

2 Chronicles 5 • The Things That Count

Introduction

The goal of Walk with the Word is to learn to personally apply God's Word. When we come to historical accounts in Scripture, we need to look for their deeper spiritual meaning as to what they were teaching the people of that time, as well as how it might be relevant to us today. Whenever the Bible discusses the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us something about God's Word. How people handled and treated the Ark provides lessons of what happens when we apply correctly or mishandle God's Word, both as individuals and as a church. Some people might list the Bible as but a number of icons that can be identified with Christianity, but not all these things are to be equally employed. Even the things of God have to be given their proper place. How we rank and employ them is a witness to the quality and direction of our faith. As with the return of the Ark to the temple, people can see what kind of priority we give God's Word.

¹Thus all the work that Solomon performed for the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and all the utensils, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God.

[Read v.1]

Observation: Some scholars question the accuracy of Scripture in its accounting of how much treasure was accumulated by David. This is because when compared to ancient accounting records of other kings' or nations' treasures, David's is so much more staggeringly larger. The main thing to keep in mind is that it was really an accumulation that began before, and continued through, David's lifetime of what was provided by previous generations, what was produced by David's holdings itself, and what was captured from all the nations subdued around them. This wasn't merely people tithing, but on par with an entire nation's wealth.

Point: They did not exchange their wealth for their own needs, but provided a means by which to repair, maintain, and operate the things of God now and in the future. They were replacing something that was much simpler and plainer – the tabernacle – with something many times larger, more fanciful, and permanent. The nature of their personal commitment was changing to become even deeper.

[Read v.2-6]

²Then Solomon assembled to Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' households of the sons of Israel, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. ³All the men of Israel assembled themselves to the king at the feast, that is in the seventh month. ⁴Then all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. ⁵They brought up the ark and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils which were in the tent; the Levitical priests brought them up. ⁶And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.

Q: What does the ark represent? How would you compare it to the treasures already brought into the temple?

A: The ark of the covenant represents the Word of God. Whereas they had accumulated and brought into the temple very great earthly treasure, God's Word is the greater, incalculable, spiritual treasure. It's actually far more valuable than anything else, even greater than the sum of everything else combined.

Application: What do the things of God mean to you or your church? Have you ever known someone to be more concerned about the building, a program, or traditions more than anything else? Often the things people speak about the most is what they're actually the most proud of. Where does commitment to the Word of God fit into that behavior? What does it reveal?

Q: What is historically significant about the ark being brought into the temple?

A: It's the first time in a very long time that the ark and the tabernacle (or now, temple) would be together as originally intended. The ark had not been returned to the Holy of Holies since it was wrongly taken into battle with the Philistines and temporarily lost. The tabernacle subsequently moved to Nebo, then Gibeon, and now the temple was built in Jerusalem. The ark has resided the whole time separate and in a tent of its own.

Point: Mishandling the Word of God can result in actually losing the Word of God, or at least dividing and fragmenting a ministry or organization.

Q: What is the feast on which this occasion falls on? How might this fit in with the overall picture of what's taking place?

A: This is the Feast of Booths, marking the completion of the harvest and commemorating the wanderings in the wilderness, a time when they were supposed to live in temporary booths and tents to remind them of how their forefathers lived before permanently settling in the Promised Land. It came five days after the Day of Atonement, which was when national reconciliation to God for sin was made by the people fasting and the high priest offering sacrifices for atonement.

So just as their celebrations prepared them spiritually by first being personally reconciled through the Day of Atonement and then reminding themselves of the permanence they now enjoy in God's presence through the Feast of Booths, so the restoration of the ark and the transition from the tabernacle to the temple paralleled these experiences and teachings.

Q: The only people required for the moving of the ark were the Levites. Why did Solomon insist on participation by everyone at every level?

A: The goal is not merely a symbolic restoration of God's Word by reuniting the ark with all the things of God in one place of worship, but a real and actual return so there will be true, spiritual reconciliation of **ALL** of God's people.

Point: A pastor or leader in and of themselves may remain committed to the Word, but it's application and acceptance for the church at large has to come from everyone's commitment to it. It's doers of the Word which God seeks, not merely listeners. Until there's a unified commitment, they're just as fragmented as when the Ark and tabernacle resided in different places.

Q: What is the greater meaning of the fact that the sacrifices on this occasion "could not be counted or numbered"?

A: They gave no regard to the cost of re-establishing God's Word. Their unlimited visible commitment matched their inner and complete spiritual commitment.

Point: People who are truly committed to God's Word embrace and establish it as their highest priority, especially over the things of this world.

Application: How well do you consider that you can measure the quality of an organization, movement, or church by their priority to God's Word? Is it alright if it, say, comes in third on their list because the first two things are really terrific and worthwhile endeavors? What do you think of those who won't bother attending a Bible study, much less reading God's Word daily?

⁷Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim. ⁸For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles. ⁹The poles were so long that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen in front of the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; and they are there to this day. ¹⁰There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put *there* at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

[Read v.7-10]

Q: Why do you suppose that v.10 is provided to specifically mention the contents of the ark and its origin?

A: It reinforces God's Word in the context of obedience. The reminder of how it came through Moses in the form of a covenant – a two-party agreement which stipulates obligations for **BOTH** God and Israel – speaks of something that is not merely a possession or highly prized thing on display, but induces the higher lesson that at the very heart of something dedicated to the worship and service of God is the greater requirement to put His Word into practice.

Point: *It's not enough to merely be in possession of God's Word or to have even the most extensive knowledge of it, but to put it into practice. God's Word comes with an obligation to do more than just read it because the salvation experience comes with the requirement to live differently according to His Word going forward.*

Q: Was a mistake made regarding the length of the poles?

A: No. First, the Law specifically stated that the poles were not to be removed from the rings of the ark (Exodus 25:15). There is much conjecture on why this may have been done on purpose, pulling the poles back enough so they didn't leave the rings but jutting forward enough to make the ark's presence known. One was so the high priest would know the proper place to enter the Holy of Holies each year, another as a testimony to God's presence.

Point: *If God's Word truly dwells in us, it will be a visible testimony to others.*

[Read v.11-14]

¹¹When the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), ¹²and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets ¹³in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Application: *Consider the overall picture of what has taken place.*

1. *They committed all their treasures to God in the form of depositing them in the completed temple.*
2. *They prepared themselves exclusively for God's service and presence by first observing the Day of Atonement and sanctifying themselves for the simultaneous celebration of the Feast of Booths and the dedication of the temple.*
3. *They restored the Word of God as the centerpiece of their service and worship.*
4. *They experienced the indwelling of God's glory, His very presence.*

How does this speak to you concerning the areas you or your church need to address concerning a right relationship with, and service to, God?

What are the lessons for how spiritual revival takes place? How do each of these elements need to be in place regardless of how it takes form today?

What is wrong with the thinking that the most important thing about worship is music, or the most important thing about Sunday School is crafts, or any other variation like the most important thing about church service is making visitors comfortable? What is the inevitable result of de-emphasizing or completely passing over the proper role and place of God's Word?