

AUGUST 11th
GOD GIVES THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. “They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it.” **EXODUS 25:8-12**

Mount Rushmore. Crazy Horse. The Washington Monument. The Gateway Arch. These are all magnificent landmarks that have been made by humans to celebrate significant events and land in the United States. They are massively impressive to human eyes. What we discover here in Exodus 25 is infinitely more significant and impressive than all of those historic landmarks...and it all comes in a four foot by three-foot wooden box. What can God teach us about His greatness from a small wooden box? Stick around and find out!

Even as God calls this box the ark, Philip Ryken points out that the term from Genesis and here in Exodus are unrelated. However, what is God’s design plan for this object? First, you can see that it is covered with purest gold. As you picture in your mind the ark, this gold was most likely golden plates that were nailed to the wood. Along with the golden rings that were at the four corners of the ark were four “footings.” There are a few ideas to notice about what we have been told so far. The rings are permanent and will not be removed, unlike other parts of the tabernacle. Furthermore, it’s significant to notice that the ark is not designed to rest on anything without the footings on the corners. Finally, the poles of the ark are also overlaid with gold. The ark is always to be transported by carrying these poles, which was one of the problems with Uzzah and the ark in 2 Samuel 6.

The gold footings, gold poles, and gold ark aren’t the only items that emphasize how special this box is. On the top of the ark is what is called the mercy seat in the ESV. Other translations will render this cover as “atonement cover.” This is the same word that is found in the New Testament in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5. The mercy seat is where the blood is sprinkled on the annual Day of Atonement that is commanded in Leviticus 16. What is key to notice is that God commands something to be placed over the mercy seat. Two cherubim are to be placed on each end of the mercy seat. Unfortunately, our culture has humanized angels to appear to be fat images with wings that carry arrows. However, the Bible tells a different story. Ryken points out in his commentary on Exodus that the cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3 as guardians of the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, Ryken also notes that these cherubim are mentioned almost 100 times in the Old Testament. Generally, people see angels as God’s messengers. Indeed, that is true. However, the cherubim serve a special role as guardians of God’s kingdom.

Men, these are a lot of details that God gives for making this ark of the covenant. What does God have to teach us with what we have discovered so far? First, God shows that He draws near to His people. The people have shook in fear because they have heard God’s voice. But God. God condescends to His sinful people and pledges that He will live among them...in this glorious box. To be sure, God cannot be contained, and He is everywhere. However, He also makes Himself near to His people in this way. What an amazing God that draws near to them and to us! A second significant truth is God’s holiness. Of course, this can be seen with all the pure gold and outlawing anyone to touch the ark. But there’s another key point that we see with the cherubim—they face each other as they are over the mercy seat. The mighty cherubim do not look at the sky because this is where God’s presence lies. These details of the ark can urge us as men to be thankful for the cross of Christ. When Christ died as an atonement for sin, our sin was covered by His blood. The curtain was torn in two that separated where God “lived” and where the high priest could enter. All

because of Christ's work. God remains holy, but now we approach the throne of grace with confidence because we have been saved by His blood. What an amazing privilege!

Spend some time thinking about God's holiness and His presence. Ask Him for help to remember how special it is to come before Him in prayer at any time.

For Further Reading: 2 Samuel 6:1-15