

THE HOLY OF HOLIES: THE WORD OF THE LORD INSIDE THE ARK

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“According to all that I show you”

Lesson: Exodus 25:1-22

Do you remember the story of how the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai? How there was thunder and lightning when the Lord called Moses into the mountain for forty days and forty nights? Do you remember how important the Ten Commandments are? We must never forget their importance, for that is why the Lord gave them with such a great miracle. And we must try to keep them in everything we do, every day.

But do you remember something else that the Lord showed Moses while he was on top of Mount Sinai? He showed him the pattern of the Tabernacle, the beautiful tent the Children of Israel made for their worship. The Lord opened Moses' spiritual eyes and showed him just exactly how they should build the Tabernacle and just exactly how they should worship the Lord. The Lord always tells people how to worship Him. In the Heavenly Doctrines He has told the New Church how it should worship. He also has told us that there are very special meanings in everything that the Children of Israel did at the Tabernacle. For this reason we want to learn all we can about how the Lord taught the Children of Israel to worship Him.

Now the first thing that the Lord told Moses was to make an Ark of shittim wood. This was a special box all covered over with gold, in which the Ten Commandments could be laid. Over the top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat, a flat lid of pure gold. And stretching their wings over the Mercy Seat were two golden cherubim, like angels, protecting the Ten Commandments. The Ark was to have staves or poles on the sides so that the priests could carry it around when the Children of Israel moved from place to place. It was so holy that it was covered with a veil whenever the people were on the march.

Why do you suppose the Children of Israel had a tent for their worship? They were on a long journey, going to conquer and inhabit the land of Canaan. So their place of worship had to be something like a tent so that they could move it. Otherwise, if they built a church like the kinds we have, they would have to leave it behind! When the Lord told Moses to build a Tabernacle that could be moved, He taught the people that He would always be with them, wherever they went. And this is true of us, too; no matter where we go, the Lord will go with us, if we really think about Him and love Him. Even while the Children of

Israel wandered all over the wilderness and were so many times in very serious trouble, they took the Ark and the whole Tabernacle with them.

Now the Ark was kept all by itself in the inmost room of the Tabernacle, a special place called the Holy of Holies. Don't you think this tells us that we should keep the Word in a special place? It also tells us that whenever we move around we should take the Word with us in our hearts. No matter where we are, we should never forget the Lord.

Remember that the Lord told Moses about the Ark and how to care for it first of anything in the Tabernacle? This tells us that the very first thing, the central thing of our worship, should be the Lord's Word. This is one reason why we open the Word at the beginning of worship. And this is why we place the Word in a special place in front of us while we pray.

Now, let's think of something else. The Children of Israel made a great big camp of thousands and thousands of people. Just imagine the tents stretching for miles in the wilderness! But do you know what was in the very center of that tremendous camp? It was the Tabernacle. Three of the tribes of Israel were on every side of the Tabernacle, each in its special place, but the Tabernacle was always in the very center. When the Lord told Moses that this was the way they should camp, He taught Moses something special about the Word again, didn't He?

In the Heavenly Doctrines, the Lord tells us that our minds are like the camp of Israel. In the very center of everything we think, we should always remember to serve the Lord. If we do this it is like putting a tabernacle—a place of worship, where the Lord can dwell—in the very center of our minds. In that tabernacle the Lord will stay. He will be with us in secret ways, deep within our hearts. And, just the way the Lord led Israel when Moses came before the Mercy Seat and asked Him what to do, so He will lead us when we have the Word in our hearts and try to find out what He is teaching us to do.

And you know, when it came time to enter Canaan, a miracle took place; as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the waters of the River Jordan, those waters divided! Another miracle took place when the Ark circled the walls of Jericho, and the walls fell down. If the Word is really in our minds, miracles will take place, miracles that will open the Promised Land to us. And we will find our place among the many mansions of heaven.

So you see, the Lord taught the Children of Israel how to worship Him. Everything that Moses told the people about worship was according to the plan or pattern that the Lord had showed him. And we, too, should try to learn from the Lord how we should worship. We should try to find out everything that the Lord teaches us about worship in His Word. If we do this, we will know that we are worshiping the Lord in just the way that He wants us to.

As it was provided that Moses should represent the Lord as to the law Divine, or the Word, specifically the historic Word, it was therefore brought about that when he was an infant, he was placed in a little ark, but in one of low value, because he was in his first rising, and because his being there was only a representative; but that afterward when the law Divine itself had shone forth from Mount Sinai, it was placed in an ark which was called the 'ark of the testimony'.... Hence the ark was most holy, because it represented the Lord's Divine Human as to the Divine law; for from the Lord's Divine Human proceeds the Divine law, or the Divine truth, which is the same as the 'Word' (Arcana Coelestia 6723:3-4).