

## A TORN CURTAIN AND A BETTER COVENANT

### I. [Hebrews 8:6-13](#) [Hebrews 9:1-15](#) [Mark 15:37-39](#) [Hebrews 10:19-23](#)

**A. [Hebrews 8:6-13](#) (NLT)** The unknown author of Hebrews writes: **6** *But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the One who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.* **7** *If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it.* **8** *But when God found fault with the people, He said: (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**) "The day is coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. (This won't take place for 550 years!) **9** This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. (Happened 900 years earlier!) They did not remain faithful to My covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the LORD. **10** But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. **11** And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know Me already. **12** And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." **13** When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means He has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.*

**B.** Most of us have grown up in era of movie sequels and prequels. Some are good and others not so much. There've been 7 Rocky movies and the same number of Lord of the Rings; 8 Star Wars, 8 Planet of the Apes, 8 Harry Potter, and 8 X-Men films; 9 Bat Man movies; 11 Marvel movies, 12 Star Trek films and the same number of Friday the 13th; 24 James Bond flicks; but Godzilla leads the pack with something like 30 episodes. Most maintain the same essential plot lines as the originals. Some keep the same heroes and villains while others create new ones. In most of these the good guys defeat the bad guys and all is well in the universe until the next blockbuster arrives.

**C.** What I just read in Hebrews 8 and what I'm about to read in Hebrews 9, could be called prequels to last week's main text of Hebrews 10. The author of Hebrews, borrowing much of his imagery from the OT, is appealing to Jewish Christians who are wavering in their faith in Jesus Christ. He stresses that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and the One who instituted a new and better covenant. What's also great about this better covenant is that includes Gentiles, i.e. Us! The Bible calls us the grafted-in wild olive branch. I call us Tribe 13. Thus these words apply to us...

**D.** When the Bible says something more than once, what do you think that means? When it says the same thing multiple times, what does that mean? And what if the Bible tells me things that don't interest me or tells me things I don't agree with, what do you suppose that means? Remember this: our opinions never alter the truth. And our ways of seeing things don't influence God's perspective. God never needs to adapt to us. His way of thinking is always right and always better...

**E.** Many view the Bible as a book about us. Truthfully it's a book written for us but ultimately it's a book about God. God's Word is all about His will and ways. It reveals that since the fall we've not been about His will and word and ways...

**F. But despite our rebellion, God's Word tells the story of how He redeems us, rescues us from sin and death and eternal damnation. God's plan and promises to make us His own, despite our rebellion, unfold in sacred agreements, i.e. covenants. Today we read about the Better Covenant, the one instituted by Christ through His sacrifice on the cross where He extinguishes the fire of God's wrath, imputing His record of righteousness to us, adopting us as His own children...**

**G. Hebrews 9:1-15 (NLT) will sound both familiar and new:** *1 That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. 2 There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. 3 Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place. 4 In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. (So how many Raiders of the Lost Ark movies were there?) Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now. (When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and they destroyed the first temple, the Ark of the Covenant disappeared.) 6 When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. 7 But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. 8 By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use. 9 This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them. 10 For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies--physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established. 11 So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. 12 With His own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. 13 Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. 14 Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. 15 That is why He is the One who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.*

**H. In the original tabernacle as well as the temple, there was a curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. As our text just stated, once a year the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place. He would do this on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and he would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. In 1965, Hall of Fame pitcher, Sandy Koufax refused to pitch in the first game of the World Series because it fell on Yom Kippur. Koufax yielded his start to Don Drysdale who gave up 7 runs in 2-2/3 innings. When Drysdale was yanked from the mound, he told his manager, "I bet right now you wish I was Jewish too!" But the Dodgers became champs, winning the Series over the Twins in the 7th game...**

**I. Good Friday is our Day of Atonement. Jesus, as our High Priest, offered His own blood as atonement for our sins and did this once for all time on the cross. He was not only the High Priest, He Himself was the sacrifice!**

**J. So what about that curtain that separated the two holy places? It was still hanging in Herod's temple in the time of Jesus. Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described it as woven curtain, 60 feet high, 30 feet wide, and 6 inches thick. It was no small curtain! But something happened to this massive curtain when our Lord died on the cross. Mark 15:37-39 (ESV) tells us: **37** *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39* *And when the centurion, who stood facing Him, saw that in this way He breathed his last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"***

**K. That curtain might as well had a sign on it: "Stay out! This place is Holy!" Now, ripped asunder from top to bottom by the fingers of God Himself, shots aloud: "Come in!" "Welcome into My presence!" Further it declares: "I have set you free from the law of sin and death!" "My Son has met the requirements of law, kept it perfectly, and His unblemished record I now bestow upon you!" Come to Me!" "Come to Me My beloved children! Come to Me free, clean, and forgiven!"**

**L. Hebrews 10:19-23 (NIV) is our epilogue of faith: **19** *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, 21 and since we have a Great Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.***

**\* Close with Prayer...**

## **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

### **Hebrews 8:6-13 (NLT)**

**6** But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the One who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises. **7** If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. **8** But when God found fault with the people, He said: "The day is coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. **9** This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to My covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the LORD. **10** But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. **11** And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know Me already. **12** And I will

forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” **13** When God speaks of a “new” covenant, it means He has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

### **Hebrews 9:1-15 (NLT)**

**1** That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. **2** There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. **3** Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place. **4** In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron’s staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. **5** Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark’s cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now. **6** When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. **7** But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. **8** By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use. **9** This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them. **10** For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies--physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established. **11** So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. **12** With His own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. **13** Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. **14** Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. **15** That is why He is the One who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

### **Mark 15:37-39 (ESV)**

**37** And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. **38** And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. **39** And when the centurion, who stood facing Him, saw that in this way He breathed his last, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”

### **Hebrews 10:19-23 (NIV)**

**19** Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, **21** and since we have a Great Priest over the house of God,

**22** let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

### **1 John 2:1-2 (AMP)**

**1** My little children (believers, dear ones), I am writing you these things so that you will not sin and violate God's law. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate [who will intercede for us] with the Father: Jesus Christ the righteous [the upright, the just One, who conforms to the Father's will in every way—purpose, thought, and action]. **2** And He [that same Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins [the atoning sacrifice that holds back the wrath of God that would otherwise be directed at us because of our sinful nature—our worldliness, our lifestyle]; and not for ours alone, but also for [the sins of all believers throughout] the whole world.

### **Bonus Goodies**

**What Was the Significance of the Temple Veil Being Torn in Two When Jesus Died?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OsJoVZiILs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OsJoVZiILs)

**Are There Recorded Events About the Torn Temple Veil? - Dr. John Barnett (DTBM)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqA8IHG7qFo>

**The Veil Torn in Two - John J. Parsons (Hebrew for Christians)**

<https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Articles/Parochet/parochet.html>

**God's Gallery - The John 10:10 Project**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWzTcHgiOmQ>

### **More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras**

#### **Leviticus 16:29-34 (NIV)**

**29** This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or an alien living among you-- **30** because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. **31** It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. **32** The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments **33** and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community. **34** "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

#### **Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)**

**31** "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

### **Hebrews 7:22-27 (NLT)**

**22** Because of this oath, Jesus is the One who guarantees this better covenant with God. **23** There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. **24** But because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever. **25** Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. **26** He is the kind of high priest we need because He is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven. **27** Unlike those other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins.

### **Hebrews 9:16-28 (NLT)**

**16** Now when someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. **17** The will goes into effect only after the person's death. While the person who made it is still alive, the will cannot be put into effect. **18** That is why even the first covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal. **19** For after Moses had read each of God's commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God's law and all the people, using hyssop branches and scarlet wool. **20** Then he said, "This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you." **21** And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the Tabernacle and on everything used for worship. **22** In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. **23** That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. **24** For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. **25** And He did not enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. **26** If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice. **27** And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once

for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.

### **Hebrews 10:1-14 (NLT)**

**1** The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. **2** If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. **3** But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. **4** For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. **5** That is why, when Christ came into the world, He said to God, *“You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But You have given Me a body to offer.* **6** *You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin.* **7** *Then I said, ‘Look, I have come to do Your will, O God--as is written about Me in the Scriptures.’”* **8** First, Christ said, *“You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were You pleased with them”* (though they are required by the law of Moses). **9** Then He said, *“Look, I have come to do Your will.”* He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. **10** For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. **11** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **12** But our High Priest offered Himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. **13** There He waits until His enemies are humbled and made a footstool under His feet. **14** For by that one offering He forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

### **Romans 7:7-12 (NLT)**

**7** Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, “You must not covet.” **8** But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. **9** At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, **10** and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. **11** Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. **12** But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

### **Romans 8:1-4 (NLT)**

**1** So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. **2** And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. **3** The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. **4** He did this so

that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

#### **Luke 23:44-46 (ESV)**

**44** It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, **45** while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" And having said this He breathed his last.

#### **Matthew 27:51 (ESV)**

**51** And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

#### **Quote by Origen (185 - 254 AD)**

"God taught the people of the old covenant how to celebrate the ritual offered to Him in atonement for the sins of men. But you have come to Christ, the true High Priest. Through His blood He has made God turn to you in mercy and has reconciled you with the Father. You must not think simply of ordinary blood but you must learn to recognize instead the blood of the Word. Listen to Him as He tells you: 'This is My blood, which will be shed for you for the forgiveness of sins (Mat 26:28).'"

#### **Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"You never hear Jesus say in Pilate's judgment hall one word that would let you imagine that He was sorry that He had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us. When His hands are pierced, when He is parched with fever, His tongue dried up like a shard of pottery, when His whole body is dissolved into the dust of death, you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like Jesus is going back on His commitment."

#### **Quote by Martin Luther**

"Christ took our sins and the sins of the whole world as well as the Father's wrath on His shoulders, and He has drowned them both in Himself so that we are thereby reconciled to God and become completely righteous."

#### **Unholy Made Holy**

Oswald Chambers

We trample the blood of the Son of God if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only explanation for the forgiveness of God and for the unfathomable depth of His forgetting is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the outcome of our personal realization of the atonement which He has worked out for us. It does not matter who or what we are; there is absolute reinstatement into God by the death of Jesus Christ and by no other way, not because Jesus Christ pleads, but because He died. It is not earned, but accepted. All the pleading which deliberately refuses to recognize the Cross is of no avail; it is battering at a door other

than the one that Jesus has opened. Our Lord does not pretend we are all right when we are all wrong. The atonement is a propitiation whereby God, through the death of Jesus, makes an unholy man holy.

### **Justification Only Through Atonement**

Author Unknown

For several generations the Edinburgh review has carried on its cover the Latin epigram, "The Judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted." The guilty is sometimes acquitted in human courts, but this never happens in the Divine Court. There, if man is justified, or, to put it in plain present-day English, acquitted or found not guilty, it is in strict harmony with the law of right, of justice. How, then, shall mortal man be just with God? Man is a sinner. The penalty upon sin as announced by God is death, eternal death, spiritual death; and God will by no means clear the guilty. The only way whereby God can remain Just, and still become the Justifier of the guilty, is through the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

### **Abraham's Offering**

For family devotions, Martin Luther once read the account of Abraham offering Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. His wife, Katie, said, "I do not believe it. God would not have treated his son like that!" "But, Katie," Luther replied, "He did."

- *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers*, W. Wiersbe, p. 191.

### **Flavius Josephus on the Herod's Temple**

<https://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-5.htm>

4. As to the holy house itself, which was placed in the midst [of the inmost court], that most sacred part of the temple, it was ascended to by twelve steps; and in front its height and its breadth were equal, and each a hundred cubits, though it was behind forty cubits narrower; for on its front it had what may be styled shoulders on each side, that passed twenty cubits further. Its first gate was seventy cubits high, and twenty-five cubits broad; but this gate had no doors; for it represented the universal visibility of heaven, and that it cannot be excluded from any place. Its front was covered with gold all over, and through it the first part of the house, that was more inward, did all of it appear; which, as it was very large, so did all the parts about the more inward gate appear to shine to those that saw them; but then, as the entire house was divided into two parts within, it was only the first part of it that was open to our view. Its height extended all along to ninety cubits in height, and its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty. But that gate which was at this end of the first part of the house was, as we have already observed, all over covered with gold, as was its whole wall about it; it had also golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height. But then this house, as it was divided into two parts, the inner part was lower than the appearance of the outer, and had golden doors of fifty-five cubits altitude, and sixteen in breadth; but before these doors there was a veil of equal largeness with the

doors. It was a Babylonian curtain, embroidered with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple, and of a contexture that was truly wonderful. Nor was this mixture of colors without its mystical interpretation, but was a kind of image of the universe; for by the scarlet there seemed to be enigmatically signified fire, by the fine flax the earth, by the blue the air, and by the purple the sea; two of them having their colors the foundation of this resemblance; but the fine flax and the purple have their own origin for that foundation, the earth producing the one, and the sea the other. This curtain had also embroidered upon it all that was mystical in the heavens, excepting that of the [twelve] signs, representing living creatures.

5. When any persons entered into the temple, its floor received them. This part of the temple therefore was in height sixty cubits, and its length the same; whereas its breadth was but twenty cubits: but still that sixty cubits in length was divided again, and the first part of it was cut off at forty cubits, and had in it three things that were very wonderful and famous among all mankind, the candlestick, the table [of shew-bread], and the altar of incense. Now the seven lamps signified the seven planets; for so many there were springing out of the candlestick. Now the twelve loaves that were upon the table signified the circle of the zodiac and the year; but the altar of incense, by its thirteen kinds of sweet-smelling spices with which the sea replenished it, signified that God is the possessor of all things that are both in the uninhabitable and habitable parts of the earth, and that they are all to be dedicated to his use. But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies. Now, about the sides of the lower part of the temple, there were little houses, with passages out of one into another; there were a great many of them, and they were of three stories high; there were also entrances on each side into them from the gate of the temple. But the superior part of the temple had no such little houses any further, because the temple was there narrower, and forty cubits higher, and of a smaller body than the lower parts of it. Thus we collect that the whole height, including the sixty cubits from the floor, amounted to a hundred cubits.

- Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book V, Chapter 5. Check out: [:https://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-5.htm](https://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-5.htm)

### **What Happened to the Ark of the Covenant?**

By S. Michael Houdmann - GotQuestions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/ark-covenant.html>

**Question:** *What happened to the Ark of the Covenant?*

**Answer:** What happened to the [Ark of the Covenant](#) is a question that has fascinated theologians, Bible students, and archeologists for centuries. In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah of Judah ordered the caretakers of the Ark of the Covenant to return it to the temple in Jerusalem ([2 Chronicles 35:1-6](#); cf. [2 Kings 23:21-23](#)). That is the last time the ark's location is mentioned in the Scriptures. Forty years later, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem and raided the temple. Less than ten years after that, he returned, took what was left in the temple, and then burnt it and the

city to the ground. So what happened to the ark? Was it taken by Nebuchadnezzar? Was it destroyed with the city? Or was it removed and hidden safely away, as evidently happened when Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt raided the temple during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam? ("Evidently" because, if Shishak had managed to take the Ark, why did Josiah ask the Levites to return it? If the Ark was in Egypt—à la the plot-line of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—the Levites would not have possessed it and therefore could not have returned it.)

Interestingly, [Revelation 11:19](#) mentions the ark as being in heaven: *"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm."* This verse has led some to speculate that the ark was taken up to heaven to be preserved there. But the ark that John sees in his vision of heaven is probably not the same ark that Moses constructed. We know that the articles in the tabernacle were *"copies of the heavenly things"* ([Hebrews 9:23](#)) and that the sanctuary itself was but *"a copy and shadow of what is in heaven"* ([Hebrews 8:5](#)). [Revelation 11](#) deals with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which ushers in a final round of judgments upon the earth. John's glimpse of the ark is probably meant as a reminder that God has not forgotten His people, that He is present with them, and that true worship will soon be restored.

The non-canonical book of 2 Maccabees reports that just prior to the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah, "following a divine revelation, ordered that the tabernacle and the ark should accompany him and...he went off to the mountain which Moses climbed to see God's inheritance [i.e., Mt. Nebo; cf. [Deuteronomy 34:1](#)]. When Jeremiah arrived there, he found a room in a cave in which he put the tent, the ark, and the altar of incense; then he blocked up the entrance" (2:4-5). However, "Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the path, but they could not find it. When Jeremiah heard of this, he reprovved them: 'The place is to remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows them mercy. Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord will be seen in the cloud, just as it appeared in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Temple might be gloriously sanctified'" (2:6-8). It is not known if this secondhand (see 2:1) account is accurate; even if it is, we will not know until the Lord comes back, as the account itself claims.

Other theories concerning the whereabouts of the lost ark include Rabbis Shlomo Goren and Yehuda Getz's claim that it is hidden beneath the temple mount, having been buried there before Nebuchadnezzar could steal it away. Unfortunately, the temple mount is now home to the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic holy site, and the local Muslim community refuses to allow it to be excavated. So we cannot know if Rabbis Goren and Getz are correct.

Explorer Vendyl Jones, among others, believes that an artifact found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the enigmatic "Copper Scroll" of Qumran Cave 3, is actually a treasure map of sorts detailing the location of a number of precious treasures taken from the temple before the Babylonians arrived, among them the lost Ark of the Covenant. Whether or

not this is true remains to be seen, as no one has yet been able to locate all of the necessary geographical landmarks listed on the scroll. Interestingly, some scholars speculate that the Copper Scroll may actually be the record referred to in [2 Maccabees 2:1](#) and [4](#), which describes Jeremiah hiding the ark. While this is an interesting speculation, it remains unsubstantiated.

Former East African correspondent for "The Economist," Graham Hancock, published a book in 1992 entitled *The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant*, in which he argued that the ark had been stowed away in Saint Mary of Zion's Church in Aksum, an ancient city of Ethiopia. Explorer Robert Cornuke of the B.A.S.E. Institute, also believes the Ark may now reside in Aksum. However, no one has yet found it there. Similarly, archaeologist Michael Sanders believes the ark is hidden away in an ancient Egyptian temple in the Israeli village of Djaharya, but he has yet to actually find it there.

A doubtful Irish tradition maintains that the Ark is buried under the Hill of Tara in Ireland. Some scholars believe that this is the source of the Irish "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow" legend. Even less believable are the claims of Ron Wyatt and Tom Crotser, Wyatt claiming to actually have seen the lost Ark of the Covenant buried under Mt. Calvary and Crotser claiming to have seen it on Mt. Pisgah near Mt. Nebo. Both of these men are held in low esteem by the archaeological community, and neither has been able to substantiate the wild claims with any evidence.

In the end, the ark remains lost to all but God. Interesting theories like the ones presented above continue to be offered, but the ark has yet to be found. The writer of 2 Maccabees may very well be right; we may not find out what happened to the lost Ark of the Covenant until the Lord Himself returns.

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