

# *It Is Written*

*A weekly publication of the  
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.*

*Vol. 3*

*November 7, 2021*

*No. 45*

## **Jeremiah's Prophecy About the Ark**

By Jim McDonald

Jeremiah 3:16 reads, "And it shall come to pass in those days ... saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it; neither shall they miss it; neither shall it be made any more."

The ark of the covenant was important to Israel. The ark was a repository to hold the tables of stone upon which was written the ten commandments. God commanded Moses to make it when instructions regarding the tabernacle and its furnishings were given to him. The ark was a rectangular "box" 2 ½ cubits long, 1 ½ cubits wide and 1 ½ cubits high made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold inside and out (Exo. 25:10-11). It was to be placed in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle into which room the high priest, once in the year, came to offer blood for his and his nation's sins. The blood was placed on the mercy seat, a gold cover for the ark.

Later, during Israel's wanderings, a couple more items were also placed in the ark. The first was a golden pot containing an omer of manna which had been Israel's daily fare from God for theirs in the wilderness (Exo. 16:32-34). The second was Aaron's rod which had budded and borne ripe almonds (Num. 17:8-11). When Aaron's priesthood was challenged by Korah and the dissidents he had gathered with him, God showed He had chosen Aaron and his descendants as priests by each tribe taking a rod with the name of the tribe on the rod and placing it before the Lord with Aaron's name on Levi's rod. After it budded, this item was also commanded to be "laid up before the Lord." The Hebrew writer tells that both these items were in the ark of the covenant (Heb. 9:4-5).

The ark of the covenant originally was housed in the tabernacle which was moved (sometimes daily) from place to place in Israel's wilderness wanderings. Even in Canaan the tabernacle did not always remain in the same location. But it was displayed on other occasions. When Joshua led Israel into Canaan and crossed the Jordan River, the Lord commanded the priests, who were carrying the ark, to go first and as soon as the soles of their feet touched Jordan's waters, the water ceased flowing and backed up in the northern part of the river. The priests stood with the ark in the midst of the river and Israel passed over on dry land. When all Israel had crossed, the priests themselves walked to the west side of the river and the waters flowed again (Joshua 3:6-13; 4:18).

When Israel engaged in their first battle in the conquest of Canaan, God demonstrated that it was through His power that they would conquer Jericho. The Lord commanded that priests with rams' horns were to go before Israel, followed by priests bearing the ark, and the all Israel follow. They were to march around the city's walls once each day for six days and on the seventh day they were to march around the walls seven times. The priests then were to blow their rams' horns and the people were to shout with a great shout and the walls of Jericho would fall down. And so they did (Joshua 6:4-9, 20).

On another occasion, many years later, the wicked sons of Eli the priest took the ark of the covenant into battle with them against the Philistines, hoping that the presence of it would bring about victory to Israel. The battle ended in disaster for Israel. Thirty thousand Israelites were slain, the Philistines were victorious, and the ark was taken as "booty" in the battle (1 Sam. 4:6, 11). However, God was not done with the ark and He vexed the Philistines severely. They perceived their maladies were from Jehovah because they had taken His ark. They therefore returned it (1 Samuel 5-6). For the next 500 years the ark remained in "curtains."

David longed to build a permanent house for the ark but he was a man of war. Therefore God would not allow him to do what he desired. He gave that privilege to David's son Solomon, who when he was finished with the temple, took the sacred items of the tabernacle and placed them in the temple. The ark was opened and searched but nothing was found in it except the two tables of stone Moses had initially deposited (1 Kings 8:9). With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, all traces of the ark were lost. There was no ark brought back from Babylon to put in the temple built by returning exiles, nor to place in the temple Herod built many years later. We are told that a block of stone was placed in the Most Holy Place in Herod's temple.

Jeremiah prophesied of a day when the ark of the covenant would be gone. Israel would not remember it, think about it, or miss it. It would not come to their mind. Jeremiah was prophesying of spiritual Israel who replaced physical Israel, and it was also fitting that rather than God's law laying in a golden depository in Jerusalem, God desired that His law would be in the hearts of His new Israel. Paul wrote of this to the Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle, ministered by us, written in our hearts, known and read of all men: being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ. Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh" (2 Cor. 3:2-3). It was of this of which Jeremiah prophesied.

## "There Must Be Heresies"

By Greg Gwin

It is so discouraging. When it happens the hurt and disappointment can be devastating. The work and progress of the church can be set back for years. Friends and brethren are often alienated irreparably. Why must it be so? Why does it seem like church trouble is so common? How is it that these divisions are reported again and again? Is it inevitable? Are we destined to simply split, and split, and split again?

The Corinthian church had suffered through a good bit of trouble. In fact, Paul's first letter to them dealt primarily with internal problems in that congregation. If you had been a member there, surely you would have been discouraged by the divisiveness that characterized their history. Paul addressed these issues. He indicated that their problems were widely reported and he urged them that "that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10,11). He blamed the situation on their "carnal" outlook and rebuked them for their failure to grow spiritually (3:1-4).

While rebuking the Corinthians and stressing their need to grow past these issues which indicated their spiritual immaturity, Paul also revealed that such problems served a necessary role. Note: ". . . I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (11:18,19). Do you see it? The divisiveness, the arguing, the forming of sects and parties within the church, the disputes, etc., all served to demonstrate which ones were "approved" among the Corinthians. In other words, those who were faithfully committed to God, who were determined to live by His truth, who would not compromise with error - these would rise to the occasion. They would "be made manifest," that is, their faith and loyalty would become obvious to all that objectively considered the situation.

So, what about our "issues" today? Must we be content with the problems? Should we not worry about the divisions and the "church splits?" Of course, we must be concerned - such cannot be commended (11:22). Unfortunately, these things have always happened and will continue to happen as weak, carnal Christians do what they have always done. But, when these terrible problems arise, let us be committed to do the right thing. In the end, error will be exposed and those who do right will stand "approved" before God.