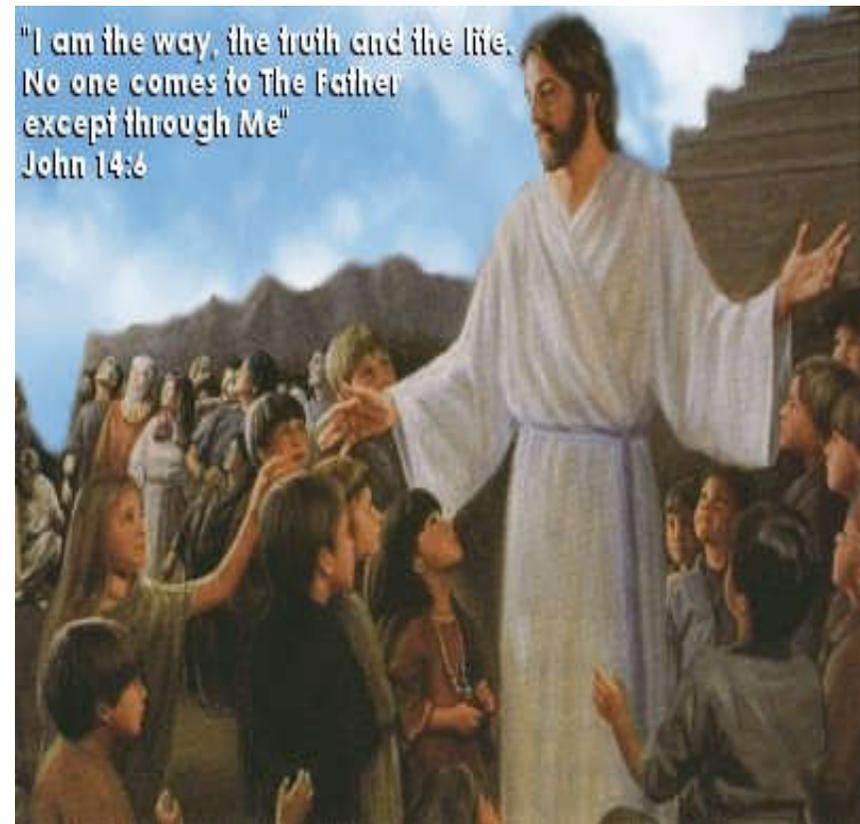


CONSECRATE YOURSELVES

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT



THE TRUE ARK OF GOD



Tough times build Christian character and faith

- Joshua 1:11 (HCSB)
11 “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘**Get provisions** ready for yourselves, for **within three days** you will be crossing the Jordan to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit.’”
- Joshua 3:5 Joshua told the people, “**Consecrate** yourselves, because the LORD will do wonders among you tomorrow.”

.". The Hebrew word for consecrate means "to prepare, to dedicate, to be hallowed, to be holy, to be separate or set apart." They must be holy. That involved Personal repentance of every known sin, being on constant alert spiritually for the hand of the Lord around us.

One of the primary reasons Israel found their way blocked, and one of the reasons we find ours often blocked, is sin. Isaiah the prophet wrote, "Indeed, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear. But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide [His] face from you so that He does not listen. (Isaiah 59:1,2)

Joshua 3:14-15 (HCSB)

¹⁴ When the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carried the ark of the covenant ahead of the people.

(But as they approached the famous river that formed a barrier between them and their longed-promised land, what they saw by the light of day was both confusing and dreadful. The Jordan was defiantly uncrossable The Jordan has swelled its banks This was the sight that greeted the multiple hundreds of thousands that pitched their tents alongside the river.)

¹⁵ Now the Jordan overflows its banks throughout the harvest season. (Jeremiah the prophet mentions the thickets of Jordan

Jeremiah 12:5-6 (HCSB)

⁵ If you have raced with runners and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in a peaceful land, what will you do in the thickets of the Jordan?

- *The Bible tells us that they spent the next three days right there, the passing flood terrifying all confidence.*
- *The waiting pounded reality into every Israelite.*
- *You could hear the doubts over night fires:*
- *"Maybe the strong among us can brave this flood, but how can we cross with infants, with the sickly, with the aged, not to mention all our possessions strapped to wagons?"*
- *An insistent "NO" began to form in their hearts as they listened to the roar of the water.*

Will we walk by sight or by faith?

- It's easy for us to relate to the emotions and thoughts of Israel. So many of us face "personal Jordans" that feel so permanent and powerful that we don't even try to make it across.
- Our lives feel stalled, stuck on the wrong side of God's promises. We read about the abundant life, but can't make it out of the wilderness.
- Churches can feel that way too, stalemated by the promise of something great with God, but blocked by all kinds of barriers.
- But with God He can turn a "no way" into a highway! The great question that loomed over the camp of Israel and over our lives today is, "Will we walk by sight or by faith?"
- Do we really believe God can handle the impossible?"

- God was about to reveal the steps that must be taken in every life and in every church if we are to move from grounded to grateful. A whole new generation of Israel learned that victory depended totally upon Him!
- As we consider the obstacles that hinder us, it can feel like we're facing an impossible task between here and there. But these things are no match for God. He knows how to get you from stuck to success Just look

A major breakthrough for Israel

- **Joshua 3:2-3 (HCSB)**
 - ² After three days the officers went through the camp
 - ³ and commanded the people: “When you see **the ark** of the covenant of the LORD your God carried by the Levitical priests, you must break camp and follow it.



What was important with the ark?

And why would God care so much about a piece of furniture that He required that it go first?

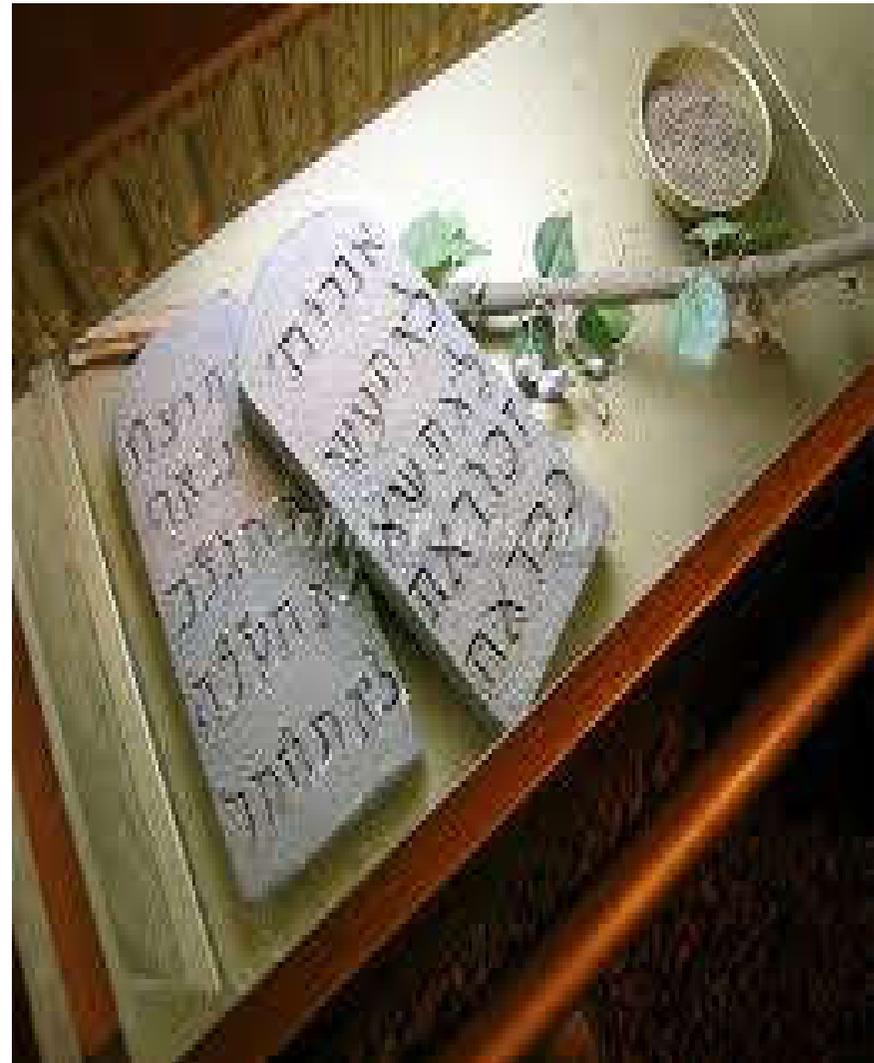
What was the big deal? Well, we get a clue when we look inside the Ark.

The stone tablets upon which the finger of God had written the Ten Commandments were inside that box, a sign to all Israel of God's desire for relationship.

There was also a pot of manna, a reminder of God's gracious provision during the previous forty years (Ex.16:33, 34).

And one other item was included: Aaron's rod—a dead stick that miraculously grew leaves and almonds to validate the power of God to use anything He willed to accomplish His will, down to the smallest detail (Numbers 17)

- Inside the Ark



But it was much more than that! You see, on top of the Ark was a gold plate called the Mercy Seat over which two statues of cherubim knelt (Ex.25:18-19). Psalm 80:1 and 99:1 describe God as "enthroned upon the cherubim." God showed up right here, above the Mercy Seat, giving current meaning to past acts of power.

The Ark was the OT equivalent to Immanuel, "God with us."
When this chest led the way, it meant God was out in front. He would, so to speak, take the first steps into Canaan. Their task was to follow His lead, to pursue His presence, to come after Him.

For as we have seen, the ark represents the power and presence of Jesus Christ Himself

The ark of the covenant was the place where God Himself came down. It symbolized the very presence of God. Indeed, this **ark of the covenant was a type of Jesus Christ**. Thus, EVERYTHING having to do with it was important – and with it there could be no compromise.

Joshua 3:4 (HCSB)

⁴ But keep a distance of about 1,000 yards between yourselves and the ark. Don't go near it, so that you can see the way to go, for you haven't traveled this way before."

He wanted all of Israel to see which way God wanted them to go. If the group in front crowded in too closely, only a handful would have seen it.

Everyone in the nation would be able to see it. The priests would bear it by rods upon their shoulders as they stride toward the white water of Jordan.

*And everybody would understand the point: God intended for Israel to breach the Jordan with Him! But it could only be done if they focused on and **followed Him.***

- **Joshua 3:15-17 (HCSB)**

¹⁵ Now the Jordan overflows its banks throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached the Jordan, their feet touched the water at its edge

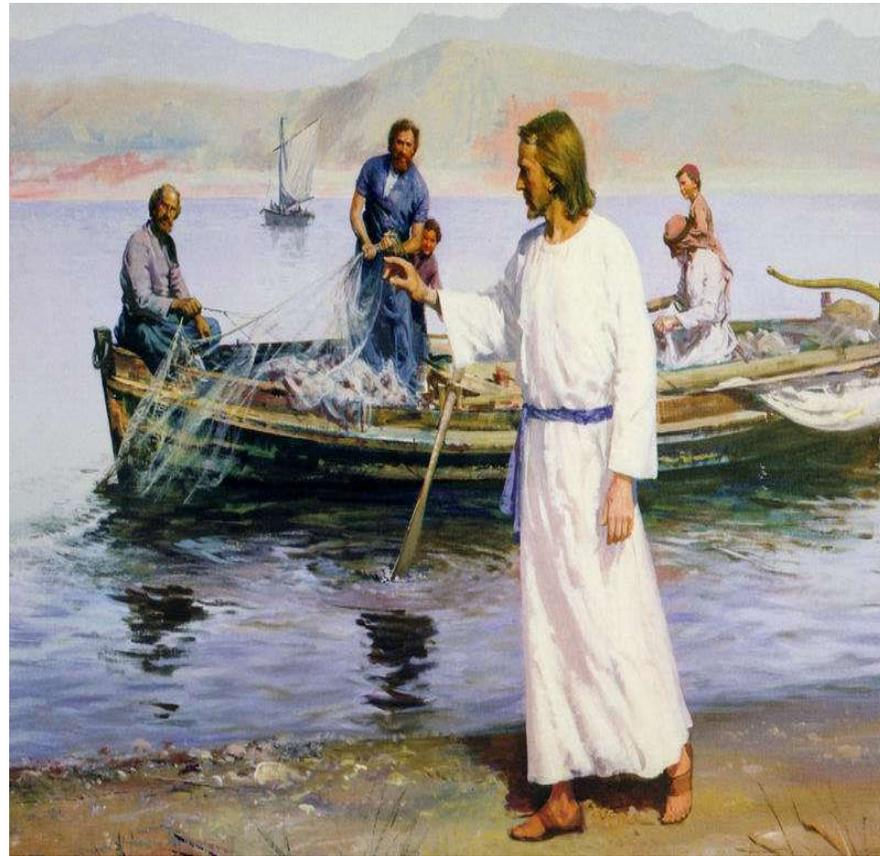
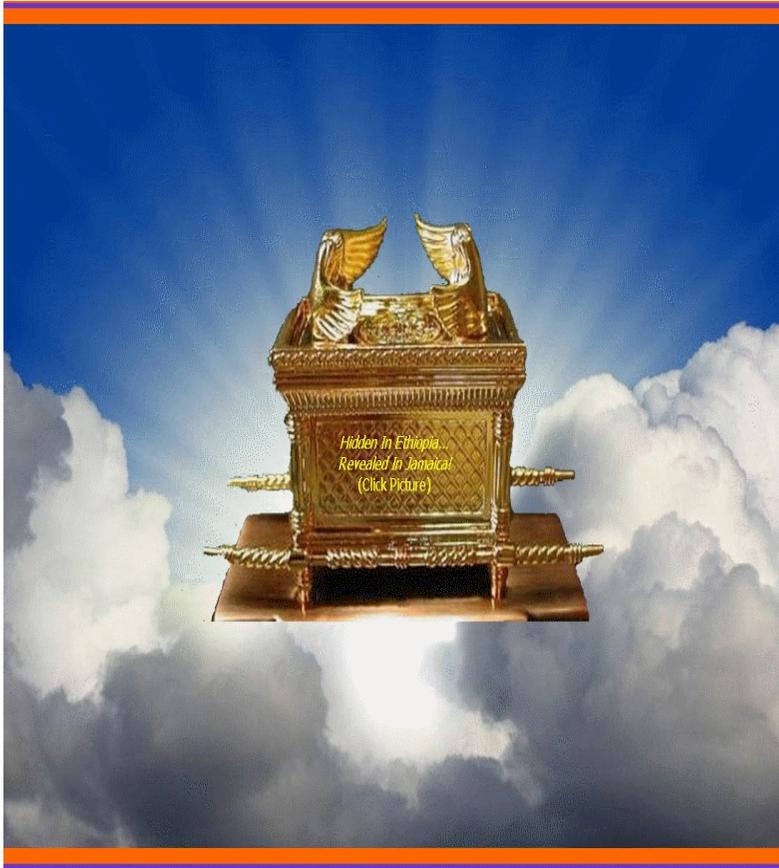
¹⁶ and the water flowing downstream stood still, rising up [in] a mass that extended as far as Adam, a city next to Zarethan. The water flowing downstream into the Sea of the Arabah (the Dead Sea) was completely cut off, and the people crossed opposite Jericho.

¹⁷ The priests carrying the ark of the LORD's covenant stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed on dry ground until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

The moment of truth has come! The priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, must step out into the flood waters and then stand still right there! The command of God to step into the water called for them to get their feet wet. Faith moves you forward in God's way, in God's timing. And there will come a moment when you must act on what God has said. If you don't, you'll never cross the Jordan.

Understand this: Focusing on the Lord is essential. And consecrating yourself to the Lord is vital. But we will never cross the river unless we take that step of faith. Our eyes and our hearts can be right on, but if we don't move our feet to meet the challenges, we will never progress in God's work. We must commit ourselves - our time, our energy, our money, our lives to what God is doing, or it won't happen.

After they stepped out, they stood still (v.8). Why? They were waiting on the power of God. In all their activity, they maintained dependence. Their standing still testified to the fact that everything came from God. They were acknowledging that it wasn't their work that changed anything--it was God and God alone. They stepped out, and they stood still.



Centuries later, the true Ark of God would come among us, the living Immanuel.

Jesus fulfilled the Law

The Ten Commandments;

Matthew 5:17 (HCSB)

¹⁷ “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.



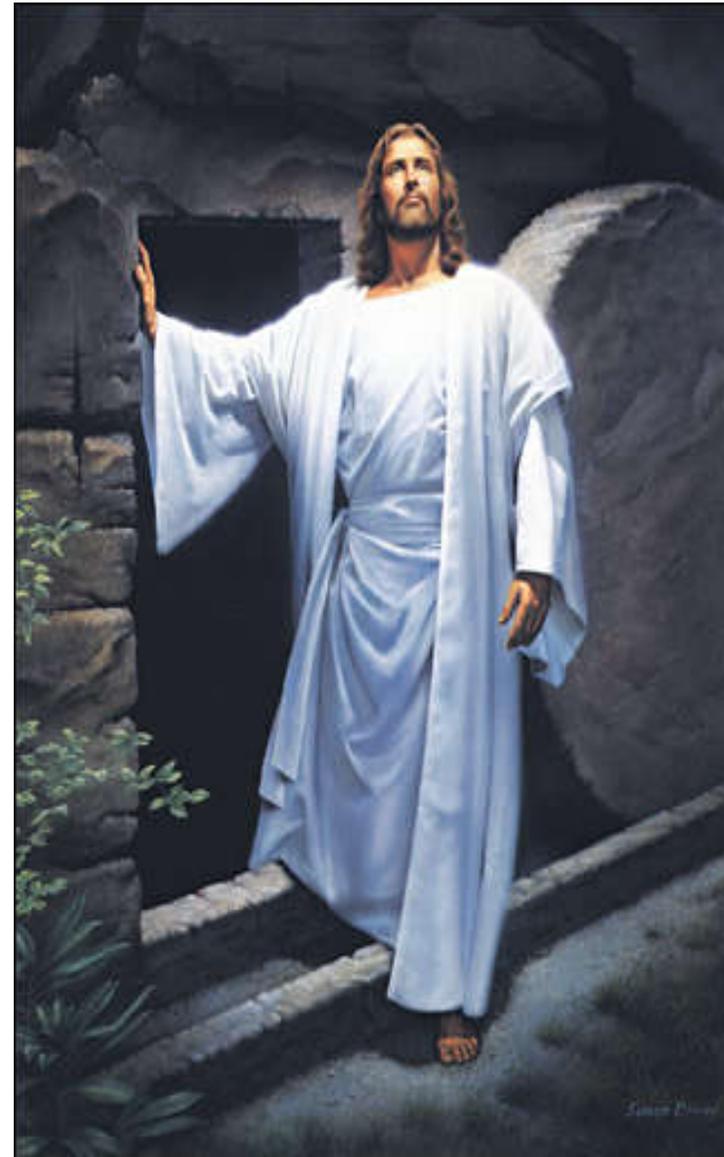
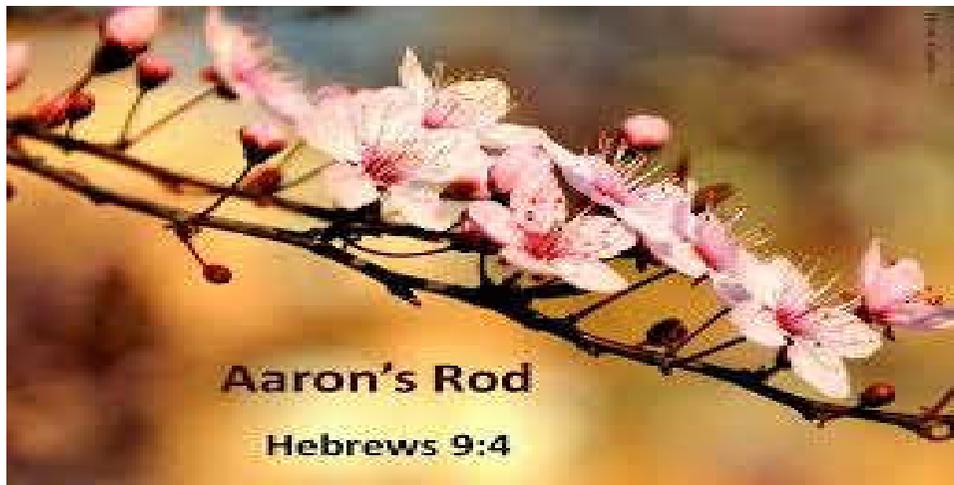
CHRIST IS THE BREAD OF LIFE(MANNA)

- The Ark preserved the manna by which God fed them in the wilderness; Christ is the bread of life **John 6:48-50 (HCSB)**
48 I am the bread of life.
49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.
50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die.



LIFE OUT OF DEATH

- The Ark held a symbol of God's power to bring life out of death; Jesus is alive from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father. **Matthew 28:6-7 (HCSB)**
6 He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said.
Come and see the place where He lay.



A Jordan stretches before us; the challenges are too much for us. We must believe that nothing is too difficult for God. What is impossible with men is possible with God. (Luke 18:27).

We must focus our souls on Christ and follow him. **Matthew 4:19 (KJV)**

¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

We must cast out all sin and set ourselves apart to Him.

And we must be ready to move when He does His work, always being mindful that if anything is going to last, it's from the Lord.

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