

Contents of the Ark

	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT	SYMBOLISM
STONE TABLETS WITH TEN COMMANDMENTS	Deuteronomy 10:5 	Hebrews 9:4	The stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, written by God's own hand, were to remind the people of God's holy nature (Exodus 10:1-17). Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17-18).
A JAR OF MANNA	Exodus 16:32-34 	Hebrews 9:4	The jar of manna reminded the people of God's constant provision (Exodus 16:32-34). Scripture says Christ is the bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (John 6:32-35, 48-51).
AARON'S ROD	Numbers 17:10 	Hebrews 9:4	Aaron's rod confirmed God's choice and anointing of Aaron as high priest. The Messiah was the chosen and anointed one (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14), just like Aaron (Numbers 17:5).

The references to the ark in Scripture include:

- Ark of testimony Exodus 25:22
- Ark of the covenant Numbers 10:33
- Ark of God 1 Samuel 3:3
- Ark of the LORD God 1 Kings 2:26
- Holy ark 2 Chronicles 35:3
- Ark of your strength Psalm 132:8

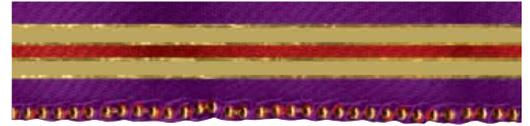


THE ARK OF THE COVENANT



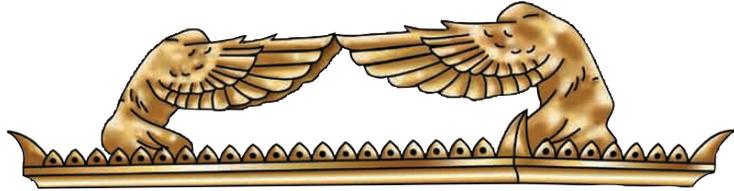
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The Mercy Seat

God promised to be present upon the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22; see also 30:6, 36). The mercy seat was a kind of portable throne, carried along the poles of the ark and complete with a canopy of angel wings. The cherubim faced the center of the seat while their wings overspread it. The picture of God as King of Israel enthroned on the mercy seat is clear no matter where the ark might be: in the wilderness, in battle, or in his tent (the Tabernacle).



The mercy seat was actually the top or lid of the ark of the covenant measuring 2.5 cubits by 1.5 cubits (3 feet 9 inches by 2 feet 3 inches). It was made of gold and had two golden cherubim at either end.

THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD

God's presence in the Old Testament was often seen as a fiery glow accompanied by smoke or a cloud.

Genesis 15:17	God is seen in a vision as a smoking fire pot and flaming torch
Exodus 14:24	The LORD is seen as a pillar of fire and cloud
Leviticus 16:2	The LORD appears as a cloud on the mercy seat
Numbers 7:89	The LORD is heard as a voice on the mercy seat
Numbers 9:15–22	The LORD appears over the Tabernacle as a cloud and fire
Deuteronomy 1:33	The LORD leads Israel as fire and cloud
1 Kings 8:10–11	The LORD fills Solomon's temple as a cloud
Isaiah 4:5	Prophecy of God as cloud, smoke and flaming fire
Isaiah 6:4	Isaiah sees God as smoke in the heavenly temple

Christ is God's presence among us. During his earthly ministry, Jesus was Emmanuel—God with us. Now that Jesus has returned to his Father, the Holy Spirit is his presence among us.

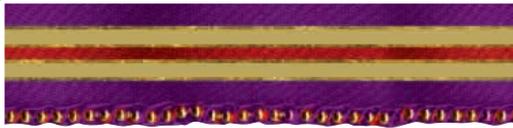
The mercy seat was also the ultimate place of appeal for God's grace. It was the place where, once a year, the high priest would sprinkle the blood of sacrifice from the bronze altar. Only on this day, in a precise manner was God to be approached in the Most Holy Place, and only by the chosen high priest. Today, because Jesus our Great High Priest has made once for all time his sacrifice, we are urged as believers to "boldly approach the throne of grace..." (Hebrews 4:16).

THE SHEKINAH

Many people think of the cloud in the Most Holy Place as God's *shekinah*. In a late Jewish tradition, the term *shekinah* became associated with God's presence. The word *shekinah* derives from a Hebrew word meaning "dwelling."

The word itself does not appear in the Old Testament. A similar word (*shakan*) occurs in, for example, Exodus 14:20; 40:34–38; Leviticus 9:23, 24; Numbers 14:10; 16:19, 42.

However, in the Exodus and the wilderness experience, God's presence was represented with the cloud during the day and the column of fire during the night.



Jesus and the Pillar

From the moment the Israelites left Egypt, danger followed them all the way. Between the Egyptian army pursuing them and the dangers in the wilderness, the Israelites were a crowd of scared, tired people. They had seen God’s power in Egypt, but they were walking into the unknown. Seeing the cloud during the day and the column of fire during the night was probably a great comfort. The pillar of cloud and fire functioned as a reminder of God’s guiding and protective care, shown in Exodus 14:19, the pillar interposed between Israel and the pursuing Egyptian army, striking fear into the camp of Egypt and encouraging the Israelites.

When Jesus gathered his disciples for a last conversation, he told them about his departure from them. Fear, anxiety, and uncertainty grew in their hearts. However, Jesus left them with a great promise: the Comforter would come in his place. The Holy Spirit would come to each of Jesus’ disciples to bring comfort, to teach, and to guide. Acts 2:1–4 narrates the coming of the Spirit. It describes a *theophany* (see sidebar): the sound of a “violent wind” and “what seemed to be tongues of fire.” Any reader familiar with God’s appearances in the Old Testament would recognize these descriptions as a theophany. Just like the cloud and the pillar of fire, the Holy Spirit continues God’s guiding care for his people.

THEOPHANY

The word *theophany* derives from a Greek word meaning “appearance of God.” A theophany is another instance of God’s special presence.

In some theophanies, God appears in human form, as when he appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre (Genesis 18).

In other occasions, God appears with a great display of power. His appearance at Mount Sinai filled the Israelites with great fear (Exodus 19:16; see also Nahum 1:2–6).

However, God can also appear in a quiet, gentle way, as he did to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings 19).

Paul’s vision of the resurrected Christ was a theophanic revelation (Acts 9:1–6).

MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD’S PRESENCE

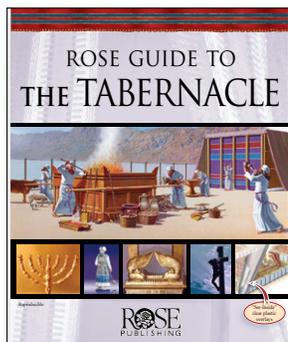
Text	Setting	Manifestation
Genesis 15:12–21	God met Abraham and made a covenant with him. This covenant sealed God’s promise to give to Abraham a land.	God’s presence occurred in the form of darkness and fire.
Exodus 13:21–22	As the children of Israel were leaving, God guided them away from Egypt.	God’s presence appeared as a cloud during the day and a column of fire during the night.
Exodus 19:16–20; 24:16–17	After three months out of Egypt, the people of Israel arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai.	God’s presence became visible with a great display of power. Darkness, thunder, and lightening covered the mountain.
Exodus 40:36–38; Numbers 9:15–23;	The Israelites camped around the Tabernacle. God would let them know when to move or remain in place.	God’s presence took the form of the cloud over and inside the Tabernacle. When God decided it was time to move, his presence appeared as a column of fire.

Jesus and the Ark of the Covenant

SHADOW (TYPE)	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT	BIBLE REFERENCES
THE TABERNACLE	 The place where God as spirit dwelled among his people.	Jesus is God in the flesh dwelling among his people.	Exodus 25; Isaiah 9:6 Matthew 1:22-23 John 1:14, 14:8-10
THE HIGH PRIEST	 The high priest offered gifts and sacrifices for sins in the Most Holy Place.	Jesus is our high priest of the true Tabernacle made by God, not by man.	Exodus 28:1; 29:9; Leviticus 16:30 Hebrews 4:14-15; 8:1-3; 9:11
THE SACRIFICE	 Each year, the high priest offered a blood sacrifice for the sin of the people.	Jesus was the perfect and final sacrifice for all time.	Exodus 30:10 Romans 3:21-26; 5:8-10 Hebrews 9:12-15; 10:1-14
THE ARK	 Place of God's presence.	Jesus is God in human form.	Exodus 25:22 John 1:14
ARK CONTENTS: TABLE OF THE LAW	 The Law given by God.	Jesus said that he came to "fulfill the Law."	Exodus 20:1-17 Matthew 5:17-18; 22:36-40 Luke 16:16-17
ARK CONTENTS: AARON'S ROD	 Represented God's choice.	Jesus is God's choice.	Numbers 17:5, 8, 10 Matthew 3:17 Hebrews 3:1-2; 9:4
ARK CONTENTS: MANNA	 Given by God as food to the people in the wilderness.	Jesus called himself the "bread of life."	Exodus 16 John 6:35, 48-51

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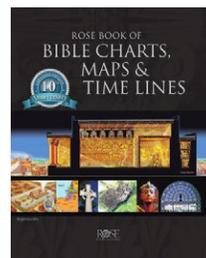
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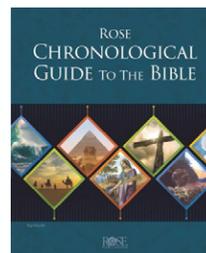


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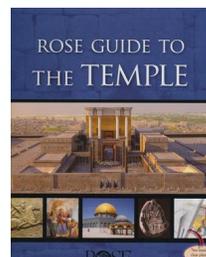
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