

Christ-Centered Testimony – Ex. 25:10-22

Intro:

- 1) One main reason people give for rejecting Christianity is that “Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites”**
 - a. In 2007, Barna research conducted a study on young non-Christians (16-29) identifying several dominant negative perceptions of Christianity
 - b. Interesting – top 5 reasons were not “evidential”
 - c. The #3 reason given – Christians are hypocritical

- 2) We know by Biblical truth and personal experience that there is a constant, present struggle in living out a Christ-centered testimony**
 - a. The world, the flesh, the devil fight against you
 - b. Every day there is a battle to put on Jesus rather than the old, former self (Col. 3)

- 3) One of the way Christians struggle in living out a Christ-centered testimony is that their testimony goes idle**
 - a. Leave the praise in the pew
 - b. Chameleon Christianity – blending into whatever is around you

- 4) Truth – there’s power in a believer who strives to live a Christ-centered testimony**
 - a. Debbie Gilberts funeral:
 - i. View line wrapped around the church
 - ii. Funeral service – church was packed, evident that lives were touched in Jesus’ name
 1. Jesus was spoken well of through her life
 - iii. “You preach your own funeral every day” – Crouch

- 5) It’s vital, as Christ-followers, that what we DO and what God SAYS line up**
 - a. Write down – the works of my life should match the will of my God

- 6) Today my desire – equip you with practical, biblical, and simple principles on living out a Christ-centered testimony**
 - a. To do so – go to the 1st mention of the word “Testimony”
 - i. 1st – Ex. 16:34 – but speaking of the same object
 - ii. Elaborated on – Ex. 25:10-22
 - b. The Ark of the Testimony

7) Context

- a. The nation of blessing has been established – Gen. 12
- b. Place and protocol of worship is being revealed – Ex-Deut.
- c. Part of the place and protocol of worship is a building called the “Tabernacle”
 - i. Our text begins to address this
- d. Purpose of the Tabernacle stated – Ex. 25:8
- e. In giving the instructions on the Tabernacle, God gives instructions as to the furniture which will dwell within
 - i. God start with the most vital piece – Ark of the Testimony

8) Ark & Mercy Seat – Word picture

- a. Focal point for God’s presence in the OT – Ex. 25:22
- b. Central to Israelite worship
- c. Located in the Most Holy Place
- d. 2 primary purposes
 - i. Revelation and expiation
- e. Was the key piece of Tabernacle furniture that God used to depict Gospel truths
 - i. It carried a Christ-centered testimony

9) The Ark of the covenant was God’s testimony among His people in the OT which testified of His power and presence

- a. Recorded for us to learn from and prompt Hope – Rom. 15:4

You must have God's Pardon

- 1) **Statement – you cannot live a Christi-centered testimony without 1st having Christ's pardon**
 - a. Illustrate – Rosie Ruiz
 - i. Appeared to have won the 1980's women's division of the Boston Marathon
 - ii. Investigators later discovered that she didn't actually run the marathon
 - iii. Evidence showed that she entered the race nearer towards the end – likely running only the last half-mile
 - iv. She was disqualified and stripped of her title
 - b. Rosie Ruiz wanted the victory, recognition, and finish line celebration – yet she did not start at the required point of entry
 - i. She wanted the crown of victory without meeting the requirements
 - c. Biblical requirements for the Christian life – John 3:3 “Born again”
 - d. This is not a new concept – God instilled the reality of meeting Him in merciful pardon in the early directions of Israelite worship
 - i. God used the Ark of the Testimony to testify, as a physical picture, of the needed pardon one must have to be right with Him

- 2) **The Provision of the wood – Ex. 25:10**
 - a. It is unique that the 1st detail God gives for the construction of the Ark is not: size, gold, or cherubim – it was the WOOD
 - i. Given all we know about the Ark of the Covenant – the fact that God started with specifying the wood tells us that this is an important detail
 - ii. Begs the question – what is so unique about the wood and what does it communicate?
 - b. It was an available wood
 - i. Hebrew word “shittim” refers to the wood from the acacia tree
 - ii. Acacia trees were commonly found in the Sinai wilderness
 - iii. This tree was readily available to the Israelites
 1. It's not like God had them go to a remote mountain area of grand significance and hewn down a rare tree
 - iv. IOW – the base material of the Ark communicated availability to the people
 - v. Great reminder that the pardon of God's grace in Jesus Christ is available to “whosoever will”
 - c. It was a durable wood
 - i. The acacia tree was known for its strength and durability
 - ii. Being a durable hardwood – it was highly resistant to scratches, dents, and rot
 - iii. Natural oils in the wood helped repel moisture that would cause decay
 - iv. The acacia tree had the quality of longevity
 1. Survived in a harsh dry climate
 2. Withstood heat, drought, and insects
 - v. Get this – at the place of God's pardon in OT worship – God chose a tree that communicated something permanent rather than temporary
 - vi. Points us forward to Jesus – 1 Pet. 1:18,19

- d. It was a healing wood
 - i. Researchers tell us that the people of that area used the acacia tree for its various healing properties
 - 1. Gum – used as a salve to treat sore throats, coughs, and other issues
 - 2. Bark – high in tannin – acted as an antiviral and possesses anti-bacterial qualities
 - a. Bark was used to help stop bleeding and reduce inflammation
 - 3. Leaves – used to treat infections
 - ii. At the core layer of the Ark of the covenant – God used a wood associated with healing

3) The propitiation of mercy – Ex. 25:21

- a. Not only does the base material communicate God's pardon, the covering lid did so as well
- b. Much debate around this aspect of this item
 - i. Was the mercy seat part of the Ark or was it separate furniture all together
 - 1. yes and no
- c. why the debate?
 - i. The term God used here doesn't refer to "lid" or "cover" like a top
 - ii. Rather – the word used means an "atonement cover"
 - iii. The verb that lies behind the noun mercy in the expression "mercy seat" (v17) means "ransom or deliver by means of substitute"
 - iv. The idea of "cover" comes from the root of this word which means "cover"
- d. Interesting – the term "mercy seat" as a translation of this word is attributed to William Tyndale
 - i. Luther translated the Hebrew word into German as "Gnadenstuhl" meaning "seat of grace" or "grace seat"
- e. IOW – the mercy seat was not simply a lid to conceal the top of the Ark – it was the mercy covering that God placed over the Ark and its contents
 - i. Why is that important to know?
 - ii. It communicates God's available pardon of grace and mercy rather than judgment
 - iii. Listen – God covered the Ark in mercy – why?
 - 1. The Ark housed the "testimony" or the 10 commandments
 - 2. The very law which the people broke constantly
- f. The picture God put before His people at the core of their worship was that God covered their rebellion against Him with mercy and dwelt among His people through the substitutionary sacrifice of another in which the people found grace and mercy
- g. The whole idea of the mercy seat was used to point to Jesus
- h. Don't believe me?
 - i. Heb. 9:5
 - ii. Same word used and attributed to Jesus in – Rom. 3:15, 1 John 2:2, 4:10
- i. The clear message of the mercy seat was that of a pardon through the blood of an atoning sacrifice

- 4) Right out of the gate – the Ark testifies of the Holy God of Heaven offering people His pardon through the merit and sacrifice of Jesus Christ**
 - a. Foundational level – the wood pointed to God’s healing and everlasting life
 - b. The covering – points to God’s mercy through the atonement of another

- 5) In order to live a Christ-centered testimony – you must have God’s pardon graciously and mercifully offered to you in Jesus Christ**

You must have God's Preeminence

- 1) Col. 1:17,18 tells us that Jesus is to have preeminence**
 - a. 1st place
 - b. We are brought face to face with this reality in the Ark of the Covenant

- 2) Notice – how God commanded the Tabernacle to be built – V10**
 - a. Interesting – when we build a house, we start with the house itself and materials
 - i. Once that's complete – we move on to the furnishings
 - b. Notice – when God began to give the plans for the Tabernacle, what did He start with?
 - i. The Ark of the Testimony
 - c. "That the first article in the tabernacle to be described is the ark reflects its significance in the temple." – Interpreters B.C.
 - d. "The very first articles to be constructed were the ark and the mercy seat. These were the most important of all the vessels of the Tabernacle, and the ones to which every other part of the building and its furniture had reference." – Olford

- 3) The Ark of the Covenant stood at the center of Israel's worship as it symbolized God's covenantal presence among His people**

- 4) It is right to conclude – the Ark shaped the worship of all Israelites**
 - a. The tabernacle was designed around the Ark
 - b. The tribes were arranged around the Tabernacle
 - c. Because the Ark of the Testimony was to be the 1st article to be constructed, we could say it was to be preeminent

- 5) The Ark was 1st and central to the people of God**
 - a. 1st to be described in the place of worship
 - b. Went before them to lead – Numb. 10:33
 - c. Went before them over Jordon into the Promise Land – Josh 3:3-4
 - d. Central to the worship of the Israelite people
 - i. Focal point of Tabernacle
 - ii. Tabernacle was focal point of the Israelite camp
 1. Numb. 2:17

- 6) The preeminence of the Ark pictured for us that a true testimony for Jesus means that Jesus is preeminent in our lives**

Lesson – A Christ-centered testimony is only possible when Christ is 1st and central

- 1) Don't let other things occupy where Christ is supposed to dominate**
 - a. Write down
 - b. Notice – the ark was unrivaled
 - i. Only piece of furniture in the Most Holy place
 1. No other idols
 2. Nothing to compete with

- 2) Christ is to occupy a special, unrivaled place in our soul that is only meant for Him**
 - a. God must be preeminent in our lives if we are to live out a Christ-centered testimony

You must have God's Placement

- 1) A Christ-centered testimony not only has to do with where God is placed in your life, but also where you are placed in relation to Him**
 - a. The Ark bore the testimony that God is to be King of your life and you must live in submission to His sovereignty

- 2) I want to point out a specific reality about the Ark of the Testimony that God used to communicate His Divine Authority**
 - a. V11 – there was to be a golden “crown” round about the top of the Ark
 - i. Crown – refers to a border, a rim, an ornamental encircling band
 - b. This crown had both a figurative and practical purpose

- 3) Figurative purpose – to communicate God’s authority as King**
 - a. It’s no mistake that the border of the Ark was to stand out prominent as a “crown”
 - i. It was meant to signify God as the King of kings
 - b. The golden crown around the Ark reminded Israel that the God who pardons is also the God who reigns
 - c. The crown was a statement about God’s authority

- 4) Practical purpose – to secure the mercy seat**
 - a. The raised edge at the top of the Ark created a border to help secure the mercy seat when placed on top
 - i. Are you getting the picture? it communicated the fixed permanence of God’s mercy

- 5) The crown communicates to us how God reigns among His people – in mercy and pardon**
 - a. Listen – the gold crown atop the Ark surrounds the place where atonement was made for God’s people
 - b. This was a picture, a prophecy of the Great coming atonement of the Messiah
 - i. Matt. 27:37 – what did the place of eternal atonement have on it?
 1. A crown of thorns and a message of His kingship
 2. What the enemies thought was a mockery was a fulfillment of worship

- 6) The Ark of the Covenant reveals to us that God is to be submitted to as Lord and King in our lived**
 - a. If you are to have a vibrant Christ-centered testimony, it starts with Jesus wearing the crown of authority in your life daily

You must have God's Presence

- 1) The last principle we see here with the Ark of the Testimony in regards to a Christ-centered testimony is the principle of God's presence**
 - a. When speaking of the Ark, most people only focus on two major aspects
 - i. Ark body and Mercy Seat
 - b. But there is a third – V13-15

- 2) God commanded Moses to make the Ark mobile**
 - a. It could be properly carried
 - b. Used to lead God's people
 - c. Used as a rallying point in war

- 3) The mobility of the Ark depicted the truth that God is not bound to a specific geographical place**
 - a. Rings – represents God's eternity
 - b. Staves – represents God's central presence amidst His people
 - c. Distinctly different from other "gods"

- 4) Point is – God's presence was to be with His people continually, meeting with them and instructing them**
 - a. Pictured His sanctifying presence – always among His people
 - i. God's testimony is that he is among His people, always leading and always instructing

- 5) Of course there is a Gospel picture here about the presence of God**
 - a. I believe the Ark pointed forward to the manifest presence of the Son of God
 - b. 2 main elements to this Ark
 - i. Wood – speaks of this world
 - ii. Gold – speaks of divinity
 - iii. Remember the promise – V22 – this was God's meeting place
 - c. In this grand picture of the presence of God we have a great foreshadowing of the hypostatic union of the incarnate Jesus Christ
 - i. Wood – speaks of being of this world as He took on flesh
 - ii. Gold – speaks of His divinity as being God Almighty
 - d. The Ark of the Covenant pictured for us how the presence of God would come to make atonement – God in flesh
 - i. Col. 2:9, Phil. 2:5-8

- 6) This great truth reminds us of the important principle that to live out a Christ-centered testimony, God's manifested presence must be a constant in your life**
 - a. You must meet with Him regularly in prayer and Scripture

Closing

- 1) As we looked at the Ark of God's Testimony, we learned 4 key principles about testimony**
 - a. Possess God's pardon through Jesus
 - b. Seen the importance of God's preeminence
 - c. Live out God's placement as King
 - d. Practice living in God's presence

- 2) When these principles are a reality, your life becomes a Christ-centered, God-honoring testimony**
 - a. Uniqueness about the wood – it not only pictures the foundation of the Gospel, it also pictures you and I when we the Gospel is applied
 - b. Acacia
 - i. Twisted, mangled, gnarly wood
 - ii. Thorny – sign of sin
 - c. But when placed under mercy, under the crown, robed in purity with God's presence, it becomes a symbol used to point others to Jesus