



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 3103

1 Kings 8:9 *“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.”*

Our verse today takes place at the dedication of the temple. This was the first temple. We commonly call it “Solomon’s temple.” This had been in the plans and heart of King David, but it was completed by his son, Solomon. What a celebration that took place. There were so many animals sacrificed that they couldn’t count them all. What a special day this was for Israel. No more tents. No more moving things around. A permanent and fixed place for the house of God.

In the midst of this wonderful description comes our verse. The ark, the most sacred item to be placed in the temple, was carried by the priests of God. In the ark was the tablets of stone. There was nothing else in the ark except the two tablets of stone, is how our passage words it. And, for the first time that thought really registered with me. I have always thought that the ark carried Aaron’s rod and the bowl of manna, along with the stone tablets in the temple. But not so. Only the stone tablets were in the ark at this time. What happened to the rod and the manna? Did the Philistines take it when they had the ark? Who else would have removed them? Who else would have the nerve and courage to look inside the ark?

Only the stone tablets remained. In the temple, only the stone tablets were in the ark.

Some thoughts for us:

First, I had always assumed that the rod, the bowl of manna and the stone tablets were in the ark until the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and took those things back to their temple. Now, I do not believe a major shift in the heavens took place when I finally discovered this for myself. In fact, I expect many went to their death never knowing about the ark, nor what was in it.

(OVER)

But this reminds us that we can assume things and we can assume them for a long, long time and not be right. One person tells us something and it seems reasonable and logical to us, so we just accept it and go on. Those ole' Bereans remind us to search the Scriptures to see if those things are so. Now, on other topics, such as worship, salvation, marriage, how the church operates, we need to know. We need to be able to find the place where it is written. Our faith must not rest upon what we have heard from others or what seems right to us. Do your homework. Check the facts. Do a little digging.

Second, we must be careful not to build theories out of speculation and ideas that are not supported by the Scriptures. Why just the tablets, and not the rod? We can come up with theories and many of those ideas can sound very good, but truth is, the Bible doesn't tell us. We don't know who or when the rod and the manna were removed. And, once they were removed, we don't know who had them. They disappeared from history. We must stay with what the Bible reveals to us.

Third, our curiosity is often not satisfied with what the Bible tells us. We are left with questions that are not answered. The purpose of the Bible is to prepare us for Heaven. It will not chase every rabbit that our minds provide. And, there are just lots of things we'd like to know. Did Paul and Barnabas ever meet again after their Acts 15 departure? Did Jairus become a disciple after his daughter was brought back to life? How long did Lazarus live after he was raised from the dead? What happened to Joseph, the husband of Mary? He seems to drop out early in the Gospel story. Did he die? Did the church of Sardis ever turn around and become active again?

Questions...questions...questions. Finding the answer to the questions we have is interesting but most times they do not build our faith or make us stronger. Sometimes we must simply trust the Lord. A wonderful older Christian asked me the other day about recognizing people in Heaven. What if my mama isn't there, won't I be sad? Great concern and question. I told her that our tears would be dried by God. I don't know how all of that will work, but I do not worry about it. If God can say words and this world is immediately created out of nothing, then He can take care of our memory, relationships and family ties. Trust God, is what I told this sister. It'll be ok.

An empty ark except for stone tablets. Sure gives us much to chew upon, doesn't it?

Roger Shouse (used by Permission)
