

David Brings the Ark of the Covenant Up to Jerusalem

2 Samuel 6

2 Samuel 6 - *"Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name,^[a] the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. ³ So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. ⁴ And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. ⁵ Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. ⁶ And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God. ⁸ And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.*

⁹ David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" ¹⁰ So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. ¹³ And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. ¹⁴ Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. ¹⁹ Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.

²⁰ Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" ²¹ So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your

father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD. ²² And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor.” ²³ Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.”

Background Notes

One of the first things David did when he became king over all Israel was to move his capital north from Hebron to Jerusalem, which was more centrally located between the northern and the southern tribes. Jerusalem was also a city that could be more easily defended because of the valleys that surrounded it on the east side, on the south side, and on the west side. So David captured the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it his political capital.

“Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. ¹⁰ So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him. ¹¹ Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house” (2 Samuel 5:9-11).

The “Millo” likely included the well-known step-stone structure that’s been uncovered by archeologists in the ancient city of David. The Millo was a huge reinforcing wall that was constructed to attain more level ground on top of a hill, where David had his palace built by Hiram’s workmen. Recently, on top of what would have been this terraced area, archaeologists have uncovered what they believe are the foundations of David’s palace. Even as we speak, it’s being excavated!

Once David made Jerusalem the political capital of united Israel, he wanted to make it the religious capital as well. Obviously that involved bringing the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant had been in Kirjath-jearim for about 100 years, ever since it came back from the land of the Philistines in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 6). So David decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. He led 30,000 chosen men with all the people to Ba’ale-Judah (another name for Kirjath-jearim) to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem, his new capital city. Unfortunately, David used a Philistine method, rather than God’s method, for transporting the Ark of the Covenant, and this led to serious trouble.

Doctrinal Points

1. There is judgment for activities outside the boundaries that God has ordained.

Did you ever feel sorry for Uzzah? I think that we’ve all felt sorry for Uzzah! When he saw the Ark tipping, Uzzah put out his hand to steady it. Uzzah had good intentions – he wanted to keep the Ark from falling on the ground - but he was killed when he touched the Ark. It doesn’t seem fair, does it?

The question we’d probably all ask is, “Why did Uzzah get zapped while the Philistines mishandled the Ark and were not killed?” (See 1 Samuel 5.) What’s the answer? ¹⁰ Many Philistines did die as a result of their mistreatment of the Ark. In 1 Samuel 5:11 the Philistines said, *“Send the ark of the God of Israel away... or it will kill us and our people. For death*

had filled the city with panic; God's hand was very heavy upon it." And verse 12 says that the people who didn't die were afflicted with tumors. So, the Philistines were also judged for their mistreatment of the Ark. Furthermore, 1 Peter 4:17 says that judgment begins with the family of God. Uzzah was part of God's covenant community - he knew God's Law and he was under the Law. No one was to touch the Ark, not even the priests. God had ordained that only the Kohathites from the priestly tribe of Levi were to carry the Ark, but even they were not to touch it. They were slip poles into rings on the sides of the Ark, and carry it on the poles when it was moved from place to place.

We don't know why David didn't follow God's Law here. Maybe that he thought because the Philistine method worked for getting the Ark back into Israel, it would work for getting it up to Jerusalem as well. The fact that they placed the Ark of God on a *new* cart seems to emphasize a deliberate act of preparing a cart for the Ark, in direct violation of God's Law. David should have known better. Even if he was ignorant of the Law, he had plenty of Levites around to inform him. David later admitted his mistake of not consulting the Lord about this matter. In 1 Chronicles 15:12-13 he told the Levites, *"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."*

There is judgment for activities outside the boundaries that God has ordained – both then and today. The Corinthian Christians learned this lesson the hard way. They moved outside the proper bounds for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and God had to remove some of them for their abuse of the communion service. *"For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep"* (1 Corinthians 11:30). The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of God and there are Scriptural boundary lines as to how it is to be celebrated. Other examples of God's boundary lines could be given. For example, God has ordained boundaries in the area of sexual activities - read Romans 1:27 in this connection. There is judgment for activities outside the bounds that God has ordained.

2. There is liberty for activities inside the boundaries that God has ordained.

When David heard that God had blessed Obed-Edom's family because of the presence of the Ark of the Covenant in his home, David realized that it would be safe to transport the Ark to Jerusalem as long as it was done in the way that God had ordained. And so the Ark was brought up to Jerusalem with much celebration and worship. The fact that sacrifices were made by the priests after every six paces, at David's direction, was acceptable worship. This was certainly within the boundaries of the Old Testament Law of God.

To celebrate the Ark coming up to Jerusalem, David danced before the Lord with great emotion. No problem! This was certainly within the boundaries that God had ordained. But Michal, David's wife, despised David for exhibiting what she thought was unbecoming emotional conduct for a king, and her attitude was wrong. Verse 23 says that Michal had no children, and this may have been the way God disciplined Michal for wrongly despising David. David's activities were well within the bounds that God had ordained.

It's okay to be emotional in the expression of your faith – both then and today! Praising the Lord with your hands raised or with your hands down are both within the bounds that God has ordained. Singing loudly or singing softly in our worship of the Lord are both within the bounds that God has ordained. Studying the Bible in any number of many translations is all within the bounds that God has ordained. There is liberty for activities within the bounds that God has ordained.

Practical Application

Don't do the Lord's work in the world's way!

David tried to do the Lord's work in the world's way when he used the Philistine method to transport the Ark. David's motives to bring the Ark to Jerusalem were right, but his means for doing it were wrong. God's Word clearly declared how the Ark was to be transported.

We, too, can have good motives, but use the wrong means. We can try to do the right thing in the wrong way. One example of this would be using all kinds of questionable worldly ways and means to raise money for the Lord's work. The Lord may even have to judge us for such manipulative activities, because we can get to the point of operating outside of the God-given boundaries. So don't do the Lord's work in the world's ways!