God's Holy Law That which was given to Moses upon Mount Sinai.

that was put into the Ark. And then there was the pot of manna that was put into the Ark.

[ 8 : 01 ] And then there was Aaron's rod that was put into the Ark. And then as the these people journeyed after Moses' death the five books of Moses were put into the Ark.

Friends, this is a blessed type of the Lord Jesus. A blessed type. Ark. And this Ark was an essential and vital part of the walk and the journeyings of the people of Israel under Moses and under Joshua as they journeyed on.

And dear friends, I can tell you today that if you're one that fears God and that you journey on without divine permission without direction you'll have to come back and start again.

The instruction here given by the officers by the command of God 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.

And what was the pattern under Moses? It was that cloudy pillar. When that was lifted they journeyed and the Ark went with them.

[ 10 : 14 ] but when it descended and stood over the tabernacle then they journeyed not. Now this dear friends is the direction of God to his living people.

The Israelites of old and the Israelites to die. that is spiritual Israelites and that is their direction to die.

If you're one that fears God you'll desire this. We live in such a day of expediency and I have to mention this at home as well of expediency.

That is we need decisions made very quickly or appear to today. Some of you that have to do with business will know what I mean.

The answer must be today mustn't it? But dear friends if you're one that fears God and one that values by the Spirit your immortal soul there'll be no quick answers to anything.

[ 11 : 52 ] You'll want to see God going before you. You'll want to see his instruction, his leading and his guiding. desire and need the direction of God in some particular way.

I feel there must be. I felt a sweet harmony in those hymns that we have sung and indeed the last hymn which we trust we shall sing which I brought with me.

I believe there's a sweet harmony but it points to this. There's one here that needs divine direction. There may be more than one. Now this is the why dear friends.

I know nothing about you. I know nothing about any one of you concerning your needs, your desires, your circumstances. But this is the why.

When you 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.

[ 13 : 44 ] But now we must continue with that. But there was to be a space left between the people and the ark.

A space of 2,000 cubits by measure, that's something like two-thirds of a mile. There was to be a space. Dear friends, the eyes of the people were upon that ark to see how it was proceeding and where it was going.

Before, you see, they had gone along, gone along, and they had been led by the cloudy pillar and by the pillar of fire.

And the ark was in the midst, but now it was the ark in front. ark. And their eyes were upon it.

God goes before his people, and the ark went before the Israelites here, went before them. Is that your desire, dear friends?

[ 15 : 14 ] One here this morning to see the hand of God and the direction of God in the way that they should go? We've come to other matters, and I'll stay with this just for a moment.

We'll come to other matters later. You've been brought to a place, you've been brought to a spot, and you need divine direction.

And you know not what to do. And you may have a good number of people ready to advise you, and they may do it quite fairly, quite lovingly, but friends, they don't know anything about it.

There's only one that knows anything about it, and that's your God. God. God was leading these Levites toward the promised land, and you that fear God are on this journey toward the promised land, dear friends.

And the path that you walk is yours individually. It's your path, not on others, your path, and it's a path which God has provided and mapped out for you.

[ 16 : 47 ] This is the way. Walk ye in it, says the word. May you hear that voice behind you when you turn to the left hand and to the right saying, this is the way, walk ye in it.

But you see, you want this, don't you? You want the same thing which the disciples were blessed with as they were sent out into the ministry.

Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee. Isn't that your desire? you see, God will make you tender.

Friends, if he's directing you, he'll make you tender. You'll desire this, to know and do his will. And you'll feel confused if others try and help you.

you won't know what to do. Dear friends, go home.

[ 18 : 10 ] Go home. Shut the door about you and go down on your knees and seek him who will direct you in all your ways.

That's the way to go. You see, there's a distance. isn't there? Between you and your God.

This is the distance. Yet your eyes are up unto him. I often speak of Jehoshaphat and he's such a sweet character to me.

He got so many enemies coming against him, he was a small band. Yet what did he say? We have no might, no power against this great enemy, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee.

Is that how you are today, friend? You're looking up. You're looking toward this ark. Christ. What are you looking for then, dear friends?

[ 19 : 22 ] You say, I'm looking for my only hope, Christ. He's my all and in all. my teacher, my strength, my support.

That's where I'm looking. My director divine. That distance.

Well, now, dear friends, keep your eyes on Jesus fixed. He won't turn you away. He'll show you the way in which you should walk, and he'll direct you in it.

You say, I've waited, and I've waited, and I've waited. Then wait on. Those that wait for him, dear friends, shall never be ashamed.

Consider that dear woman that came with an afflicted daughter. She needed the Lord's help. She asked for the Lord's help.

[ 20 : 46 ] He answered her not a word. But she had to come to this, didn't she?

Lord, help me. And that's where you all have to come. You see how often it is, friends, when we come to the Lord to ask him for direction, we find that their own ideas are working as well.

But he won't have that. He'll strip us of that. These Israelites may well have had their own idea as to the quickest way and best way to go, but that wasn't the right way.

And neither will it be for you, dear friends. We cannot have our own way in this path that the Lord has laid out for us. We must go his way. And it may not be the obvious way.

We so often feel that we know the obvious way. We know the obvious thing to do. But it's not so, dear friends. It's God's way.

[ 22 : 07 ] It's his way. It's his leading, his teaching. Wait upon him. He'll answer you. And until he does, wait on.

I'll mention this to you, for it is, it has been a pathway of mine for the encouragement of perhaps one here to die.

the Lord does speak and he uses instruments in so speaking. When I was here twelve months ago, I was much exercised and cast down concerning the invitation which had been extended concerning the pastorate at Skain's Hill.

And as we know, the normal time for making engagements for the following year comes round at the end of June.

and here we were at the end of May. Time was getting close. And there was no direction.

[ 23 : 44 ] I'd had no direction from the Lord concerning the matter. But I believe this, our eyes were up unto him, this blessed ark.

There was that distance felt, and now, friends, you can't take these steps, you know, and say, well, we'll go and see how it works out.

We can't do that, and neither will you be able to, in your exercises. If you're one that fears God, it'll be his direction, and we believe our eyes were up unto him for it.

But shortly after the services of that Sunday here, I had a telephone call, and a dear lady said this, I've been thinking much about you, and particularly concerning your affairs at Skines Hill.

And she said, I feel I must refer you to Deuteronomy. me. She said, that word has been with me.

[ 25 : 32 ] She said, and I'll not repeat it on the telephone, you go away and read it. Well, I went away and read it.

and the word was this, in Deuteronomy chapter 31 and verse 8, and the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee, fear not, neither be dismayed.

that was the eighth verse. Well, we would desire that blessing, dear friends, wouldn't we, whether we were a supply minister or a pastor.

But you see, God used the word and he directed us to the seventh verse as well. And the seventh verse is this, and Moses called unto Joshua and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, be strong and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them, and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee. You see the blessing, you see the direction, you see the word of God.

[ 27 : 09 ] Friends, when you get a word like that, you know it's done. It's done. And there's a hastening to do the will of God.

There's a running then in his commands, and this was his command, for thou shalt go with this people. And we had to sit down, and we wrote the letter.

You say, did it lift you up with pride then? Not a bit of it, dear friends. It'll humble you in the dust. Yes, it will.

Well, wise answer to your petitions. You, a poor, worthless worm of the earth, a sinner thrown through, you, unfitted, unwilling, you have been to do what you believe the Lord has led you into, unfitted and unwilling, and now he gives you this command and direction.

There's no room for self here, dear friends. There's no room for self. There's a falling down before him in humility and godly fear, seeking that he would make that promise true, that he would perform it, that it would be made over to you time and time again, that it would be your support.

[ 29 : 00 ] Dear friends, if you have a word like that, whatever it may be, you're going to need it. You're going to have to plead it. to have a dear man at Skain's Hill many years ago, perhaps not so many years ago, but he'd been coming for many years, oh Mr.

Buck, some of you will know him, but he used to ask this question sometimes, have you done any trading with heaven?

friends, this is trading with heaven, and those promises that he gives you are your currency, you'll have to take them back again, again and again, so that you might obtain, that you might purchase, as it were, once again, his mercy and his favour, because you plead for his name's sake, what he has done, what he has given you, you have to plead it.

Now dear friends, this is what, this is the underlying desire of the heart, isn't it, when you come into these spots and places, that God will put you in that place, that God would direct you into that place, because when you come into trial, when you come into trouble, you're going to need him.

We've no strength, no might against this great enemy, and that's how it is. We've been promised that from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, in the world, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, I have, the Lord Jesus himself.

[ 31 : 13 ] So now when you come into these paths of difficulty, dear friends, what can you plead? Why, you plead the promise. You plead his word, you plead his direction, what he has given you, how he's leading you.

You remember those disciples that the Lord Jesus ordered to get into a ship and go across the lake. He remained behind in prayer, yet they were ordered, directed to go across the lake.

Was it all smooth? Wasn't very long before a storm blew up, and their lives were in jeopardy, but they were doing the will of God.

And this is how it is with us, dear friends, as we journey along. There will be those storms, those waves that will come into the ship, and we fear that we should be overwhelmed.

What is this walk? What is this path? It's the walk of faith, the trial of faith, so that you may plead what God has given you.

[ 32 : 50 ] That you may prove him. this is proving the word of God. This is proving God himself. To prove this in the darkest places, in the deepest places that you may be brought into, it's this.

Underneath are the everlasting arms. that's it. And his arms, dear friends, are underneath every vessel of mercy.

Every true is relied. His arms are underneath them. And friends, we are brought into those spots and places where we have to prove it.

The arms of love and mercy. the arms, the promises from his true. Dear friends, there's Christ in every promise that he's given you.

Every promise in God's word, dear friends, there's Christ in it. The foundation stone, the foundation of your hope.

[ 34 : 08 ] Christ is in every promise. And if he's given you that promise, dear friend, your eyes will be upon him, upon that promise, upon his word, upon his faithfulness, upon his mercy, upon his salvation, he'll be everything to you.

Yes, it will. You see, the holy law of God was in that ark. The holy law of God is in the heart of the Lord Jesus. Jesus.

He's kept it. He's fulfilled it. And he's that law fulfiller for his dear people that are brought in this way, led in this path.

we hope to come a little to that this evening as we're enabled. But you see, dear friends, this is what you'll need in this pathway.

If you go ahead of the Lord's leading and guiding, and then when you come into trouble, what have you got to plead? What have you got to plead?

[ 35 : 30 ] You've only got your own works to plead. What you have done, the path that you have gone in, you've only that to plead. Will your works and my works stand before an holy God?

Friends, these are holy things, seek his direction, and when he leads you, dear friends, when he leads you, then you'll be made willing to go, and you can plead that direction in the path of trial and tribulation.

You shall remove from your place, and go after it. This is an obedient walking. When the Lord Jesus, dear friends, is laid in the heart, Christ in you, the hope of glory, friends, there's made a willingness to follow him where he leads.

peace, and that is being made willing in the day of his power. Jonah knew that.

What an example Jonah is of disobedience and rebellion against God. God is, when brought to himself by the teachings of the Spirit.

[ 37 : 16 ] God said, what did he say then? I will look again, look again unto thine holy temple.

Salvation is of the Lord. God made. You see the willingness. You see the obedience, dear friends.

Made willing in the day of God's power. You may have been rebellious concerning it in days gone by, but now made willing.

And they commanded the people saying, when you 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.

[ 38 : 30 ] Just before we leave it for this morning, when the Lord calls out of nature's darkness into his glorious light, there's a new walking, there's a new way.

It is not by sight, it is a walking by faith. We're slow learners, dear friends, we're slow learners, and we have to learn this walk by faith, as we journey along, as the Lord leads us and guides us.

It is a way that we've not passed heretofore, it's a new path. You see, that's why human intellect is of doubtful value in this path.

God may sanctify it and use it, but it's the wisdom which is from above, and that's where the eyes are to be placed, above, for that wisdom which is above.

And as we would leave it for this morning, just this, I leave it with you, you may be favoured to meditate upon it in the afternoon, this ark went before the people directing them in the way that they should go.

[ 40 : 10 ] When they came into trial and into difficulty, the ark was right amongst them.

when they went over Jordan, the ark didn't go on before them, and they were left across Jordan the best way they could.

The ark remained in the midst of Jordan until they were all safe home. that's Christ.

That's Christ. He'll never fail you nor forsake you. Dear friends, in all your burdens, all your trials and difficulties, he's with you in it.

Amen. Let's conclude with hymn 1119.

[ 41 : 33 ] Jesus, thou almighty saviour, prostrate at thy feet I lie, humbly I entreat thy favour, condescend to hear my cry.

Hymn 1119. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Oh Oh Oh

[ 44 : 07 ] Oh