

David Attempts to Bring the Ark to Jerusalem; David's Victories Over the Philistines

1 Chronicles 13-14

1 Chronicles 13:1-6 – *“Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. ² And David said to all the assembly of Israel, “If it seems good to you, and if it is of the Lord our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere who are left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites who are in their cities and their common-lands, that they may gather together to us; ³ and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul.” ⁴ Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. ⁵ So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim. ⁶ And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, to Kirjath Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God the Lord, who dwells between the cherubim, where His name is proclaimed.”*

Background Notes

1 Chronicles 12 listed the mighty men of valor from the various tribes of Israel who joined David: first at Ziklag, while he was still escaping from King Saul, and then in Hebron in Judah, where David was first crowned king. In chapter 13 David has moved his capital to Jerusalem, and he is now king over all Israel. David's capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites is described in 1 Chronicles 11.

When the kingdom was established with the capital in Jerusalem, one of King David's first official acts was to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant was in Kirjath Jearim, a town about ten miles west of Jerusalem. When the Ark was sent back from the land of the Philistines, it came to Beth Shemesh. But some of the men of Beth Shemesh looked into it, and were struck down by the Lord for their irreverence (1 Samuel 6). So the Ark was moved to Kiriath Jearim, and it remained there for about 100 years.

1 Chronicles 12:1-6 gives us the **good news**. David's desire to bring the Ark of God up to Jerusalem was a good desire. Consulting with the leaders of Israel about his good plans was the right thing to do. Including the priests and Levites in any discussion lined up with Scripture, because they were in charge of transporting the Ark. And it's wonderful to read about all Israel, from the far north to the far south, united in their desire to bring the Ark to Jerusalem!

But now comes the **bad news**, beginning in verse 7...

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord always expects His people to know and follow His Word.

1 Chronicles 13:7-14 - *“So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. ⁸ Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.*

⁹ And when they came to Chidon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. ¹⁰ Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. ¹¹ And David became angry because of the Lord’s outbreak against Uzzah; therefore that place is called Perez Uzzah to this day. ¹² David was afraid of God that day, saying, “How can I bring the Ark of God to me?”

¹³ So David would not move the Ark with him into the City of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹⁴ The Ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.”

Have you ever felt sorry for Uzzah? Why would God be so angry with him? He was sincere and enthusiastic. He was zealous. He meant well. He was only trying to keep the Ark from falling on the ground. Why was he punished?

The answer is our doctrinal point: **the Lord expects His people to know and follow His Word.** God’s Word clearly said that **no one** was to touch the holy Ark of God. Only the priests and the designated Levites were to be involved in handling the holy objects of the Tabernacle, and even they were not allowed to touch the Ark (Numbers 4:15). Uzzah would have known this Scripture. Priests and Levites were present to inform the people (v2). And Uzzah would have known about the men of Beth Shemesh who had died years before when they looked into the Ark. So there really was no excuse - certainly not ignorance. The Lord always expects His people to know and follow His Word.

If the Ark of the Covenant were found today, would you die if you touched it? Possibly not, because the Glory of the Lord departed from the Ark before the Babylonian armies destroyed the Temple (Ezekiel 10). But I always tell my students, “If we find the Ark of the Covenant when we’re on an archaeological dig, I’ll let you be the first to touch it!”

Uzzah’s death, caused by the Ark almost toppling off the cart, happened because the Ark was never to be transported on a cart. Again, God’s Word clearly said that the Ark was to be carried on poles, on the shoulders of the Levites.

Transporting the Ark by cart was the Philistine method (1 Samuel 6). It was not God’s way. God’s work must be done in God’s way. The Lord expects His people to know and follow His Word.

This doctrinal point certainly applies today. Whether it’s organizing a ministry, or foreign mission field strategy, or authority structures in the home and in the church, or fundraising, or whatever - **God’s work must be done in God’s way!** And the Lord expects His people to know and follow His Word.

2. The Lord does not always lead His people to work in the same way.

1 Chronicles 14 - *“Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, with masons and carpenters, to build him a house. ² So David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, for his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of His people Israel.*

³ David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David begot more sons and daughters. ⁴ And these are the names of his children whom he had in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵ Ibhah, Elishua, Elpelet, ⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷ Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

⁸ Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went out against them. ⁹ Then the Philistines went and made a raid on the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁰ And David inquired of God, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?” The Lord said to him, “Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand.”

¹¹ So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, “God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water.” Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim. ¹² And when they left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire.

¹³ Then the Philistines once again made a raid on the valley. ¹⁴ Therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, “You shall not go up after them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. ¹⁵ And when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.” ¹⁶ So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer. ¹⁷ Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.”

In this chapter we see the blessing of God upon the reign of King David. *“Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations” (v17).* Hiram, the king of Tyre, was friendly toward David. He sent material and skilled labor to build David's palace (v1) - and archaeologists have recently uncovered the massive foundation of that palace in the ancient “City of David” area in Jerusalem!

The good news: David realized that **the Lord** - not his own valor - was exalting him and blessing his kingdom. The bad news: David did not obey the Lord in the area of marriage (v3). He had many wives. His sin of polygamy led to long-lasting family problems.

Our second doctrinal point comes from the record of David's wars with the Philistines. In verse 9, the Philistines made a raid in the Valley of Rephaim, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem. David asked the Lord how he should handle this incursion, and the Lord directed him to meet the Philistines head on. And David's troops broke through the Philistine assault, as water breaks through a dam.

But once again the Philistines invaded the valley – same enemy, same valley (v13). We might assume that the Lord would direct David to use the same strategy, right? Wrong. This time the Lord told David to circle around behind the Philistines, and come upon them near some mulberry trees. And when they heard the sound of marching at the tops of

the mulberry trees, they were to attack. That was certainly a different direction from the Lord! But David obeyed, and God gave him the victory.

The spiritual lesson is the Lord doesn't always lead His people to operate in the same way! He will never lead us in ways that are contrary to His Word, but don't expect the Lord to guide our decision-making process the same way every time. Sometimes He will guide through the counsel of a fellow believer. Sometimes He will guide through circumstances, or as a result of a significant event in our lives. Sometimes He will direct us through a verse or passage of Scripture.

Don't force God into some "Standard Operating Procedure" mold. The Lord does not always lead His people to work in the same way!

Practical Application

Remember - there is a blessing for reverence.

Look back at the last verse of chapter 13, *"The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had."* Do you think anyone in Obed-Edom's family touched the Ark? No way! They treated the Ark with proper awe and reverence. They obeyed the commands in God's Word. And because the Ark was cared for properly in his home, the Lord blessed Obed-Edom's family, and all his property and possessions!

We too will be blessed if we show reverence for our awesome and holy God. Read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. One of the keys for blessing in our lives is reverence. *"Blessed are the humble..."* and *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* Humility and obedient hearts indicate a reverent attitude.

Remember - there is a blessing for reverence!