

The Rise of The King

Where His Glory Dwells part 1

1. The Ark of the Covenant- What does it mean?

- **The Mercy Seat (Atonement Cover)** – This was the solid gold lid of the Ark where blood was sprinkled for atonement. It symbolized **God's throne of mercy**. God told Moses that He would meet with him above the mercy seat, between the cherubim (Exodus 25:22), making it the focal point of God's presence and forgiveness. In essence, the mercy seat was viewed as the **footstool of God's heavenly throne** on earth – the place where God's glory rested in the Tabernacle (cf. 1 Chronicles 28:2, Isaiah 37:16). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for Israel's sins (Leviticus 16:14-15), foreshadowing how a holy God could show mercy to sinful people. Thus, the mercy seat represented both God's **justice** (since it covered the Law inside the Ark) and His **mercy** (since sacrificial blood covered the people's violations of that Law) biblestudytools.com. It was, figuratively, the meeting place of God and humanity – **where God's holiness and mercy met**.
- **The Cherubim** – The two golden cherubim on the lid had their wings spread upward and forward, overshadowing the mercy seat. Cherubim are majestic angelic beings associated with guarding God's holy presence (Genesis 3:24, Ezekiel 1:4-11). In the Ark's design, the cherubim figures symbolized the **attendants of God's throne** and the guardians of His holiness biblestudytools.com. Scripture often describes God as enthroned "**between the cherubim**" above the Ark (e.g. 1 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 6:2, Psalm 99:1), as if the Ark's cherubim formed a seat for Him en.wikipedia.org. Because no image of God was ever to be made, the golden cherubim signified God's heavenly throne room invisibly present. They remind us that God is **holy** – approached only on His terms – and surrounded by worshiping creatures. The posture of the cherubim (facing inward and downward toward the mercy seat) also indicated that even powerful angels gaze in wonder at God's saving mercy. In sum, the cherubim on the Ark pointed to God's **supreme majesty and holiness** dwelling among His people biblestudytools.com.
- **The Stone Tablets of the Law** – Inside the Ark lay the two tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments – the core stipulations of the covenant. These tablets represented God's **Word and covenant terms**. By placing them inside the Ark, under the mercy seat, it showed that God's throne (symbolized by the seat) rested upon the foundation of His righteous Law. The Law inside the Ark also testified against Israel's sin (Deuteronomy 31:26) – hence the need for the atoning blood above it. Symbolically, the stone tablets signified God's **authority and holiness** (since the commandments reflect His character), as well as the **standard** by which Israel was to live. They were the terms of the covenant in stone, indicating the unchanging moral requirements of God. Every time the Ark was mentioned as containing the "testimony," it reminded Israel that at the heart of their community was the revealed will of God. **Obedience** to that Law would bring blessing,

while disobedience would remove them from God's presence – a lesson literally shown when the mercy seat's atonement was required to cover their breaches of the Law.

- **Aaron's Rod that Budded** – This was the staff of Moses' brother Aaron (Israel's first high priest) which miraculously sprouted buds, blossoms, and almonds overnight as a divine sign (Numbers 17:8-10). God had Aaron's rod placed before the Ark "as a sign against the rebels" to stop the complaints against God's chosen leadership (Numbers 17:10). Later Jewish tradition (and Hebrews 9:4) suggests the rod was kept inside the Ark. Aaron's rod symbolized God's **power to bring life from the dead** (a lifeless stick came alive) and His confirmation of the **true priesthood**. It was a **warning against rebellion** – reminding the people of the fate of those who challenged God's appointed authority (as Korah's rebellion did in Numbers 16–17) gotquestions.org. Each time they saw or remembered that rod, Israel would recall that God is not to be opposed and that He chooses through whom He will mediate (in that case, the line of Aaron as priests). In a broader sense, the budding rod pointed to resurrection life and God's power to do the impossible, as well as the principle that **fruitfulness comes from God's power, not human effort**. Together with the manna, it testified that Israel's survival and leadership were by God's grace, not man's strength.
- **Function in Worship and Life:** The Ark of the Covenant functioned as the central symbol of Israel's worship, identity, and even military confidence in God. In worship, the Ark was located in the holiest place and was associated with God's very presence dwelling among His people: "*There I will meet with you,*" God said of the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22). Only the high priest could approach the Ark (and only with sacrificial blood, once a year on the Day of Atonement), which taught Israel God's holiness and the need for atonement. The Ark's presence signified that **God was with His people** – in fact, the Israelites encamped around the Tabernacle in all their journeys, with the Ark at the center (Numbers 2). The Ark was also a unifying symbol of the twelve tribes' identity as one nation under Yahweh. It reminded them, constantly, that they were the **covenant people** of the one true God who led them out of Egypt.
- The Ark's role extended to Israel's **national life and battles** as well. When the Israelites traveled in the wilderness, the Ark led the way. The Levites would carry the Ark out front, and Moses would say, "*Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered*" whenever the Ark set out (Numbers 10:33–36). It was a **portable sign of God's leadership and protection** gotquestions.org. For example, when Israel reached the Jordan River at the brink of the Promised Land, God instructed the priests carrying the Ark to step into the flooded river first – the river miraculously stopped, allowing the people to cross on dry ground (Joshua 3:13-17) en.wikipedia.org. The Ark, in this way, led them into their inheritance. At the battle of **Jericho**, the Ark was carried in solemn processions around the city for seven days. On the seventh day, after the priests blew trumpets, the walls of Jericho collapsed by God's power (Joshua 6:6-20) en.wikipedia.org. Here the Ark served as the visible token that **God Himself was fighting for Israel**. In later episodes, however, Israel learned that the Ark was not a magical box to be wielded for victory apart from faithful obedience. During the time of **Samuel**, when Israel was defeated by the Philistines, they rashly decided to bring the Ark from Shiloh to the battlefield, thinking it would guarantee God's help. But because their hearts were not right, God allowed the Ark to be captured, shocking Israel (1 Samuel 4:3-11) en.wikipedia.org. This showed that the Ark's true power lay in God's presence and favor, not in the object itself as a superstition. Throughout Israel's history, the Ark's presence brought blessing when revered (as

when David danced before it) and judgment when mistreated or approached irreverently (as in the case of Uzzah, or the men of Beth Shemesh who looked into it). In sum, **the Ark was central to Israel's worship and sense of identity**, representing God's law, holiness, mercy, and guiding presence in every aspect of their life as a nation.

2. THE LOSS WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT — IT WAS A JUDGMENT

Who was responsible?

The loss of the Ark was not merely the result of poor battlefield strategy. It was a divine judgment—a line drawn in the sand between superficial religion and holy reverence.

- Hophni and Phinehas, sons of Eli, were priests by title, but corrupt in character. They used their spiritual positions for personal gain. They stole from the offerings meant for God, slept with the women who came to worship, and desecrated the very place they were called to protect (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–25). They embodied religion without fear, leadership without holiness.
- Eli, their father and the high priest, bears responsibility not just for their actions but for his inaction. God said plainly that Eli knew what his sons were doing, yet he honored them over God (1 Samuel 3:13). He corrected them with words, but failed to remove them from office. In the eyes of heaven, this was not compassion—it was compromise.
- Israel, the people, treated the Ark like a magic token. After their defeat, they didn't seek God's face—they sought His favors. They believed that bringing the Ark into battle would guarantee them victory, even though they were living in disobedience. They wanted God's power, but not His presence. His name, but not His lordship (1 Samuel 4:3–5).

This wasn't just human error. It was rebellion.

The Broader Implication for Us Today

The temptation to carry God's name without revering Him is as real now as it was then. We may not have golden arks or stone tablets, but many treat God in the same shallow way:

- We want His blessing but not His correction.
- We quote His promises, yet ignore His commands. Neglect His word, prioritize anything else above Him?
- We place a cross on our wall, wear it around our neck, post about Him online—but our hearts are cold, and our actions speak a different allegiance. Do we have a different version of ourselves when we're at Church vs in the world?

Just like Israel, many today want a God-on-demand—one who shows up to fight our battles, but who doesn't confront our sin. We want the comfort of religion without the cost of obedience. But God is not mocked. When we treat His presence as common, and His name as convenient, we invite judgment. Not always in the form of fire or exile—but often in the quiet departure of His presence, the loss of His voice, and the hardening of our hearts.

We want the blessing without the relationship and ultimately, it costs us our purpose.

God's judgment here wasn't just punishment—it was a wake-up call. He was saying, "I will not be used. If you will not honor My name, you will not carry My presence."

What we often fail to believe is that His way is better, perspective, because we don't understand that He is supremely good.

Personal Application

This is not just Israel's story—it is ours.

- Is there any area of compromise that you've tolerated under the disguise of grace?
- Are there places in your life where you've hoped God would bless your rebellion simply because you go to church, wear the name, or serve in ministry?
- Are you carrying His name but mocking His holiness?

Let this be clear: God is not a mascot for our mission. He is holy. He is just. And He will remove His presence from those who use His name while rejecting His reign.

But this judgment is not the end of the story—it is the soil for revival. Because when the presence departs, it prepares the heart to long for His return. God does not withdraw because He is finished—He withdraws to call us back.

He is calling His youth to a sincere, authentic relationship with Him. He is not a genie, He is the Holy one, the King of the ages. Does my life reflect that I know him? Does yours.