

PRAISE IN DANCE

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Samuel 6:12-19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 6

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 14-19

I. A Hopeful Gesture 2 Samuel 6:1-5

¹ David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. ² He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

1. *Again* refers to David's reassembling the *men* of his army. They had conquered Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6) and defeated Philistine armies (5:20-25). When it came to defeating the Jebusites of Jerusalem, David as their leader appears to have done so on his own accord, though God gave him success (5:6-10). Regarding defeat of the Philistines, David twice inquired of the Lord (5:19, 23). It may be significant, then, that there is no record of David's consulting the Lord regarding what he (David) had in mind next.

The number *thirty thousand* is interesting in that it is also the number of men who died when the Philistines defeated the Israelites and captured the ark in 1 Samuel 4:10.

2a. *Baalah in Judah* is another name for Kiriath Jearim. The ark had been resting there for some 20 years since its recovery from the Philistines.

2b. Every aspect of God's designation is significant in this verse. *Lord* (indicated by small capital letters within the text to show the name *Yahweh* was used) refers to the personal name of Israel's God. The word translated *Almighty* is translated "hosts" in older versions of the Bible and may refer to angelic beings who serve the Lord as he directs. It also may refer to stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies that he had created. The word speaks to God's fighting on behalf of his chosen people. The bottom line is that this designation celebrates the Lord's power in various contexts.

3a. Had David consulted the Levites, whom God appointed to care for the ark, he would have learned that the ark must be carried by only two long wooden poles through rings affixed to the ark (Exodus 25:12-15; 37:5). This method kept the ark a safe distance from human contact and kept the top-heavy ark stable.

Why David chose instead to *set the ark*

of God on a new cart isn't revealed in the text. Perhaps it is evidence of David's ignorance of the law, or maybe it betrays a flippancy toward God's presence. Or he could have thought that if a cart safely brought the ark back from the Philistines, it could surely take the ark safely to Jerusalem.

Older versions of the Bible include the town name "Gibeah" instead of *hill*. This is because the Hebrew word can refer to either a hill or a specific town. If the latter, it likely was Gibeah, located about four miles north of Jerusalem and nine miles east of Kiriath Jearim.

3b-4. A common assumption today is that *Abinadab* was a Levite, an assumption also held by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 6.1.4). However, we should conclude that *Abinadab* was *not* a Levite since 1 Chronicles 15:12-13 has David's later statement that Levites were not involved in transporting *the ark of God* on this occasion.

Four Levites were to carry the ark by means of the two poles that were kept in the gold rings (Exodus 25:14-15). Two branches of the Levites did indeed use carts for transportation of various tabernacle items, but not the branch that was charged with transporting the ark (Numbers 7:4-9). The use of a cart in this regard is reckless in that it indicates David's failure in not inquiring of the Lord regarding procedure.

5. King *David* and the Israelites celebrated in grand style the consecration of David's capital city. He spared no expense.

The celebration was cut short, however, by tragedy: when the cart tipped, the ark slid, and Uzzah lost his life trying to stabilize it (2 Samuel 6:6-7). The party ended, and David left the ark in the house of Obed-Edom, where it remained until David tried again. When David sent for the ark a second time, he had greater re-

spect for God's holy presence. God must be honored and his instructions obeyed. David picked up his celebration where it left off and welcomed the ark into his city.

II. A Hope Fulfilled

2 Samuel 6:14-16

¹⁴ Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

14a. The *ephod* was one of six pieces of clothing traditionally worn by priests. In terms of construction, ephods were to be made "of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted *linen*" with "two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners" (Exodus 28:6-7). As part of a larger ensemble, the ephod's intent was to communicate "dignity and honor" (28:2).

It is unclear what we should make of King David's wearing of a priest's garment since the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king were normally distinct from one another (1 Kings 1:32-45). Perhaps the safest conclusion is that David wore the ephod in the same sense that young Samuel did in 1 Samuel 2:18: a waistcoat suitable for worship. That would lead us to understand the garment as having significance apart from the priesthood.

There's also the possibility that David's taking on a priestly role could foreshadow Jesus, who would come as both king and high priest (Hebrews 7). Normally only priests offered sacrifices, but we see an exception to that in 2 Samuel 6:13, 17.

14b. *Dancing* was a common form of celebration in Israel, especially for women. Israelite women danced with Miriam to celebrate God's victory over Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20).

15. As *all Israel* joined David, no other instrumental *sound* other than that of the *trumpets* is mentioned as accompanying the *shouts*. Trumpets are associated with priests dozens of times in the Old Testament and with the presence of the Lord. In the case of the latter, trumpets were linked to fear of God. Once again we see evidence that David took on a role associated more with priests than with kings. Only one person seems to have objected.

16. *Michal* was David's first wife, and they had a rough history together. Her reasons for despising David aren't completely clear. But there may be a clue in the fact that she was not celebrating with the crowds, choosing instead to stay inside and watch *from a window*. Perhaps she did this to model what she considered to be royal behavior—behavior that kept herself apart from the common people in their revelry.

We are told in 2 Samuel 6:20 that Michal accused David of acting in an undignified and inappropriate way in front of other women who served him. David rebuffed her by claiming that he danced *before the Lord* (2 Samuel 6:21-22).

III. A Hope Shared

2 Samuel 6:17-19

¹⁷ They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to

each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

17a. *David* appeared at this point to have completed his mission now that *the ark of the Lord* was in *the tent that David had pitched for it*. But this raises a question: Given the cause of the tragedy in 2 Samuel 6:6-7, discussed above, did David's preparations at this point conform to instructions in Numbers 1:51 for moving the tabernacle? The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15:12-13 indicates not.

17b. *Burnt offerings* were prescribed for specific occasions (Exodus 29:38-42; Numbers 28:9-10). But they were also appropriate as freewill offerings (Leviticus 22:18). *Fellowship offerings* (Leviticus 3) could express thanks or obligation to God (7:11-16).

Both kinds of sacrifices indicated the joy of the occasion and the felt need to praise God for bringing it about. Regarding the possibility of David's exercising a priestly role, see 2 Samuel 6:14b.

18a. Solomon will later follow in his father's footsteps by sacrificing *burnt offerings* and *fellowship offerings* in dedicating the newly finished temple; the massive numbers of Solomon's sacrifice recorded in 1 Kings 8:62-63 make an interesting contrast to the "seven bulls and seven rams" offered on this occasion.

18b. On pronouncing blessing on *the people*, compare Leviticus 9:23; Joshua 8:33; 1 Chronicles 16:2; and 2 Chronicles 31:8. Regarding *the name of the Lord Almighty*, compare 1 Samuel 17:45; 2 Samuel 6:2; and Isaiah 18:7.

19. David shared this celebration with *all the people*. God's presence among his people was a momentous occasion for *the whole crowd of Israelites*. A full meal for the assembled celebrants was a massive and extravagant undertaking (Nehemiah 8:10).

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

PRaise IN DANCE

Into the Lesson

What is the best news you ever received?

Today’s lesson allows us to see how some reacted exuberantly to the blessing of God’s presence, giving us an opportunity to compare their expressions with the way we react to God’s blessings.

Into the Word

Based on class discussion, what is some important information to know about the ark of the covenant?

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 14-19. List elements of worship you detect in these passages.

Into Life

Consider the list of worship elements you detected in this lesson’s Scripture text.

List similar elements you detect in worship today.

Consider the following continuum:

Observer-----Participant-----Celebrant

Definitions:

- **Observer:** one who watches performances at a worship service
- **Participant:** one who does what the worship leader asks (stands, sits, claps hands, sings, etc.)
- **Celebrant:** one whose expressions of worship are spontaneous (lifts hands, speaks “amens,” etc.)

Place a mark along the continuum that best indicates your personal style while engaging in corporate worship.

Why did you mark the continuum as you did? Is it a matter of personality, upbringing, or something else?

Does worship style become “better” by moving along the continuum to the right?

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Praise God with all your might.