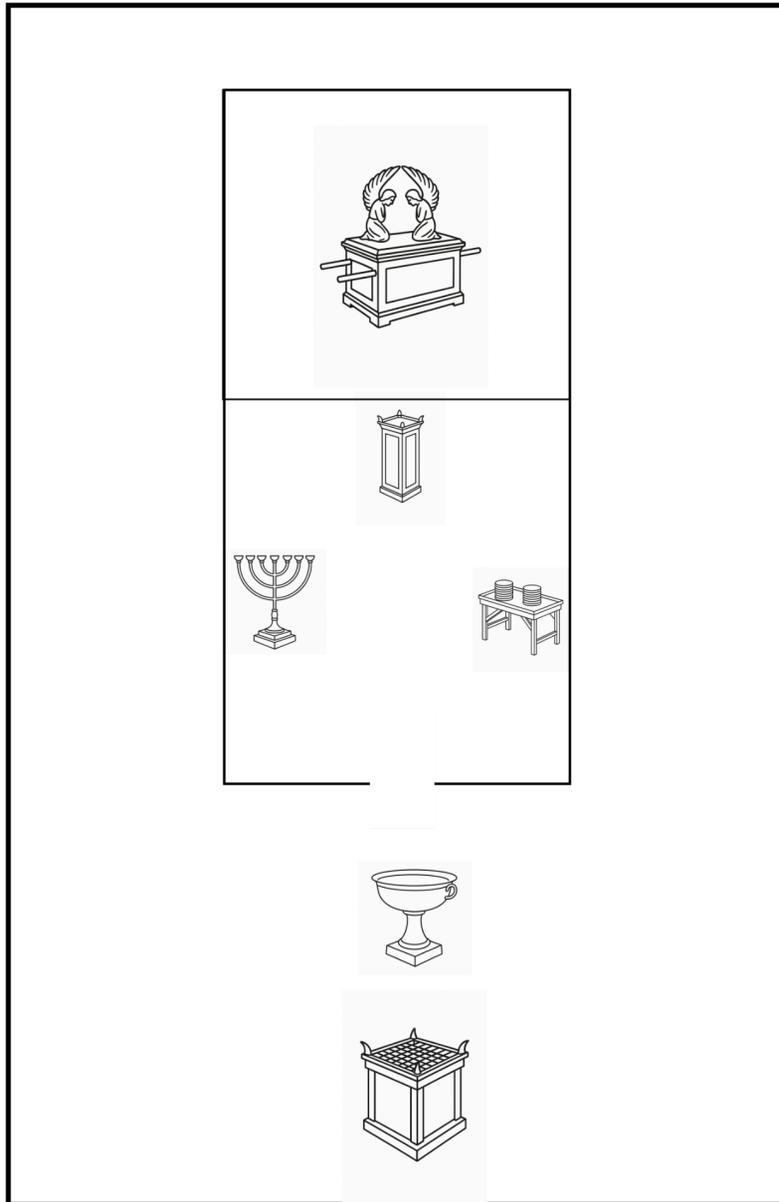


The Sanctuary



ANCIENT WORLDS *of the* BIBLE

Study Guide 6

by Pastor Daniel McFeeters

The Quest for a Golden Box

From ancient treasure hunters to Indiana Jones, the quest to find the Ark of the Covenant has fascinated generations. Is it possibly sealed in a secret chamber under Jerusalem's Temple Mount? Resting in a cave on Mount Nebo? Or perhaps God took it to heaven before the Babylonian captivity? Speculation abounds! This golden box, crafted at God's command (Exodus 25:10–22), was no mere relic. It carried the stone tablets of God's 10-commandment law—the terms of His covenant and the symbol of God's throne. The shekinah glory rested above its mercy seat, a visible sign of God's presence among His people.

But Israel's history with the Ark was turbulent. The sons of Eli treated it as a magical object and brought it to battle, only for it to be captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). It was later returned, and Solomon gave it a home in the Most Holy Place of the temple (1 Kings 8:6–11), where the glory of the Lord once again filled the sanctuary. And then, after centuries of centrality, it vanished.

Yet the Ark is not lost to those who seek with spiritual eyes. The book of Revelation places the Ark in God's heavenly temple (Revelation 11:19), inviting us to rediscover its significance in Christ's ministry as our High Priest. Search the Scriptures—and you may just find the Ark again, not buried in the earth, but blazing with truth in heaven's sanctuary.

A Solution to Sin and Suffering

Sin, at its core, is rebellion against God's character and law—an assertion of self above the Creator. The biblical narrative traces its origin not to earth, but to heaven. In Isaiah 14:12–14, Lucifer—once a covering cherub—declares his fivefold "I will," aspiring to ascend above God and "be like the Most High." This prideful ambition marks the inception of sin: the elevation of self in defiance of divine authority.

Revelation 12:7–9 reveals the cosmic scope of this rebellion: "war broke out in heaven." Lucifer, now Satan, deceived a third of the angels and was cast to the earth. But rather than annihilate the rebels, God permitted the conflict to unfold. Why? Because God is love (1 John 4:8), and love cannot exist without freedom. A universe governed by coerced obedience would be incompatible with God's nature. Thus, God allowed sin to run its course, so that the entire cosmos might witness its results and freely choose whom to serve.

Though God permitted the rebellion, He did not abandon humanity to its consequences. The plan of salvation was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). Christ, the Lamb of God, took upon Himself the penalty of sin to redeem a fallen race. This redemptive work was prefigured in the earthly sanctuary. The Ark of the Covenant, housed in the Most Holy Place, held the Ten Commandments—God's unchanging law—beneath the mercy seat, upon which the Shekinah glory dwelled. Blood sprinkled on the mercy seat symbolized atonement, pointing to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Christ is now interceding in the heavenly sanctuary, pleading His blood on our behalf, so that once again sinful humans can be restored to a right relation to God (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9).

Sin is not merely broken behavior but broken relationship. Yet through Christ, sinners are reconciled to God. Evil persists for now, but its days are numbered. The sanctuary message points to a final judgment, in which sin and evil are eradicated and God and His loving character are finally vindicated.

Scan this code to watch a fascinating video message:
Cosmic Conflict: The Origin of Evil



Questions for Reflection & Discussion

SCRIPTURE: "And it shall be in those days when you become numerous and are fruitful in the land," declares the LORD, "they will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor miss it, nor will it be made again." (Jeremiah 3:16)

"Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple" (Revelation 11:19)

REFLECTION: How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory passages? Why would Jeremiah say that the ark of the covenant will not be remembered? What ark appears in heaven?

EXPERIENCE: What aspect of the Ark of the Covenant is most meaningful to you? What would you like to study more?

QUESTION: Do you think that archeologists have found, or will ever find, the ark of the covenant that Moses made? Why or why not?

RESPONSE: Do you want Christ to cover you with His grace and to intercede for you in the courts of heaven? Do you long to see the end of sin and suffering and to live forever with Him?

More resources at www.pastordaniel.net/ancientworlds0925
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