

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5



GOD'S WAY FOR MOVING THE ARK

Scripture Texts: 1 Chronicles 15:1-5; 1 Chronicles 15:11-15 1 Chronicles 15:25; 1 Chronicles 16:1; Romans 8:8-9

To have God's approval, we must do things God's way. The presence of God, of which the ark was a type, must be carried in the hearts of saints, not separated from them. The work of the church is to rest directly upon the saints of the church, not on a mechanical, human organization.

MEMORY VERSE: *Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever. — 1 Chronicles 15:2*

David Learned His Lesson

1 Chronicles 15:1-5 In the three months that the ark waited at Obededom's house, David searched the law of God and found the reason for the failure of the first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Now he was confident in his moves. Knowledge of God's law and direction on any work brings real confidence. **None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen . . .** Levites were the priestly tribe set apart for the service of God about the tabernacle, the building sacred to the presence of God. The ark was the most sacred piece in that tabernacle (**Numbers 3:5-10**). On the previous trip David had substituted a cart and oxen for Levites.

David prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. He called representatives, once again, of all Israel and carefully selected Levites. It was a large company, 862 Levites alone, besides many from other tribes.

1 Chronicles 15:11-13 David separated the two priests and six chief Levites to carry the ark. Levites were sanctified—cleansed and set apart—to be fit to do God's work. First, sanctification of the tribe was done by shaving, washings, sacrifices and the offering of themselves (**Numbers 8**). Now David directed these Levites to **sanctify yourselves**. He plainly said the disaster of Uzza's death on the first trip was because they did not go to God for direction nor follow His rules.

God Arranged Strict Rules

The Levites were chosen of God and cleansed as His priestly tribe to serve about the tabernacle. Only those who were sons of Aaron were priests. Kohathite Levites were carriers of the ark and other sanctuary vessels after they were covered by priests. **They shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.** God meant for these careful arrangements and rules to be strict. Why? Because the priestly tribe was to be a type of the church, God's cleansed and called-out people. He has **made us unto our God kings and priests (Revelation 5:10)**. The tabernacle vessels were types of the provisions God has given the church—the Savior, cleansing from sin, food and light of God's Word, prayer, consecration, and Holy Spirit baptism.

He shows us here how things are to be handled now, and who is to do it. Unsaved "strangers" have no part in the work of the church. God is teaching us a lesson of reverence that He requires in all sanctuary vessels. God punished carelessness and disobedience so severely to show how the Gospel and all God's gifts must be treated. The penalty for irreverent handling and unholy touching of spiritual work is a termination of spiritual life.

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Carried on the Shoulders

1 Chronicles 15:14-15 The Levites bare the ark . . . upon their shoulders with the staves thereon . . . according to the word of the Lord. **Exodus 25:13-15** tells what the staves are to be made of and how they are to be used. Not upon a cart but **upon their shoulders**--close, personal contact. It must be done as God said.

Why did God decree that **the staves shall be in . . . they shall not be taken from it?** (**Exodus 25:15-22**). Because the ark represented God's presence, and God's presence was necessary to Israel in all places at all times. This is true in our lives as its antitype. We must take our God into all phases of our lives. This is significant in Jesus' statement that the Spirit would be **in you**. That **he may abide with you forever**.

Nothing was to be placed between God's ark and His chosen carriers. Jesus, our high priest, carries the government of the church on His shoulder (**Isaiah 9:6-7**). Saints are priests and they are to carry the work of the church as He directs. Using that cart created a serious problem. Many problems in the church might be eliminated by discarding carts of human organizations, manmade rules and programs, and boards removed from local church work. The responsibility for spiritual life (which proceeds from the Holy Spirit) cannot be removed from the shoulders of individual saints and successfully transferred to the pastor or denominational head. Outward activity or church membership cannot take the place of personal contact with God.

With Joy and Worship

1 Chronicles 15:25; 1 Chronicles 16:1 The company went **with joy**, knowing they were in the will of the Lord. **God helped the Levites**. They stopped and offered sacrifices in thanksgiving and worship. They moved along with shouting, singing, music, and joyous dancing. When the ark was settled in its prepared place in Jerusalem, David gave the people food and drink to celebrate. He set priests and Levites to care for the ark and serve continually before it.

The difference between the joy shown on the first trip and that on the second was the result of knowing God's will. By doing God's will, by acting in God's strength and not their own, and by following God's plan and not their own, their joy was full.

Antitype of the Ark

Romans 8:8-9 The ark in the holy of holies of the tabernacle represented the closest communion of God with man then. God met the high priest there.

The ark is a symbol or type of the experience of the closest communion of God and man now, that is, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Saved people are priests (**Revelation 1:6**) who allowed to approach God. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple, which separated the holy place from the holy of holies, **was rent in twain**, opening the way for all of God's people to come close to God in Holy Spirit possession (**Matthew 27:51**).

Israel needed the ark as a contact with God. We need its antitype--Holy Spirit baptism--as our contact with God. We cannot please God while living in the flesh. We must live in the Spirit. He comes after one has repented and been justified by faith in the blood of Jesus. He comes when one surrenders himself to the Spirit to take complete control, and opens his heart for His entrance.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Jumping at conclusions is not half as good exercise
as digging for facts.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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