

David Brings Back The Ark

This can be found in 1 Chronicles 13 and it's a pretty amazing picture of the Return of the Ark, no not the Raiders of the Lost Ark, or the Return of the King, this is something a little different. 1 Chronicles 13 only has 14 verses in it so read through it out loud.

David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, 'If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our people throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasture-lands, to come and join us. Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not enquire of it during the reign of Saul.' The whole assembly agreed to do this, because it seemed right to all the people.

So David assembled all Israel, from the River Shihor in Egypt to Lebo Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim. David and all Israel went to Baalah of Judah (Kiriath Jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God the Lord, who is enthroned between the cherubim – the ark that is called by the Name.

They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it. David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets.

When they came to the threshing-floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God.

Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

David was afraid of God that day and asked, 'How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?' He did not take the ark to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house for three months, and the Lord blessed his household and everything he had.

Good job on reading all that. You'll also need to read chapters 15 and 16 a bit too! Sorry!

Leadership

David was a good leader. His military exploits had already proved this. In verses 1 and 2 we see there is a distinct hierarchy in David's decision making. In the church today people claim access to all decisions at times. But this is not Biblical. We learn that God runs a theocracy where he alone makes decisions. On the human level David consulted his top

military chiefs then his secondary military chiefs. Some people claim ownership of decision making that God has appointed to his leadership teams in churches.

Then David presented the idea of bringing the ark back to the people. Again, some churches present decisions without many people involved (only exclusive church meetings etc) but here we see David assembling all the people of Israel (def more than the average church!) So our lesson is that the whole church is involved in hearing about church plans. Some churches have a meeting as another layer of order. But ultimately the whole church should hear of plans, and be involved! In 1 Chronicles 13 the people believed it was a good thing to do and agreed with David.

Did David consult his boss – the Lord God at all? We'll come back to that question later.

Gathering of the people

So David went ahead and gathered all the people from across Israel. What a massive task. But the Ark had such significance that this was essential. Again we see leadership quality often not seen in churches today with ministers and pastors not always showing capable leadership. Training up young people effectively as youth workers has never been so important as we release a well trained, experienced, holy and Godly future leaders.

Carrying the Ark

We read in verse 7 that God's people of Israel carried the Ark on a new cart. We see that some thought went into carrying the ark with a new cart possibly built for the purpose. We see that 2 men guided the Ark. We also find the whole of the people shouting, dancing and musically praising God en masse with real life and passion – 'with all their strength they were singing and playing lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets.'

Bruce Almighty – is a movie where we see a successful TV presenter see his life fall apart in front of him. Who does he blame for this mess? God. Yet Bruce cannot see that it is within him that the problems and solutions lie. Within him, via the guidance and help of God.

Back to 1 Chronicles 13 we see that all of a sudden the oxen stumbled, the Ark slipped and Uzzah reached out a hand to stop the Ark falling. We then read in verse 10 that the Lord was angry with Uzzah because he did this and killed him. Seems pretty harsh doesn't it? The guy was only trying to stop the Ark hitting the floor and God kills him...

Next we find that David was angry with God because God had killed Uzzah. David then named the place where Uzzah was killed 'The Punishment of Uzzah.'

Fear Of The Lord

We've done a talk on this subject (Talks > Fear Of God) but in Chronicles, we find that the death of Uzzah causes David to feel understandable fear and awe of the Lord. I know I would and I do fear God. Do you?

The result of this fear was to leave the Ark with a family (Obed-Edom) and not take it back to Jerusalem. This must have been quite a humbling and embarrassing experience for David. After all the celebrations and big noise he would have had to stand in front of people and admit that they weren't taking back the Ark to Jerusalem just now after all. He

may even have had to explain Uzzah's death to Uzzah's wife and family. Who knows. But what it did do is get a right perspective of God.

The Power of the Ark or the Power of God

In the famous Harrison Ford – Indiana Jones movie, 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' we see Indiana try to find the Ark, along with a group of Nazis. In the movie, the Ark is accorded a special kind of power but this just isn't true.

The Ark was a representation of God's saving power on earth. The people of Israel were made right with God through the complicated sacrifices and God-ordained rituals made by the priests on behalf of the people. The Ark was 'the house of God' among the Israelites. The source of power did not lie with the Ark but with God himself. The same is true today.

In our churches, services and spiritual life we must not forget that the true power of God comes from God himself and the Spirit of Jesus in us. It does not come from our rules, rituals, plans, ideas, words or weird clothing, buildings and ornaments. These should NEVER be used to claim the power of God. Old-fashioned and charismatic churches fall into this trap in different ways. Let's make it clear that we recognize God as the power and authority and God alone. Anything less is sinful and idolatry. Period.

So why did Uzzah die?

Number 1.50 – '...appoint the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony-over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it.'

One thing David hadn't done was consult God – or even look back to the Law to find out how the Ark should have been carried. Disobedience, not following God's way, is always a recipe for problems – for us today as much as back then.

In Chapter 15 verses 11-13 we find David asking the Levites to carry the Ark. This is what David said, "It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." God's way is always best!

Noah's Ark and The Power of the Ark

We read that while the Ark was in Obed-Edom's house, 'the Lord blessed Obed-Edom's family and everything he owned.' What an awesome picture of God. We also see that God's presence brings blessing. Which Christian can truly say that God has not brought them blessing through his Spirit in us. We also learn that the place of true happiness is the place where God is in the centre of our being, family, life and home. Awesome huh?

As I wrote this, God revealed a fresh picture to me – comparing Noah's Ark found in and around Genesis 7 – and the Ark of the Covenant we're looking at in this talk.

What was Noah's ark and why was it built? In Genesis 6 we find God saddened and pained deeply about the corruption, evil and violence of man he had created. But we find that Noah was a righteous man (right with God) and not evil like the other people.

Genesis 7:1 – The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.”

So God offered Noah a rescue plan, a way out from the destruction God was going to bring on the earth through a flood. This was God’s saving plan.

In Noah’s ark we find that God put his righteous people – the representation of his power and his holy name. Let’s repeat that to make it clear. God’s earthly representatives of his righteousness were found in Noah and family alone. It was them alone that God saved through the ark that they had built. So we see God’s people and power represented in that ark.

We also note that Noah and family had built the ark. Our spiritual life is dependent on Jesus in us yes, but it takes work and commitment, obedience on our part.

What a crystal clear depiction of the Ark of the Covenant we’re looking at in Chronicles. In both we find the earthly presence of God in an ark.

The modern day equivalent is found in the power of God’s Spirit through his body – God’s people who make up the church.

Chapter 15 – the Ark returns to Jerusalem

David firstly made a place for the Ark to rest. Our hearts are prepared by God for worship. Even before we were born, Jesus appointed us to be part of his kingdom. Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters in Genesis 1, so the Spirit of God works in people’s lives today. 1 Corinthians 3.7 says, “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” Even in our spiritual lives, God is shaping us and working to make us more like Christ.

We find in verse 14 that the Levites, who were to carry the Ark, ‘prepared themselves for service to the Lord.’ How this is true for us today? Ever wondered why churches are generally so ineffective right now? Well, guess what, it’s got a lot to do with you and me and our lack of preparation of service for the Lord. That means being prepared to grow, step out in faith, our prayer and Bible life, our personal holiness.

Worship of God

The final point I want to look at here is the impact the return of the Ark had on the people. David had assembled the people from all over Israel, no doubt delegating the work (another lesson for church leaders and youth workers here!)

The people went nuts. I don’t know about you but often I look back to my pre-Christian days and I had a load more laughs and fun than right now. There may as well be a sign outside some churches saying, ‘Be miserable. Be a Christian.’ It’s not what God wants – he loves a celebration and came to give us life (see John 10.10)! The people in Chronicles went ballistic. It was like VE-Day back in 1945 when Hitler had been defeated and there were parties all over.

We have a full-on choir and loud musical accompaniment. There's cymbals, lyres, harps, horns, trumpets and loads of SHOUTING!! There's a whole bunch of people breakdancing, doing the conga - OK, maybe Israelite dances - but you get the point. And where's my boy David? What's he doing? The guy's off his head, going mad for God. We hear the phrase, 'mad for God' but David invented this phrase. No holding back. His heart was full of joy and he praised God openly and unashamed. What a party.

We even find that David's wife, Michal hated him because of his dancing. Maybe he was plain a really bad dancer but it was probably more than that - she probably thought he was going too wild. But David couldn't help himself as he was so happy and full of God. With full-on worship of God and when we are a true disciple of Jesus, it brings 2 reactions - people are drawn in or turned away. It forces people to make a decision.

Is there something that God wants you to make a decision about today?