

The Assumption of Mary - Part II: Typology

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In our previous article we saw that Enoch, Elijah and perhaps Moses were bodily assumed into heaven and as such, provide precedence in our case for Mary's Assumption. We will now turn our attention to typology¹, establishing a link between the Ark of the Covenant and Mary. Once the typological link is established, we will glean from it further evidence for Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven.

But first, a brief background. The Ark of the Covenant was the most holy object in the Old Testament. In the Temple the Ark resided behind the veil in the holy of holies, the inner sanctum, where only the high priest could enter once a year. The Ark contained three objects consisting of manna from heaven, Aaron's rod that had budded and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The Ark was a box-like object made of acacia wood covered in pure gold. Two cherubim on each end, facing each other were mounted on the top. The Ark had been designed under specific instructions given by God and was not to be touched by man. As such, it had rings on both sides enabling it to be carried by poles.

In the gospel of Luke we read that Mary was given a message by the angel Gabriel, namely that she was to conceive a son by the Holy Ghost. Mary then makes her way to her relative Elizabeth in the Judean hill country. As she approaches Elizabeth she greets her, where upon John the Baptist *leaps for joy* in his mother's womb and Elizabeth cries out - *for why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Elizabeth then explains the reaction of her son. *As soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped for joy in my womb.* Mary then stays with Elizabeth for three months before returning home. Now let us compare this story to an event recorded in II Samuel 6. In so doing, we will establish that the Ark of the Covenant is indeed a type or picture of Mary.

In our passage, King David takes the Ark from the hill country of Judah to its soon-to-be residence in Jerusalem. During the procession the oxen pulling the Ark on a cart stumble, tipping the cart. As the man Uzzah catches the Ark, God strikes him dead as no man was to touch the Ark. In his shock at God's action, David states - *How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?* David then leaves the Ark with a righteous family for three months. Afterwards he resumes the journey, bringing the Ark to its new home in Jerusalem. In doing so, David dances before the Ark as it enters the city. Now let's look at the similarities between these two stories.

Compare the statement of Elizabeth in her encounter with Mary with the nearly identical statement of David in his encounter with the Ark. Elizabeth says to Mary - *But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* And David of the Ark - *How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?*

¹ Typology is a form of Biblical interpretation that proceeds on the assumption that God has placed anticipations of New Testament characters and concepts within the Old Testament. As Saint Augustine stated - The New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old Testament is revealed in the New. Paul writes in Romans 5:14 - Adam.. was a type of the one who was to come (i.e. Christ).

Secondly, in David's encounter we find the Ark sojourning three months in the home of a righteous man, Obed-Edom. In Luke's story we find Mary sojourning three months in the home of Godly woman, Elizabeth.

Thirdly - *as the Ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David... leaping*. And what did John the Baptist do in Luke's account? John *leaped* for joy in his mother's womb when he heard Mary's voice. Both John and David leap before the Lord in the presence of the Ark.

And of course, the Ark carried within itself the contents of the manna, Aaron's rod and the Ten Commandments, each of these signifying Christ. The manna from heaven signifies Christ in the Eucharist. Aaron's rod signifies Christ as the Shepherd of his flock, the Church. And the Ten Commandments signify Christ as the Word of God. Mary carried Christ in her womb in reality while the Ark carried these contents as types.

It could be noted that in Uzzah's death we see another correlation between Mary and the Ark. God had made it very clear that no man was to ever touch the Ark as it had been sanctified for a unique role in the Old Testament. Here we see an anticipation of Mary's perpetual virginity as she was uniquely set apart as the bearer of the Word Incarnate.

Additionally, there is a correlation between Mary and the Ark in Christ's burial and resurrection. The Gospel states - *Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.* The famous Protestant Matthew Henry comments - *He that was born from a virgin-womb must rise from a virgin-tomb* (comments on John 19:41). But there is more to this virgin-tomb. After the resurrection we find Mary Magdalene at the tomb weeping. John 20: 12 states - *And she saw two angels in white sitting in the tomb, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.* Here is a picture of the Ark of the Lord with its two cherubim mounted on each end. We read in Exodus 25:18 - *And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.* The Ark imagery in the virgin-tomb reinforces the case for the Ark as Marian typology.

Are we to regard all this as mere coincidences? The fair-minded man will say No. What then are the ramifications? Is this all merely interesting? The answer is that it cannot be merely interesting, as typology is meant to teach and inform about what it anticipates. Now let us turn our attention to those lessons.

First, notice that the Ark was made of acacia wood. In his commentaries John Calvin notes that *the Greeks said this type of wood never decayed*. Catholics assert that Mary's body never saw corruption (as her body was taken to heaven), just as the Ark was designed to be incorruptible. In this way we see the Ark anticipating the Assumption.

Psalm 132, verse 8 contains what most Christians regard as a Messianic passage - *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the Ark, which thou has sanctified*. While the psalmist is depicting God filling Solomon's Temple, and specifically the holy of holies, with his presence, the Messianic implications are of Christ ascending into heaven after the labor of his death and resurrection. But does *only* Christ ascend to heaven in this psalm? No, for the Ark accompanies him, *which thou has sanctified*. In this way we see the Ark anticipating the Assumption.

In the book of Maccabees we are told that Jeremiah the prophet, upon seeing the immanent danger of the approaching Babylonian armies, took the Ark out of the temple and into the Judean hill country for safekeeping. Nobody views the Ark again for the rest of history until it is seen in Revelation 11. The Apostle John (whom Christ entrusted his mother to) observes the Ark in heaven. He writes - *Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thundering, an earthquake and great hail*.

John then sees a woman with Child². The timing cannot be overlooked. Almost all theologians acknowledge a dual imagery of this woman in the Church and Mary. As the Incarnation is depicted (God becoming a man in the womb of a woman), so the woman is described in bodily terms, with a head and feet (Note: No flesh, no Incarnation). After all, it's Mary that provides the flesh for the Incarnation, not the Church. Mary and the Ark are linked by their proximity. As the Ark is described as residing heaven, so too is the Woman (Mary) described in bodily terms as residing in heaven.

In summary we have established that the Ark of the Covenant is a type of Mary. And types are meant to teach us about what they are anticipating. As such we have seen how the Ark was made of a wood its contemporaries understood to be incorruptible. We have heard the psalmist tell of Christ's Ascension into heaven where he will bring the Ark with him, the Ark that he sanctified. And while the Ark was never found after the Babylonian invasion, the apostle John sees the Ark in heaven with a woman who bears the Messiah³. Each of these items, coupled with the assumptions of Enoch, Elijah and perhaps Moses (and in light of the 4th commandment), points us to the Assumption of Mary. We have now moved from the reasonableness of the dogma to its likelihood. Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church move us to certainty.

In our next essay we will examine the legitimacy of using Sacred Tradition to buttress and declare our Catholic dogmas.

² The phrase "with Child" is the same Greek expression used of the Virgin Mary in Matthew 1:18,23. So writes the Reformed Theologian David Chilton, in *Days of Vengeance*, p. 298. In some respects, this portion of John's vision could possibly be viewed as the first Marian apparition.

³ Revelation 12 is linked to Genesis 3:15 where it is prophesied that a woman will be at enmity (at war) with the serpent (Satan) and that her seed (Christ) will crush the head of Satan while he (Christ) will be bruised in the process. We know the woman is Mary because the passage talks of *her seed*, a reference to the virgin birth, which *only* Mary can claim. At the beginning and end of our Bibles we find a woman, her child and a serpent at war.