

[R4258 : page 308]

HOMING THE ARK AT JERUSALEM

- 2 SAMUEL 6:1-12. - OCTOBER 4. -

Golden Text: – "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." – Psa. 100:4.

THE Ark of the Covenant, wherein was deposited the tables of the Law, the basis of God's covenant with Israel, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna, was the most sacred article of typical Israel's religious emblems. Its lid, consisting of a golden plate surmounted with two cherubs, constituted the mercy-seat – the meeting place between God and the officiating priest, who acted as mediator++ between God and the nation of Israel. When in the Tabernacle, the divine presence was manifested upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim by a miraculous light called the shekinah glory. For seventy years prior to our lesson the Ark had been neglected and in considerable degree the religion of the nation had likewise been neglected, though it is presumed that their devotions as individuals were not entirely forgotten, even as in David's case, we note his continued reliance upon the Lord and appeals to him.

++ Please see January 1909 Issue where the author says the word "advocate" should have been used instead of "mediator." – site Editor

It will be remembered that the Ark was in the Tabernacle of the Lord at Shiloh when Samuel was a boy and Eli was high priest, and that later, when the latter was aged and Samuel was grown, in a battle with the Philistines the sons of Eli, who were disreputable, self-seeking, grasping characters, took the Ark into battle as a talisman or mascot, believing that the Lord would [R4259 : page 308] protect the Ark and that thus the army of Israel with it would have success. But the iniquity of Eli's sons had reached its full and God willed that they should fall in the battle and that the Ark

should be captured by the Philistines and that Eli himself should die of heart failure upon hearing the news of the disaster, and that Samuel should occupy the place of judge, prophet and priest to the Lord.

It will also be remembered that while the Ark was with the Philistines it brought them no blessing, but on the contrary sickness, trouble, etc., or "bad luck," as some would say. It was thus sent from one Philistine city to another, each being glad to get rid of it until finally they put it upon a cart and started it eastward to the land of Israel. There it was received by the priest Abinadab and lodged in his own house. There it had remained for several years up to the time of this lesson, when David had become King of Israel.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT

As we have already seen King David possessed a very deep religious nature, whose center or will had been early turned in full consecration to the Lord. Realizing that God was the real King of Israel and that he himself was merely God's vice-gerent or representative, David sought to fulfil the divine will and arrangement by inaugurating the Tabernacle and its religious services, as God had appointed through Moses. Accordingly a royal decree went forth summoning the priests, Levites and tribal princes and religious people of the various parts of the dominion for the reinauguration of the public worship of Jehovah God. The scope of the decree may be judged from the assembled multitude – 30,000. It matters not to us that some are inclined to impugn the motives of the king and to claim that this was merely a policy stroke of the king for the binding of the people to himself through his religious instincts and a revival of ancient customs. If it were merely policy on David's part, it was good policy, wise policy, helpful policy as respects the people, as well as in respect to unifying and solidifying his Kingdom. To be religious did not

necessitate the avoidance of such things as would be good for the people, even though some might impugn the motive. But the love which thinketh no evil should be experienced and the king should be given credit for the best of motives in calling for the fulfilment of divine commands given through Moses.

Indeed, those who have learned to look for the Lord's leading, amongst the Lord's people, in all the affairs of life should be convinced that God did not leave the affairs of his people Israel in the hands of David – that the Lord himself was King and Director of all of the interests of that chosen and covenanted people. In our estimate, therefore, it matters not what motive David may have had in calling this convocation, because God was behind it and David, wittingly or unwittingly was being used as the divine agent in accomplishing the divine purposes. And it will surely do us good to call to mind that similarly the Lord has a special interest in all the matters which pertain to Spiritual Israel and that no great or important matters that **[R4259 : page 309]** pertain to Spiritual Zion take place without his notice, without his permission. Only those who thus recognize the divine supervision of the Church's interest can rest their hearts in faith and confidence or feel assured that God is working all things according to the counsel of his own will.

We feel specially impressed with the special evidences which show that God's supervision was particularly with Israel in their harvest time, at the end of the age, in all of the affairs pertaining to our Lord's first advent: his birth in the "fulness of time," his death "in due time," the number of his disciples, the one that should betray him, his crucifixion as a malefactor, the rejection of Israel because of the rejection of Messiah, the anointing of the "most holy" at Pentecost, the final overthrow of the nation, A.D. 70. And if we note such particular care by the Lord over natural Israel, may we not experience as much faith in his care for Spiritual Israel in the present harvest time? Surely the lessons we

have learned in the Scriptures respecting the harmonious parallels between the Jewish Age and the Gospel Age, between the harvest of that age and the harvest of this age, justify fully our expectation that the Lord will be equally careful in overruling even the smallest affairs in the harvest of this age.

Whoever can by faith reach and maintain this position will surely have a confidence in the Lord which will be very helpful to him. The trials and difficulties of the Jewish harvest seemed like calamities at the moment of their permission, and it is only by hind-sight directed by the holy Spirit and prophetic Word that we are able to discern God's providences there. Similarly calamities, adversities, peculiar conditions, etc., are to be expected in this harvest, which at the time of occurrence will not be understood by any except those of large faith and intimate acquaintance with the prophecies, and even they will be obliged to walk by faith and not by sight. It will be *afterward* that the divine supervision in every detail will be discernible. Meantime the Lord wills evidently that the Spiritual Israelite, instructed in the school of Christ, shall have learned the lessons of faith and obedience from the harvest time of typical Israel.

"OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE"

The occasion of bringing the Ark of God to the capital city of the nation was to be a gala day of rejoicing, long to be remembered from one end of Israel's land to the other. King David rejoiced at the unanimity of religious sentiment everywhere prevalent with the people who accepted his instructions. The players of musical instruments of every kind had been engaged so as to accompany the procession. An ox-cart, specially prepared, was provided and the Ark was put upon the cart and the two sons of the high-priest accompanied it, the one preceding and the other driving. The good intentions of all concerned are not to be misjudged, but a serious

error was made in that the divine order in connection with the matter was neglected.

(1) God had made no such arrangement of transferring the Ark on a cart, however honorable that may have seemed to David and to the priests.

(2) It was not the business of the priests at all to transfer the Ark, for, although they ranked high in the Lord's services, it was the Levites who were commissioned to bear the Ark by its staves on their shoulders. In neglecting these divine provisions an opening was made for all kinds of irregularity in connection with the services of the Tabernacle, which the Lord designed should not be reinaugurated. It was proper that the king, the priests, the nobles of all the tribes and the religious people of the nation should have a lesson that would not soon be forgotten respecting the importance of carrying out every detail of the divine law in respect to the worship and services of the Tabernacle. The lesson which the Lord gave on this occasion not only was profitable to the king and the nation, but has been profitable in a large degree to Spiritual Israel during this Gospel Age.

When the time came for the manifestation of the Lord's disapproval of the neglect of the Law on the part of those who desired to honor him, the oxen stumbled and, to steady the Ark, Uzzah, an under-priest, put forth his hand, when immediately God's displeasure was manifested in his falling down dead. The gala day was suddenly spoiled. The joy of the king and of the people vanished. Instead came distress and fear – if because of some blunder even one of the priests should be thus smitten down of the Lord, what would be the dangers as respects others! King David promptly concluded that he dare not have the Ark with him and near his own house at Jerusalem, as previously intended. The procession stopped and, turning aside, the Ark was deposited in the home of Obed-edom.

"THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM"

One of the first lessons necessary for every Israelite, natural and spiritual, is reverence. Without this quality we shall be sure to err. There is an old and true adage, "Familiarity breeds contempt," and this applies to religious things and to God, as well as to earthly things and to men. The worship of God, which King David was to inaugurate in the typical temple built by Solomon, must be founded upon a proper base of respect and reverence. It must be recognized as fundamental, that obedience is a pre-requisite to the offering of acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

The fact that this lesson was taught at the expense of human life has seemed to us terrible, because of our delusion in respect to eternal torment, which led us to suppose that poor Uzzah not only ceased from human activities and pleasures but that he was immediately dropped into a seething abyss of hell-flames and torture. Now, by the grace of God, we see that this is not the teaching of the Scriptures, and this relieves the narrative of its distressing features. We perceive that Uzzah lost his life a year or so earlier, as the case might have been, than he otherwise would have lost it, and that it was for the Lord's glory and for the good of the people that he died as he did and not by disease or accident. We are to remember that he was already, like the rest of the race, under condemnation of death and that God had a perfect right to require his life at any moment. We are to remember that all that he lost was of God's purpose and in God's time will be made good to him, in his awakening in the resurrection of judgment, when he shall come forth from the tomb to more favorable conditions than those under which he was living – to the antitypical jubilee of restitution to all who will receive it.

Spiritual Israelites must learn this lesson – that in handling the holy things of the divine Word, the divine plan, the services of

the Truth, the ministry of the Church of Christ, they are not at liberty to do as they please, merely assuring themselves that their motives are good. It is their duty to note carefully the divine [R4260 : page 310] will and to follow out the program in the order of the directions of the divine Word. Furthermore it is for us to learn, too, that God designs that not all the services are to be performed by one or two persons, but that there is a part in the service of God for all of the consecrated and that each is to be granted the opportunity for such service, as the Lord has planned. Some may occupy the priestly service, which others may not enjoy, and some may occupy the Levites' service, and their opportunities are not to be taken from them. Again another important lesson to be learned by Spiritual Israelites is that God is guiding his own affairs; that he is as much interested in them as we are and more, too, and that he is fully capable of their management. Some of the Lord's people carry great burdens which do not belong to them and which hinder them from the rest and joy which otherwise might be theirs. Others are *so* active, so zealous, that they fancy that the work of God would not be accomplished at all unless they did it. The Lord wishes us to learn the important lesson, "In all thy ways acknowledge him," "and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." Only by recognizing the Lord as first in every feature of his work and by recognizing ourselves as honored by him in every opportunity of service shall we be able to bring blessing to ourselves and to others.

PROFITING BY EXPERIENCE

If we think of David's course in refusing to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, as at first intended, as a mark of petulance and anger against the Lord for spoiling the gala day, we shall make a great mistake. David's character was too reverential for anything of this kind. He was the man who could fight Goliath, but not the man who could fight against God. Every act of his life was marked by reverence and humility and a recognition of God's justice and

power and love and of David's own humility in the Lord's sight. Meantime the Lord was teaching a great lesson to the whole nation, which heard of the sad disappointment of the people with reference to the great gala day and that God's displeasure was shown in such a striking way that even a priest was stricken down for neglect of the divine supervision, and that the Ark was now in the house of Obed-edom.

King David was watching, and noted these results, and again his heart went out longingly with the wish that the chief emblem of divine worship should rest under the shadow of the Lord, near to the Lord and to the shekinah glory. Evidently he made investigation as to the handling of the Ark and concluded that the mistake was that of himself and of the priests and that God's blessing and not a curse would go with the Ark. So at the end of three months he made arrangements afresh for the bringing of it to his capital. Again the visitors came, the bands of music in order, and the procession accompanied the Ark again towards Jerusalem. We read that David brought the Ark from the house of Obed-edom unto the City of David with gladness and with joy.

A description of the festival procession may be found in I Chron. 15 and 16. It was decidedly the greatest day in David's career. But this time, in harmony with the lesson taught, there were no innovations, no cart driven by priests after the manner of the heathen, but instead a strict adherence to the divine direction. The Ark was borne on the shoulders of the Levites. The lesson was learned that obedience to the letter is better than sacrifice. In the joyous procession the king apparently led, playing upon the harp, while with him the singers and the musicians were divided into several companies which sang parts in alternation. See Psalms 105, 96 and 106. The 24th Psalm is supposed to have been sung as a marching accompaniment as the procession was entering Jerusalem, where a tent or tabernacle had already been placed for

the reception of the Ark. Seven choirs formed part of the procession, according to Josephus.

OTHER LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Members of antitypical David – the Christ – are to learn lessons from all the experiences of life; that with them it may be as it was with David in this case, when the proposed gala day was turned into a day of mourning and fear. Similarly our mistakes are to be received rightly and the reasons for them rightly appreciated that, instead of stumbling-stones, they may be stepping-stones which shall draw us "Nearer, my God, to thee." Another lesson is that we should desire to be nearer to the Lord.

The Ark in the Tabernacle near to David's home represented not its glorious resting place, but its present dwelling. The condition of the Church in glory is represented by the Temple of Solomon. We, of course, long to be there and to enter into all those glorious things of the future, but that is impossible until the Lord's time, even as David was not permitted to build the Temple. Thus his life shows a picture not of the Beloved in glory, but of the flesh in the trial state below. As David desired to be near to the Tabernacle, close to the Lord, so we, members of the Beloved, should find ourselves longing for a closer walk with God, a nearness to his arrangement of the mercy-seat – Christ Jesus. This will signify a desire to be near to the members of his Body, the Church, to have fellowship with them, because the condition of things is represented as being the "holy" of the Tabernacle, with only a vail between this and that glorious condition beyond the vail. And is it not so that whoever desires to be near to the Lord and to those in fellowship with him, along the lines of the new nature, will give heed to the privileges of showing forth his praise by manifesting their love for the brethren and their confidence and faith in the Lord and in his light and wisdom and love?

"ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING"

In some respects the City of God is the Church – not the nominal system, but the true Church, whose "names are written in heaven." According to the Apostle the justified believers can enter into this City only by consecration. The Apostle exhorts, "I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice." There are some who seem to enter this gateway of sacrifice in sorrow and with a measure of regret – with a feeling that they are sacrificing too much. They either overestimate the things sacrificed or they underestimate the things which they are securing. It would have been better for such if they had sat down and counted the cost before taking the step of consecration. The proper attitude of all is to take a right view of that which now is and that which is to come and what we have contracted to do as priests, doing it, then, joyfully. And thus this lesson is learned, that we "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." The appreciative child of God will be able to "count it all joy" when he falls into various difficulties, **[R4260 : page 311]** because it will be a trial of his faith that "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope," which maketh not ashamed and is a preparation for the glories of the Kingdom.

[R4262 : page 311]

SWEET DAY OF REST

(Tune: Saved By Grace)

I know some day my Lord will come,
And stand within my humble home;
His glorious presence in the room
Will make it like a rose in bloom.

CHO. – Then haste, Oh! hasten, day of rest,
When I shall be forever blest!

His voice, like music on my ear,
Will banish every thought of fear;
He'll fold me closely to his breast,
And there in peace I'll sweetly rest.

And oh, my Lord, on that sweet day,
I know the words that thou wilt say:
"It is enough, my child, come home,
Thy work is done, beloved, come."

Then I'll arise and go with thee,
Across the shining, crystal sea,
Until we reach that blissful shore,
Where we shall dwell for evermore.

G. W. Seibert.
