



## The Ark of the Story

**Read:** Luke 1:39-45

In this week's gospel we hear the story of Mary visiting Elizabeth. There is more going on here than just a family visit. In the Old Testament the Ark of Covenant was the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwelled among his people. Luke identifies Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant, therefore ascribing the child in her womb as Emmanuel, God with us. Christ is the fulfillment of the messianic covenant. The vessel of his incarnation is Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant.

But how does Luke delineate Mary as the Ark? In Mary's visitation, Luke's choice of vocabulary draws attention to a comparison between, on one hand, the pregnant Mary's journey to Elizabeth, and, on the other hand, the transfer in 2 Samuel 6 of the ark from the fields of Kireath-jearim via the house of Obededom to its present destination in David's capital, Jerusalem. Elizabeth's residence is only a few short miles from the home of Obededom. Furthermore, the ark stayed with Obededom three months, which is the exact amount of time Mary stayed with Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth greets Mary, the verb used for Elizabeth's greeting is best translated as "intoned", which is only used in the Old Testament in connexion with liturgical ceremonies involving the ark. And just as David cried out in holy terror, "How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Sam. 6:9), Elizabeth in comparable awe says, "How should this befall me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). In this way Luke is drawing an intentional and well-crafted parallel between Mary and Ark of the Covenant.

All Mariology points towards Jesus. Luke's identification of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant is a reminder that God is coming. She is the Ark, who carries Emmanuel, God with us.