

# A New Cart

In II Samuel, chapter 6 we are told of the fetching of the Ark of God to Jerusalem by David after he became king and had taken Jerusalem and made it the chief city of Israel. However, as we read in the relating of that incident, we are informed that it did not end well. In fact, it ended in the death of Uzzah (or Uzza), one of the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the Ark dwelt. In I Chronicles, chapter 13, this event is related and we are given more detail.

And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul. And all the congregation said that they would do so: **for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.** (*I Chronicles 13:1-4*)

And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. (*I Chronicles 13:7-10*)

Of the details given, we are informed that all Israel was in agreement as to how to set about bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, and that there were instruments played and much

singing. It is also confirmed that the Ark was placed on a new cart. Nonetheless, for all Israel's worship and celebration, when the oxen stumbled at the threshingfloor of Chidon, and Uzzah sought to steady the Ark and prevent it from falling off the cart, the LORD God struck Uzzah dead when Uzzah touched the Ark. Immediately, all celebration ceased and the Ark was carried to the house of Obed-edom, a Gittite, where it remained for three months. As the Scripture tells us, the house of Obed-edom was blessed the entire time the Ark remained there.

This engenders several questions:

1. So, what went wrong?
2. What was amiss that the anger of the LORD was so kindled against David and Israel that He struck Uzzah dead?
3. Was it that Uzzah had simply touched the Ark, or were there aggravating factors along the way?
4. Why was God not pleased with King David, a man after the LORD's own heart, and all Israel who sought the LORD God and obviously thought they were pleasing the LORD?
5. Oh, and why should we care? After all, this event happened nearly 3,000 years ago and is definitely Old Testament dispensation, and really doesn't have a bearing on us.
6. Or does it?

To find the answer to all the above questions, particularly the issue of applicability to us, we only need to continue a little further in I Chronicles and pay close heed to what is related to us. In chapter 15 of I Chronicles, we find that David begins to set right the things wanting in the first venture to bring the Ark to Jerusalem.

In the following passages, we find that David returned to the Levitical law for the determination of what ought to be done in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. In so doing, David confesses fault in how it was determined that the Ark ought to be borne.

This time, a new cart is not chosen, but the Ark of God is carried as directed: **upon the shoulders of the Levities**. Moreover, the priests and Levities are directed to sanctify themselves prior to coming near the Ark of God.

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. 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. *(I Chronicles 15:1-2)*

And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 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. *(I Chronicles 15:11-15)*

Again, King David and all Israel went forth to fetch the Ark with singers and instruments and the Ark of God was borne upon the shoulders of the Levites. This time we find the response of the LORD God to be different:

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. 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. *(I Chronicles 15:25-26)*

So, what made the difference in the LORD's response to David

and Israel, and how does that apply to us?

The answer is astoundingly simple: **Obedience**.

If we care to note, it was not the music or the singing that pleased the LORD. In fact, when that was done the first time they attempted to bring the Ark, it did nothing to alleviate the LORD's displeasure with David and Israel. It was not the fact that all Israel was behind bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, as that was the cause of the breach in the first place. No, to the LORD God, it is irrelevant whether our music and singing are good, or whether everyone agrees with us, or even that we are supposedly "seeking" God; what matters to the LORD God is what Samuel expressly told Saul when Saul allowed disobedience to the commandment of God in the matter of utterly destroying the Amalekites:

**Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (I Samuel 15:19-23)**

To the LORD God, disobedience in any form and to any degree, is rebellion. What made the transgression of Uzzah so egregious was the fact that the Ark was to be carried in the style of a King, elevated above all others. It plainly was not. By placing the Ark upon a cart, whether new or old, they

treated the earthly representation of the throne of God like they would a pile of manure, or straw, or wood, or any number of other common things that are carried about upon carts. They did not treat the Ark with the reverence they should have, and this displeased the LORD God. Thus, when the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah thought it ought to be prevented from falling, and hence, touched the Ark, it was the final insult for the LORD. Plainly, the attitude of King David and all Israel was not one of reverence to the LORD and His things. For that attitude of irreverence the LORD struck Uzzah dead. Thus, the LORD ended any continued mishandling of the Ark, in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that when this attitude was rectified, and the law was followed, the LORD blessed.

So, what does this mean for us?

Aside from the obvious lesson that we ought to follow what the LORD God commands fully, there are several other specific things pertinent to our particular culture that we need to take note of.

First

In most worship services great emphasis is placed upon the music and its style. In fact, I have observed several church signs where the pastor's name is given, but the name underneath it is not the associate/assistant pastor's name, but the name of the music director or song leader. In many instances this position is not even called the song leader or music director, but the "worship leader." This indicates the level of importance placed upon the one leading the singing. In fact, by calling the position "worship leader" those churches elevate their music and singing above the teaching and preaching of the word of God. This is manifestly in error as the word of God states. Notice the Psalm states that it is the word, and not music that God has elevated above all His holy name:

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: **for thou hast magnified**

thy word above all thy name. (*Psalm 138:2*)

### Second

Regardless of our intentions, if we do not follow what God has said to do, the way he said to do it, we still displease Him and are disobedient to His word. King David and all Israel had the best of intentions the first time they went to fetch the Ark. Nevertheless, the LORD God was not pleased by the way they chose to do things, and struck Uzzah dead as a result. The second time, Israel did all according to the commandment, and the LORD blessed. It could not be more plain that our intentions make no difference in pleasing the LORD God. Rather, it is our obedience that counts.

### Third

No matter how many of us agree, it carries no weight with LORD if we agree on something that is contrary to the word of God. The LORD God gave us His word. And, regardless of how anyone may feel about it, it is the plain expression of His will: He clearly means for us to follow it. Even if everyone on earth agreed to walk contrary to the LORD God and His word, it does not sway the LORD one iota. We seem to forget that He made all the creation in six days by simply speaking it into existence. With a word He will cause the earth and the heavens to cease to exist, and with a word he will bring the new heavens and new earth into existence. What arrogance and presumption it is on our part to think that we can sway the LORD God by all agreeing to something, even when it is contrary to His word.

### Last

If you want the LORD's blessing upon your church services, and upon your personal life, be obedient to His plain written word. There is simply no reason to attempt to get a new cart when the LORD has already provided a way for things to be done.

In sum, there is no substitute in the eyes of the LORD God for simple obedience to His word. What He told ancient Israel applies equally to us today:

Now therefore, **if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant**, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (*Exodus 19:5-6*)

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: **But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice**, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. (*Jeremiah 7:22-23*)

When it comes to serving the LORD God, there really isn't any other option.