

David Worships God In Jerusalem

Bible Background • 1 CHRONICLES 15 | Printed Text • 1 CHRONICLES 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–29

Devotional Reading • 1 CHRONICLES 16:7–13, 28–33

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson we will EXAMINE the ceremony surrounding the Ark being brought to Jerusalem, APPRECIATE the diversity of responses that flow from authentic worship, and EMBRACE physical expressions as important aspects of worship.

In Focus

Allison and Mario Bishop have been married for 40 years. Three months before their anniversary they made dinner reservations at their favorite restaurant.

Their four children planned a surprise anniversary celebration. They rented a ballroom, hired a caterer, and picked out flowers and decorations, all to make the celebration special. On the day of the celebration, it was Gary's responsibility to get his parents to the site of the celebration. So he called the place his parents made reservations in advance and told them why he needed to cancel the RSVP.

"Hello. My name is Mario Bishop. My wife and I have reservations for a dinner party of 23." The manager pretended to check his list and not find their names.

"This is ridiculous! We have a large group coming here for our anniversary dinner. What should we tell them? Sorry, go home?" Mrs. Bishop was very upset. But Gary stepped in and suggested a place a mile away that had good food. Gary's wife, Gwen, told them she would call everyone about the change.

When they all arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop were genuinely surprised by all the people who came to celebrate their anniversary with them. When Mr. Bishop heard the jazz ensemble playing his favorite songs, he began to laugh. Then he grabbed his wife and went onto the dance floor. Everyone enjoyed celebrating with the Bishops.

Why is it important to celebrate special occasions?

Keep in Mind

"So all Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD's Covenant with shouts of joy, the blowing of rams' horns and trumpets, the crashing of cymbals, and loud playing on harps and lyres" (1 Chronicles 15:28, NLT).

Words You Should Know

A. Sanctify (v. 14) qadash (Heb.) — To make oneself ceremonially clean for service to God, especially through ritual washing

B. Ephod (v. 27) 'ephod (Heb.) — A priest's outer robe

Say It Correctly

Ephod. EE-fud.

Kiriath-jearim. KEER-ee-ath jeh-ar-EEM

KJV

1 Chronicles 15:1 And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.² Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.

3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.

14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.

16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom with joy.

26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

27 And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen.

28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

29 And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal, the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

NLT

1 Chronicles 15:1 David now built several buildings for himself in the City of David. He also prepared a place for the Ark of God and set up a special tent for it.² Then he commanded, "No one except the Levites may carry the Ark of God. The LORD has chosen them to carry the Ark of the LORD and to serve him forever."

3 Then David summoned all Israel to Jerusalem to bring the Ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it.

14 So the priests and the Levites purified themselves in order to bring the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to Jerusalem.

15 Then the Levites carried the Ark of God on their shoulders with its carrying poles, just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

16 David also ordered the Levite leaders to appoint a choir of Levites who were singers and musicians to sing joyful songs to the accompaniment of harps, lyres, and cymbals.

25 Then David and the elders of Israel and the generals of the army went to the house of Obed-edom to bring the Ark of the LORD's Covenant up to Jerusalem with a great celebration.

26 And because God was clearly helping the Levites as they carried the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.

27 David was dressed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who carried the Ark, and also the singers, and Kenaniah the choir leader. David was also wearing a priestly garment.

28 So all Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD's Covenant with shouts of joy, the blowing of rams' horns and trumpets, the crashing of cymbals, and loud playing on harps and lyres.

29 But as the Ark of the LORD's Covenant entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David skipping about and laughing with joy, she was filled with contempt for him.

The People, Places, and Times

The Ark of the Covenant. God instructed the Children of Israel to build a Tabernacle and several pieces of furniture for it after their exodus from captivity in Egypt (Exodus 25:10–22). One piece of furniture, the Ark, measured two and a half cubits in length, and a cubit and a half in both width and height. A cubit is an ancient unit and is the measurement from the elbow to fingertip, about 18 inches. David built several buildings for himself in the City of David. He also prepared a place for the Ark of God and set up a special tent for it.

This acacia wood box was then covered in gold and carried by two staves also made of gold-covered acacia wood. Mounted on the Ark was the mercy seat, a slightly raised platform, surrounded by two cherubim made of gold, one mounted at each side of the seat. The Ark of the Covenant resided within the Holy of Holies, the innermost room of the Tabernacle. Access was only permitted to one person, a high priest, once per year, on the Day of Atonement. The high priest would enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of a goat, on behalf of the people of Israel's and his own sins. The goat's blood was sprinkled onto the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of the people of Israel.

Background

Originally one book, Chronicles recounts the genealogy and history of Israel. It includes the spiritual heritage that shows God's hand in the life of His people from Adam through David's generation (1 Chronicles 1–9). The author is unknown; however, it is traditionally ascribed to Ezra. In the Jewish Bible, Chronicles appears at the very end, right after Ezra and Nehemiah, giving an indication that Chronicles is very different from the book of Kings, which recounts many of the same historical events. It is believed that the book was written in the fifth or fourth century BC, perhaps between 400 and 350 BC. The author devotes a large section of 1 Chronicles to the story of David's life, which took place much earlier around 1000 BC. There is little mention of David's sins. Instead, the focus is on his achievements. He loved God and accomplished much.

Why is our spiritual heritage important to our future? What are the details of your spiritual heritage, and how will you pass them on?

At-A-Glance

1. A Place for the Ark (1 Chronicles 15:1–3)
2. Transporting the Ark (vv. 14–16)
3. Praising God for the Ark's Return (vv. 25–29)

In Depth

1. A Place for the Ark (1 Chronicles 15:1–3) David became a great warrior whose power and fame increased because of his deep faith in God. He was appointed King of Israel by God. He trusted God and recaptured Jerusalem through the help of his strong military. Jerusalem became the capital city where David built his home and other structures including a tent to house the Ark of the Covenant.

This passage indicates David's desire to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark is the most sacred object of the Hebrew faith. It is a large box overlaid with gold that contains the two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:10–22). Originally it held Aaron's rod and a pot of manna from the wilderness experience. Following a battle with the Philistines, the Ark was captured and eventually ended up in Kiriath-jearim at the home of Abinadab (1 Chronicles 13:6–7) where it remained, neglected for many years.

God wants to spiritually reunite His people, so the Ark is central in reinstating the worship of God. David's initial attempt to move the ark failed because David did not follow God's directions for moving it (1 Chronicles 13:9–14). As a result, one of the men was killed when he touched the Ark. The Ark was then left at the home of

Obed-edom. In despair, David learned from the experience and was determined that his second attempt to move the Ark to the tent he pitched for a sanctuary was going to be done according to the will and instructions of God in the Law. On the second try, David only permits the Levites to carry the Ark of God, which were God's directions in the Torah (15:1–3; Deuteronomy 10:8).

Why is it important to follow God's directions in carrying out our plans? What consequences might we suffer from by ignoring God's instructions?

2. Transporting the Ark (vv. 14–16) The priests and Levites sanctify themselves in preparation to move the Ark of God. This requires physical washing and spiritual preparation. The Ark of God is considered holy, so they have to purify themselves first. Once they are prepared, they carry the Ark by placing the long poles or staves through the rings of the ark and putting them on their shoulders as the law requires (1 Chronicles 15:15). David is a musician and recognizes the value of music to the worship experience. David commands selected Levites to sing and play a variety of instruments (v. 16). This is a time of worship and celebration for the Israelites. The instruments include psalteries and harps. While these are ancient instruments, scholars put forth ideas of what they were and how they were played. The “harp” is believed to have been a stringed instrument that may have been a bass lyre or a lute. The “psaltery” was likely a string instrument as well and was played by plucking the strings. The cymbals may have been used to announce the worship procession.

How do you prepare to worship God? How is the worship of God expressed in your church?

3. Praising God for the Ark's Return (vv. 25–29) In response to God's deliverance of the Ark, part of the ceremony includes the sacrifice of seven bullocks and seven rams in atonement for the sins of neglecting the proper worship of God. David and the entire troop of Levites wear linen garments. As the leadership of the procession and as king, David also wears an ephod or overlaying garment.

When the Ark is brought from the home of Obed-edom, David includes all the people of Israel in the worship experience. They are rejoicing because of God's faithfulness in restoring the people to their home and allowing the Ark to return to the nation for worship. God keeps His promise. As a result, the nation can once again start worshipping God with the Ark of God in the tabernacle in Jerusalem. The people shout praises to God, along with the loud playing of instruments (1 Chronicles 15:28).

But everyone does not join in the celebration. Saul's daughter is in her house looking out the window watching King David as he dances and leaps for joy while praising God. She feels that his actions were not befitting a king (1 Chronicles 15:29). Nevertheless, this celebration is momentous and marks a turning point in the history of Israel as their worship of God indicates their unity as a nation and their remembrance of all God has done throughout their history.

How does music influence our worship experience?

Search the Scriptures

1. Who was chosen by God to carry the Ark of God (1 Chronicles 15:2)?
2. What did the priests and Levites have to do in preparation before bringing the Ark of God into Jerusalem (v. 14)?
3. What instruments did the Israelites use in praising God (v. 28)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why was it important to bring the Ark to Jerusalem?
2. How does this passage proclaim the importance of leading the worship of God with reverence and joy?
3. What does this passage say about the relationship of obedience to worship?

Liberating Lesson

King David returned the Ark of God to Jerusalem. He followed the laws of God concerning the movement of

the Ark by using only the Levites to transport it as prescribed in the Law. David made the celebration of the Ark's return an event to be shared with all the people of Israel. Music was a central part of the celebration and worship experience. Even now, music is a special ministry in the church. However, it is important to maintain a focus on worship and to avoid allowing music or other elements of worship services to become about the satisfaction of our "taste" in music. On the other hand, we can also evaluate the place of quiet meditation and prayer in our worship times. How can we maintain the sacredness of worship while allowing our God-given creativity and joy to be focused on worshipping God? Do you believe there is a role for quiet reflection as part of personal or congregational worship? Why or why not?

Application for Activation

This text is about the joy of celebrating God's deliverance and restoration. This week, reflect on how God has delivered you and restored joy and hope to your life after a period of pain, despair, or some other "dry place" in your spiritual life. What acts of worship can you engage in that show your gratitude for His grace?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Chronicles 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–29 In order to understand the significance of the Ark, it is important to examine its placement, construction, contents, and purpose. The Ark, which was supposed to be placed permanently in the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle, did not have an attached lid. Instead, the mercy seat that had cherubs at each end became the lid for the Ark. The Ark itself was made of wood and was covered inside and out by gold. The mercy seat, however, was composed of a solid sheet of pure gold beaten or pounded into shape. The Ark and mercy seat were symbols that God's mercy was the vehicle with which the priest was able to come before God on behalf of the people. During the time that Israel was in the wilderness, Moses was instructed to place three items inside the finished Ark: Aaron's rod, a container of the manna that the Children of Israel had been fed in the wilderness, and the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. We call these the Ten Commandments. These three items served as symbols of God's selection, provision, and relationship with His chosen people (see Exodus 16:32–34, Numbers 17:10–11, Deuteronomy 10:2–5).

1 And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. 2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. 3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.

David has built houses in Jerusalem for himself and his family. He also prepared a place for the Ark in Jerusalem. David knows that the role of the Levites and priests is to lead people in the sacrifices and worship of God; therefore, David assigns the Levites the task of moving the Ark in accordance with the Law. He also gives them additional responsibility for the ministry of music. David's preparation for returning the Ark includes involving all of the people of Israel in corporate worship. This is a momentous occasion. It symbolizes the

restoration of worship to the nation and victory over Israel's enemies. God prospered the Levite, Obed-edom, when the Ark resided with him (2 Samuel 6:11). David is certain that God will prosper the nation when this symbol of communion with God is restored to national prominence. Furthermore, God is not just the God of the leaders. He is the God of the nation. All of the people are to participate and to witness what is done on that day. Through this procession, celebration, and worship, David establishes his kingdom as being loyal only to Jehovah, the self-existent God, who chose Abraham and his descendants and later took the Children of Israel out of bondage and through the wilderness. The return of the Ark will be celebrated and the beauty of the procession will be discussed throughout Israel's generations.

14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. 16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

Before the Ark could be moved, the priests and Levites sanctify themselves. In the Hebrew, the term "sanctify" (qadash, kah-DAHSH) refers to a process of becoming ceremonially clean by washing oneself in preparation for service to the Lord (Exodus 29:1–37). Strict adherence to the ritual of washing and sacrifice is necessary in order to avoid the penalty of death when approaching the Ark and the Tabernacle. In transporting the Ark, David makes sure the instructions given to Moses are followed.

The priests are the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses. God chose Aaron to be the first priest. As was God's plan, David makes sure that the priests have the responsibility of conducting worship through the offering of sacrifices. The law clearly specifies which animals are to be used for sacrifice and the manner in which sacrifice is to be carried out. The priest is just one line of the tribe of Levi, but all Levites help in worship. The Levites, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, are the descendants of Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah. They are set apart by God to minister Him on behalf of the people. In the wilderness, the Levites had the responsibility for moving the Ark of the Covenant along with all of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. It is also critical that the Ark is carried in a specific manner. David saw firsthand what transgression of God's instructions meant (2 Samuel 6). In this second attempt, David follows the Law completely. Only the Levites are to take responsibility for the Ark (1 Chronicles 15:2). The Levites follow God's instructions explicitly. According to the law, the Ark is to be carried. It is to be laid upon the shoulders of the Levites as symbols of their carrying the worship of the Lord before the people. It is to be held only by its staves, which, like the Ark, are made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The staves are placed through rings of pure gold, which are affixed to each corner of the Ark. Through its materials and construction, the Ark represents the protection and covering of God over His chosen people. The rings represent God's direction.

David's ability as a musician is well known, and he believes that the return of the Ark must be accompanied by praise. The worship of God is accompanied by music and singing—a joyful noise. The instruments of David's time are described in these verses. The "psaltery" (Heb. nebel, NEH-bell) was similar in shape to a lyre and was probably played like its modern sister, the guitar. The "harp" (Heb. kinnor, kee-NOHR) was named because of its "twanging" sound. The cymbals (Heb. metsseleth, mets-AY-leth) were probably double cymbals and gave a high pitch as they would today. This music is accompanied by the voices of Levite singers. This entire musical praise is described as a "sounding" and uses the Hebrew term shama' (shah-MAH), which means "to listen attentively." At this resounding music and song, the nation is to pay strict attention and to rejoice because of the return of God's presence.

25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom with joy. 26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. 27 And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. 28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound

of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. 29 And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal, the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

David leads the return of the Ark with a joyous and orderly procession, which includes Israel's older leaders and captains. The Israelites offer sacrifices to express their gratitude to God and to ask His blessing upon their nation as the Ark is returned to prominence in the worship of the people. This voluntary gesture is made in accordance with the law for the sins of the people (Leviticus 1:1–7). A sacrifice of seven animals of each type is made. In Scripture, the number seven refers to completeness and corresponds to the number of days in creation. The sacrifice, therefore, symbolizes the complete atonement of the people as they seek the complete forgiveness and presence of God in their nation and national affairs.

The leaders follow strict guidelines even regarding attire. David, as well as the Levites, wear fine linen, and he also wears an ephod (Heb. 'ephod, ay-FOHD), a priest's outer robe. David is not attempting to step into the place of the priest. Rather, his attire represents him as the leader and as a worshiper who has donned the finest vestments in this celebration of restoration.

Verse 28 of this text summarizes the mood of the celebration and symbolizes the restored relationship between God and the nation of Israel. The "shouting" (Heb. teruah, ter-oo-AH) can also refer to a battle cry. This is a historic moment in the nation's history. All surrounding nations will know by the sound that God has given victory to Israel. Here, additional instruments are mentioned. The "cornet" (Heb. shophar, shoh-FAR) is a ram's horn, which was blown in battle, to sound the alarm as a warning and to call the people to solemn assemblies. The "trumpet" (Heb. chatsotserah, khaw-tsoh-tser-AH) added to the sound of the cymbals, the harps, and the voices to signify that God returned to Israel and that the symbol of His presence would reside with His people. The procession of the Ark into the city of Jerusalem takes three days. David knows that he is declaring the restored prominence of worship. His installation of the Ark, using worship with singers, musicians, and apparently dancers, is not just a spectacle. David is ushering in God's presence and ushering in a new direction for the nation. The Bible clearly tells us that the violence and bloodshed of David's reign did not stop with the entrance of the Ark, but David's action in restoring the priority of worship over violence also created a mindset among the people.

In the return of the Ark the great Jehovah, who chose Abraham and promised him a great nation, is being honored. In this procession, the nation is remembering that Jehovah delivered their fathers from Pharaoh's hand and brought them across the Red Sea. Through the restoration of worship, the nation is declaring before their enemies that the one true God who brought their forefathers out of the wilderness and across the Jordan indeed delivered the Promised Land into their hands. David is shown to be a great king who is dependent upon the Lord and in whom the Lord is pleased. The Ark of the Covenant is brought into the city, and David himself rejoices by dancing and playing.

David is an expressive participant in the worship to God and celebration in thanks to God's presence among His people. David does not let his position as king of Israel keep him from praising God with all that he has. He is subject to God who is worthy of praise just as all the other Israelites are, and he recognizes and honors God as a result. However, his wife Michal who is Saul's daughter is offended and embarrassed that David does not maintain his status and decorum as a king (2 Samuel 6:15–23). She is angered by his expressive praise and feels it more important to maintain his status above the common people in worship. Yet David is the man after God's own heart and refuses to let human praise be more important to him than praising God (2 Samuel 6). As we reflect on today's lesson, we must remember that whether we are worshiping God in the church building or in our home, we should respond to God with expressions of praise and gratitude for who He is in our lives, for His power in the universe, and for what He has done for us. In Jesus Christ, God has fulfilled the promise of the Ark of the Covenant. God has made His abode with humanity and brought to earth the divinity that enables us to offer true worship and praise.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Duties of the Levitical Priesthood
(Deuteronomy 18:1–5)

TUESDAY

David Delivers Ark to Obed-edom
(1 Chronicles 13:5–8, 13–14)

WEDNESDAY

Leader to Bring Ark to Jerusalem
(1 Chronicles 15:4–13)

THURSDAY

Ark Placed in Tent in Jerusalem
(1 Chronicles 16:1–6)

FRIDAY

Regular Worship Services Resumed
(1 Chronicles 16:37–43)

SATURDAY

Engaging in Spiritual Worship
(Romans 12:1–8)

SUNDAY

Rejoice in God's Faithfulness
(1 Chronicles 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–29)