

Ark of the Covenant Moved to Jerusalem

II Samuel 6

Outline

- 1-5 | David tries to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem
- 6-11 | Uzzah killed by God for touching the Ark while trying to steady it
- 12-15 | David moves the ark again after 3 months
- 16 | David dances before the ark
- 17-19 | David makes sacrifices and blesses the people
- 20-23 | David explains why he danced

Reflections

The moving of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and the various offerings and celebrations that accompanied it are similar to events that have taken place in other nations when a new capital is established.¹ It was evidently a common practice when a new capital was established that the idol(s) of the nation's god(s) were brought into the city in procession with many sacrifices and celebration. This seems to be the case of what was happening here.

David had captured the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and moved his government there in what became known as the City of David, below the temple mount to the south and along the Kidron Valley.² David set up a tent there for the ark but it is not specified as being the tent of meeting or the tabernacle as in Exodus. In I Chronicles 16, we find that the tabernacle was in Gibeon.³

One question that is always asked, why did Uzzah have to die? In Exodus and Numbers, there are specific directions for the transportation of the ark, and the rest of the tabernacle and its furnishings. Specifically, the ark was to be carried on poles by the priests (Exodus 25:14; Numbers 4:15,20). However, David placed it on a new cart to be transported.

If we consider the incident of the Philistines capturing the ark (I Samuel 4), the reason it was taken was because the Israelites were misplacing the power of God on to the ark rather than attributing it God, whose seat it was, and the true source of Israel's military victories. That is why the Philistines weren't killed while they handled it on numerous times or even for returning it on a cart to the Israelites.

In this instance, God, through the death of Uzzah upon his touching the ark, insured that the ark isn't the thing being worshiped but that the celebration was for the Him. When this happened, David halted the procession and left the ark in the household of Obed-edom.

When David hears of Obed-edom's house being blessed by God, he decides again that it is "safe" to move the ark to Jerusalem. This time it appears that the ark is being transported as prescribed by the description of the phrase "bearers of the ark" (II Samuel 6:13; I Chronicles 15:2,13).⁴

The text notes that on this second procession that after "six steps" David offered a sacrifice. There are a couple schools of thought regarding this.

1. David offered a sacrifice literally every six steps, however the text only mentions one sacrifice along the way and then more when it is placed in the tent.

1 Walton, John H. et al. *IVP Bible Background Commentary*. InterVarsity Press; e-Sword, 2000.

2 Most Bible have maps included some of which will have a map entitled Old Testament Jerusalem or something similar. cityofdauid.org.il has an interactive map that identifies the various sections of Jerusalem.

3 Perowne, J. J. S., ed. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*. London: Cambridge University Press; e-Sword, 1921.

4 Blaikie, W. G. *The Expositor's Bible*. Ed. W. Robertson Nicoll. Public Domain; e-Sword, 1887.

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2. The steps refer to a specific distance, i.e. two miles, but the Hebrew word (H6806 - טַעַד, *tsa'ad*, tsah'-ad) usually means a literal step, but there are occasions where it is used figuratively (II Samuel 22:37; Job 14:16; Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 10:23).⁵
3. David offered a sacrifice once at the very beginning of the journey since they were progressing and didn't have an incident as in the first occasion.⁶ This seems to be the more likely answer as it better reflects the reading of the text.

Having begun well, David proceeded transporting the ark to Jerusalem, leading the procession. This is important to note especially in light of Michal's objection to this display. Some have presumed from Michal's chide in v20 that David danced naked. I don't believe that is the case. Rather he had set aside any royal attire and dressed humbly, in a linen ephod, and "danced before the before the Lord with all his might."

Michal was showing her contempt for David making such a display of himself before the "common" people. Of course, when David returned home and Michal made her opinion known to David, he then reminded her of God's rejection of her father, Saul, and His choosing David to rule in his place. David additionally let's her know that he would rather look like a fool worshiping God before the common people than not (my paraphrase).

So what can we take away from this for our times? My mom has a t-shirt, that was originally one of my step-father's, that has this saying on it, "I'm a fool for Jesus. Whose fool are you?" or something to that effect. Are we more worried about how other people view us rather than how God views our lives? That is the real question.

Compare David's response with Peter's when he was told to stop preaching about Jesus.

2 Samuel 6:21-22 NASB So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. **22** "I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished."

Acts 4:19-20 NASB But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

We cannot afford to be ashamed for worshiping God!

Lord God, may we never be ashamed for worshiping God with our whole being, even when we might look like a fool. You have blessed us with so much and we pray that Your Spirit will always move our hearts to worship You first and foremost. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Key Words: Old Testament, History, 2 Samuel, David, Uzzah, Ahio, Abinadab, Obed-edom, Michal, Worship, Dancing

⁵ Zhodiates, Spiro, Warren Baker, and Gene Carpenter. *The Complete Word Study Bible and Dictionary*. e-Sword, 1993.

⁶ Winter, Willard W. *Studies in Samuel*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Publishing Co., 1967. Bible Study Textbook.

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