

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

NO. 1621

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1881,
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“And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says 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 anymore.”
Jeremiah 3:16.

THIS text speaks concerning the material ark. I should like to append to that another which speaks of the ark *spiritually* and tells us where its antitype is to be found—

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.” [Or covenant.]
Revelation 11:19.

When inward piety is low, the externals of religion are frequently cried up. Those who know nothing of God are the very people to exclaim concerning themselves and their brethren, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The Pharisees, who were furthest from God, were the most bitter advocates of ritualism and formalism—they would not even have a man healed on the Sabbath, or allow the hungry to rub a few ears of corn out of the husks! It is not always so, but yet too often, “The nearer the church the further from God.” The more grown the less grace; the more phylactery, the less sanctity; the more of ecclesiasticism, the less of true godliness. On the other hand, whenever the Spirit of God is largely poured out, although the ordinances of God are carefully attended to, yet, as external things, they are sure to be put into their proper place, and that proper place is a secondary one. The *spiritual* is put foremost, and the ritualistic is placed hindmost when grace is largely given. It was so with David in the 51st Psalm. When he had made a hearty confession of his sin, and cried to God for mercy, he uttered those memorable words, “You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings.” He puts aside the symbol because he has a clear view of the *substance!* That is exactly the case with the people mentioned in my text—they had been sadly sinful, but God, in His mercy, promised to turn to them, to bless them, and bring them back into their own land again.

He says—“And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when they are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says 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; and neither shall that be done anymore.” The visible golden ark, which was so much their glory, would be quite forgotten because of the gracious visitation of God! That shall be our subject this morning.

First, I shall invite your attention to the symbol revered. Secondly, we shall see that reverence obliterated, and thirdly we shall dwell upon that reverence transferred, for though we no longer revere the ancient ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, we do honor to that forever enduring ark of which we read in our second text—“The temple of God was opened in heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant.”

I. First, then, let us think upon THE SYMBOL REVERENCED. The ark of the covenant was a small coffer not exceeding four and a-half feet in length by about two feet, eight inches in breadth. It was made of an enduring kind of wood and was covered with pure gold both inside and out. Upon the upper part of it was a golden crown into which fitted a solid slab of gold which formed the lid of the ark. That golden lid was called the propitiatory or mercy seat—in the Hebrew, Kapporeth, or a place of covering. Upon the two ends of this mercy seat, and part and parcel of the same solid metal, were two cherubs, with outstretched wings.

The Lord said of them, “And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.” Between those wings, when God was favorable to His people, the bright light, called the Shekinah, was known to shine forth. And when, once in the year, the high priest went into the innermost place, bearing with him a cloud of incense and sprinkling the blood, he saw the glory of that light of God. This ark was the object of great reverence and very fitly so, because it symbolized God’s presence, the presence of Jehovah, the living God, in the midst of His people. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of Him that fills all in all? They knew that God’s excellent glory shone above the mercy seat and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did, when he said, “You and the ark of Your strength.” It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be revered, for God was there. To no other people had God given such a token of His presence. He walked in the midst of no other camp—but of Israel He had said, “My Spirit shall go with you.” It was the first article of the tabernacle concerning which Moses received instructions, for, indeed, it was the first in honor. Read the 25th chapter of Exodus and see how speedily the Lord, who gave the law, provided a chest for its honorable preservation! Although Solomon made most of the furniture of the holy place anew, he retained the same ark which was too much esteemed to be changed.

When it was carried abroad in the marches of the Israelites it always went in front, and it was distinguished from all the other furniture by being covered externally with blue, as if to signify its heavenly character. Lifted high on men’s shoulders, upon golden staves, the blue colored wrapping of the ark was seen in the van of the Lord’s host occupying the place of honor. We do not wonder, therefore, that it was much spoken of and esteemed by the tribes of Israel. That presence of God meant blessing, for God was with His people in love to them. The Lord abides not with His enemies, but with His chosen. So long as He gave the token of His presence, it was a sign that He had not cast them off as hopeless. He still heard their prayers and granted them His favors, for He still remained in residence among them while His mercy seat was in the holy place. When the ark went into the house of Obed-Edom for a time, the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom for the sake of the ark of the Lord. Therefore David was encouraged to bring up the ark into his own city, and he did so with gladness which he expressed by dancing before the Lord with all his might. Well, then, might the people speak of it, think of it, visit it and magnify it because it brought blessings to them!

The ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because it was their leader. When the time came to march through the wilderness, the ark went in the forefront. Often did Moses cry, “Rise up, Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered,” and on they went across the pathless desert rightly led by this ark of the covenant. When they came to the brink of Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the waters, the river was parted and they went through dry shod! It was so trusted in that they bore the ark, on one occasion, into the battlefield when God was *not* with them and the golden coffer was carried into captivity to vindicate its own honor among the Philistines by smiting its captors with sore diseases, and breaking in pieces Dagon, their God! A wonderful ark it was when God was with it! It was such a symbol of power that we wonder not that when David brought it up to Mount Zion all the people shouted—and with sound of trumpet celebrated its triumphal march. It was also so much a symbol of holiness that Solomon removed Pharaoh’s daughter out of the city of David, for he said, “My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord has come.”

In Solomon’s day the ark was finally installed in the temple and the king placed over it two greater cherubim, ten cubits high, with outspread wings. These were made of olive wood overlaid with gold and probably covered the entire structure of the coffer and the smaller cherubim which were component parts of it. Then they drew out the staves of the ark, signifying that there the ark was to stay—but they left the ends of the staves visible to show that God might yet depart from them if they sinned against Him. In the temple the ark rested until the time of the captivity and from that time it was no more heard of and possibly never appeared again in the temple that was built by Zerubbabel or in that which was enlarged and beautified by Herod. The ark was to the Israelites, after their wanderings were over, the fixed center of their nationality, even as while they were in the wilderness it had always been placed in the center of the camp. In the desert it had been the central kernel of the whole army. Outside the ark

was the tabernacle or holy place, and outside of that, in various rows and orders, were the tents of the tribes—but the core of it all was this honored ark.

Today we have a center to which we rally—a fixed center which faith perceives in heaven where the true ark of the covenant has gone up. Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark, when, in so many ways it was a token of good to them. What they did to this ark is mentioned in the text. First, they recognized it as the ark of the covenant of the Lord. They were known to say, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” They spoke much of it and prided themselves upon the possession of it. No, they not only *spoke* of it, but they *loved* it, for we read, “Neither shall it come to mind,” or as the margin has it, “Neither shall it come upon the heart.” The ark of the covenant was upon the hearts of God’s people—they had a deep affection for it. When it was carried away, captive, we read of a godly woman who was seized with sudden travail at the news, while the aged Eli fell backward with horror at the tidings. It was very dear to the people of God, and if it was taken away, they reckoned that the glory was departed from them.

Hence, in the next place, they remembered it, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated. Wherever they wandered, they thought of God and of the coffer which represented His presence. Next, they visited it. On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the utmost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing from stage to stage and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim! When they came back they rejoiced because they had worshipped before the ark of the covenant, even before the presence of the Most High God. Visiting it, they were accustomed, also, to speak highly of it, for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, “Neither shall they magnify it anymore.” They used to tell one another what the ark had done—the glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement—and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. They would tell how the ark divided the Jordan, how it laid the walls of Jericho level with the ground, how it slew the prying men of Bethshemesh. And they would tell of Uzzah who laid presumptuous hands upon it, and how the glory of the Lord came upon it and filled the temple so that the priests could not stand to minister. Of their God and the ark of His strength they would not cease to sing, for the ark of the covenant was honored in Israel.

II. Secondly, I would have you observe THAT REVERENCE DISAPPEARED. They were to say, no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a *threat*, but as a gracious *promise*. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark, for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfill the prophet’s words, for if the ark were gone, they would still remember it and their hearts would hunger after it. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their minds and they would speak of it. It was, somehow, to be a gift to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise.

The fact is, they were to have done with the symbol because the substance would come. They were no more to speak of the ark itself, because they would have that which the ark was intended to foreshadow. Bear with me with great patience this morning while I try to interest you in the points in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the ark of the covenant now in the temple of God for us. Our Lord Jesus, by His coming, has put out of His people’s thoughts the material ark of the covenant because its meaning is fulfilled in Him! And this, first, in the sense of preservation! The ark was intended to be a sacred treasury in which God laid up the two tablets of stone upon which the law was written, that they might be kept there as priceless things, not to be commonly handled or even seen, but shut up there as the most precious gifts of heaven. We know not where the tablets are, now, and we know not what has become of the golden chest. But where is the law now? Once it lay broken at your feet and mine, even as the tablets were shattered at the feet of Moses. When Moses took the tablets of the law into his hands, he soon grew angry with the sinful people, and he broke them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. But where is the law now? In Christ, for, “He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.” “How I love Your law,” says David. David knew where the law was, and where it could become an object of love in the hands of the Mediator. The law apart from Christ is a terror to our guilty souls because it is a law broken, and therefore, condemning!

But the law in Christ Jesus, honored and fulfilled by Him, is a delightful sight to true worshippers. In Him the law is more honored than by any merely human obedience and it smiles upon us as if we had perfectly obeyed it. The law fulfilled is our confidence as much as the law violated was our dread. We think nothing of the ark, now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone—but we do think everything of Christ Jesus, “who is made of God unto us righteousness for He has completely kept the law,” for He said, “Your law is within My heart.” It was not within His heart, alone, but within all His life! His whole thoughts, words and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify His blessed name!

Next, the ark signified propitiation, for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tablets of the law was the slab of gold called the mercy seat which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering, now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all! When God looks down upon His law, He does not see it nakedly—He beholds it in the person of His Son. He sees it, there, perfectly preserved without taint or flaw of any kind, and He rejoices therein. You and I magnify the Lord, that instead of having a naked law to look at, which would flash devouring flames upon us, we see the law in Christ covered with mercy, fulfilled by love on our behalf! We often speak of the mercy seat, but do we, as often as we should, remember that Jesus Christ, Himself, *is* that mercy seat? There is no mercy seat to which we can draw near in prayer except the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, who is the propitiation for our sins and through whom our supplications are accepted! “Ah,” said the Jew, “we have a mercy seat that covers all.” “Ah,” say we, “but *we* have one who does not do that *typically* and in outward pattern, alone, but He is the real covering upon which we lay our prayers and thanksgivings and find ourselves accepted.” We come not to God on the footing of the law, but the interposing propitiation! He covers all and comes between—and upon *that* mercy seat we offer our petitions and praises! That is a second blessed reason why we will say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord,” neither shall it come to mind, for Jesus is the propitiatory for us.

The next word is a very blessed one and that is covenant. The ark was called “the ark of the covenant.” It represented a covenant of works, as it was a part of a visible sanctuary, and ah, how soon was that covenant broken! There is no wonder that in the breaking of that covenant, the golden pot of manna was lost and that Aaron’s rod that budded was no more seen, for we are told in the Chronicles that when they opened the ark, in the days of Solomon, there was nothing found in it “save the two tablets which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.” Paul tells us that they were there originally, and so it is probable that they were taken away by the Philistines. Ah, how soon we should lose the sweet things of God if we were under the covenant of works—and how soon we should miss the gentle sovereignty of His shepherd rod! I thank and bless God that in Christ Jesus we have a covenant of grace which can never fail and never can be broken! In Him we have all that our soul desires—pot of manna and rod of Aaron—covenant provision and covenant rule we find in Him. Dear hearer, have you ever seen Christ as your covenant? It is not every believer that has seen Him in that light. When we first come to Christ, we look to Him as our Savior and we are lightened—and a very blessed look it is!

It may not be till years after that we come to understand that God has entered into covenant with us in Christ; that He will bless us, sanctify us and keep us to the end. But, mark you, while a knowledge of Christ as a Savior gives you the bread of life, yet the “wines on the lees well refined” and the “fat things full of marrow” are unknown to you till you can spell that word, “covenant.” Oh, how I wish some of the people of God understood it and realized that there is established between God and us, in the person of Christ Jesus, a covenant ordered in all things and sure! May the Holy Spirit teach you this! God has pledged His honor for the salvation of His people and He has sealed the covenant with the precious blood of Jesus, and therefore He will not turn away from it, but will keep it for His Son’s sake! Oh, blessed Jesus, we need no ark of the covenant, for You are the covenant, itself, to us, and in You we rejoice!

Fourthly—because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God, it was from it that He was accustomed to reveal Himself—and so it is called the “ark of testimony.” Jehovah often spoke from the mercy seat to His waiting people. His priests and prophets heard a voice coming forth from the thick darkness of the secret chamber wherein God dwelt—a voice from off the mercy seat giving them promises of succor in their times of need. It was a great thing to possess what they called, “the oracle.” No other

people had a true oracle except these chosen ones of God, but now that its voice is silent, we need not regret it, for we have another oracle. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.” His Son is the testimony of the Father’s mind. “He that has seen Me,” He says, “has seen the Father.” In all the world of nature; in all the realm of providence; in all the books of Revelation, God is seen, but nowhere as He is seen in the person of Jesus Christ—Jesus, the Word, is the plainest Revelation of God! His sacrifice is the heart of God written out in readable characters. Jesus Christ is “the testimony!” Come, then, beloved, let us rejoice in the faithful and true witness. Some will say that they know God by study. Others declare that they have found God by reflection. And some dream that they perceive Him by imagination. But all their knowledge put together cannot equal the blessed testimony of God which He has given us concerning Himself in the manifestation of His incarnate, holy, obedient, suffering, dying, risen Son! We say no more, “the ark of the testimony,” but we rejoice that God was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, and saw the Father in the Son.

We have only reached the middle of the subject now—this ark also signified enthronement—for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the throne of God. It was “the throne of the heavenly grace.” There God reigned and dwelt, that is, *typically*. It was a throne to which petitioners came with their pleas to obtain favors at the hand of the great King. Where, now, is the visible throne of God? Ah, sirs, His holy place has been broken down and He dwells not in temples made with hands; that is to say of this building. There is now no visible throne of God upon the face of the earth. Whereunto shall you liken the throne of the Most High? We have heard of thrones of mighty kings adorned with gold, ivory, pearls and gems till they have shone like rainbows—but what would these trifles be to the God of the whole earth? If you would see the throne of God, behold the person of the Christ, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! The Lord reigns from the tree, from the cross—here is the kingdom of God set up in the person of Christ Jesus among the sons of men! Oh what a blessing to have such a throne to come to—to Jesus, Himself, who *is* the throne of the invisible God! We talk no longer of the ark and of its gold; of its crown and of its golden lid; o the winged cherubs, for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these! Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very throne of God is You!

Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God’s enthronement, so it was the door of man’s approach. Men never came nearer to God on earth, typically, than when they stood in the holy place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God, symbolically, on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted—and her priest stood before the ark—awe-stricken in the presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant, for we have a blessed way of approach. We do not come to Christ only once in the year, but every day in the year and every hour of the day! He who came but once in the year came tremblingly! The Jews had a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the high priest so that if he should die before the ark, they might draw out his corpse—such was their servile fear of God! That tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil—how different from the apostle’s words, “Let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace.” We are not afraid of being stricken with death there—we are full of reverence—but we have not received the spirit of bondage, again, to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ, but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. Come nearer, nearer still—it is your fault that you do not come near enough! There is nothing to tremble at, here—come right up to God and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend.

I would leave others to worship as they find they can, but to me, though the prayers of our national church are very beautiful—they are so very cold! What a long way off is God in the liturgy! What word is there in it of childlike delight in God? Therefore certain brothers and sisters who have been accustomed to that style of praying chide us for our boldness and familiarity in prayer. They think we are presumptuous in drawing so near to God! Brothers and sisters, we do not marvel at your judgment, nor complain of it! We would not condemn you for your distant prayers, but we *cannot* yield to your censure of our bolder approach, for we have in our bosoms a sense of acceptance and a spirit of adoption which will not let us speak with God otherwise than as His favored children! We come boldly because we come through Jesus! Who is afraid of Jesus? Who shudders when drawing near to Him? And if He is the

mercy seat to which we come—and the place where the Father meets us—we feel that He permits the holy familiarity, the humble freedom which is suggested to our hearts by the spirit of adoption!

I must go a step further—the ark was the place of gracious power. On the top of the mercy seat stood cherubic figures and, notwithstanding all that learned men may have said, I do not think that any idea is nearer the mark than that these cherubim were types of angelic *power*—and of all the powers of providence which God is pleased to use in the behalf of His people. Notice how frequently the Word associates angels with our Lord. For instance, when Jacob saw the ladder which reached to heaven and God at the top of it, there were angels ascending and descending upon it. Cherubim were on all the curtains of the most holy place which enclosed the ark, and the ministry of angels is interwoven into the great covenant plan of salvation. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Consider, then, that the angels on the mercy seat typify the *power* of God by which He will defend His people. Right well did He defend them, for who could harm them when He was in the midst of them? Yet we will not speak of the ark. Neither will we remember it. Neither will we visit it, for we see in Christ Jesus that all the power of God is on our side! He is, “God With Us,” and if God is with us, who can be against us? Every angel is the servant of our covenant head, and so the guardian of every member of Christ. As He might have summoned 12 legions of angels by one uplifted glance to heaven, so will He fill the mountain with horses of fire and chariots of fire whenever His people need such succor! The stars in their courses fight for the Savior and for the saved ones—nothing shall, by any means, harm them! In heaven and earth and hell, the warrant of the great King stands in full force, “Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” And this protection comes to us because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

An eighth explanation, however, I must close with, so far as this second head is concerned. The ark was much revered by the Jews because it was the center of their nationality. Around the ark in the wilderness gathered all the tribes. The pillar of fire and cloud above the ark of the covenant was God’s flaming standard marking the pavilion where the Lord of hosts abode. After they were settled in Canaan, it was the center of the nation. There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of our God. Today we have no such sacred ark or chest. We have no palladium or central standard. There is a church which has a man they call, “infallible,” who is her center—and there are others who, in their cravings after uniformity in the churches would, I have no doubt, soon create a second hierarchy and bring forth by prodigious birth a second pope—but it is not so among us! God will not have it so! He will have no *human* center, and our very divisions are overruled to prevent such a thing. But there *is* one center to which all God’s people gather! There is one name above every name, “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Find me a dozen spiritual men, and to describe their different modes of thought, one of them may be called a Baptist, one an Episcopalian, a third a Presbyterian, a fourth a Methodist and so forth. Let them sit together and begin to talk of the things of God—of the covenant of grace; the work of the Spirit in the soul; the preciousness of the blood of Jesus—and you will see that they are one! Though they talk with various brogues, their language is one. Even as men from Somersetshire, or Essex, or Yorkshire all differ and yet all are Englishmen—so are Christians of various denominations one in the common language of the cross of Christ!

They say that Christians ought to be one and so we ought. But I go further and assert that all who are in Christ are already one! When our Lord prayed, “That they all may be one,” was He unheard? Was His prayer unavailing? I believe it was answered and that to this day there is a vital union among all the people of God in every place. And though they sometimes try to conceal that unity, yet the love of Christ wills out and will fuse them into one. Put two mere *theologians* together and they will fight like Kilkeny cats! But bring two spiritual men together at the cross, and they will lie down like two lambs—they cannot help it—they must love each other in Christ! There is, there must be, an essential unity among those who are quickened by the Spirit! And I rejoice and glory that the name, the person and the work of Jesus are, at this hour, the center of Christendom! Talk not of the ark, neither visit it, neither let it come to mind, for the King, Himself, is in the midst of us, “the standard bearer among ten thousand.”

III. Thirdly, let us see THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED. Let us render to Jesus the honor which aforetime was offered to the ark. First, let us say that Jesus is our covenant. We are told, “They shall say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” People must talk, it is natural to them, they must say something—what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that *He* is the

ark of the covenant of the Lord. Come, let us each one say it for himself—“Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through You. Jesus, You are my propitiation—by You I approach unto the Father.” Recognize this truth of God for yourself, my brothers and sisters, and it will be a grand day for you. When you have said it to yourself, say it to those about you. Say it to strangers, but especially say it to your own brothers and sisters. “They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another,” and what better subject could they have than to say one to another, “Brother, what fellowship we have with God in Christ! What a covenant there is between us and Him! Oh how sweetly does Christ cover our sins! How blessedly does He fulfill the law! How sweetly does He bring us into fellowship with angels, and how does He enable God to shine forth upon us!” Say this, say it often, nobody will rebuke you—it is a subject upon which you may be as fluent as you please. When you have said all you know, say it over again! And when you have said it again, say it a third time! This is a kind of note of which the human ear, when once it is cleansed, never grows weary!

The text takes you a step farther, for it says of the original ark, “neither shall it come to mind,” or, (I give the margin), “neither shall it come upon your heart.” Brethren, let *Christ* come upon your heart and dwell there! Beloved, let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart! Know all you can about Him, but love Him on account of everything you know, for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to Him. How I loved Him when I only knew myself a sinner and Christ a Savior! But oh, I love Him more as I begin to see my greater need and His greater fullness—as I see my greater sinfulness and His greater graciousness! Oh for a great Christ! Oh to see Him grow upon us! Oh to get more knowledge and then to have our hearts enlarged that we may love Him more and more! Carry Christ in your heart, even as the Israelite bore the ark in his affections. Oh love the Lord, all you His saints! You can love other things too much, but not your Lord! Embrace Him! Cry in the language of the Song, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” Outsiders do not understand the Song—they say it is a mere love ditty. They never will understand it till the Lord Jesus is laid on their hearts. But when He is once there—their joy, their all—they will need just such golden speech as Solomon’s Song! And every word of it will be dear to their souls. Let us, then, love our Lord with all our hearts.

And, next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text and let us remember the Lord—

*“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.”*

If I have not this enjoyment now, I will remember it and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember You. If I forget You, let my heart forget to beat—

*“Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee!
When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! My sacrifice!
I must remember Thee.
Remember Thee and all Your pains,
And all Your love to me.
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.”*

O memory, leave no other name than that of Jesus recorded upon your tablets! Let us sometimes set apart a little space for the exercise of our memory. It is good for children at school to have their memories trained. Should not we sometimes, especially we who speak so much, get alone and sanctify our memory by going over all the blessings of the covenant which come to us by Christ—all the glory of His person and all the wonders of His work? Oh, yes, we must remember it!

The next thing is, let us visit Him. We cannot set out on journeys, now, to go to Jerusalem on foot—little bands of us together—yet let us visit Jesus. Let us continually come to the mercy seat alone. Who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next, let us come up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom get out, could you not, every now and then during the day, say to your maid, if she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, “Come, let us have a five minutes’ visit

to the ark of the covenant. Let us go to the Lord and speak with Him— maybe He will speak with us. Perhaps we have not been agreeing as we should—let us go and hear what God the Lord will speak, for He may speak peace to us in more senses than one. Perhaps we have had a trouble today and we do not see our way—let us go up to the ark of the covenant and hear what the oracle will tell us. Perhaps the Lord will say, ‘This is the way, walk you in it’ and we shall know what to do.”

Frequently, in twos and threes, visit Christ your ark and take care, also, to join the great caravans of church prayer. One starts in this place every Sunday at seven o’clock in the morning, and another at the hour of ten. Join those bands of pilgrims! A still larger company goes up to the oracle on Monday nights at seven o’clock. Some twelve or fifteen hundred of us are usually to be found in happy fellowship going up to the mercy seat on Mondays. A very blessed little company meet on Thursday nights, before I begin my sermon, and they say, “Come and let us go and inquire of the Lord and ask His blessing upon His servants.” Besides these, there are meetings for prayer in this place at so many hours that I cannot now mention them all.

If you live where they are giving up on prayer meetings, carry home a live coal and drop it into your minister’s bosom. “Ah,” you say, “he might not like it.” That is very likely, but he certainly needs setting on fire if he lets the prayer meeting go out! *Churches without prayer meetings?* Pull them down, their day is over! Stop the preacher’s mouth if he does not pray, and let his church be scattered to the winds, for the church that forgets to assemble for prayer has “Ichabod” written on its walls! No prayer, no power! The ark of the covenant is gone when the people no longer come together to cry unto the Lord in their companies. Let us constantly visit the ark, then, together! Let us go up to the holy place that we may speak with the Most High!

The last thing is, “Neither shall that be done anymore,” but the margin has it, “Neither shall that be magnified anymore.” Transfer your reverence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal mercy seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the *real* mercy seat! Oh, that I knew how to speak words worthy to lie under the soles of my Master’s feet! Oh, that I could speak a sentence that was fit to be laid in the road like the palm branches with which the disciples strewed His way, not worthy to be touched by His feet, but by the feet of the beast that He rode upon! I am not worthy to unloose His shoe lace! He is so glorious that archangels fall on their faces to adore Him! Heaven is splendid, but the splendor of heaven is the presence of my Lord and Master! His throne is a glorious high throne, but it owes its glory and its height to Him that sits upon it! Hallelujah unto You, O Christ! Hallelujah forever and ever, for You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood! If the Jew was ever permitted to look upon the golden chest of the ark, he saw but little compared with what I see in You, You man, You God!

The wood that could not rot, covered over with precious gold, was a poor representation of His perfect manhood and glorious Godhead. The ark was crowned, but we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels and crowned King Of kings and Lord of lords! Again my heart cries hallelujah! The Jew could but see a slab of gold that was called the throne of God, but we see the spotless, perfect life and infinitely precious atonement of Christ which are better than the much fine gold. I see God, not as a light for the eyes, but as shining upon the soul in Jesus, my Lord. Oh, the glory, the glory of that light of God! I am reconciled! I am a child of God! I am brought near! Jehovah speaks to me! I speak to Him! Hallelujah! All praise to Him through whom such fellowship is rendered possible so that a man can see God and live! Glory, glory be unto Him who is now in the temple above! The veil is torn and faith can see Jesus, to whom we come this day. God bless you this day. God bless you, beloved! Amen.

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