

1 Chronicles 13 • Carrying the Ark to Jerusalem

Introduction

What happens when everyone has the best of intentions, but they don't do things in exactly the manner dictated by God? What are the consequences for leaders who take matters into their own hands or, for that matter, followers who do not challenge leaders with the Word of God? Obedience does not strictly apply to each individual believer, but to the body of believers as a whole as well.

¹Then David consulted with the captains of the thousands and the hundreds, even with every leader. ²David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if it is from the LORD our God, let us send everywhere to our kinsmen who remain in all the land of Israel, also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their cities with pasture lands, that they may meet with us; ³and let us bring back the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul." ⁴Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

[Read v.1-4]

Point: David's transportation of the ark takes place after a protracted war with the Philistines. Bringing the ark into Jerusalem (where it has never been, even before its current resting place) illustrates a renewed desire on Israel's part to seek God and to worship before Him, David being the ultimate spiritual leader in this regard.

Q: Who did David consult with first before bringing in the ark? Who should he have consulted with?

A: He consulted first with his military leaders to make sure it was safe, but he should have checked first with Nathan or the priesthood. The movement of the ark was a responsibility God had specifically given to the Levites/priesthood.

Q: What can we discern is wrong with the response David received in v.4?

A: Nobody stood up to David, citing God's Law as to how this was supposed to be carried out. In other words, everyone acceded to David's earthly authority, incorrectly assuming it carried with it spiritual authority sufficient to over turn God's **written** authority.

Q: How did David differ from Saul concerning the ark?

A: Remember that the ark was lost to the Philistines during the period of the Judges. When Saul came along, he probably saw the ark as a liability, and that having the ark could be disastrous because of his sin. Either way, he saw no profit in having the ark. In David's case, his motives seem not to be focused on winning battles but to worship God in the place He designated.

[Read v. 5-8]

⁵So David assembled all Israel together, from the Sihor of Egypt even to the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. ⁶David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, the LORD who is enthroned above the cherubim, where His name is called. ⁷They carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. ⁸David and all Israel were celebrating before God with all their might, even with songs and with lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and with trumpets.

Q: This is a case of good intentions with wrong methods. Baalah is the Canaanite name for Kiriath-jearim, which was 8 miles west of Jerusalem. The ark had been resting there in the house of Abinadab for 80 years. Uzza and Ahio were sons (or descendants) of Abinadab (2 Sam. 6:3). What was wrong with the method of transportation used?

A: It was a cart (whether old or new makes no difference). It was supposed to be carried by hand. That's why it nearly toppled over.

Q: What was wrong with who carried it?

A: The ark was supposed to be carried only by the Levites. The house of Abinadab was obviously not of the tribe of Levi.

⁴"This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things. ⁵When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it... ¹⁵When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry

them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry."

Numbers 4:4-5, 15

Q: What was the reaction of the Israelites and David to transporting the ark?

A: Great news! The ark is coming to Jerusalem. (This is the good news. The bad was yet to come.)

[Read v. 9-14]

Q: In verse 10, why did Uzzah die?

A: Because even the Levites were not allowed to touch the ark.

"When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry."

Numbers 4:15

Q: What was David's response in verses 11 & 12?

A: His celebration turned to fear and he became angry at God.

[Read 15:1-3, 11-15]

Q: When did the ark finally reach Jerusalem?

A: Obed-edom the Gittite was indeed a Levite of the clan of Kohath, family of Korah (26:1,4). As a Korahite gatekeeper (15:18, 24, and also a musician, v.21) he met the requirements of the law for service as a caretaker of the ark, and was visibly blessed.

Q: What's the difference between David's first attempt and second?

A: The second attempt was according to God's instructions, God's Word; the first was not. David had the right intentions, good motives, etc., but he was not obedient to God's Word, to God's way of doing things.

With God, the ends do **NOT** justify the means; the process is as important—often **MORE** important—than the goal.

⁹When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, because the oxen nearly upset it. ¹⁰The anger of the LORD burned against Uzza, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. ¹¹Then David became angry because of the LORD's outburst against Uzza; and he called that place Perez-uzza to this day. ¹²David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God home to me?" ¹³So David did not take the ark with him to the city of David, but took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹⁴Thus the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months; and the LORD blessed the family of Obed-edom with all that he had.

¹Now David built houses for himself in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. ²Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever." ³And David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to its place which he had prepared for it.

¹¹Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, ¹²and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place that I have prepared for it. ¹³Because you did not carry it at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance."

¹⁴So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁵The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, as

Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

Application

Q: Is there an equivalent today of how we approach God's "holy vessels"?

A: His people, for one, when they do not forgive one another. Communion is another example.

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

Matthew 5:23-24

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. "

1 Corinthians 11:27-30

Q: How have some of your good intentions turned into bad incidents?

Q: Does any of the sacredness of God's things reflect on how we treat His Word?