

A SERMON PREACHED AT
ALDERMANBERRY-CHURCH

Dec. 28. 1662. In the Fore-noon.

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Congregation.

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Church, Dec. 28. 1662.**

1 Sam. 4. 13.

And when he came, Lo, *Ely* sate upon a seat by the way side, waiting; for his heart trembled for the Ark of God.

That you may the better understand these words, you must know that whatsoever God threatn'd against old *Ely*, in the second and third Chapters, because he did not restraints his wicked Sonnes from their lewd Courses, is here Executed in this Chapter: therefore we read there were four thousand Israelites slain by the Philistines: And the Elders of Israel met together to consult how to repair this great loss; they confess it was the Lord that had smitten them: for say they, *Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistins*: And they conclude, the way to repair this their loss, it was, to fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from *Shiloh*, and carry it into the Battel; whereupon they apoint *Hophny* and *Phinehas* to fetch it, whereby they imagined that the presence of the Ark would save them from ruin, but herein they were miserably mistaken; for this Judgement befel them not because the Ark

was not in the Camp, but because their sin was in the Camp: The Ark of the Covenant would not preserve those that had broken Covenant with God: And therefore there was a great slaughter of the Israelites, and were slain thirty thousand men, and *Hophny* and *Phinehas* were slain, and the Ark it self was taken prisoner. But what was old *Ely* doing? He was ninety and eight years old, and was not able to go to the Battel, but sits upon a seat by the way side near the Battel; and there he sits, thinking what shall become of the Ark: And *loe*, *Ely sate upon a Seat by the way side, watching; for his heart trembled for the Ark of God*, for fear lest the Ark should be taken: He was not troubled, what should become of his two Sons, or what should become of the people of Israel, but what should become of the Ark of God.

In the words are three parts.

1. Old *Elies* solicitousness for the Ark.
2. Old *Elies* heart-trembling for fear of the Ark.
3. Old *Elies* preferring the safety of the Ark, before the safety of his two Sons, Wife and Children.

He sate upon a Seat by the way side watching, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God.

But what was the Ark of God? why should old *Elies* heart tremble for fear of the Ark?

I Answer, This Ark was the holiest of all the things of God; it was so holy, that it made every place holy where it came, *2 Chron. 8. 11. And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharoah, out of the City of David, into the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the House of David King of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the Ark of the Lord hath come.* This Ark was the dwelling place of God, it was the habitation of God, *Psal. 99. 1. The Lord Reigneth, he sitteth between the Cherubims.* Now these Cherubims were placed over the Ark: it was the speaking place of God; he met his people there, and there he gave an answer to them: *Exod. 25. 21, 22. And thou shalt put the Mercy-seat above upon the Ark, and in the Ark thou shalt put the Testimony that I shall give thee: And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercyseat, from between the two Cherubims which are upon the Ark of the Testimony of all things I shall give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.* This

Ark was Gods Foot-stool, and all the people of God worship before the Footstool of God, *Psal. 99. 5. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy.* The Ark, it was the glory and the strength of *Israel, Psal. 78. 61. And he delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into his enemies hand; And it was the terror of the enemies of God:* And therefore when the Ark came into the Battel, the *Philistines* were afraid, and said, *Wo unto us, for God is come down into the Camp:* And indeed this Ark was called *Jehovah. Numb. 10. 35. And it came to pass, when the Ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; And when it rested, he said, Return O Lord unto the many thousands of Israel.* In a word, the Ark was a pledge, and a visible symptom of Gods gracious presence with his people; as long as the Ark was saved, they were saved; and when the Ark was with them, Gods presence was with them; but when the Ark was gone, God was gone; his comforting presence, his protecting presence, and his preserving presence: And therefore no wonder that this good old man sate watching here for fear of the Ark. I call him good old man; many are of opinion that he was not good, because he suffered his Sons to be so wicked; and indeed his fault was

great, but surely he was a good man, and I have two Reasons to prove it: First, in that he took the punishment of his iniquity so patiently; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* And secondly, he was a good man, as appears by the Text; his solicitousness for the Ark: *He sate trembling for fear of the Ark.*

Now this Ark was a Type of three things: First, It was a Type of Jesus Christ; for God spake from the Ark: so God speaks to us by Christ.

Secondly, It was a Type of the Church of Christ: for as the Ark was the preserver of the two Tables of the Law, so the Church of Christ is the preservative of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, The Ark was a Type of the Ordinances of Christ; for as God did communicate himself by the Ark, so God by his Ordinances communicates his Councils, Comforts and Grace unto his people: The Ordinances of Christ, they are the *Oraculum* by which he conveys himself unto his people. Thus I have shewed you what the Ark was.

I shall gather two Observations from the words:

1. *That when the Ark of God is in danger of being lost, the people of God have thoughtful heads and trembling hearts.*
2. *That a true child of God is more troubled, and more solicitous what shall become of the Ark, then what shall become of Wife and Children or Estate.*

I shall begin with the first.

Doct. *That when the Ark of God is in danger of being lost, the people of God have thoughtful heads and trembling hearts.*

Or if I may put this Doctrine into a Gospel dress, take it thus:

That when the Gospel is in danger of losing, when Gospel-Ordinances are in danger of being lost, and Gospel Ministers in danger of losing, that then the people of God have trembling heads, and careful and solicitous hearts about it.

Mark what I say; I say not, when the Ark is lost; for that was death to old *Ely*, that broke his neck; and it cost the life of *Ely's* daughter in-Law, when the Ark of God was taken, she took no comfort in her child, though a man-child she regarded: *For*

the glory is departed from Israel, the Ark of God is taken.

I say not, when the Ark of God is lost; but I say, when it is in danger of losing: when the Gospel is in danger, the Ministers of the Gospel in danger, and the Ordinances in danger to be lost, then the people of God have trembling hearts, and careful heads. When God threatned the *Israelites*, that he would not go with them, they were troubled for the loss of God's presence, and would not put on their ornaments, *Exod. 33. 3, 4. I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way: And when the people heard these evil tydings they mourned, and no man did put on his ornaments; 1 Sam. 7. 2. And it came to pass, while the Ark abode in Kiriath-jearim, that the time was long, for it was twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord: That is, after the presence of God, speaking from the Ark, 2 Sam. 11. 10, 11. David would have had Uriah to have gone down to his house and made merry: And Uriah said unto David, the Ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in Tents, and my Lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord are incamped in open fields; shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink, and to lye with my Wife? as thou*

livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing, 1 King. 19. 10. And Elijah said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and slain thy Prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away. Thus you see when the Ark is in danger, the people of God mourn and are sorrowfull.

And there be four Reasons, why the people of God are so much troubled when the Ark of God is in danger.

Reas. 1. Because of the great love they bear to the Ark of God; As God loveth the gates of Sion, more then all the dwellings of Jacob, Psal. 87. 2. so the people of God love the Ordinances of God, and the faithful Ministers of Christ, Psal. 26. 8. Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth, Psal. 27. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the dayes of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple. Now love stirreth up the affections; as young *Cresus*, though he were dumb, yet seeing his Father like to be killed, cryed out, *Do not kill my Father:* Such is

the love of the Saints of God to the Ark, that they cannot be silent, they cannot but tremble when they see the Ark in danger; and for *Sions* sake they cannot hold their peace; and they cannot be silent until the Lord make the Righteousness thereof go out like brightness, and the Salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

2. The people of God are troubled at this, because of the Interest they have in the Ark of God: Now interest stirreth up affections, as when another mans house is on fire; as you had a lamentable and sad providence this last week, and it is not to be forgotten, how suddenly in all our Feastings, may God dash all our mirth. Now consider, how were they affected that had an interest in those that were burned; so the people of God have an interest in the Ark, God is the Haven of a Child of God, the Portion and Inheritance of a Child of God; and when God begins to forsake them, they cannot but be afflicted and troubled: The Ordinances of God, are the Jewels of a Christian, and the Treasure of a Christian; and the loss of them, cannot but trouble them: And Jesus Christ is the Joy of a Christian, and therefore when Christ is departing, they cannot but be much afflicted at it.

3. The people of God are much troubled when the Ark is in danger, because of the mischeifs that comes upon a Nation when the Ark of God is lost: woe be to that Nation when the Ark is gone. The Heathens had the Image of *Apollo*, and they conceived, that as long as that Image was preserved amongst them, they could never be worsted, but be preserved; and the *Romans* had a Buckler, upon which they had a Tradition, that as long as that Buckler was preserved, *Rome* could not be taken. But sure I am, that where God is in a Nation, and where the Gospel is preserved in purity in a Nation, that Nation cannot but stand; but when God is gone, and the Gospel gone, then comes the misery of a Nation, and the Tongue of man is not able to express the misery of that Nation where the Ark of God is taken: Shall I give a hint, and set it out a little, in five particulars.

1. When the Ark of God is taken, then the wayes of *Sion* mourn, and none come to the Sollemn Assemblies; It was the complaint of the Church, *Lament. 1. 4.* That is matter of sadness.
2. When the Ark of God is taken, then the Ministers of Christ are driven into Corners, And that is matter of heart-trembling.

3. When the Ark of God is taken, then the Souls of many are in danger; when the Gospel is gone, your Souls are in hazard: There is cause of sadness.
4. Then do the Enemies of God Blaspheme, and are ready to say, *Where is your God?* then do the enemies of God Triumph, *Psal. 42. 10. As with a Sword in my Bones mine enemies reproach* Page 10 *me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*
5. Then is Jesus Christ trampled under foot, and the Ordinances of God defiled and trampled on; and then Blasphemy and Atheism comes in like an Armed man.

4. The people of God must needs tremble when the Ark is in danger, because of their accessariness to the losing of the Ark; and this was that which made old *Ely* so much troubled, because he knew it was for his sin that God suffered the Ark to be taken: He knew that his not punishing his two Sons, was one great cause of that great slaughter the people of *Israel* met withal, and that made him tremble. There is no person here in this Congregation, but his heart will tell him, he hath contributed something towards the loss of the Ark. None of us so holy but our Consciences must accuse us; we

have done something that might cause God to take the Ark from us: And therefore Mr. *Bradford* that blessed Martyr, said in his Prayer, *Lord it was my unthankfulness for the Gospel, that brought in Popery in Queen Maries dayes; and my unfruitfulness under the Gospel, that was the cause of the untimely death of King Edward the Sixth; and those that fled in Queen Maries days, sadly complained that they were the cause of Gods taking away the Gospel from England.* O Beloved, it is for thy sin and my sin, that the Ark of God is in danger; and therefore the Lord give us trembling solicitous hearts, what shall become of the Ark.

I come now to Application.

Use 1. If this be the property of a true child of God, to be solicitous when the Ark of God is in danger, and to have such a trembling heart for fear of the Ark, then this is a certain sign there are but few that are the children of God in truth. O where is the man, and where is the woman, that like old *Ely*, sits watching and trembling for fear of the Ark! I suppose you all believe, and have cause to believe, that my coming here this Morning was not by way of design, but the mere Providence of God, and therefore what I say should be premeditated; but this I may say, and it must not be denied, but that

the Ark of God is in danger of being lost; and that will appear by these Reasons.

First, In reference to the many sinnes in this Nation; for let me tell you, there is not one sin for which God ever took away the Ark from any people, but it is to be found in *England*: Did the Church of *Ephesus* lose the Candlestick, because they had lost their first love? And have not we lost our first love to the Gospel, and to the Ordinances? And did the Church of *Laodicea* lose the Candlestick, because of lukewarmness? and are not we lukewarm? Did the people of *Israel*, as here in the Text, lose the Ark, because they abhorred the offerings of God? and do not you do so; are not the sins of *Israel* amongst us? the sins of *Germany*, and the sins of all other Nations about us? And can any man here before God this day in this Congregation, that considers the great unthankfulness of this Nation, and the great profaneness and wickedness of this Nation, but they may conclude the Ark is in danger, and God may justly take the Ark from us?

I might tell you of the drunkenness, adultery, covetousness, injustice, and uncharitableness, &c. that doth abound amongst us; and I might tell you of Sanctuary sins, profanation of Sabbaths and

Sacraments, our unthankfulness and unfruitfulness, and unworthy walking under the Gospel: And you of this place, God may very well take the Ark even from you; and indeed it was the great interest I had in you, the which while I live I shall ever own; and that great affection and respect I had to you, that I would not send you home this day without a Sermon, and let you go without a blessing. Now can any of you in this Parish, and this Congregation; can any of you say God may not justly take the Gospel from you?

You have had three famous Successors, Doctor *Taylor* for seven years, and Doctor *Stoughton* for seven years, and my Self, I have been with you almost four and twenty years, and may not God now unchurch you, by suffering you to want a faithful Minister to go in and out before you? This is one Reason, upon which account I may safely say the Ark of God is in danger, and *Aldermanberry* may truly fear the loss of the Ark.

Secondly, another Reason is, the abundance of Priests and Jesuits that are in the midst of us, and the preaching of Popery amongst us, and the proneness of people to run headlong to the garlick and onyons of *Egypt* again. This is argument sufficient to make us believe the Ark of God is in

danger. And shall I add, the discontents and divisions in the Nation, as Christ saith, *A Nation divided against it self cannot stand*; but I leave these things to your considerations; I do believe there is none here but will confess the Ark of God is in danger to be lost. But now where are our old *Elys*, to sit watching and trembling for fear of the Ark? Where is *Phinehas* his Wife, that would not be comforted, because the Ark of God was taken? Where are our *Moses's*? Our *Elijah's*? Our *Uriah's*? Where are they that lay to heart the dangers of the Ark? You complain of Taxes, and decay of Trading, of this civil burden, and that civil burden; but where is the man or the woman that complains of this misery, the loss of the Ark? Most of you are like *Galio*, he cared not for these things; if it had been a civil matter, then he would have meddled with it; but for Religion, he cared not for that: every man is troubled about *meum* and *tuum*, about civil concernments; but who laves to heart? who regards what shall become of Religion? There is a strange kind of indifferency and lukewarmness upon most peoples spirits; so they may have their Trading go on, and their civil burdens removed, they care not what becomes of the Ark. There is a Text of Scripture, I shall not spend much time in opening it, but I would have

you well consider it, *Hos. 7. 9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray-hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.* Shall I say gray-hairs are upon the Gospel? I come not hither to prophecy; I say not the Gospel is dying, but I say it hath gray-hairs; for you have had the Gospel a hundred years and above, and therefore it is in its old age; and I dare challenge any Schollar to shew me an example of any Nation that hath enjoyed the Gospel for a hundred years together. Now that gray-hairs is to a hundred years, is no wonder: Well, gray-hairs are here and there, and yet no man layeth it to heart.

Now shall I spend time to shew you what a great sin it is, not to be affected with the danger that the Ark of God is in; consider but three particulars.

First, it is a sign you do not love the Gospel; if you had any love to it, you would be troubled more for the danger of the Ark, then for any outward danger whatsoever.

I read that among the *Romans*, when any man was accused for his life, all his relations put on mourning Apparel, and they followed him to his Tryal in mourning, thereby to shew their love to the party in danger. Now did you love the Gospel,

the Ministers of the Gospel, and the Ordinances of Christ, you would all put on mourning, and lament for the Gospel, the Ark of God that is in danger; and because you do not, it is a sign you have no love to the Gospel.

Secondly, It is a sign you have no interest in the Gospel, for interest will stir up your affections; it is a sign you are not concerned in the Gospel, for if you were concerned in it, you would be affected with it, as those that were interested in those persons that were in that lamentable fire the last week, it is impossible but they should be affected; and so it is a sign you have no interest in God and Christ, if your hearts do not tremble for fear of the loss of the Ark.

But thirdly, There is a curse of God pronounced against all those that do not lay to heart the Afflictions of *Ioseph*, *Amos* 6. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. *Wo be to them that are at ease in Sion, and trust in the Mountain of Samaria: yea, that put far away the evil day; that lye upon beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; that eat the Lambs out of the flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves instruments of Musick; that drink wine in bowles, and anoint themselves with*

the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph. Wo be unto you that enjoy your fulness of outward things, and make merry therewith, and never consider the afflictions of Gods people, and the danger of the Ark.

Use 2. For exhortation, To beseech you all, that God by a providence hath so unexpectedly brought this day to hear me, and there may be a good providence in it, possibly I may do good herein; I say, let me beseech you all to declare you are the people of God indeed and in truth, by following the example of old *Ely*, to be very solicitous of the Ark of God; and let me exhort you to five particulars.

First, Let me perswade you to believe, that the Gospel is not intailed upon *England*: *England* hath no letters Patents of the Gospel; the Gospel is removeable: God took away the Ark, and forsook *Shilo*; and he did not only take away the Ark, but the Temple also; he unchurched the *Iews*, he unchurched the seven Churches of *Asia*, and we know not how soon he may unchurch us: I know no warrant we have to think that we shall have the Gospel another hundred years; God knows how to remove his Candlestick, but not to destroy it; God doth often remove the Church, but doth not

destroy it; God removed his Church out of the East, as the Greek Churches were famous Churches, but God removed them, and now the *Turk* over-spreads that Countrey.

Secondly, I would perswade you, that *Englands* Ark is in danger to be lost; were it only for the sinnes of *England*, those prodigious iniquities amongst us, and that strange unheard of ingratitude that is in the Land; but I will say no more of that, because I would speak nothing but what becomes a sober Minister of the Gospel; but sure it is, That the Ark is in danger to be lost.

Thirdly, I would perswade you, and O that I could raise you up to old *Elies* practise; *He sat watching, for his heart trembled for fear of the Ark:* He had a thoughtful head, and an aching heart, for the Ark of God that was in danger: and that I might move you to this, consider what a sad condition we are in if the Ark be taken; what will your Estate do you good? or what will all your concernments do you good if the Gospel be gone? wherein doth *England* exceed other places? there is more wealth in *Turkie* then in *England:* And the Heathen Nations have more of the glory of the world, then any Christian King hath: What is the glory of *England?* What is the glory of Christianity but the

Gospel? if the Gospel be gone, our glory is gone. Pray remember *Elies* Daughter in Law, the wise of *Phinehas*; she hearkned not though a Man-Child was born, and would receive no comfort, but called his name *Ichabod*; for the glory is departed from *Israel*, the Ark of God is taken: O when the glory is gone, who would desire to live! I am loath to tell you the story of *Chrysostom*, he was but one man, yet when he was banished *Constantinople*, the people all petitioned for him, and said, *They could as well lose the Sun out of the Firmament as lose Chrysostom from among them.* O the sad, and lamentable, and woful condition we are in, if the Ark of God be taken: O therefore, let us tremble for fear of the Ark.

Fourthly, Let me perswade you not to mourn immoderately, neither be not discouraged; I would willingly speak something to comfort you before I leave you, I know not by what strange providence I came here this day, and the Lord knows when I shall speak to you again; therefore I would not send you home comfortless: O therefore, mourn not as without hope, for I have four arguments to perswade me, that the Ark of God will not be lost, though it be in danger of losing.

First, Because God hath done great things already for this Nation; and I argue like *Manoahs* wife; surely if God had intended to destroy us, he would not have done that he hath done for us; He that hath done so much for us, will not now forsake us. And therefore, though our hearts tremble, yet let them not sink within us.

Secondly, I argue from the abundance of praying people that are in this Nation, There are many that night and day pray unto God, that the Ark may not be taken; and let me assure you, God did never forsake a praying and reforming people. When God intends to destroy a Nation, and take away the Ark, he takes away the Spirit of Prayer: but where God gives the Spirit of Prayer, there God will continue the Ark. You all know, that if there had been but ten good men in those five Cities, God would have spared them: We have many hundreds that fear God in this Nation, that do not give God rest, but night and day pray unto God for this Land: And who knows but for their sakes, God will spare the Ark?

Thirdly, another ground of comfort is this, That God hath hitherto dealt with *England*, not by way of Rule, but by way of Prerogative; we have had un-Churching sinnes all the Reign of Queen

Elizabeth, and of King *Iames*; and the godly Ministers have been threatned Ruin, from year to year; but God hath hitherto saved *England* by way of Prerogative: God hath spared us, because he will spare us; according to that Text, *I will be gracious, to whom I will be gracious*. God will not be tyed to his own Rule; and who knoweth but God will deliver us?

Fourthly, another ground of comfort is, That God is now pouring out his Viols upon Antichrist, and all this shall end in the ruin of Antichrist: God is pouring forth his Viols upon the Throne of the Beast, and all these transactions shall end in the ruin of Anti-christ; though some drops of these Viols may light upon the Reformed Churches, and they may smart for a while, and God may severely punish them, yet it will be but for a little while, but the Viols shall be poured out upon Anti-christ: God may scourge all the Reformed Churches before these Viols be poured out, and persecutions may go through them all, the which I call drops of these Viols; but the Viols are intended for Anti-christ, and shall end in the ruine of Anti-christ; and whatsoever becomes of us, yet our children, and our childrens children shall see the Issue of the

Viols poured out upon the Whore of *Babylon*; This I speak for your comfort.

Fifthly, I am to exhort you, That you would all of you contribute your utmost endeavour, to keep the Ark of God from being taken: And here I shall shew you,

1. What the Magistrate should do.
2. What the Ministers should do.
3. What the people should do.

First, What the Magistrate should do, I shall say but little of them, because I am not now to speak to them; they are to use their Authority for the settling of the Ark; for the Ark of the Covenant will be like the Ark of *Noah*, alwayes floating upon the waters, until the Magistrates settle it. Thus *David*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 1, 2. he gathered together all the chosen men of *Israel*, thirty thousand to fetch home the Ark: So *Solomon*, he assembled the Elders of *Israel*, and the heads of the Tribes, the Nobles, the chief of the Fathers of the children of *Israel* unto *Jerusalem*, with a great deal of pomp, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord into its place. O that God would encourage our Nobles and Magistrates, that they might be solicitous to settle the Ark: Magistrates must not

do as the *Philistines*, they had the Ark, but what did they do with it? they set it up in the house of *Dagon*, but *Dagon* and the Ark could never agree: where false Religion comes in at one door, the true Religion goes out at the other; you must not put the Ark and *Dagon* together.

Secondly, What must the Ministers do to keep the Ark from losing? They must endeavour after holiness; the Ark will never stand steddy, nor prosper upon the shoulders of *Hophny* and *Phinehas*. A wicked, prophane, drunken Ministry will never settle the Ark; it must be the sober, pious, godly Ministers that must do it: How holy must they be that draw nigh to the God of holiness?

Thirdly, What must the people of God do, that the Ark may not be lost? There be five things I shall commend you unto, and then commend you to God.

1. You must not Idolize the Ark.
2. You must not undervalue the Ark.
3. You must not pry into the Ark.
4. You must not meddle with the Ark without a lawful Call.
5. You must keep the Covenant of the Ark.

First, *You must not Idolize the Ark*; that was the sin of the people in the Text; they thought the very presence of the Ark would excuse them, and keep them safe, and therefore they carried the Ark into the Camp; though they reformed not, and repented not, yet they thought the Ark would save them.

So many there be that think the Ark will save them, though never so wicked; but nothing will secure a Nation but Repentance and Reformation.

Secondly, *Do not undervalue the Ark*; this was Michals, 2 Sam. 6. 14, 15, 16. *When David danced before the Ark, and Michal mocked him, and despised him in her heart; but saith he, it was before the Lord, and if this be vile, I will be more vile.* Some men begin to say, what need we any Preaching, will not Prayers serve? Others say, what needs so much Preaching, will not once a day serve? Now this is to undervalue the Ark: therefore let us say as *David*, if to preach the Word, if to fast and pray for the Nation; *If this be vile, then I will be more vile.*

Thirdly, *We must not pry into the Ark*; this was the sin of the men of *Bethshemesh*, 1 Sam. 6. 19. *They looked into the Ark, and God smote them, and cut off fifty thousand and threescore men.* Be not too

curious in searching, where God hath not discovered or revealed: For example, there be great thoughts of heart, when God will deliver his people, and set his Churches at liberty; And many men talk much of the year, 1666. that shall be the year wherein Antichrist shall be destroyed: And there are strange impressions upon the hearts of many learned men, as to this year; some go to the year, 1669. and others pitch upon other times; but truly if you will have my judgement, and I am glad of this opportunity to tell you, *This is to pry too much into the Ark:* Remember that Text, *Acts 1. 17. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.* And thus to conclude upon any particular time, if you find you are deceived, it is the way to make you Atheists, and that afterwards you should believe nothing: And those Ministers do no service, or rather ill service to the Church of God, that conclude of times and sea sons.

A Popish Author saith, That in the year one thousand, there was a general belief over the Christian world, that the day of Judgement should be that year; but when they saw it happened not, they fell to their old sinning again, and were worse then before, and believed nothing. Well, Gods

time is the best, therefore let not us pry too much into the Ark.

Fourthly, You must not meddle with the Ark, unless you have a lawfull Call to meddle with it: This was the sin of *Uza*, *2 Sam.* 6. 6, 7. the Ark was in danger of falling, and he good man meaning no hurt to keep up the Ark, took hold of it; but he destroyed himself, and made a breach, and hindred the carrying home of the Ark.

We had a great disorder heretofore; abundance of well-meaning people usurped upon the Ministerial Office; they were afraid the Ark was falling, and therefore they touched the Ark, they laid hold on the Ark; but their touching the Ark hath undone the Ark, and themselves too. O take heed of touching the Ark.

Fifthly, If ever you would preserve the Ark, then keep the Covenant of the Ark, keep the Law which the Ark preserves: The Ark was a place wherein the Law was kept, the two Tables; keep the Law, and God will keep the Ark; but if you break the Law, you will forfeit the Ark: The Ark was called the Ark of the Covenant; keep Covenant with God, and God will preserve the Ark; but if you break the Covenant of the Ark, the Covenant made in

Baptism, and that Covenant often renewed in the Sacrament; if you break Covenant, God will take away the Ark.

FINIS.