

Prayers

To God

Weekly theme: the glory of God

Come to me Lord Jesus, and show me Your glory! I long to see Your face and talk to You without conditions, as one person to another, so that we may hear each other's voices and feel each other's reactions! But am I dreaming? Do you indeed come so close to Your people? Am I asking the impossible because I am over-zealous? Lord Jesus, answer me now I pray and speak to my heart, my ears, my mind and my emotions. Seize my soul with Your glory! **HALLELUJAH!**

For myself

What things get you down and prevent you from being the person you know you should be? Offer your thoughts and feelings to God, especially those you feel are hard to express.

For others

Pray for those who make laws in your country and pray that they will serve the public interest. Pray for good laws and for wise counsel to prevail in your government.

Meditation

All around us, within our sight or not, people rush about,
Doing those things that keep everyday life ticking over;
Shopping, looking after children, visiting relatives and friends:
Travelling in cars, eating meals, texting and enjoying life.

All around us, somewhere just out of sight from everyone,
Some are in panic, trying to keep lives going amidst trouble,
Dealing with family break-up or the death of loved ones;
Not knowing what they are doing; lost, and looking for help.

All around us, God is breathing His Spirit, and Jesus is alive,
He is just waiting to be found, ready to give all necessary help,
Waiting to soothe the heart, to help each one in stress or crisis;
Who will take His offer of assistance to grasp life in all its fulness?

Bible Passage

2 Samuel 6:1-5

¹ David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of 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 that are 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 the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

Review

David proved He was the anointed King of Israel by the astute move of capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Sam 5:6-10) and making it his capital. He then launched a military campaign to liberate large swathes of Israelite land from the Philistines (5:25). Notably, he liberated the tribal lands of the old king Saul, in Benjamin (5:20-25); David wanted to keep his potential enemies within Israel content! By following the Lord's orders (5:19,23), David showed he was sincere about uniting all Israel as one nation under God; it was God's plan, and David was His servant.

David now needed to bring unity to Israel under God, something it had lacked for generations. Judges reveals that without a king, Israel had wandered far from God's Laws, given to Moses (Exodus 20f.). Some Judges were great people, but as a whole, they were a strange bunch and the book conclude with stories of the appalling depths of immorality to which Israel had fallen (Judges 17-21). In 1 Samuel, we find that Israel's great 'Ark of the Covenant' had been captured by the Philistines, and then sent off in an ox-cart before turning up in Kiriath-Jearim, a Benjaminite town half way between Jerusalem and Philistine territory (1 Sam 7:2)!

So there was only one way alone for David to truly unite Israel. As a man of prayer who knew God, we should not be surprised now to read that he sent a powerful troop of men to take the Ark from its resting place in Kiriath Jearim and bring it to his new capital city, Jerusalem. The Biblical text overflows with references to the divine presence of God in the Ark; *'the Ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty ... enthroned above the cherubim'* (6:2). The ark may have been languishing in a back yard in Kiriath Jearim, but God was still present with His people in the Ark and it was needed by all Israel!

Going Deeper

The sins of Israel

Israel had a common history and ancestry, as Genesis and Exodus reveals, but the different tribes had at various times strayed significantly from the 'Covenant', the agreement by which Israel was connected with her God (see Genesis 15:18, 17:2f., Exodus 2:24). Some involved themselves with the worship of golden calves (Ex 32:4ff), others became entrapped by

various household gods (Judges 17:1ff), whilst others had succumbed to the temptation to worship the ancient and traditional 'god' of the land of Canaan, the 'Ba'als' (Judges 6:25ff). Doubtless there were some who kept the true faith alive, probably in their families and in some of the small towns of Israel where godliness prevailed. This is why Samuel was able to find a young man, David, the youngest son of a man of Judah who trusted God and had a relationship with God the prophet could see (1 Samuel 16:13f.); he believed this young man was God's choice to be King of Israel, and he was right.

The Ark of the Covenant

From his earliest days, David worshipped the Lord as the one true God, and this was the most important of the commands of Moses (Deuteronomy 28ff). It was the first of the Ten Commandments, recorded on stone and held within the Ark of the Covenant since the time of Moses. The Ark was at the heart of a tent complex called the 'Tabernacle', with a series of courtyards surrounding a holy tent, where sacrifices and symbolic offerings of bread and light were offered by priests to God. The Ark itself was a box like a seat (sometimes called the 'mercy-seat'), which contained the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God (see Exodus 34,35f.), and was protected by huge cherubim. All this was within an inner tent called the 'Holy of Holies'.

In Samuel's youth, the Tabernacle had been at Shiloh, and it operated effectively as a unifying focus for Israel under the stewardship of the priest Eli. But towards the end of Eli's life, the Ark had been taken into battle against God's will by Eli's sons, and had been captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). Following strange signs and wonders (1 Samuel 5) the Philistines became scared of it; they regarded it as a dangerous religious relic and therefore returned it, set on a cart pulled by two cows (1 Samuel 6:10-12)! It was eventually taken in by the people of Kiriath-Jearim, where it remained until David's day. Kiriath-Jearim was a town in Benjamin, and although we do not know its exact location, it may well have just been liberated by David immediately after the capture of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:17-25). David saw the obvious need to get the Ark out of Kiriath Jearim, away from Benjaminites who, as we will soon discover, were still supporters of Saul, and take it away to Jerusalem.

David's action to get the Ark to Jerusalem

David's actions here are all important, and this is why they have been recorded for us in Scripture. He was a politician of skill as well as an army commander! In gathering the very large army of 30,000 men (6:1) to retrieve the Ark from Kiriath-Jearim, David was not simply acting for the protection of this ancient focus of God's presence in Israel. This was a demonstration of national unity and strength, and may have been the first time David had called together such a large force. The Philistines would have had their spies out in this territory, because they still coveted it even though David had just evicted them with a far smaller force (5:22f.). Also, there would have been no chance of the Benjaminite people of Kiriath Jearim objecting to what David was about to do; they had clearly become attached to the Ark (1 Samuel 6:21, 7:1,2)!

A new cart was made for the journey of about 10 miles to bring the Ark from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem (6:3), and we are told that the cart was accompanied by two young men, the sons of 'Abinadab' (6:3). It is only a small point, but it is possible these were some of David's relatives. Abinadab was the second son of David's father Jesse, and David's older and perhaps favoured brother (1 Sam 17:13,14). But we should be cautious to assume this because the name Abinadab was common, for example, someone named Abinadab was killed alongside Saul in a battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 31:2). But Scripture normally includes names for good reason, and this is the only 'good reason' to be found here.

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem,

The whole joyful ceremony of bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem bound the people of Israel together in faith, and this unity of purpose and belief would be necessary in the future years. David's large army would also be important in future years to keep the borders of Israel. We will find out soon enough that much of the north of Israel still lay under Philistine bondage, even though David had liberated the south. More would have to be done for the vision of unity to be completed.

But things were now beginning to change. Although the life of David would have many twists and turns, he took the essential early steps to unify God's people militarily, practically, and in the worship of their one and holy God. All this is celebrated in the words of verse 2 which celebrates the glory of Israel's God. It is also celebrated in the wonderful description of the worship that accompanied the movement of the Ark. This was certainly new worship, and for the first time in the Old Testament, we find here a description of worship that is not just to do with the sacrifice of animals and ritual. People celebrated with '*all their might*' (6:5), and with obviously complex musical accompaniment; '*songs ... harps, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals*' (6:5). How we would love to have a recording of such worship! Everything David did was to raise the expectations of people and their worship of God. After long years of darkness and war, Israel was let loose to worship in a new way!

Discipleship

Application

Worshipping the Lord with a new song

A number of David's psalms speak of praising God with a 'new song' (Psalms 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1). Here is Biblical evidence of something new happening in worship when God begins to do something fresh amongst His people. The point of time in Scripture we have studied today describes a new part of Israel's spiritual life, and we should not be surprised to find that there is something new in the worship as well. Then, as now, society moves on and people begin to expect things to happen differently. I wonder what Abraham would have thought of David putting on a show of musical worship instead of simply offering a suitable sacrifice? Would he have been like those who even today object to the latest musical means being used in worship? I hope he would have been more open hearted!

Throughout the years, a new work of God has been accompanied by an outpouring of song and new expressions of worship. People in the last hundred years have rediscovered the holding up of hands as an attitude of worship, music has changed, styles of service have radically altered and informality is acceptable where once it was not, and much more. Personally, I hope the Scriptural advice of the New Testament will always guide our use of song; Paul says, use '*hymns, psalms and spiritual songs*' (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16). So whether the music itself is new or old, this wisdom points us to using a combination of Scriptural words and inspired poetry, and it acknowledges the need for us to both sing with simple songs to express our emotions as well as to sing hymns of deep meaning to feed our minds as well as our spirits. The Spirit will always inspire new worship, whether with music or not.

God's presence in the Ark

Today, we would not say that God is uniquely present in any one place or object, in the same way that the people of Israel thought of God as being present either in or on the Ark of the Covenant. We all know, however, that God does use certain things and certain places in order to reveal Himself to us, and we tend to think of those things or places as 'holy' if not to all God's people, then certainly to us personally. The Ark bound God's people together in

celebration and praise, and it is tempting to wish that we had something to provide a focus for Christians today, who are as we know, deeply divided.

But we do in truth have this focus, and it is the person and the work of Jesus Christ. The Ark of the Covenant held God's 'Word' written on tablets of stone (the Ten Commandments). This was destroyed centuries later but before the time of Christ, in around 587 BC when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem. The Temple was destroyed and its contents ransacked (2 Kings 23,24). So although the Jews rebuilt their Temple, for us now, Jesus is the new 'Word of God' in human flesh, and by the Holy Spirit continues to be this same 'Word' today. He is the only focus of our faith.

Ideas for what to do

- What great events have happened in your life or the life of your church? Have they been celebrated in song or in any 'new' or special worship? What place does 'newness' have in the life of your church, and how do you react to it? Measure yourself against the themes of this study already mentioned.
- Write down a poem expressing your worship and your love of God. It does not have to be complex, it could be very simple; it is surprisingly easy to hum a tune to yourself and put a few simple words to it to praise God, if we dare try!

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What is it that unifies the people in your church? Answer honestly, and consider all possibilities!
2. Try to summarise what this text tells us about David's early days as King of all Israel.
3. In what way can we enable Jesus Christ to be the focus and the point of unity for all God's people today?

Final Prayer

Glorious and faithful Lord, cover my life with the protection of Your love. Keep the enemy at bay, save me from my sin, and keep me from worldliness I pray; In Jesus' name, my Saviour and Redeemer, AMEN
