

CITY OF DAVID – CITY OF GOD

– *MAY 30.* – 2 SAMUEL 6:1-19; PSALM 24. –

JERUSALEM THE NEW CAPITAL – KING DAVID'S PALACE – GOD'S PRESENCE DESIRED – THE ARK TO BE BROUGHT – UZZAH SLAIN – OBED-EDOM BLESSED – THE LESSON LEARNED – THE ARK PROPERLY BROUGHT – SOLEMNITY WITH REJOICING – THE TABERNACLE OF GOD – LESSONS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the House of Jehovah." – Psalm 122:1.

GUIDED by Divine providence, King David sought a new capital after he had been anointed king over all Israel. The city of Jerusalem had for centuries been an impregnable fortress, held by the Jebusites. They claimed that even the blind and the cripples could defend it against any foe, so advantageously was it situated. But when the time came, it was delivered into the hands of King David and became the capital of Israel. One of the first acts of the new king was to provide himself a palace fitting to the dignity of the nation and the court. To this end he obtained from King Hiram of Tyre not only material, but also skilled craftsmen.

Soon King David's spiritual nature, so marked and represented in his Psalms, began to assert itself in respect to the government of Israel. It was not sufficient that idolatry should not be tolerated amongst God's Covenant people. The symbols of God's presence should be honored once more. The Tabernacle at Nob had fallen into disuse when King Saul destroyed the priests because they gave comfort to David; and King Saul had had the Tabernacle removed to Gibeon; but the Ark was not in the Tabernacle, and had not been for a long time.

We recall that the wicked sons of Eli had taken the Ark with them into the battle with the Philistines; that in the defeat it was captured by the Philistines; that in its presence, Dagon, the Philistine idol, fell down broken; and that in whatever city the Ark rested, there were chastisements from the Lord until the Philistines returned it to Kirjath-Jearim. There it had remained for seventy years, until the events now noticed. King David made the transfer of the Ark to its new Tent, or Tabernacle, a very important affair, sending word to various parts of the nation, assembling some thirty thousand warriors and multitudes of people of deep religious inclination who desired to be witnesses to this great new religious movement, which all hoped would mean the bringing of God's blessing back to the nation, as of old.

A GREAT LESSON IN REVERENCE

King David, intent upon honoring God, had nevertheless neglected to look particularly into the Divine Law regulating the Ark and its movement – who should touch it, etc. Divine providence now gave him a great lesson in respect to reverence for the Almighty and carefulness in respect to the Laws. He had esteemed the Ark, but not highly enough. Really, it was the most important of all the various furniture of the Tabernacle.

The Brazen Altar and the Laver were in the Court; the Table of Shew-bread, which was overlaid with gold, the Golden Candlestick, and the Golden Altar of Incense were in the Holy. But in the Most Holy the only article of furniture was the Ark. In shape it was like a box – about four feet long, two feet high, and two feet wide. It had a pole at each side, by which the Levites were to bear it on their shoulders. It was overlaid with gold; and inside the box were the Tables of the Law, a Golden Pot of Manna, preserved from the Wilderness times, and Aaron's rod, by which miracles had been wrought. The top of the Ark was its most particular feature. It was a

solid plate of gold, wrought out above in the shape of two cherubim, whose faces looked inward and whose wings stretched forward.

The Divine direction was that the priests should cover the Ark in a particular manner, symbolical of certain things; and that then only the Levites should have the care of it, to bear it upon their shoulders. Neglecting these matters, the king had a new cart made and oxen to draw the cart, as though this would be a more dignified way to bring it than any other thought of. But it was not God's way; and a lesson of reverence for God and for the Ark, which symbolized His character and His Mercy-Seat, must be given.

The appropriate time came when the oxen, drawing the cart over a smooth, sloping, stone surface, allowed it to tilt a little. Then it was that Uzzah stretched forth his hand to steady the Ark, and was immediately smitten dead with a bolt of lightning. This evidence of Divine displeasure with the procedure brought all the festivities to a sudden termination; and King David feared to bring it too near to him, lest it should do other injury. The procession stopped; turning aside, the Ark was delivered to the home of Obed-edom the Levite, possibly a priest.

The whole people thus learned the lesson of reverence **[R5680 : page 136]** – a lesson, by the way, which seems to be as much needed today as at any time. Irreverence is frequently manifested by the world; but this does not astound us as much as when we find irreverence manifested by those who profess to be the Lord's consecrated people, His Royal Priesthood. It is sometimes irreverence of manner, sometimes irreverence of language, sometimes the making of jokes on religious things or on passages of Scripture. Everything of the kind is surely injurious to the individual, as well as to his influence with others.

We are not to forget that Uzzah was not sent to eternal torment; but that he merely fell asleep in death, and that his mistake, which taught a good lesson in his time, will not inure to his disadvantage

in the future. Meantime, another lesson was taught; for the Ark at the home of Obed-edom began to bring blessings, of just what character we are not informed, but blessings of such a nature that they attracted the attention of many. Among them King David noticed. Again his heart turned to the original thought that Jerusalem should be not only the City of David, but the City of God, God's dwelling-place, as represented by the presence of the Ark and the Shekinah Glory-light which shone between the two cherubim, as indicating the presence of God with His people, Israel.

GOD'S OWN HOLY NATION

We are not situated in the same way as were David and the Israelites. There is no nation in the world today that is God's Kingdom. When He took away the crown from Zedekiah, 606 B.C., He declared through the **[R5680 : page 137]** Prophet, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until He comes whose right it is; and I will give it unto Him." (Ezekiel 21:25-27.) We believe that the time for the giving of the Kingdom to Messiah and the fulfilment of our prayers, "Thy Kingdom come," is near at hand. But, in the meantime, no earthly kingdom is God's Kingdom except in the sense that St. Peter declares the Church to be the holy nation, a peculiar people of God. (1 Peter 2:9.) But even then, it is not a sectarian system that is referred to – not the Baptist Church, nor the Methodist, nor the Presbyterian, nor the Lutheran, the Anglican or the Roman. The true Church of Christ is the unlimited Church, to which properly belongs the name Catholic in the sense that it is general; for that word means general, or universal.

The Church of Christ is the one Church throughout the whole world; and its members are those who are united to Christ by consecration and by Divine acceptance through the begetting of the Holy Spirit. Some of its members may be found in the Roman Church, some in the Anglican, some in the Presbyterian, some in the Baptist, some in the Lutheran, some in the Methodist and others, and

some outside of all these. But this is the only holy nation that God recognizes; and it will not be organized as a new nation fully until the resurrection change shall glorify the Lord's people with Himself beyond the Veil; as it is written, we shall be like Him, shall see Him as He is and shall share His glory.

We can no more expect the world to appreciate the Truth of God and the presence of God than the Israelites could have expected that the Philistines, on the one hand, and the Moabites, on the other hand, would accept the Lord. Only God's Covenant people can appreciate Him and His arrangements. He is in *their* midst only.

Nor can we even claim that it is a family matter; rather, as the Scriptures show, it is an individual matter. Here one, there another, the Church of Christ is scattered throughout the world. Only the consecrated belong to it or have its privileges and the fellowship with the Father and with the Son which the Ark of the Covenant would imply. One exception to this rule might be noted; namely, the one mentioned by St. Paul – the children of believing parents, who are counted in with their parents as participators in God's favors, blessings and care until such time as they reach a development of mind that would enable them to decide for themselves, either to make a full consecration to the Lord and be individually accepted by Him through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, or to turn aside and be part of the world.

When King David was ready for the bringing up of the Ark the second time, some three months after the first attempt, which failed, he had studied the matter more carefully; and this time there was no new cart, but the Divinely directed method – the Levites, bearing the Ark upon their shoulders. It is not for us to be ingenious and inventive in respect to Divine methods and services, but rather to be students of the Divine will, searching the Scriptures that we may know the will of God and do it. The lesson which King David learned is one which all of God's people may well take to heart.

DANCING BEFORE THE LORD

The Record tells that, besides the thousands of warriors who acted as a guard and gave dignity to the procession, and the multitudes of people who met the Ark at various villages on the way, there were trumpeters, rattlers, and players on stringed instruments, who made joyful manifestations of appreciation of the great event of God's return to the nation as represented in the Ark's return. Another arrangement was that of having the Levites chant, one to the other, the different portions of a certain Psalm which King David had composed for this very occasion. It is made a part of this lesson. – Psalm 24.

King David joined with the others in his manifestation of delight, and danced before the Lord. It would appear that this custom of a dignified rhythmic moving of the feet in harmony with music is a common form even today in far Eastern countries. Mr. Clark tells us how there was such a dance at a gathering of the Christian Endeavorers at one of their meetings in India, and how dignified and beautiful it appeared.

As the grand procession neared the city of Jerusalem, it was met by the women of the city with rejoicing. At the head of these should have been Michal, King David's wife, the daughter of King Saul. But not so. She was in a cynical, proud mood. Was she not the daughter of King Saul? Had not her husband David been a poor shepherd boy, and then an outlaw for a time? On his coming home she criticized him for his manifestations of joy in connection with the bringing in of the Ark. She said that it was undignified and reproved him. King David reminded her that the Lord had taken the kingdom from her father and given it to him, and that he thus had the Lord's favor and thus relied on Him. And the proud woman was apparently thereafter left to herself, the bare mention being made that she was thenceforth childless.

THE PSALM WAS PROPHETIC

As the Ark represented Christ, in whom are hidden all the Wisdom and Power of God and in whom center all of God's blessings for men, so the bringing of the Ark into the city corresponded in a measure to our receiving of Christ. All such realize that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" – that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father and through the Son. The world and all that dwell therein are subjects of these blessings.

God is founding His New Order of things in the midst of the seas of discontent – amongst those who are not established and in harmony with God – the restless masses. He invites us to ascend into His Holy Hill, His Holy Kingdom, and to be established in His Holy Place, in the spiritual Divine nature. He stipulates that none can be of this class except upon certain conditions; namely, a pure heart, an honest heart, and clean hands, righteous living to the best of his ability. These are all expected to swear allegiance to God. This is styled their Covenant with Him.

Jesus was the first of these Covenanters; and all of the Church must walk in His steps, if they would be with Him in His Holy Kingdom. These must not lift up their soul to falsehood nor swear deceitfully. God will require of them all that they have covenanted with Him. Only such will receive the blessing of the Lord, and only to such will His righteousness be imputed through Christ.

Never more than today has this Lesson seemed to need to be impressed. How many today confess that although they have made a covenant of sacrifice and vowed to the Lord, they are not considering this nor keeping their vows! How many indeed confess that they are speaking falsely in respect to their creeds, denying privately what they publicly have declared to be their faith! Surely such a course must be reprehensible in God's sight and such cannot hope to be of the Kingdom.

Then follows in the Psalm a declaration that the Children of Israel are those who seek the Lord, and who request that the King of Glory come in, even the Lord, mighty, powerful, able to deliver from sin and from the [R5680 : page 138] power of sin – death. We are still waiting for the entrance of this King of Glory in the full sense of the word. He declares that He will be revealed in flaming fire, so far as the world is concerned – a great "Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Daniel 12:1.) Many Bible students see this trouble already beginning in the awful war now spreading, and are expecting the fiery anarchy of it to result in the near future. Then quickly will come the still small Voice, the Divine influence, the mighty power of the Savior, which will deliver from sin, from death, and from Satan, who shall be bound for a thousand years.

