

PRECIOUS CONTAINERS
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There came a time when Israel forgot the value of the Ark of the Covenant. Like most precious articles of tabernacle worship, this large chest was covered in gold. But its cover did not create its true value. God Himself lived on it. Inside the Ark was Aaron's dead rod which had budded, a pot of manna still preserved by God's power, and God's stone tablet copy of the Law He had given His people. These items were to remind Israel of the power of, the provision of, and the pact with their God.

Such had become of little concern to His people. They actually carried the Ark into battle with the Philistines as a good luck charm. Only when it was captured, and the presence of God was gone, did they learn the value of what they esteemed so lightly.

The most valuable thing in the church is not the instruments, the altar, or even the very costly buildings. What the church must treasure is the receptacles in which the presence of God dwells. The people, in whom He lives, are the Church. Without them inside our walls, little else matters. Inside these saints can be found new lives, dependence upon God to supply needs, and God's laws inscribed on their hearts of flesh. These contents all testify to God's desire to be our God and our willingness to be His people. We do well to treasure, protect, and preserve those in whom God dwells.

Good music is important. Great services are great. Fine speakers are just fine. But we must never cease to place the highest value on lives submitted to God. They may not be in front and they would usually rather serve than lead. But when we lose our respect for what they are, and what God has done in their lives, the terrible enemy called "time" will capture these saints. We will eventually find them gone from our tabernacles. If we do not sink on our knees in submission, and then rise to take their place, we will wake one day bereft of the vessels of God and the testimonies they contained.

We will miss the presence of God we so lightly esteemed.