

Discerning God's Ways

by Devern Fromke

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning God's ways and being sensitive to His purpose, highlighting the need to inquire of the Lord and seek His guidance before making decisions.

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Scripture: Exodus 40:36

Topics: "God's Will"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the period of declension that occurred after Joshua's leadership. During the time of the judges, there was a lack of progress and a fading of glory. However, God raised up Samuel as a bridge to prepare the hearts of the people for their purpose as a kingdom of priests. Then, David emerged as the unifier of God's people, bringing organization and vision to the motley tribes. The speaker emphasizes that the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament, where God's ways are summed up in Jesus Christ. The focus should be on following God's way rather than setting goals or focusing on needs.

Transcript

Good morning. It's been a real joy to be with you these three days. I want to thank you for inviting me.

I have learned much from your fellowship, and I appreciate what the Lord is doing here. It's a great encouragement to see how God has worked in the last years since we were here last. We started the first evening by speaking of the onward progress of the Lord and His purpose.

If there has been any one thing that I have been keenly aware of these last few years, it is that God has been saying to my own heart that He is very jealous for the purpose that He is working out, and that if I have a heart really toward Him, I will continue to be sensitive to this onward progress. I called it last night the line of purpose. First night we were speaking about Moses, God's servant, how he was used of the Lord, bringing Israel out of Egypt, and hopefully to bring them through the wilderness into the land.

And last night we went on to Joshua. It is interesting that Moses is known as the great deliverer of God's people, fulfilled his place in the onward progress of God's purpose. Joshua comes along, and he is the great possessor, stood on the shoulders of Moses, and takes the people on into the possessing of the land.

This is an onward step in God's progress and His purpose. Then, after Joshua leaves the scene, we go through a little period of declension. It is a sort of decline during the time of the judges.

And you don't have a very clear sense of the onward progress of the Lord in purpose. Much of the glory is fading. And finally, in due time, God raises up Samuel.

In some ways, he is a bridge. He is the recoverer, the one who begins to prepare the hearts of the people to come back into the line of purpose and what God has for them as a kingdom of priests. And then we come to David, who is the unifier of God's people.

Here are all these motley tribes who have gone in to possess their various areas, so disorganized, so lacking a sense of vision and purpose. But God raises up David to be the great unifier of the Lord's people. Can you see something of the onward progress? Can you look back through your own history here for ten years and see something of the onward progress and the fulfilling of purpose? I want us to go into a simple little lesson this morning in the life of David.

I speak of Moses in the schoolroom where God was teaching and working, teaching him the ways of the Lord. Last night we were dealing with Joshua in the school, and this morning we're going to look into the life of David and see how he learns. Now, I hate to tell you, but David learned a lot by trial and error.

And he has a few friends around, I think. We sort of learn by the mistakes. It would be wonderful if we could learn by intuition or by the revelation of the Lord and be very clear in what God wants, but so much of the time we learn by failure and we learn by mistakes.

But we're going to speak for a little bit this morning as we look into this lesson in discerning the ways of the Lord. Now, I said last night, and I repeat again, I believe that one of the great needs of the hour is for us to be discerning and to know the ways of the Lord. Let's just use for a title then today, Discerning God's Ways.

A little background before we turn to 1 Chronicles, but we'll turn there and have you look with us. 1 Chronicles, chapter 13. The burden that I have in sharing this morning is to recognize that in God's ways seems to be one thing that he's been very jealous for, and that is the ark and God's working in relation to the ark.

You remember it was Moses who saved the blueprint for the tabernacle of worship, and the ark was built. And all through that wilderness wandering period, every time the cloud would move, the priests would pick up the tabernacle of the ark and they would lead out until the cloud stopped. They'd really learn to follow the cloud or follow the ark.

They would pitch tent and stay there until the cloud would move again. Then there came a time when God spoke to Joshua, and he said, as we were referring last night, in three days we're going to go over. And you know how the priests picked up the ark again, and they got their toes in the water.

God caused the great bank of the Jordan, the water, to hold back, and the people went through on dry ground over into the land that they were to possess. The ark was very significant. You remember when they came to Jericho, the priests carried the ark around.

In those seven days, the seventh time, seventh day, they blew the trumpet and the walls came tumbling down. It seemed like this people were very conscious of a very special box, an ark. What did the ark

represent? Well, it was called the Ark of the Testimony.

Here was a people who were bearing a significant testimony of the one true God. It speaks of the glory that departed when the ark was carried away. I believe the ark represented something of God's glory being manifest in their midst.

The ark represented something of the presence of God. The ark, I believe, is something that God is saying back there had a very distinctive meaning. Sometimes I almost feel that today, we get so caught up in our working and going on in the things of the Lord, we might well ask the question, where is the ark today? Well, I'm not speaking of that physical ark.

I'm speaking of the sense of where is the glory of God being manifest? Where is the purity of a testimony being represented? Where is God's presence and glory? Where do you find that? If I were to move into a city, looking around for some fellowship and to be with God's people, I might not be understood, but I'd probably be putting my antenna up to see, where is the ark? Not an old box now, but where is the ark? Where is God sort of manifesting Himself? Where is His glory being uncovered? Where is their sense of the revelation of the purpose of God and the onward progress of things? Well, a little more background before we read here in Corinthians, or rather in Chronicles. You know that for quite a period of time, after they got into the land, the ark had been down here at Gibeon. Also called Shiloh.

And the people had really lost the sense of vision and something of the divine purpose of God. Over here in the land of the Philistines, five lords, five of the Philistine kings, were constantly raiding and constantly keeping Israel in servitude. And there comes a time when there's a great battle raging over here, and the people of God are sort of remembering the ark.

And so they bring the ark out of the tabernacle here, over to Ebenezer, where they are pitched, and they bring it into battle. And they think, well, maybe we can use the ark to help us against the Philistines. I want to mark one thing very carefully this morning.

You can't use the ark to your own ends. The Philistines heard the shout as the Israelites brought the ark in, and suddenly they were filled with fear, and they said, something's happened. And then they realized that this strange box was there, and they said, God's in their midst.

And they said, we must be very careful, because if God is in their midst, then they'll make slaves of us, and in the past they've been serving us, and now we'll become slaves. So they stirred up the spirit and the courage of the Philistines, and they came out to battle here at Aphek, and they won the battle that day against Israel, and they carried this very precious box over into their own midst, thinking, now we have it. We can use it.

And they put it in their room with their God. Guess what? Next morning when they came into their room, their God had fallen over and was bowing before the ark. And they followed the next morning and came in, and once again their God had fallen over, and his hands were broken off.

Well, like the heathen do, they considered it and pondered it, and so they sent it on to their friends. And the ark went to about three different of these areas over here. It went to Gath, from first place to Gath, and then down to Ekron, and they all had a similar situation.

Instead of the ark being a blessing, and the ark working to their favor, the ark brought great misery and great difficulty to them. And so they go to their diviners, some of their prophets, and the prophets say, you

better get rid of this. And they decide to send the ark back.

The prophets tell them, well, put the ark on a new cart and tie some milk cows and let the cart and the kind carry the ark back, and just by chance, if all this has happened, our gods have fallen over, our people have been plagued with the emrods, and we've had mice. In case all of these things just happen by chance, we'll see. And so they selected two milk cows who had calves, and they put the calves in the pens, and they watched to see if the milk cows, the kind would carry the cart or the ark, and to their utter amazement, the old cows put their head down and plugged their ears, just listened to their bawling calves, and headed right toward Beth Shemesh, which is over here, the area where Israel was harvesting at that time.

And it's very interesting, when all the people saw their cart, the ark coming, they were thrilled, greatly encouraged. Well, the story that we're after is basically this. As we open up to 1 Chronicles this morning, in chapter 13, we come to grips with the fact that this ark has been here out of the tabernacle for 20 long years.

The ark has been here. The people have been lamenting and mourning because of their decline, their condition. And all during the reign of King Saul, the ark has not been at the center of their worship.

And so David comes to the throne, and being a man after God's own heart, a man who knows the importance of worship and all that God had in His line of purpose, David begins to cry out and to say to the people, we really need the ark in our midst. And we pick the story up in chapter 13. In verse 1 it says, 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 the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere 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 inquired not at it in the days of Saul.

I'd like to just draw some simple distinctions for us for a little bit. As we look into the life of David and maybe make some practical applications for us. One of the great needs that I see so often today among God's people is what I call seeing a need.

And the difference between seeing a need and receiving the burden of the Lord. I guess as I look back through years of ministry and especially in our own fellowship in Indianapolis, I've just been constantly amazed at the folk about every Sunday who rush up, Brother, I see a need. And I didn't used to know how to handle all the people who came having seen a need.

I let them give me their burden. But I learned from one of my Chinese brothers some years ago who said, Oh, praise the Lord, God's working. He's giving you the sense of need.

You'll find the burden. Don't give it to me. You take it.

How many of you look around and you see needs? Well, needs aren't wrong. God could be in a lot of the things that he's opening your eyes to see. And I look into this and see that David looks around and there's a sense of purpose and a sense of what God's wanting to do.

And he says, look at the verse again, he consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and David said unto all the congregation, If it seem good unto you, and that it be the Lord our God. How many of you know how often we say the Lord willing? It's kind of a little postscript we put in. We know very well

we're going to be there.

It's just unless the Lord really sidetracks us, and we can't. But here is a seeing a need. And I believe that God starts with need.

That is, he shows us, gives us a sense in our own heart of a need. But we must never stop with just seeing a need. If we do, we'll know what to do.

That is, we'll have a sense of what to do. But God, I believe, wants to bring his people to the place where we take this back and say, Lord, is this something just natural that I have seen? Or is this initiated with you? And we begin to inquire, we bring it back to the Lord, and we say, Lord, I really want to know what you want. And I believe it's at that point that the need turns and God helps us to see the burden.

That is, the real concern that he has. And the difference then is, instead of just knowing something to be done, God gives us the how and the when. And I think you will see that as we go along this morning.

I don't know, are you folk out there? Any of you are kind of need conscious? Okay, that's all right, you can start there. But that reveals something. Because the Lord who begins to work in our hearts in uncovering some need and helping us to see, and we come back.

We usually try to give burdens or get others involved, and I believe it's at this point that David does the wrong thing. He goes to the congregation, he says, now I see a need. We really need to bring the ark into our midst.

And if it's good unto you, here's another distinction we men all need to be careful about. There's a difference between a unanimous vote and one mind. Those who are in responsibility know that after the meeting's gone on for five hours, and there hasn't been much progress in really getting through, it's not too hard to just get a unanimous vote so you can go home.

Get rid of the thing. In fact, I am convinced there are lots of times that folk think they have come to the mind of the Lord, and they're in one mind in accord with Him, and they've had a unanimous vote. But that's all they've had.

David had a unanimous vote that day. Did you see it? If it seemed good unto you, David says, I see a need. If it seemed good unto you, and of course that would be the Lord willing, let us send abroad.

And verse 4 says, And all the congregation said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of the Lord. What version do you have? Just checking on you. How does it read? The thing was right in the eyes of all the what? Listen to me.

If we could get a 100% vote here this morning, wouldn't that make it right? Do you know that the whole world, except for Galileo, believed that the earth was flat for quite a while? Except for poor old Galileo and a couple of friends. Just because the majority are in agreement, or you have a unanimous vote, is no evidence that it's the mind of God or that there is one mind really coming to know His. It's one of the most dangerous things.

Now, I'm a thoroughgoing, loyal, loving American. But at this point, democracy doesn't work. God is very theocratic.

If it seemed good unto you, and of course the whole congregation said they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. Well, it was a good thing to do. It was a right thing in some ways.

Let's bring this ark. All this time it's been over here in this home. It's been blessing in the home.

But the people have not had a real awareness of inquiring at the ark. I think that the inquiring at the ark has in it the significance of getting the sense of onward progress and the purpose of the Lord. There's another distinction that maybe will be helpful to us.

Are you fellows aware that the one mind is the mind of the Lord? And it's something that's born in a corporate way when somehow the Spirit of God turns people from all their own, well, I think this, and I think this. I've been in meetings. I heard Lance Lambert say one time that in Halford House, they started praying about certain things, and it usually took 12 hours of praying with the whole group before people got rid of all their own plans and their own ambitions and finally an exhaustion said, Lord, what do you really want? Would you give us your mind? Would you help us know what you really want? This quick instant getting answers from the Lord, trying to bring God's people into corporate mind, God is today bringing into His mind the mind of the Lord, one mind.

And that will be something not imposed by other brothers upon one another, but it will be something born of God in the midst. But David's a leader. David has some desires and ambition.

Here's another thing that I believe God's children need to be very careful of. It's the difference between guidance and confirmation. Guidance and confirmation.

If David had really inquired of the Lord, I believe God could have brought him into knowing the how things were to be done, the when of this whole operation. When we go to people for guidance, you've got problems. Fact is, you go to this brother and you're not sure, so you go to this individual and then this, and you run around in the multitude of counselors, you really find difficulty.

Now, I'm not saying we should never go to people. I believe people can become a confirmation. But God wants to teach us how to get through to Him.

And it seems to me that David has his feelers out and he's trying to get the guidance from people that seem good unto you. Do you know when you're doing that? These are days when prophecy is something very much in the fore in many assemblies. And I'm constantly having to deal with it wherever we go because people are getting direction and far too much guidance by the prophecies that folk give.

And it's not a very popular thing to say, but I have to say, confirmation could come through prophecy, but I believe that God wants you to get through to hear and to know from Him personally. Acts 13 is a good example. It says, Now there was in the church at Antioch certain prophets and teachers.

And as they ministered to the Lord, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work, whereunto I have called them. I don't think that just came out of the blue. I really believe that God had already been exercising the heart of Barnabas and Saul.

They'd had something of a sense of what God was going to do. And then the prophecy came. God spoke as they ministered to the Lord.

Then it came and it was confirmation. I'm not even sure we should use a lot of circumstances to get guidance on the most dangerous things. You could be like David in the cave when he was being chased by Saul those years.

And here he is in this cave with his men and suddenly the men whisper and said, Look, your adversary Saul has come in. And he listens to them for a moment. It seems like God has put his enemy right in his hands.

And David is almost to kill Saul. In fact, as he takes his sword and cuts the skirt. And in that moment God gets through.

And the principle that's been woven into his heart. Touch not the Lord's anointed. That's why we need to be rich in the Word and in the principles that God has.

So, we have a guidance that I believe God wants to bring his people into. And confirmation that comes in various ways. Circumstances, people, maybe prophecy, other things.

As I read here, and we need to go on just a little further now. It seems that David is sort of feeling out and finding his guidance among the people. Verse 3, Let us bring again the ark of our God to us.

For we inquired 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. So, David gathered all Israel together. From Shehor of Egypt, even unto the entering of Hemath.

To bring the ark of God from Kirjath-Jerim. And David went up. And all Israel to Baala, that is to Kirjath-Jerim.

Which belonged to Judah to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord. That dwelleth between the cherubims whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart.

Out of the house of Abinadab. And Dozen and Heodre 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.

I don't know if you can appreciate David like I do. I think he was so excited that finally he was going to restore. Bring that ark back to its place where Israel could have worship.

And the procession as the new cart as they are carrying the ark along. And the strangest thing happens right in the midst of what seems like a real glorious time. God intervenes.

Verse nine. And when they came unto the thrashing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark. For the oxen stumbled.

The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah. And he smote him because he put his hand to the ark. There he died before God.

And David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah. Wherefore that place is called Perez-Uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of God that day saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? I wonder if you've ever considered another little distinction that maybe is helpful for God's people.

I call it the difference between sovereign intervention. Sovereign intervention. And I don't want to just throw words, but I'd like to have you consider the difference between that and divine naturalism.

We'll explain that in a moment. I would have to say that when this procession was moving along, the oxen come to a rough place and they stumble and it causes the cart to stumble or to wobble. And the ark is about to fall off.

Uzzah puts up his hand to steady it. I believe that he is a Levite who has been trained in the household of the significance. God's value of this particular box, this ark.

And in that moment, he puts his hand up to steady it. But God puts his hand down and sovereignly intervenes in the midst of it. Sovereignly intervenes and stops the whole jubilant procession that becomes a funeral.

I meet a lot of folk who say, Oh, I wish God would sovereignly intervene. I wish he'd demonstrate his hand. I wish he'd be more manifest and explicit.

Well, knowing how much the time would err and how often he would have to sovereignly intervene like this, I say, Lord, I'm glad you hide yourself in your ways more often. When I speak of divine naturalism, I'm trying to find a better word. But if you can come up with it later, I'd appreciate it.

God, who is continually working, so wonderfully working, and yet hiding his working in natural ways until you can't see that it's really God until he gives ISAF. The lust of our flesh today is, Lord, send a raven and feed us. Lord, put a cloud over this place until everybody will know this is where the ark is in Richmond.

Or how about a pillar fire? That's what I mean by something very sovereign, very spectacular. Come on now, how many would like it? Be honest now. Do you know what would happen? Next week you'd be praying, Lord, make it a little bigger, a little warmer.

Do it because I've invited all my friends. We just love the sovereign display. But I believe that the more spiritual we become with the Lord, the more alive that we are, the more our ISAB helps us to see, God, you're at work.

You're a God who hides your working. In very natural ways, I see the divine hand, the working of God. You know, I like sovereign things, but I believe that in this particular case, when God reached down, it wasn't very hidden.

Amen? It is a very sovereign intervention. And God is demonstrating His anger in it, very definitely. The thing that I notice as I get among God's people is, how many times those who really become sensitive to the ways of the Lord, they begin to see God's hand in a hidden way, working.

It's there, but unless the eye of faith helps you, you really don't see it. Do you remember when Abraham sent his servant to get a bride for Isaac? He comes over the hill and he looks down at the watering place where all the maidens are coming. He puts his prayer up and he says, Lord, cause that the one you're

choosing, cause that she will answer thus and so, and she will do this.

And of course, he meets Rebekah. She comes. Rebekah completely fulfills it.

In fact, she has learned such a servant spirit in the home, that she not only waters the camels of Abraham, but all the rest of the group. Somebody says, there must have been 10 camels and they each drank 60 gallons. I tell you, she carried lots of water.

She had a servant spirit. Somebody could say, well, I think it just happened. God hides his working, but he was there working.

The God who works in sometimes very natural ways and divinely yet hiding it. And there are times when he does. We were visiting one of the fellowships in Kokomo a few weeks ago.

Here was a wife. I had seen her for 2 or 3 years. She had been praying for her husband, really claiming that God would lay hold of him.

And this Sunday when I came to my amazement, I saw a man sitting by her and I assumed it was her husband. And immediately after the message, he came rushing up and he said, I've been saved. He said, my wife and all of you prayed for a couple of years.

And I saw such a submissive spirit in her. I saw such a reality. I just had to give up.

And you know, he was so alive. I thought, Lord, you really did a good job on this fellow. I just, some folk are really born alive.

Some are born asleep. It takes so long for them to awaken to the Lord. Well, he was born alive.

Really, there's something in there talking for a little bit. He said, you know, this is some time ago. He said, I've read so many places in the Scripture where God would very sovereignly intervene and God would demonstrate and manifest himself.

And he said, a week after I was saved, I was reading and I said one day, Lord, would you demonstrate and prove yourself to me like you did to some of these folk? I believe you're the God who does it today. So that I'll have my own testimony. How do you know God might indulge somebody that way? Well, I don't know about this, but I remember him saying with his eyes wide open, he said last winter, just a week after I had met the Lord, we had one of our terrible snowstorms in Indiana.

And he said my driveway was filled with almost two feet of snow that had blown in the big drift. And he said that morning I walked out and I said, God, you're able to do anything. Would you demonstrate yourself to me by sweeping my driveway clear without my having to shovel? About that time I say, oh Lord, he really needed help.

And you know what he said next? He said I stood there with my shovel and I saw a wind come around the corner and literally swept my whole driveway bare. And his wife walked up and she said, Brother Vern, that's right. I looked out the window.

Some of you are going to go home saying, Lord, do it again. I know human nature. I know her heart.

Then I'll have a real good testimony. And you know what he said next? He said, I'm not asking the Lord for any more. I just needed that.

I said, that's safe, Brother. But he might. Who knows? Are you getting what I'm trying to say? Sometimes God sovereignly intervenes.

And we'd like to make him do it all the time, wouldn't we? Except it would become old and commonplace and no eye of faith needed. But I believe that the God who works in hidden ways is working here this morning. Divinely in very natural ways, maneuvering, manipulating things.

And only the eye of faith, the only way we can really see that God is working is when he helps us to really see it. But he's working. So, be careful now when you plead.

Lord, intervene. He just might. And in this particular case, the zeal of this moment to bring the ark into their midst, one of the other portions over here says, when Uzzah put forth his hand, God was angry, and the word it uses, and he killed him or he was slain for his error.

That brings me to another distinction. I hope you can receive this. I believe there's a difference between temporal judgment and eternal judgment.

Temporal judgment, eternal judgment. Here was an error. Here was this poor Levite who had been trained.

But in this moment, in the expediency, when the whole thing they'd started got them into problems, he tried to steady the ark from falling off. God puts his hand down. I'm going to put you on the spot.

Don't answer, but just sort of think about it. How many of you think that God sent Uzzah to hell for steadying the ark and gave him eternal judgment? Don't answer, please. Think about it.

Sometimes we're very quick in our judgmental attitudes. All I have to say is, Lord, I do not believe that this error, this quick, impulsive thing was an eternal judgment. But I believe it was temporal judgment.

I just think God took him quickly to Abram's bosom, so to speak. Are you following? In line with what I was saying last night and the night before, many, many of God's children are getting temporal judgment all along the way. Because so often we violate a principle or we even break some laws and we get the consequences from it.

Some get them quicker than others. Some are weakened sickly among you and some go to... Just simply because of violating. I read the other day of one of the men who was saying as a doctor that most people were getting the judgment of breaking the laws of their physical well-being.

You don't have to wait to the end. It accumulates and you get judgment, temporal judgment, all along the way. Eternal judgment.

That's a final separation when God says, you see, it's an eternal thing. But here is a temporal judgment. I believe that what happened to Uzzah that day was God stepping in and saying, it's an error, I can't put up with it.

He deals very severely. But I don't believe it was a matter of salvation. Temporal judgment.

Lots of people are getting it all the time, don't recognize what it is. Physically. Guilt.

Things that come in in the moral areas in our life. We get a consequence. Well, we need to move along.

It says in verse 14 of chapter 13, And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord what? Blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had. I was saying the first night, I believe that with the line of purpose there is also the line of blessing.

Something of the blessing of the Lord. And oh how my heart, when I read that little chapter, expecting the Lord's blessing. In a new way I began to say, Lord, your people are uniquely and distinctly called unto something of what you're working out.

Help us, help us to be more expectant. That God, who is working out a purpose, waits to pour blessing through that we might be world blessers. And here's this ark in this home during this period.

After David was afraid and didn't know how to bring the ark, they put it in this house for a period of time. Three months I think. And how wonderfully the blessing of the Lord was there.

Well, we read chapter 14 and we don't find much of an answer. Except two little phrases that I want you to get a hold of. Chapter 14 it says, And David inquired of God.

Verse 14, again it says, Therefore David inquired again of God. Now he's talking about other things. But now we get over to chapter 15.

It says, 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. Now one thing that was really amazing to me, I had not realized it for quite some time. Here was Gibeon, or Shiloh.

This is where the tabernacle and the ark had been before they carried it out to battle. And then it spent this time in Philistine country. And the amazing thing is that when David starts his procession and stops here for a while, he doesn't bring the ark back to the tabernacle.

He doesn't bring it to Gibeon or Shiloh. You know where he takes it? To Jerusalem. And he pitches his own tent up there for it.

This is quite interesting. Some say that he moved the tent from Shiloh up there and it was the tabernacle. No, you go back, we'll read.

David pitches his own tent. The first question I would like to ask David is, David, in this first little episode, when you started out to bring the ark, David, where were you going to take it? You know why? I'm sure he saw a need, but he didn't have the will of the Lord, he didn't have the how, and he didn't have the when. David, where were you going to bring the ark? In this chapter we're reading it says, and David prepared a place for the ark, pitched for it a tent.

And then God has given him some further insight, and 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. Next question I'd ask is, David, where did you get the idea of using a cart? Well, this is not new to most of you.

As you well remember, the Philistines had to use a cart because they didn't have any prepared Levites. They used a cart. Fact is, the Philistines had a brand new cart.

A lot of people say, Nothing but the best for the Lord. Sounds good. And, you know, I'm sure that's true, but oh how Christendom, oh how religion, how things today have devised their machinery to get things done for God.

And I just remind you now, I believe that if David had inquired, he saw a need, Lord, we must be able to inquire with the ark. We need it in our presence. All these 20 years during the time of King Saul, the people have not been really concerned in David's heart to bring it in.

And there is something rather significant in the fact that he didn't bring it back to the old tabernacle, but he pitched a new tent. And here they began to worship, and here they gathered, and there were priests who ministered. I don't think it's the normal order or the real thing that God's after.

It's one of those expedients until the temple was finally to be built. It doesn't represent all that God's after, but it does say to us in this lesson that David did prepare. God gave him a sense that it needed a place, and not only that, but he needed prepared Levites to carry it.

Read on with me. He says, verse 2, 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 forever.

And David gathered all Israel together to eat to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord unto His place which he had prepared for it. And he assembled, verse 4, all these. He assembled them.

And verse 12, And he 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. David, if you would have gone to the Lord with your need, He could have given you the real burden he had, and you would have known how to do it.

And the when would have been right because you would have had the place prepared. Verse 13, 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 divine or the due order. I guess the reason I can identify with David is because I have pulled this so often.

I mean, I have sensed how many times in my ambition and my eagerness and desire to do, I have rushed off with seeing a need. And I could pray, just this little lesson for us this morning, I could pray that somehow the Holy Spirit would allow us to be sensitive to needs. The need was right.

But not quickly to rush out to try to fulfill or to do, but to turn our heart and say, Lord, I don't want to just see out of natural eye something that needs to be done. Let me be able to inquire. Let me be so attuned to you that I know that which is your burden and your concern, that I'll know how and I'll know when.

And so we read that David prepares, that is the Levites are prepared, they're sanctified, set apart. God had never planned to use the cart or machinery to do his work. And you'd be surprised how difficult it is for people to make a distinction between the machinery that we devise to get the job done.

God's methods are still man. Sanctified. You can sanctify the machinery by separating it, but God's methods are man.

Individuals. Sometimes I watch in our own area in the fellowships how easy it is to let the responsible brothers or the elders become machinery. It's a very subtle thing.

All the brothers, all of God's people open to Him, but it is God who sets apart whom He will and gives burden and vision. And so David brings it in. And I love this procession.

We were talking about it the first night. So the priests, verse 14, and Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. The children of Israel bear the ark of God upon their shoulders with the stage they're on as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord.

And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers and instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding by lifting up the voice with joy. Verse 25, So David, 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 Obed-Edom with joy. And it came to pass when God helped the Levites to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen. And all the Levites that bear the ark and the singers in Chinnaniah the master song with the singers, David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the cornet and with trumpets and with cymbals making a noise with psalteries and harps.

And came to pass as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David that Michael, the daughter of Saul, that's his wife, looking out a window saw David, King David, dancing and playing. And she despised him in her heart. You read the rest of the story over in another portion where it says she was barren from that time on.

I want to just make one thing finally clear this morning and we close. One of the difficulties we run into so often is that we try to interpret the New Testament by the Old. It's very dangerous.

The Old Testament must always be interpreted by the New. These three days I've been with you, we've been in the Old Testament with Moses and with Joshua and now with David. And we've been speaking about first of all, the goal that God had.

Last night we talked about the principle. Learning the ways of the principles. This morning we're talking about the principle.

Could I just make one real correction in the whole thing? That is, now to focus our attention. God today in the New Testament, in His new way of working, God says, I wish you would discover that all my ways are summed up in thee way. Doing everything in and through my lovely Son, the Lord Jesus.

He is my way. Are you following me now? The tendency today in so many areas is to people set goals. There's an awful tyranny from even goals.

Even the tyranny of looking like Jesus, trying to be conformed to His image. If that's your goal, you've come short because as the songwriter says, my goal is God. And I'm convinced that if we become occupied with goals or with principles or with ways, we're still short.

It's an Old Testament level. God says, all my goals, all my principles, all my ways are now summed up and there's just one simple way you inquire. We've had it at the table this morning, looking unto Him.

Lord, You are the way, the truth and the life. Wesley caught this when he wrote it in one of the hymns. He said, Lord, there is a divine principle.

Plant that divine principle within me. It's capital P, the indwelling principle of the Lord Himself. We come short if in getting knowledge, if in knowing goals, even in getting clarity of principles or even in learning the ways of the Lord, we come short if finally our preoccupation is anything short of God's way in His Son.

Lord, don't let us miss this. How does that way work? The indwelling principle, the indwelling way, the life of the Lord Himself. I'm sure you know this, but it was made surreal to me some months ago when I realized that all that the old represented has its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus.

All that the law and all that it represented, now we have literally the law or the principle that's in Christ, and we're just governed by four lovely laws or I would use the word principle. There's the law of the Spirit of life. There's the law of love.

It really should be the principle of life, the principle of love, and then there's the law of liberty or the principle of liberty, and finally the principle of faith. All of this comes to be comprehended in our New Testament way. He's saying in the Lord Jesus there is life, there is love, there is the law of liberty, the principle of liberty, and the principle of faith.

And as I am occupied with Him, God gets His way. It's all in the Lord Jesus. Father, we bow before You this morning.

We know all the tendencies, the anxieties of our heart to do things, to get things done for Thee. And I have to confess I have been most guilty leading the way so often in being need conscious instead of being alive and conscious of You. You're the one who gives burden.

And with the burden You always give way of discharge. You help us to know how and when. I pray for my brothers and sisters as they're moving along and there's new horizons and new opportunities before them.

Oh God, help us to be more expectant. Help us to be more alive to claiming and believing You to give us much more. The real blessing of the Lord.

But let us learn how Your way works as we are occupied with You, Lord Jesus. You are the divine principle, the anointing that works within. It gives us the inward yes or the inward no.

Our mind sometimes, Lord, can't comprehend which principle is right because principles themselves seem so good. And so we have to just shut ourselves up to Thee and say, Lord, the inward anointing teaches. The inward registration of life to our renewed mind we can say, Lord, You will give guidance.

You will help Your Davids to know. I claim for my brothers here. Claim, Lord, that there will be a new corporate sense of the mind of the Lord as they expect and they go on and they believe You.

And, Lord, that there will be in this community of people who really sense what it is to long for the place to long for the glory of the Lord, the presence of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, all the unique singular purpose of God being worked out for this generation. Lord, help us to be in the line of Your purpose, the onward progress. We remember how finally Solomon came on the scene and built the temple.

It wasn't a place You wanted. You wanted always to dwell in the lives of Your people. You're building a corporate building today, living stones that are being framed together.

We thank You for this. And we pray, Lord Jesus, that You will take us on more and more in a fuller way to realize we're more than a gathering of people. We are a building that You're working on.

Bring this into such reality that folk around about in the community are caught and the Lord Jesus can make home and rest in a group of people who've come to dwell together in unity, for there You command the blessing of the Lord. We believe You to do it. Help us to know the way of the ark and the way of the Lord.

Spare us from machinery, whatever it represents. Let us be men who've really been alive to Thee, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it with thanksgiving.

Amen. Amen.

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