

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, Part II

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-6

1st Scripture: 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:4

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:11-17

Hymn Insert- *Shout to the Lord*

Hymn #402- *Amazing Grace*

Hymn Insert- *Here I am to Worship*

Introduction:

Having been established as king over all Israel, David, wishing God to be the central glory and source of strength for his kingdom, expresses a desire to bring the ark up to Jerusalem. It has been kept at the house of Abinadab, and under the care of his sons, since before the time of Saul's reign, when it was returned by the Philistines, who had captured it in a war against Israel.

And so, David, with a righteous heart and pure motives, calls all of the leaders and elders of Israel together, to share his burden with them, and to get their opinion on the matter. Indeed, we might just pause here for a moment, and highlight the wisdom of David, who was not so swallowed up in his own power and royal position, so as to neglect to surround himself by a multitude of wise counselors, when making such an important decision. His grave error came, when he neglected to inquire of God, concerning the proper way to handle and transport the ark. But, needless to say, they all agree that David's desire is good, and so, after inviting all of Israel to gather together for this glorious occasion, they set out to retrieve the ark. David sets up a tent/tabernacle in Jerusalem, within which the ark will be placed, and they head about nine miles west, to the house of Abinadab, so as to bring up the ark.

However, failing to inquire of the Lord, they set the ark on a new ox cart, with two of Abinadab's sons, Ahio and Uzzah, driving the cart. According to the Law of Moses, very careful instructions were given, concerning how the ark was to be cared for, and transported. It was to be carried by its poles, and by the Levites alone. And so, in the course of their travels, this grave error was made known by a divine tragedy that had come about. While David and all of Israel were rejoicing, singing and playing all kinds of musical instruments, the oxen stumbled and the ark began to totter. With quick reflexes, Uzzah laid hold of the ark, so as to steady it and keep it from falling. This, being a gross act of irreverence to The Lord of Hosts, whose holy Name was attached to the ark, led to the immediate and swift destruction of Uzzah. God had a righteous outburst of wrath, which met Uzzah, and killed him right there, next to the ark. David was afraid of God on that day, which put a halt on him bringing the ark to Jerusalem. Instead, the ark was

placed in the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, where it would rest for the next three months. Following this, upon seeing the way in which God blessed Obed-Edom and all of his household, David regains the courage to bring the ark up to Jerusalem. But this time, he will exercise great care, ensuring that it is transported in accordance with the prescribed ordinance, found in the Law of Moses. Great joy will ensue, but it will be accompanied by great reverence as well!

I. Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem

"The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, 'The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God' (vs. 11-12a).

In the three months time that the ark of God remained with Obed-Edom, very clear and obvious blessings came upon him and his family. They all thoroughly prospered in unusual and extraordinary ways, such that it was evident that the presence of the ark, was the source of this prosperity. And word of this, had gotten back to King David. Indeed, God was sending another very clear message to David, indicating that, while God must always be revered and hallowed, his covenant love was still fixed upon David and His kingdom. Chastisement; indeed a very necessary and warranted chastisement came for a moment, but David was still the object of God's everlasting, covenant lovingkindness. He was, in no way, "done with David!" His mercy and grace and covenant love were still upon him. And so, by means of His kindness to Obed-Edom and his family, God was inviting David to come, and to boldly, and joyfully bring the ark to Jerusalem, but to hallow God's Name throughout the whole process, by properly transporting it!

"So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David **with gladness**" (vs. 12b).

David gets the message, and this compels him to complete the journey of bringing the ark up to Jerusalem; to the City of David (notice, with *gladness*). There is no greater joy than to know that, following a grievous trial, the smile of God is yet upon you! And so, David's fears have been turned into joy, and with sobriety and reverence, he will bring the ark to Jerusalem!

In 1 Chronicles 15, we saw that a special emphasis (indeed, a detailed emphasis) was placed on describing the pains of preparation that David had taken, in order to ensure that the ark

was properly transported. There, we are given a specific list of the various Aaronic and Levitical descendants, who after being consecrated, were to oversee and carry out the transportation of the ark, and that, with the playing of musical instruments and loud singing. In fact, when they get to Jerusalem, David appoints some of the Levites unto the specific and perpetual task of ministering in songs of praise and worship to the Lord, before the ark. The Levitical choir, as it were, is birthed at the conclusion of this event.

And so, as the Levites are to be consecrated unto the carrying of the ark, David speaks these words of instruction to them in 1 Chronicles 15:12-13, "You are the heads of the fathers houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of The Lord God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. For because you did not do it the first time, The Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order." And then we are told in verses 14&15, "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of The Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the Word of The Lord." And so, this time, without sacrificing the joy of The Lord, they take pains to ensure that they transport the ark, in accordance with the Word of God, given in the Law of Moses.

And then, continuing on with our text in 2 Samuel, we read in verse 13, "And so it was, when those bearing the ark of The Lord had gone six paces, that he (David, by means of the priests) sacrificed oxen and sheep." Parallel to this, in 1 Chronicles 15:25-26, we are told, "So David, the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of The Lord from the house of Obed-Edom *with joy*. And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of The Lord, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams."

And so, we are told that, after moving six paces, before going on any further, David sacrifices seven bulls and seven rams, when "God helped the Levites," who carried the ark. What are we to make of this? Well, certainly we can say that God provided the Levites with the necessary strength to bear the ark, but I think that there is more to this statement. After all, the Levites only moved six paces so far. I believe that what is meant here, is that God provided the Levites with the boldness to transport the ark, further alleviating their fears, by allowing them to carry it, without their being destroyed and struck down. Remember, not that long ago, Uzzah

was swiftly struck dead for touching the ark. And while the Mosaic Law permitted and ordered the Levites to carry the ark, certainly an element of fear was present, in light of what had happened in the past. And what if they should stumble? What if they should make some grave mistake in the moving of the ark. The first few moments must have been sobering and tense, but God enabled them to take steps forward, confirming His approval of their actions. In this way, he strengthened them; He alleviated any fears of judgment; He helped them. And so, David stops them at six paces, and before all present, he offers these sacrifices unto the Lord, in acknowledgement of His kindness and grace toward them. And at the end of their journey, when the ark is safely in the tabernacle, David will further offer several burnt offerings and peace offerings, in gratitude and on behalf of the people (vs. 17-18). You see, whereas the first time, there was a clear lack of reverence for The Lord, displayed by the way in which they had transported the ark, now David, in the midst of and at the book ends of their travels, expresses great reverence and a high regard for God's holiness, by atoning for their impurities (with "burnt offerings") and acknowledging the good will of God toward them (with "peace offerings").

"Then David danced ("whirled about") before The Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod" (vs. 14).

Here, we are given a description of David's inward and outward demeanor, throughout the course of this celebratory event. On the inside, David was so caught up in the ecstatic, joyful worship of God; he was so excited about that which was taking place, that he not only danced, but he danced with all of his might before The Lord. His whole heart was engaged in this act of celebratory worship. Literally, he whirled and whirled about, violently, unconcerned about how others viewed him (we will consider Michal's reaction to this, next week, Lord willing). Just note for now that David's soul was overly thrilled about the fact that God's presence would be with him in Jerusalem. We have never seen such rejoicing in David before, even when he had come to reign over all Israel.

And yet, at the same time, there was a somber humility surrounding the way in which David was dressed. David's procession was not in the order of normal kingly processions. He was not decorated in the royal purple and red robes, which a king would wear before his subjects, so as to flash forth his own glory. No, the emphasis was on God and His glory here. David was dressed like an ordinary Levite priest. He wore a robe of fine linen (1 Chronicles 15:27) and a linen ephod. He joined the Levites in their ordinary servant attire, offering the

sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving before God! God was to be the center of this procession, and not the king. And while such garments would better allow David to whirl around freely, they also kept him from overshadowing the main focus of the event, namely, that the God of all glory was coming to reign over Jerusalem. And so, here we find a great combination of explosive joy and somber reverence, surrounding the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem.

"So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of The Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. Now 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 whirling before The Lord; and she despised him in her heart. So they brought the ark of The Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before The Lord" (vs. 15-17).

Lord willing, next time, we will consider Michal's reaction to David's dancing, and the way in which David blesses the people, at the closing of this commemorative event.

II. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having spanned through the recorded event here, brethren, let us draw out a few relevant closing thoughts and applications for this morning:

1) Brethren, from a Scriptural standpoint, I don't recall a more joyfully celebrated occasion than this, found in the life of David. Out of all that David could have been thrilled about; the slaying of Goliath, his many God-ordained deliverances, his coming to the throne of Judah and then all Israel, that which most thrilled David's soul, was the reality of God's presence being with him, throughout the course of his life and reign. David loved God! Now certainly, this is because God first loved him, but I think that this display of David "whirling about" with all of his might; of David, expending all of his energies in dancing unto The Lord, should speak volumes to us.

What excites your soul, this morning? What is most precious and valuable to you in life? What saps your emotions and elates your heart? Is it anything in this world? Is it these things, which come and go, which rust and rot, and which always leave the soul disillusioned and disappointed? Or is it recognizing that the presence of Christ is continuously with you? Now brethren, we all fall short in this regard. And my point here, is not to discourage you, by hanging you out to dry, amongst your faults and lacks. Rather, I want to exhort you to reconsider your

present path, and to strive to constantly bring yourself back to that reality, which matters most, and which never changes over time or by any of the circumstances you have faced, are facing or ever will face. Consider the most precious reality of knowing that no matter what, at all times, your God and Creator is with you! His presence is ever with us, and the guarantee is cemented in Christ! Indeed, we call Him "Abba, Father;" we have been given the down payment of the Holy Spirit unto this end, and nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. By His Spirit, He tabernacles, not in a nearby tent, but within us...as individuals and as a Body! It was the recognition of this kind of a reality, which set David off on a violent, whirling journey, here in our text!

The presence of God; the favor of our Creator, ever upon us fearfully and wonderfully made creatures, is and ought to be the most exhilarating thunder and lightning, which resounds throughout the depths of our souls! Disillusioned souls attempt to grasp this reality in the pursuit of material things, upcoming vacations, Christmas gifts, cars and houses, relationships...etc, but they are always left empty. But, we have the abundant life that is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone! We know the Creator, who has fashioned this entire creation; who has pieced us together with great wisdom, granting us profound thoughts and emotions and desires; who has surrounded us with the beauty of flowers, stars, and an innumerable host of living creatures! All that we enjoy in this world are but mere traces; mere tidbits of pleasure, directing us to the infinite source, within which, resides the fullness of joy! [A charge to the unbeliever here, concerning the utter deadness and foolishness of missing the Creator in the midst of created, material things, which break down and die, never meant to replace the joy and elation, to be found in the Creator alone!]

Christ was the center of David's joy, in spite of all that he could access as king. Compare Saul and David in this regard...behold the outcomes! And so, brethren, let us desire most; and let us revel in most, that God's presence would be primary in our lives and in the church!

2) Let us see again in David, the coveted heart of humility, after which we ought to constantly strive. Though David was king, he laid aside his royal robes and took on the form of a servant, in the presence of all, so that God's glory might be the great emphasis of the occasion. And in such a state of humility, he risked the criticism of his subjects, and his own wife rose up to that occasion, and despised him in her heart, soon to criticize him, when the occasion arises.

Brethren, too many would use even their Christian position or their Christianity, as a means of exalting themselves and their own interests in the sight of all. And if we are all honest, we are all far too prone to doing this. But, like David here, let us be jealous for God's glory, doing all we can to magnify the hidden reality of His presence, so that all will see outwardly, what we know to be true inwardly; that Christ alone is Lord. Like John the Baptist, let us always strive to "decrease," so that we might see Christ, "increase." Let the friends of the Bridegroom do all to proclaim and celebrate the Bridegroom's wedding, and let them do so, while blending themselves somewhere into the background. [Example: GCA play...prop helpers, scenery changers, in dark clothing, so as to avoid interfering with the actors and the play; keeping the focus on the play and not the prop handlers...imagine the opposite?]. Let our lives shout aloud, in every respect, "This is all about Christ! I am a grateful, unworthy beneficiary, and all glory belongs to Him!"

Young people, this will not make you very popular in school or in college or at work. But it will help reveal your true heart's interest! If you are to be mocked, stand out and be mocked, for your commitment to, and exaltation of, Christ!

Amen!!!

[Note: "Thanksgiving," Whole-hearted worship...etc]

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25