

Church of God

Sunday School



THE TABERNACLE #11 – THE ARK'S CONTENTS

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** We must "abide in Christ" to stay saved (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 2:16; John 15:4).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** In salvation, there is no room for sin, worldliness, or surfeiting (Romans 6:1-2; 12:2; Luke 21:34).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** The Testimony, placed in the Ark first, was "the work of God" (Exodus 31:18; 25:16; 32:16).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Manna was daily bread from heaven sent by the Father (Exodus 16:4, 15; John 6:31-32).
- ❑ **Friday:** Rebellion is serious, contagious, and deadly (Numbers 16:20-35, 41-49).
- ❑ **Saturday:** God will make it plain whom He has chosen to be the leader (Numbers 17:1-11).

MEMORY VERSE: *"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."* —1 John 2:14

The Ark Represents Salvation in Christ

Noah's ark, the ark of bulrushes, and the Ark of the Covenant were all places of safety and preservation. In the same way, when we are saved, we are "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This lesson looks at what the contents of the Ark teach about how to "abide" in Christ (John 15:4). In other words, how to stay spiritually alive. The Ark's contents were only protected and preserved while *inside* the Ark. Likewise, we are kept safe from the dangers and consequences of sin if we remain "in Christ."

The Ark was a small, narrow box made only for the contents God intended—nothing more, nothing less. In the same way, we cannot add to or take away from God's plan of salvation. Salvation is a narrow way (Matthew 7:14). It makes no room for "sin" (Romans 6:1-2), worldliness (Romans 12:2), or "surfeiting" (Luke 21:34), which is an excessive, overabundance of things. If we try to bring these into the Ark of Salvation, they crowd out the essential, God-intended contents.

The Tables of Testimony

The Ark held Israel's most important treasures. These items reminded them of: (1) their covenant relationship with God; (2) God's love and care; and (3) the dangers of rebellion, murmuring, and idolatry. Just as the Ark (representing Christ) held *physical* treasures, God's Word contains *spiritual* treasures. Jesus is the Living Word (John 1:14, 17). These "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3) teach us how to stay saved. They also reveal God's love and care and warn of the dangers and pitfalls we must avoid.

On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Tables of Testimony. These "tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18), were placed in the Ark first (Exodus 25:16). This teaches that God's Word must be of supreme importance in our lives!

The word *testimony* means "witness." The Tables of Testimony were a witness (visible evidence) of God's covenant with Israel. God was delivering His Word directly to man. "The tables were the work of God" (Exodus 32:16).

Under the old covenant, God wrote His Law (with "the finger of God"; Exodus 31:18) on the Tables of Stone. In the new covenant, God's Spirit (called "the finger of God"; Luke 11:20 and Matthew 12:28) writes His laws on our hearts. Just as the tablets were "the work of God," a life changed by Christ is the work of God!



The Pot of Manna



When Israel traveled through the wilderness, God fed them with "manna." It was "bread which the LORD" gave to them (Exodus 16:15). This miracle from God kept them alive. Each person was to gather only "an omer" (Exodus 16:16)—a daily portion of about two quarts. A "golden pot [with] manna" (Hebrews 9:4) was the second item placed inside the Ark. Just as the Israelites were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), we too are "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). As they needed physical food to reach Canaan, we need spiritual food to keep us alive on our journey to Heaven.

God promised to "rain bread from heaven for [Israel]" (Exodus 16:4). This "bread from heaven" was sent by the "Father" (John 6:31-32). God has also sent us daily spiritual bread. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (verse 35). Manna teaches the importance of daily Bible reading.

Israel gathered manna "every morning," except on the Sabbath. Can we do any less? Can we neglect daily gathering of spiritual manna and try to live on yesterday's blessings and experiences? What happened when the Israelites attempted to keep leftover manna (Exodus 16:19-20)? For forty years, the Israelites were kept alive by this manna (Exodus 16:35), and it came one day at a time.

"Aaron's Rod That Budded"

God called Moses to be Israel's deliverer from Egyptian bondage. His brother Aaron was to be Moses' spokesperson. God told Moses, "Speak unto [Aaron], and put words in his mouth" (Exodus 4:15). Aaron represents the ministry—those who speak God's words to the people. The third item placed in the Ark was "Aaron's rod that budded" (Hebrews 9:4).

In Egypt, God used Aaron's "rod" (staff or walking stick) to perform miracles (Exodus 7:8-12; 8:5-6, 16-17). After leaving Egypt, Korah (a Levite) and others became envious of Moses and Aaron. These rebellious men influenced many people. They accused Moses and Aaron of taking "too much upon you" and of lifting themselves "above the congregation of the LORD" (Numbers 16:3). When Moses heard this, "he fell upon his face" (Numbers 16:4). He understood the seriousness of their rebellion! (This serves as a warning today of the serious dangers when people work against Christ and His ministry.)

God dealt with this rebellion swiftly and severely. "The earth opened ... and swallowed them up," and "a fire from the LORD ... consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Numbers 16:16, 32, 35). This rebellion cost the lives of over fifteen thousand people (Numbers 16:49). Rebellion against God and His ministry is serious, contagious, and deadly! Learning about Korah's rebellion explains why Aaron's rod was included in the Ark's contents. Yet, it was more than just a rod.

God wanted to prevent rebellion from happening again. In Numbers 17:1-11, He performed a miracle to silence the congregation's murmuring. Twelve rods (one for each tribe) were gathered. These ordinary staffs carried by the tribal leaders were tokens (a sign or evidence) of their authority (Numbers 21:18). The name of each tribal leader was written on his rod, but for the tribe of Levi, Moses wrote Aaron's name.

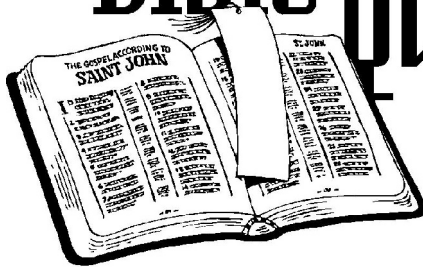
God told Moses to place the rods "before the testimony" in the Tabernacle. The rod that blossomed would reveal God's chosen man. The next day, Aaron's rod had "buds" and "blossoms" and "yielded almonds." Aaron's rod was kept "before the testimony ... for a token [sign or warning] against the rebels." This "rod" maintained its buds, blossoms, and almonds (it was preserved in the Ark).



We Must Abide in Christ

When we "abide" in Christ and "the word of God abideth in [us]" (1 John 2:28, 14), we can overcome the enemy. In Christ is our place of spiritual safety. The three items in the Ark teach us how to remain in Him by: (1) keeping God's Word first in our lives; (2) daily reading and obeying what the Word tells us to do; and (3) following a godly pastor who teaches the truth. ALL three are absolutely essential!

Bible Quiz



1. Like the small Ark of the Covenant, salvation also does not have room for just anything. What three things are mentioned in the lesson that will not fit (no room) into the Ark of Salvation?

2. The Ark's contents were placed in a specific order. Why were the Tables of Testimony placed there first? _____

3. What did God give to Moses on Mount Sinai? _____

4. What does the word *testimony* mean? _____

5. The Israelites gathered manna "every morning" (Exodus 16:21). When might be the best time to read your Bible? _____

6. What happened to leftover manna (Exodus 16:19-20)? _____

7. Aaron was to be Moses' spokesperson. Aaron represents the _____—those who speak God's words to the people.

8. How many people died because of the rebellion of Korah and others? _____

9. Whose name was written on the rod for the tribe of Levi? _____

10. How many rods were placed before the Testimony in the Tabernacle? _____

11. Aaron's rod was kept "before the testimony ... for a _____ [sign or warning] against the rebels."

THE ARK HELD ISRAEL'S CHIEF TREASURES



What Treasures Can Be Found in Christ (the Word)?

- "treasures of WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE" (Colossians 2:3)

LESSONS FROM THE ARK'S CONTENTS

Match the Contents With the Descriptions

Reminders and Warnings of Israel's Past Failures

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| _____ The Tables of Testimony | A. A reminder of murmuring, complaining, and disobedience |
| _____ The Pot of Manna | B. A warning of the rebellion of Korah and others |
| _____ Aaron's Rod That Budded | C. A reminder of the golden calf apostasy |



Essentials Needed for Maintaining Salvation

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| _____ The Tables of Testimony | A. We must obey (eat) whatever the Word tells us to do |
| _____ The Pot of Manna | B. We must give the Word its proper place (first place) |
| _____ Aaron's Rod That Budded | C. We need a godly pastor to feed us the Word |

"In the Old Testament, the New is hidden; in the New Testament, the Old lies open."