

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles

Lesson 6: The Ark Brought to Jerusalem -- 1 Chronicles 15:1–16:43

There is a holy difference between trying again and trying again wisely. After the disaster at the threshing floor, after Uzzah fell and the procession froze and the ark sat for three months in the house of Obed-edom, David could have given up on bringing the ark to Jerusalem altogether. He did not. But neither did he simply repeat himself. This time he stopped and asked the question that changes everything: not 'Did we want it badly enough?' but 'Did we do it God's way?' And the answer he reached is one of the most important sentences in Chronicles: 'because we did not seek him according to the rule.'

So the second attempt looks different. The carts are gone. The Levites are summoned and sanctified. The ark is lifted onto the shoulders of the sons of Kohath, carried with poles as God had commanded long ago through Moses. There is still music, still dancing, still overwhelming joy, but now the joy runs inside the banks God Himself had marked out. Here is a man who has learned that reverence and exuberance are not enemies. You can be wildly glad before God and still be carefully obedient to God. In fact, the gladness is purer for it.

And what gladness it is. When the ark finally enters the city, David appoints singers and instruments, and he hands Asaph a psalm of thanksgiving that fills chapter 16 with praise. 'Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!' This is worship that is utterly God-centered, full of His name, His wonders, His covenant, His salvation. It is not a performance aimed at the crowd; it is the heart of a nation lifted toward heaven. The center of the kingdom has become the praise of God.

We come to these chapters not to copy the ceremonies, for the ark and the Levitical orders belonged to the Old Covenant and are not bound on the church. We come to learn the abiding principles: that God is to be worshiped as He directs, that reverence and joy belong together, that praise is meant to be God-centered and shared among His people. Under the New Covenant we worship by the apostolic pattern, in spirit and in truth, and these chapters teach us to take both the manner and the heart of worship seriously. Let us watch David do it right, and let us learn to worship God His way.

Group Discussion: What changed between the first attempt to move the ark and the second, and what does David's diagnosis in 15:13 ('we did not seek him according to the rule') teach us about how God wants to be worshiped?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own worship have you settled for sincerity without asking whether you are worshiping the way God has directed, and what would it take to seek Him 'according to the rule'?

Read 1 Chronicles 15:1–16:43

Study Questions

1. What does David's insistence that only the Levites carry the ark (15:2, 11-15) teach us about the principle that God determines how He is to be worshiped?
2. David said, 'because we did not seek him according to the rule, the LORD broke out against us' (15:13); where do you most need to stop asking 'did I mean well?' and start asking 'did I do it God's way?'
3. Why does the Chronicler give such detailed attention to the appointment of singers and musicians (15:16-24), and what does it reveal about the place of ordered, intentional praise in the worship of God?
4. When your worship feels routine or scattered, what would more intentional, prepared, wholehearted praise look like in your own life?
5. David danced and worshiped with all his might while Michal despised him (15:29); what does this teach about the place of joyful, undignified, God-centered exuberance in worship?
6. Where has self-consciousness or fear of others' opinions held back your wholehearted praise of God?

7. The psalm of chapter 16 commands us to 'make known his deeds among the peoples' (16:8); how is God-centered worship also meant to be a witness to the nations?
8. How could the overflow of your praise become a testimony to someone outside the faith this week?
9. The whole episode rests on the truth that God Himself prescribes the manner of acceptable worship (15:13–15) and is to be worshiped as He directs; how do we honor this New Testament principle today, worshiping by the apostolic pattern (Acts 20:7; John 4:23–24; Colossians 3:16–17) without binding the Old Covenant ceremonies of the ark and the Levites on the church?
10. Looking back across these chapters, name one specific way Jesus is forming you to worship Him both reverently (His way) and joyfully (with all your heart).

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Numbers 4:1–20, the LORD's specific instructions for the Kohathite Levites to carry the holy things on their shoulders, the very rule David recovered; Deuteronomy 12:32, the warning not to add to or take from what God commands in His worship; John 4:23–24, Jesus teaching that the Father seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and truth; Acts 20:7 and Colossians 3:16–17, the apostolic pattern of New Covenant worship, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus; Psalm 96, the psalm of thanks woven into 1 Chronicles 16, calling all nations to ascribe glory to the LORD.

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