

The Ark Is Established in Jerusalem (1 Chr 15-16)

Building a House for God's Name: Studies in 1 & 2 Chronicles

I. REVIEW: BUILDING A HOUSE FOR THE LORD

- A. As the Lord has been at work in our church over the last season, he has been calling us into a season of “*building the house*”. This is in line with the vision of what God has put in front of us to become and build a praying church that pursues his presence and his purposes for Kansas City.
- B. One of the ways we are seeking to strengthen and establish what God has put before us is by preaching through the books of Chronicles. The books of Chronicles were written to those returning from the Babylonian exile with the charge to rebuild the house of the Lord (cf. 1 Chr 9.1-2).
- C. The message of these books is that the people of God are designed to live under the rule of the right Davidic King and in accordance with the rightly ordered worship of the Lord. This vision of living under the blessings of God's kingdom is meant to orient people's hearts toward a wholehearted pursuit of God.
- D. 1 Chronicles 13 kicks off a new section that is concerned with David's work to establish the house of God in Jerusalem as the centerpiece of his kingdom. This work will happen in stages: David seeks to return the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13-16), seeks to build a house for God (1 Chr 17), and organizes and administrates his kingdom toward preparing for Solomon to build the Temple (1 Chr 18-29).
- E. In 1 Chronicles 13, we saw David's hasty attempt to return the ark to Jerusalem was met with dire consequences. As the he and the people sought to bring back the ark from its “captivity”, they did so in a manner outside of God's commandments. The severity of their disobedience led to the death of Uzzah.
- F. Outline of 1 Chronicles 15-16
 - 1. The Preparations for Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15.1-24)
 - 2. The Procession of the Ark into Jerusalem (1 Chr 15.25-29)
 - 3. The Installation of the Ark in the Tabernacle (1 Chr 16.1-3)
 - 4. The Establishment of the Levitical Orders of Worship (1 Chr 16.4-7)
 - 5. The Enthronement of Yahweh on His Praises (1 Chr 16.8-43)

II. DAVID'S VOW TO BUILD GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

¹Remember, O Lord, in David's favor, all the hardships he endured, ²how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, ³“I will not enter my house or get into my bed, ⁴I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, ⁵until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. (Ps 132.1-5)

- A. To understand this section of 1 Chronicles, we must recognize David's consuming passion to build a resting place for God. Psalm 132 is a poetic retelling of David's desire narrated in these chapters..
- B. David possessed a unique revelation that God desired to be at rest among his people. The “dwelling/resting place” of God speaks of a place where he is not striving against his people (cf. Gen 6.3). This happens more when his people are in agreement with his *nature* (worship) and his *purposes* (prayer).
- C. David vowed to live with an extravagant devotion to seek the Lord with all of his resources. This vow included *spending time in God's house* (Ps 27.4), *spiritual disciplines* (Ps 69.7-12), and *giving with extravagance* toward this end (1 Chr 22.14).

⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (Ps 27.4)

⁹For zeal for your house has consumed me... ¹⁰When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.
¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. (Ps 69.9-11)

¹⁴With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord 100,000 talents of gold, a million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for these is so much of it; timber and stone, too, I have provided. To these you must add. (1 Chr 22.14)

- D. David was unsatisfied with the comforts of this world and the cares of this life. He recognized the futility of wealth, ease, and pleasure that was disconnected from the manifestation of God's kingdom in this world. This led him to make costly choices to pursue God's purposes until they were established in his generation.

²the king said to Nathan the prophet... "I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." (2 Sam 7.2)

III. DAVID PREPARES TO BRING THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (1 CHR 15.1-24)

- A. After three-months, David once again sets out to bring the ark back to the city of Jerusalem. During this time, the Lord has blessed the house of Obed-edom (13.13-14), the house of David (14.1-7), and expanded the boundaries of Israel as David has sought the Lord (14.8-17). It is also likely that during this time David sought to understand the correct way to transport the ark of the covenant.
- B. After the failed attempt to move the ark on a new cart in accordance with pagan practices (cf. 1 Sam 6.7-14; 1 Chr 13.7-8), David determines that only the Levites could carry the ark of the Lord as a service to him. This was in accordance with the commandment given by Moses.

²Then David said that no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, for the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister to him forever (1 Chr 15.2)

⁸At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless in his name, to this day. (Deut 10.8)

- C. David took great pains to prepare both the people and the place for the ark to dwell. This includes:
1. **Sober-minded obedience** (1 Chr 15.2, 13, 15): David sought to order the stewardship of God's presence according to the commandments of God. We must hold a high standard toward obedience and honor God's commandments as we seek to establish worship at the center of our spiritual family.
 2. **Commitment to holiness** (1 Chr 15.12, 14): David commanded the priests to consecrate themselves unto the Lord for the work. Throughout the Scripture, when God calls people to step into a specific work, he calls them to set themselves apart unto that work. This looks like a pursuit of holiness and a thoughtful commitment to order our lives toward what he has called us to.
 3. **Exuberant worship** (1 Chr 15.16-23): In this passage we see the commitment of David to facilitate the musical and choral worship of the Lord while accompanying the work of transport. David understood that the Lord is great and greatly to be praised. The loud, vigorous, and powerful worship was to remind the people of the glorious majesty of God.
 4. **Administration** (1 Chr 15.4-10, 17-23): Throughout these chapters we also see the practical preparations that David undertook to establish the ark in Jerusalem. This included resources, people, buildings, and significant administration. Likewise, for us to regain a central focus toward worship and prayer will require both intentional and costly choices to align our commitments and resources toward those ends.

IV. THE PROCESSION OF THE ARK (1 CHR 15.25-29)

- A. After making all the preparations to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the people set out to do the work. As the Levites brought the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the city of Jerusalem, they were empowered and helped by the Lord to fulfill the work (1 Chr 15.26).

- B. The procession itself was a loud and festive endeavor — with David himself serving as the “master of ceremonies”. The picture we have of David is that of an ideal priest-king (linen ephod), using the power of his throne (resource, manpower, administration, etc.) to facilitate the extravagant worship of the Living God.
- C. The picture of a king unashamedly dancing and celebrating before the ark of the covenant as it is brought in triumphal procession into the city (usually kings are the ones receiving the adulation in a processional) leads David’s wife Michal (Saul’s daughter) to despise him. This portrait gives us a final window into the distinction between the heart of David and the house of Saul.

V. DAVID’S REFORMATION IN WORSHIP (I CHR 16.4-7)

- A. We cannot come to this passage without seeking to understand the catalytic and revolutionary nature of David’s actions in establishing musical worship at the center of the house of God and at the center of his kingdom.
- B. David understood something foundational about God — namely, that God is zealous to be worshiped and has designed his kingdom to be established on the worship of his people.
- C. Moses had commanded that the blowing of trumpets was to accompany the burnt offerings and peace offerings. David seemed to understand the foundational place of music to accompany moments of joy, sacrifice, and worship to the Lord.

¹⁰On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the Lord your God. (Num 10.10)
- D. David brings Moses’ commandment to its logical fulfillment after installing the ark in the tabernacle in Jerusalem — adding the element of choral music to accompany the instrumental music.
- E. **Appointed:** We see the intentionality, care, and provision made by David to orient his labors around facilitating musical worship in the tabernacle. David’s vow to seek a resting place for God involved significant labor, patience, and resources.
- F. **Invoke:** The word invoke in this passage could also be translated “remember”. Throughout the Scripture, the concept of **putting the Lord in remembrance** was a phrase used for intercession. The Levites were to remind God of his character, his former works, and his promises toward his people as a means of interceding that he would again demonstrate his character and fulfill his promises toward them.

⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. (Isa 62.6-7)

⁷I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. (Isa 63.7)

³O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known. (Hab 3.3)

- G. **Thank:** The Levites were commanded to minister to the Lord by bringing songs of thanksgiving to him. They were to both represent and lead the worship of God’s people by giving him thanks for his character and his mighty works.

¹Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! ²Let the redeemed of the Lord say so...

⁸Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! (Ps 107.1, 8)

- H. **Praise:** The third task given to the Levitical musicians and singers was to offer praise to the Lord. To praise the Lord is to respond to him in a posture of worship because of his nature and character — acknowledging that he alone is God, and to him alone worship must be given. The Levites are to stand as the leaders of God's people — and even of all creation — offering to the Lord the glory he alone is due.

¹Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! ²Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! ³Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Ps 150.1-6)

VI. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE: A PEOPLE OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

- A. Several hundred years after David's life (while the temple was still standing), the prophet Amos spoke of the day when God would rebuild the tabernacle of David. The apostle James declares that this began to be fulfilled in the expansion of the church through Christ Jesus (cf. Acts 15.12-17).

¹In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins (Amos 9.11)

- B. In the new covenant, the people of God are the Temple of God (the tabernacle of David). The people are meant to be the dwelling/resting place of God Almighty and are to serve as a **kingdom of priests** to God.

¹⁹you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph 2.19-22)

⁹you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation... (1 Pet 3.9)

- C. In the New Testament, the priesthood of believers no longer deals with facilitating the sacrificial system related to purity (forgiveness and atonement) and stewarding the Lord's presence among his people. This aspect of the priestly ministry has been fulfilled once and for all in Christ Jesus — the great high priest.

¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing eternal redemption. ³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9.11-14)

- D. This means that the **primary** place that the people of God (the New Temple) fulfill their priestly role is through **ministry to the Lord in worship and prayer** — through the acts of invoking his name, thanking, and praising him as God.

- E. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the days of the new covenant by declaring that any who joins himself to the Lord will be brought into his presence to minister to him and serve him. He also declares that one of the primary identities of his people will be a **house of prayer**.

⁶"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Isa 56.6-7)

- F. This revelation is foundational to our DNA as a spiritual family. God is calling us into a season of intentionally building toward becoming a people centered around worship and prayer as our foundational reality together. This will require a consistent **realigning of our values** (*Foundations*), a **plan** to walk toward this (*Sunday Worship, prayer meeting*), and a **commitment to continue** in the face of difficulty and pressure.