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# Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

**—Proverbs 18:10**

## A Glimpse Inside the Ark

Indiana Jones famously knew that you shouldn't look inside the ark of the covenant. But I'll tell you what's in there.

In the Old Testament tabernacle stood the ark of the covenant. The ark was a large box of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The lid formed the “mercy seat,” with two golden cherubs stretching their wings across it (Exo. 25:10–20). The ark represented the presence of God on earth (25:22). It was to remain in the holiest place in the tabernacle while the people were camped, and was to be carried in front while the people marched (Num. 10:33–36).

The ark was not empty. In fact, the primary function of an ark is to contain things; the same word is used of the boat Noah built to safely carry a remnant of the world's population during the flood. Hebrews 9:4 says that stored within this chest were “a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.”

Nowadays, families often keep a trunk in the attic full of articles that evoke precious memories—picture albums, awards, diaries, the children's art projects. Here, it seems to me, God has done the

same with the ark of the covenant. What was the significance of each of these items, if God commanded they be kept forever in such a special place, as a memorial to the people?

### **The Golden Jar of Manna—A Reminder of God’s Provision**

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He took them into the wilderness. Before long, they grew hungry, and cried out to God for food. In Exodus 16, God rained bread from heaven, called manna. It was white and flaky, and tasted like wafers with honey. Each day when Israel awoke, God had provided just enough manna for a single day—an omer per person (16:16–18). According to the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, an omer is equivalent to about half a gallon (Vol. 5, p. 917). What an amazing thing it must have been to arise and see manna covering everything, like a layer of frost upon the ground!

Then the Lord commanded, “let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt” (16:32).

God wanted His people to have a physical memorial of His provision for them, a reminder of the days when they were utterly dependent upon Him for sustenance. Israel was preparing to move into a land flowing with milk and honey, where the ground would yield bounty. It would be easy for the people to grow accustomed to this, and forget that it was God who watered the earth and provided their daily bread (Deut. 8:7ff).

Let none of us forget the days when we relied upon God for our daily bread. Let us remember, even when our homes are paneled and our plates are full, that God is the provider of all good things. Let us never cease to feel utterly dependent on God. Let us pray to God for our daily portion (Matt. 6:11) and give Him the credit when it comes.

### **Aaron’s Rod Which Budded—A Reminder of God’s Power**

In Numbers 16, the people in the wilderness had grown rebellious against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The sons of Korah attempted to take control, but God destroyed them all by splitting open the earth beneath their feet.

Still, the people were not satisfied with the authority that God had vested in Moses and Aaron. God commanded twelve rods be placed in front of the tabernacle, each with the name of one of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon it. The next morning, the rod belonging to Aaron, head of the tribe of Levi, had sprouted green growth, produced blossoms, and even produced ripe almonds (Num. 17:8)! By this miracle, God left no question that the priestly tribe of Levi would have God's authority to lead the people in spiritual matters. God commanded that the rod "be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put an end to their grumblings against Me" (17:10).

God's authority is equally important to remember today, for it is frequently challenged. God gave the authority to teach His word to Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:29; 28:19–20; John 12:49). In turn, Jesus appointed the Apostles and prophets to reveal God's word to mankind (John 20:21; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 2:12–13; 2 Cor. 5:20; Gal. 1:6–10). The Apostles wrote the word in various documents, which are collected in our New Testaments today (Eph. 3:2–5). God caused the Apostles to perform signs and miracles, to prove that their teaching carried with it the approval of God (Mark 16:15–18; Heb. 2:3–4). The Bible is perfect, the inspired word of God Himself (1 Tim. 3:16–17).

Increasingly, some men rebel against God's authority vested in His written word. They attempt to attract followers to emotions, visions, opinions, and charisma. They appeal to traditions and the creeds of men. Or they put their own authority ahead of God's. These are all as bad as the sons of Korah. They encourage rebellion against the divinely established and approved authority of God's word. Let us never forget the importance of God's revelation, the Bible.

### **The Tables of the Covenant—A Reminder of God's Principles**

When God called Moses up to Mt. Sinai to deliver the Law, He gave Moses two tablets of stone, written by His own finger, upon which were the law of God (Exodus 31:18; Deut. 9:10). These tablets were written on both sides (32:15).

Common depictions show the two tablets as containing the Ten Commandments, five on each tablet. But it is more likely, according to the practice of covenant-making in the day of Moses, that each tablet was a full copy of the decalogue, one copy for the people, and one copy for God. These tablets God commanded be put into the ark as a permanent “testimony” to the people (Ex. 25:16; 40:20; Deut. 10:5).

In a similar fashion, the United States government keeps on public display the founding documents of our country, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Local municipalities keep official deeds and contracts on record, so that the documents may be referenced for confirmation when necessary.

The stone tablets represented the principles of behavior that God demanded His people follow. Though only the Ten Commandments were written on the tablets (Deut. 10:4), they represented the entire law and the covenant that God had made in the law. The rest of the Law of Moses was in a book next to the ark (31:26). God promised that if they obeyed the words of the law, God would bless and protect them.

Let us likewise treasure within our hearts the principles and promises God has made to us. If we cherish God’s will and obey His word, then we can look forward to the day when He will fulfill His promise and give us eternal fellowship with Him in heaven. This “contract” can serve as a source of hope and comfort even in the most difficult times.

Sadly, Israel did not maintain these memorials long. By 1 Kings 8:9, the rod and manna had been lost. King Manasseh temporarily removed the ark and tablets (2 Chron. 35:3). The people forgot God’s provision, God’s power, and God’s principles, and were soon cast off into exile.

Though we have no ark, let us “sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts” (1 Pet. 3:15). God’s presence dwells in heaven (Rev. 11:19), and if we will keep these memorials, that is where our future lies! —*J. Guzzetta*

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### **Quote of the Week:**

“A leader has two important qualities: he knows where he must go, and he is able to persuade others to go with him.” —*author unknown*