

(1 Chron. 13:1-4) - King David wanted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem as he was confident that the ark was the assurance of the presence of the Lord among His people. Where the ark was, there was the glory of God (*Exod. 25:22*). As we can recall from *Exodus 25* and other Scriptures, the ark of the covenant was a chest of acacia wood covered with gold. It contained the tables of the law and rested in the holy of holies in the tabernacle of Moses along with the pot of manna and Aaron's rod (*Heb. 9:4*). It was covered by the mercy-seat that was made of acacia wood covered with gold. It was an important picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole way of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between God and sinners. It pictured how God justifies sinners through the blood of Christ as the righteousness of God that has been imputed to His people for their justification was established. In the Old Testament, the ark was the only place believers could go (through the high priest and the blood of sacrifice) to have their sins forgiven in a temporal and ceremonial way (*Heb. 9:13*). This all pointed to the glorious Person and finished work of Christ for the spiritual and eternal forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between God and His chosen people (spiritual Israel) (*Heb. 9:14; 10:14*).

The worship of God as pertaining to the ark had been neglected during Saul's reign. During the days of Samuel, the superstitious Israelites took the ark from Shiloh into battle and lost it to the Philistines (*1 Sam. 4:3-4; 10-11*). Because of the wrath of God against them, the Philistines eventually and willingly returned the ark to Israel. The presence of God to them meant God's wrath and death for them (*1 Sam. 5*). This is a great picture to show us that God's presence without Christ as our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Mediator, is nothing but wrath and death. To approach God without Christ is to approach Him without a righteousness that answers the demands of His justice, and this is certain death (*John 3:18,36*). The Philistines brought the ark back, and it rested in Kirjathjearim for fifty years.

So, David consulted with the leaders and the people, and they all agreed that bringing back the ark was the right thing to do. This was a large part of David's godly leadership as the God-appointed and ordained ruler of the people, but, as we will see, David made a great error in his way of moving the ark. God had given very specific instructions on how the ark was to be moved, and David did not consult the priests as to how this was to be done. The reason these instructions were so specific and meticulous was to show how the concept of true righteousness before God was in the perfection of the law. The law had to be kept in every jot and tittle. Man cannot do this, but Christ came to keep the law and satisfy its justice perfectly (*Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:4*). This was to show that we as sinners must have the righteousness of God in Christ to be justified before God and to have eternal life.

(1 Chron. 13:5-10) - David had constructed a tent (tabernacle) that would eventually house the ark because the tabernacle of Moses had been lost or destroyed, but some of its furnishings had been recovered and were eventually placed in the temple that Solomon built. He gathered 30,000 chosen men with instruments, singers, and all of Israel, and they journeyed to Baalah or Kirjath-Baal to bring up the ark. David was well versed in the law of God, as were the priests who were with him. They all knew that the ark was only to be carried by staves on the shoulders of the Levites. But David prepared a new cart with oxen, driven by Uzza and Ahio, to transport the ark. After putting the ark on the cart, they began their journey to Jerusalem, rejoicing and singing, confident that God was pleased with them. When the procession came to the threshingfloor of Chidon, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled. Uzza put his hand out to steady the ark, and God smote him dead because he put his hand on the ark.

(1 Chron. 13:11-14) - The people were all stunned, and David was displeased because the Lord had smitten Uzza. But all of them (including David) realized, at last, that God was angry and displeased with the whole affair. So, David put the Ark in the house of Obedom, where it remained for three months. Why was the Lord displeased with David and Israel? David

intended to do the right thing in returning the ark to Jerusalem. But three months later, David gives the answer when he determined again to bring up the ark. He said to them, “You and your brethren sanctify yourselves that you may carry the ark into the place I have prepared for it. Because I ignored God’s priests and put the ark on a cart, the Lord was angry with us. We sought Him not after the due order” (1 Chron. 15:12-13). This time David consulted the priests of God (1 Chron. 15:14-15). In ignoring God’s priests, it was as if David ignored the need of a God-appointed mediator. The high priest (who offered the blood) was a type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16). The other priests (who offered the sacrifices and ministered about the tabernacle) were pictures of God’s people who come unto Him by Christ as they plead His blood, His righteousness imputed. Consider -

(1) The priests were taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God (Heb. 5:1). So, Christ was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, to be our one Mediator between God and His chosen people.

(2) The priests were chosen of God, and no man took this honor unto himself (Heb. 5:4). So, Christ glorified not Himself to be our high priest. The Father chose and ordained Him to be our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer to accomplish the duties of His priesthood in an eternal way by establishing the righteousness of God for the justification of His people, sinners saved by grace (Rom. 4:6-8; 5:21).

(3) The high priest offered the blood of atonement once a year, and the other priests offered daily sacrifices (Heb. 9:6-7). No man dared to assume this office. Those who took it upon themselves perished. Even King Uzziah was slain by the Lord when he attempted to burn incense at the altar of incense without God’s appointed and ordained priest (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

Christ, our Lord, is our High Priest and our mediator by Whom God is reconciled to us and us to Him (2 Cor. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 2:5). No man comes to the Father but by Him and based on the righteousness that He alone established for His people (John 14:6). David and the people sought to approach God, move and set up the ark, and establish worship of the Lord without God’s priest. This is a serious error. Without question, this was David’s error, and the Lord dealt severely with him and his friends. Disregarding God’s commandment for the priests alone to carry the ark, it did not matter how sincere David was or how good his intentions were. God is to be obeyed. We see an application for us in that it does not matter how sincere we may be in desiring to worship, know, serve, or approach God. He is only worshipped, known, and approached in the Lord Jesus Christ and on the basis of His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. God’s Word says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Faith involves believing and resting in Christ and His merits alone as we come before God. Without Christ, there is no pleasing God (Matt. 17:5; Eph. 1:3-7).

(1 Chron. 15:14-29) - Here we see how David sought to bring up the ark and how he came to God the right way. The priests carried the ark. God was pleased and helped the priests who bore the ark. They offered the blood sacrifice before the Lord. When David sought the first time to return the ark to Jerusalem, these two things were missing – the priests and the blood sacrifice, both which are necessary to please God (Heb. 10:19-22; Heb. 9:22). This was the equivalent, in picture, of approaching God without Christ, not having His righteousness imputed, seeking His favor and blessings without God-given humility and faith evidenced by pleading His blood as our only merit and only ground of salvation.