

# "Doing God's Work, God's Way" • 1 Chronicles 13

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *Seeing The Bigger Picture*

1. When Reggie Jackson was playing for the Orioles, he had a running battle with his manager, Earl Weaver
2. Weaver had a rule that no one could steal a base unless he had given the sign to steal
3. Jackson was upset and thought it unfair because he felt he knew the pitchers and catchers well enough to judge who he could and couldn't steal off of
4. So one game, he decided to steal without the sign
  - a. he got a good jump and easily beat the throw to second base
  - b. as he shook off the dirt, Jackson smiled with delight, feeling he had vindicated his judgment to the manager
5. Later, Weaver took Jackson aside and explained why he hadn't given the steal sign
  - a. first, the next batter was Lee May, a power hitter
  - b. with first base open and a man on second, the other team intentionally walked May
  - c. second, the following batter hadn't been very strong against that particular pitcher
  - d. so Weaver felt he had to send up a pitch hitter
  - e. that then weakened the bench later in the game when he needed it
6. The problem was, Jackson only saw his relationship to the pitcher and catcher.
7. Weaver was watching the whole game
8. We too, see only so far; But God sees the bigger picture
9. When He sends a signal, it's always wisest to obey, no matter what we may think we know

### B. *Obedience*

1. 1 Chronicles teaches us an important lesson on obedience,
2. But from a bit of a different angle than usual

### C. *Read the Chapter*

## II. TEXT

### A. *Setting the Scene*

1. The book of 2 Samuel helps us understand the chronology a bit better
2. This takes place after David had broken the back of Philistine strength and driven them from the territory of Israel
3. He had taken the city of Jebus, the capital of the Jebusites, and made it his

- capital [We know it as Jerusalem]
4. He had built his own palace and now that God had brought a measure of peace to the kingdom, David saw the need to restore the worship of God to its right place of prominence
  5. You see, something had happened 80 years before that was a national calamity of major proportions
    - a. when Eli was the priest and judge of Israel, the Philistines had made several raids against Israelite cities
    - b. in one battle that was going against the Jews, the men of Israel called for the ark to come to their aid
    - c. the ark was the most sacred religious artifact they had;
    - d. and they held the superstitious belief that God's presence was somehow mechanically attached to the ark
    - e. they thought that if the ark went with them in to battle, they would be guaranteed victory
    - f. when the ark came, not only did it not give them victory, they were roundly defeated, the two sons of Eli were killed and the ark itself was captured by the Philistines
    - g. they then took it to their capital and put it in the temple of their god, Dagon as something to gloat over
    - h. but on consecutive mornings when they went in to their temple, they found the idol of their god, lying on its face as though bowing before the ark of the covenant
    - i. after propping it back up, it fell again, and this time its hands and head were cut off
    - j. they realized the God of Israel was not pleased with His current environment and sent the ark to another major Philistine city
    - k. there again it was put on display, but the city was quickly struck with a plague of mice and hemorrhoids
    - l. in fact, where ever they moved the ark, the people were lining up for mouse traps and Preparation H
    - m. finally, the Philistines realized the best place for the ark was back in Israel, so they loaded it on to a new cart, hitched to a couple oxen, and they turned it lose to see where it would go
    - n. the oxen turned and headed straight for the territory of Israel
    - o. after a couple more adventures, the ark ended up at the home of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim where it remained, almost forgotten, for over 70 years
  6. Now that David is securely in place as king, he moved to return the worship of God to it's rightful place in the land

## **B. V. 1**

**{1} Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.**

1. Notice who David is consulting with here about the ark
  - a. he's talking with the military leaders and heads of the tribes of Israel
  - b. remember that this takes place after his military campaigns against the

### Philistines

- c. these were the guys he had been spending a lot of time with lately
- d. if anyone was his peer, it was this group
- e. these were the men David was comfortable with
2. But when it came to questions and issues of the ark of the covenant, were these really the men David should have consulted? No
3. Why didn't he consult the men who had some interest in and knowledge of the ark?
  - a. why didn't he consult the Levites?
  - b. why didn't he talk to the sons of Aaron?
  - c. why didn't he go to Zadok and Abiathar, the serving priests?
4. This was David's first error of many in this event in the history of Israel
5. APPLICATION: When we are in need of counsel, who do we go to?
  - a. do we only go to our peers, our friends?
  - b. do we go to those we are comfortable with but really don't know the right answers to our need?
  - c. do we go to those who only have an opinion, but don't have a clue?
  - d. do we go to the so called "experts?"
    - 1) men and women trained in the best of the world's wisdom
    - 2) they may have a Ph.D. or a MFCC but really, the best of the world's wisdom is still just the world's wisdom
    - 3) and it isn't worthy to tie the sandals of God's wisdom
  - e. it's so sad to see how people will seek counsel from really bad sources to help with their marriage, or their family or whatever
  - f. I have had many people tell me that they had gone to some counselor somewhere who had told them that making their marriage work was just too much work and that they should just get it over with, divorce and move on
  - g. The counsel these so called experts often give is; "Look, you have to do what is going to make you happy. Do what's right for you."
  - h. But you know what, there is no "what's right for YOU."
  - i. what right for *you*--is what's right--PERIOD!

### C. Vs.2-3

**{2} And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If *it seems good to you*, and if it is of the LORD our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere *who are left in all the land of Israel*, and with them to the priests and Levites *who are in their cities and their common-lands*, that they may gather together to us;**

**{3} "and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul."**

1. David's idea was to call a national assembly and to lay the idea before them
2. He laid out two conditions for them: Let's go get the ark if . . .
  - 1) it seems good to you [meaning the people]
  - 2) it is *of* the Lord or God
3. Good leadership requires building a consensus
4. You can't lead if people who won't follow
5. So working to build a consensus before setting out is an important element

- of leadership
6. But doesn't David have the order of the conditions backward?
  7. Shouldn't they have asked God first?
  8. As well, while David mentioned the condition of seeing if this whole endeavor was of God, we nowhere read that they did indeed inquire of the Lord
  9. APPLICATION: It's easy to fall in to the trap of religious "God-talk"
    - a. what I mean is that it's easy to talk *about* prayer and seeking God in the choices of life
    - b. but when it comes down to it, we only talk *about* seeking God and praying
    - c. we never, or rarely actually do it
    - d. there have been several times in my life where I have fallen in to the trap of empty God-talk
    - e. I'm sure many of you have as well
    - f. I say something like, "I'll pray for you." Or "we need to seek the Lord on this."
    - g. but then I don't
    - h. this is dangerously close to the commandment that says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."
    - i. story of the man who buys a horse from the Amish farmer: "Praise the Lord!"

#### **D. V. 4**

**{4} Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.**

1. Though the people heard David's conditions, nowhere do we read that they did anything other than the first one--they never paused to seek God's heart and mind on this
2. If they had, they could have saved themselves a world of hurt

#### **E. Vs. 5-7**

**{5} So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim.**

**{6} And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, to Kirjath Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD, who dwells *between* the cherubim, where *His* name is proclaimed.**

**{7} So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart.**

1. The ark of the covenant was a gold covered box that contained, among other things, the two tablets that contained the 10 Commandments, written with the very finger of God
2. On top of the box, was a golden lid called the Mercy seat
3. This lid was fashioned in such a way that two winged man-shaped creatures rose up out of it
  - a. these were called the cherubim, and they were small representatives of the creatures we see at several places in the bible that surround God's

throne

- b. in verse 6 we read that God dwells between the cherubim
- c. well, that has a dual meaning:
  - 1) first of all, God dwells between the cherubim in heaven continually
  - 2) secondly, God manifested His glory and presence on earth in a bright cloud of light called the Shekinah
  - 3) the place where the Shekinah was revealed was on top of the Mercy seat, between those two golden models of the Cherubim
4. You see, the whole purpose of the ark was to be a representative of the presence of God
5. And this is why David wanted the ark brought to Jerusalem, his home and the new center of the nation
  - a. for almost 80 years it had been forgotten, and the nation had suffered
  - b. David wanted the ark near him, and at the very center of national life
6. So, what David wanted was a good thing; it was even a right thing
7. But the way he went about bringing it to Jerusalem was wrong
8. God had given very explicit instructions in Numbers 4 on how the ark was to be handled
  - a. He said that it was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites
  - b. it was *not* to be carried on a cart
  - c. other parts of the tabernacle were moved by cart, but not the ark
  - d. we'll consider why it was to be carried later
9. But in verse 7 we see that they put it on a new cart, and started the 9 mile trip to Jerusalem
10. Why didn't they carry it, why did they put it on a cart?
  - a. well, they didn't carry it because they never stopped to see if God had given directions for the ark's care
  - b. from the beginning to the end, the biggest error David and the people made was that they never consulted God
  - c. they packed it up on a cart because that is the way it had come to them from the Philistines
    - 1) they had sent in on a new cart
    - 2) and we can excuse their doing so because they were utterly ignorant of how to treat it
    - 3) they didn't have the books of Moses, but the Israelites did
    - 4) there is no excuse for their negligence here
11. APPLICATION: It's always sad when the people of God take their cues on life from the world
  - a. what's even more sad is when they take their cues on how to worship God from the world
  - b. you probably aren't aware of it, but the technology of modern marketing and commercialism has already captured the thinking of a large segment of the evangelical church in America
  - c. you see it most clearly in what are called "seeker-sensitive" churches
  - d. this approach to church does a market analysis of the surrounding community to find out what people want
  - e. then it plans programs and services that will meet those desires

- f. the gospel is *packaged* and *marketed* to *consumers*
  - g. the focus of the philosophy of ministry is outreach and evangelism, and on the surface, that's good
  - h. but they are trying to make church more appealing to the lost in the process
  - i. Jesus never told His followers to make themselves more appealing to the world
  - j. He said that we were to follow Him and be conformed to His image
  - k. and that as we did that, He would add to the church those who were being saved
12. David and the people packed up the ark on a cart because it was the way the Philistines had done it
  13. They never sought God on how to move it; till later, till after disaster had struck
  14. But Oh! At least it was a "NEW" cart
    - a. they realized the ark deserved the best
    - b. but it was only the best of what was still wrong
  15. Friends, the best of what is wrong is still, and will always be, wrong!
    - a. it isn't enough to just give God the best
    - b. the question is-Does He want it?
    - c. are we giving what He wants?
    - d. and are we giving Him what He wants in the way He wants it?
    - e. are we doing God's work, God's way?
  16. Uzza & Ahio were Abinadab's sons
    - a. when it says they drove the cart, it's best to think of them as walking beside it, not riding it
    - b. they stood alongside the cart, behind the oxen, providing gentle reminders to the animals to keep moving

## **F. V. 8**

**{8} Then David and all Israel played *music* before God with all *their* might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.**

1. As the procession set out, those who had brought musical instruments began to play
2. It was one immense, happy, excited, and loud parade
3. But sad to say, because it was built on the wrong foundation of obedience to God, it was nothing more than a religious show
4. It was all of the flesh! It was a sham!
5. Oh sure, there was a lot of emotion as well as motion
  - a. it really seemed like they were going somewhere
  - b. and if you were to stop the whole procession at this point and ask them how they were doing
  - c. they would probably say it was a moving experience and that God was really there!
6. In fact, God was not pleased, and they were about to find out in a way that would bring it all to a grinding halt

7. Friends, God will not just go along with the crowd
  - a. He does not go along to get along
  - b. He isn't worried or concerned about going against the flow of public opinion just because He doesn't want to upset the apple cart
8. APPLICATION: The presence of a lot of activity and movement does not equal genuine service of God
  - a. A lot of noise and color does not equal God-honoring worship
  - b. God is better honored by 10 tone deaf people singing "Jesus Loves Me" accompanied by an out of tune accordion whose hearts are truly yielded to Him
  - c. than by a 150 voice Master Chorale singing Handel's Messiah accompanied by the London Symphony whose only interest is to sound good
9. But here's the tough part with verse 8: these people were genuinely excited about what was happening
10. They were expressing their joy at the ark coming to its proper home
11. The problem is, they were so busy with their praise, they failed to stop and seek God!

### **G. Vs. 9-10**

**{9} And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled.**

**{10} Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.**

1. Threshing floors were placed on the crest of a hill where the wind would blow without disruption
2. The path from Kirjath Jearim to Jerusalem went over the hill where Chidon had a place to thresh his grain
3. And being on a hill, it seems that as the oxen either ascended or descended they stumbled and the cart was nearly upended
4. Uzza, who was on one side of the cart, saw the cart shift and the ark start to slide, so he reached out his hand, and in that very instant, he died
5. It was evident to everyone that this was no accident
  - a. it wasn't a death by natural causes
  - b. he died in such a way that it was evident to all that God had struck him down
6. What harm was there in Uzza's action? [\[1\]](#)
  - a. it was most natural, and in one point of view, commendable
  - b. any careful cart driver would have done the same with any valuable article he had in charge
  - c. that was just the point of Uzza's error and sin
  - d. that he saw no difference between the ark and any other valuable thing
  - e. his intention to help was right enough; but there was profound insensibility to the awful sacredness of the ark
  - f. even those Levites who were supposed to carry the ark were never to touch it but to only lift it by the poles in its sides

7. Uzza and his brother Ahio, were the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had spent 70 years
  - a. all his life, Uzza had been accustomed to the presence of the ark
  - b. it had been one of the familiar pieces of furniture in Abinadab's house
  - c. and no doubt familiarity had had its usual effect on Uzza's heart
8. APPLICATION: Do none of us to whom the gospel of Christ has come, and who have grown familiar with the worship of the living God treat them in the same fashion?
9. Many a hand is laid on the ark today with more criminal carelessness of its sacredness than Uzza showed
10. One may ask, "Was not the punishment of Uzza in excess of the sin?"
  - a. well, we must remember the times:
  - b. there had been long neglect of the ark
  - c. the decay of religion in Saul's reign had been far reaching
  - d. this was a critical moment as the beginning of a new era or reformation
  - d. therefore it was all important to print deep the impression of the holiness of God

#### **H. Vs. 11-12**

**{11} And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza to this day.**

1. Perez means "break"
2. Perez Uzza meant "Outbreak on Uzza"
3. David's reaction to what happened is interesting: He was angry
  - a. actually, the Hebrew word means he was furious
  - b. it's the same word that's used to describe Jonah's anger at God when He turned away from wiping out all the Ninevites - Jonah 4:4
4. Knowing David as a man after God's heart, we might think that his reaction to Uzza's death would be dramatically different; Anger at God is not what we expect from him
5. But it only reinforces our interpretation of what is going on in this chapter
6. David's anger comes from the fact that he thought he was doing a good thing *for* God
7. Then God went and rained on his parade - He crashed the party!
8. It didn't seem right or fair
9. APPLICATION: Has something like that every happened to you?
  - a. you thought you were doing the right thing; you thought you were doing something that was good and pleasing to God
  - b. but then some catastrophe sets down on you like a Midwestern tornado
  - c. and you get mad at God
  - d. "Why God? Why did you let this happen to me? I serve you and this is the thanks I get?"
10. While we might not expect this reaction from David, it is in fact a reaction that we can probably relate to

**{12} David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?"**

1. Though David's initial reaction was anger, it quickly passed into fear

2. A wise counselor once told me, when you are confused and don't know what to do, return to those things you do know and work from there
3. I think that's what David did
  - a. at first he was angry and confused
  - b. so he returned to the things he did know
    - 1) he knew God was good
    - 2) and he knew God was holy
    - 3) and as he rolled these things over in his mind he soon realized that in all the preparation for moving the ark, they never consulted God
    - 4) he realized there must have been some critical information they had not considered
  - c. in the absence of light, he began to fear that he had violated the holiness of God
  - d. and having a very clear example of God's judgment lying there at the side of the ark, David trembled at the thought that God might not be finished
  - e. for a moment, in David's heart, God's goodness was eclipsed by His wrath
4. But just as his anger had turned in to fear, then the fear turned into reason and he asked,

**“How can I bring the ark of God to me?”**

- a. in light of what follows, I'm convinced that this is not a cry of exasperation
- b. rather it is the cry of a sincerely earnest heart
- c. he is expressing his desire to *discover* **how** to bring the ark to Jerusalem
- d. he realized he needed to learn how to do God's work, God's way
5. As we read on, we discover that just three months later they did find out how to move the ark the right way, and they concluded the journey
6. But for now, the ark would have to stay put

**I. Vs. 13-14**

**{13} So David would not move the ark with him into the City of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.**

**{14} The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.**

1. Obed Edom was a Levite, one of those who were charged in the law with the care of the ark
2. While the ark stayed with him, his household was blessed
3. APPLICATION: If God is showing you today that you are doing the right thing but the wrong way, don't just keep plodding along the same path
  - a. stop and seek him how to do it right
  - b. it might be your relationship with your husband or wife, or boyfriend or girlfriend
  - c. it might be your relationship with your children, or maybe your parents
  - d. it might be some ministry you are involved in
4. Just as Obed Edom's house was blessed while the ark stopped there, so God

- can bless you in the midst of your pausing to distance yourself from the counsel of the world
5. He can bless you while you silence all the business and activity that has marked your life lately

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. The Order**

1. Just make sure first you are doing God's work
2. Then second, make sure you're doing it God's way

#### **B. The Ark**

1. Want to finish with this . . .
2. The ark was a symbol of the presence of God: It was a replica of His throne
3. It was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites and not a cart because God wanted it to be an object lesson of the fact that he desires to dwell in and on man, not a cart
4. God wants a relationship with men and women, not an organization
5. He wants to be in and on the lives of His people not just ensconced in the halls or hierarchy of a formal institution
6. They put the ark in a cart:
  - a. you know what a cart is don't you?
  - b. it's boards and big wheels!
7. Well, unfortunately, that's what a lot of churches are = boards and big wheels
8. May God give us the grace to never be merely a slick religious show, a well oiled machine
9. But rather, a humble loving family who sincerely worships God and serves Him in Spirit and Truth

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[1] Inspired by Alexander McClaren (Outline Points 6-8)