

THE DUE ORDER

We shall be moving straight to our meditation, which is titled “*The Due Order*”. This phrase occurs in 1 Chronicles 15:13. You will recall that was the phrase we used to conclude the last meditation. We shall begin to read from the thirteenth chapter. We will pick some verses there before we go to the fifteenth chapter. The event being covered, concerning which there is going to be an exposition is the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant back from captivity into the place that was prepared for it.

1 Chronicles 13:2-10

“... And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, if it seem good unto you, and that it be of 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 enquired 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 Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath – Jearim.

And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove 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. And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. ...”

I Chronicles 15: 1, 2, 11 – 14.

“...AND David made him houses in the city of David, prepared a place for the ark of god, and pitched for it a tent.

The 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 for ever.

And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asiah and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadah, And 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.

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 due order.

So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. ...”

Now, it was in the time of Eli that the ark of the Lord was captured in a battle between the Philistines and Israel. You will recall that when the children of Israel got to the Promised Land, then began what is called the era of the Judges. For above five hundred years, single individuals from the several tribes ruled over the polity of Israel. Eli was the priest at the time when Samuel was born. You remember Hophni and Phineas, two men who took advantage of their public position to menace women that came to worship. They took some to bed. And, all Israel was in a bad state, because those who were supposed to lead them in the fear of God led them in unrighteousness.

It was in such a setting that the Philistines the constant enemy of the children of Israel came against them in battle. And this unfaithful nation of Israel, having no regard for the Lord's word carried the Ark of the Covenant into the battle, supposing by that to get victory on account of what the ark symbolised. You will recall that all through the forty years of Israel's journey through the wilderness it was the Ark of the Covenant that was carried into all battles, and God in His power, presence and glory, fought for Israel. Recall too that when Jericho fell to the onslaught of the children of Israel, it was the Ark of the Covenant that went before them. They compassed the city round about seven times and as the glory of God thundered in response to the blowing of the trumpet, down came the mighty wall of Jericho.

So, there was a history, a precedence that they are to take with them the ark of the Lord when they go forth to battle. Infact, they are to say, *“Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered and let them that hate him flee before him”*. So, Eli commanded Hophni, Phineas, and a company of priest to carry the Ark of the Covenant unto the battle against the Philistines. That symbolise God's glory in their midst. But in the battle, God proved to be to Israel what they had consistently been to Him. If they had disregarded his word, then He also will disappoint their confidences. Because they did not take to heart His word but disregarded him, he allowed them to suffer terrible defeat in that battle.

Now, the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant into captivity. That ark was not to return to the centre of the worship of Israel until seventy years after. In 1Chronicles 13, we find that for all forty years during the reign of Saul, no reference was made of the ark, except at the beginning of his reign when he went out to the outskirts of the land of Israel to consult the ark of the covenant. But he had not yet gotten an answer when he ran back because there was a battle at home that required his presence and attention.

Let us come to the main story. In 1 Chronicles 13:1 we are told that David gathered to him all leaders, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds and began to say into them it is necessary for us to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to the city of Zion. Not only did David do that, he consulted with all the congregations. Their representatives were gathered and they thought about this matter. Messages were sent into all the land of Israel saying it is necessary for us to bring back the Ark of the Covenant. And they all looked into it and said, yes, the word “*Ichabod*” was born when the Ark of the Covenant was carried into captivity. The glory has departed. But now the glory of the Lord must return. Even though the Lord had been merciful to us, we know that there is something short of what God is looking for amongst us, and we are yet to reach the mark of the glory that God has purposed to manifest through us as a nation.

So, they set out. We are told that when they got to the house of Abinadab, they carried the ark into a new cart. In modern day language, that answers to a new wagon. And, they began to go with the ark of the city of Zion amidst tremendous rejoicing and praise. So great was the praise that it attracted the whole of Israel.

As they continued in their journey, they came to a point where it was as if the oxen carrying the cart were about to fall. The effect upon the ark was that it also tilted. Uzzah at that point stretch forth his hand to steady the Ark of the Covenant. And the Lord smote him with death. The Bible says he died right there before the Lord. That single incidence arrested the whole of Israel. David was afraid. In fact, if you read the account of this same story in II Samuel 6, you will find that it is said that David was greatly afraid and said unto himself, “*how can I take the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto me?*” and he sought for somebody close by who will allow him to keep the ark of the covenant in his house. And he ran back home confused and greatly disappointed.

Now, why did God smite Uzzah? Were the intentions of David and the rest of the children of Israel proper in seeking to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel, to the city of Zion? Now, all of these questions we shall seek to answers. But let us go back to 1 Chronicles 15:13 so that we can place the issue squarely before us. David said in that passage, *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 due order.* God broke upon them and slew Uzzah with death, because they were carrying the ark in a manner not in harmony with the due order.

Now, let us look at the whole situation first, David was anointed of God three times. Samuel anointed him. Then several years later, he was anointed as King over Judah. And seven years after the second anointing, he was anointed the third time over all Israel. So, David carried the anointing. Again, the scripture says David was a man after God’s heart. It was the tremendous love that David had for God that made him decided to bring the ark of the covenant of God into the city of Zion where the temple was to be built, that it might be the centre of the worship of the children of Israel as Moses had prescribed it.

Secondly, he (David) did not take an absolute approach towards accomplishing that desire. He did not say, “*well, it pleases me, so I will go ahead*”. He consulted with the people. In fact, he consulted with all credible people in the land of Israel. In the account of 2 Samuel 6, we are told that He took chosen men. We are told in 1Chronicles 13 that he gathered all Israel. He sent for persons all over Israel that had insight into the workings of God and asked “*is this thing right? Let us bring back the Ark of the Covenant of our God back to Israel*”. And they all agreed.

David did not operate by any absolute fiat, he knew he should consult the people. But brethren, no matter how many persons identify with what we are doing, no matter what support we garner from the people, if a thing is not according to God’s word, God cannot support it. Sincerity is not enough. Good intentions are not adequate. The Lord whom we serve has revealed himself in a particular manner. We must follow on to know the Lord according to the principles of his word that He has made known.

Recall David destroyed Goliath and brought great victories to the children of Israel during the time of Saul. But here, something was done that was in effect a rejection of God’s wisdom. God had detailed how the ark was to be carried.

Now, what scripture is being referred to here? Remember that God revealed to David that that breach happened because they did not conduct themselves according to the due order. The reference is to Numbers 7:9 and Numbers 4:4–15. Those verses of scriptures were written about five hundred and eighty years before this event recorded in 1Chronicles 13 and 15. All that Israel was to do in the worship of God must agree with the principles set forth in the first five books (Genesis to Deuteronomy). Any deviation would incur the wrath of God.

Remember we came to this point in the last edition when we said the apostles of the Lamb and the writing ministries of the New Testament have received mandate of the Lord to chart the course for the church. And all are to operate according to their writings. Jesus commanded them to say to the people to observe whatsoever things they have given in instructions. Matthew 28:18-20.

The fact that David was sincere, the fact that David loved God, the fact that the people were mindful of the Lord’s glory did not make what was wrong right. Sincerity does not justify a bad action. The street of religion is filled with so many people who hunger for God, who seek to serve God. But there has not been an equal zeal to seek to serve God according to the prescribed manner, according to the due order. Men have chosen to be lazy towards spiritual things that find strength to do other things. But in this last hour, God is drawing our attention back to how things are supposed to be. We are referred to our spiritual roots. The New Testament writings give sufficient direction as to how the church should conduct her affairs.

What are these particulars that constitute the due order. Turn with me to Numbers 7:9.

“...But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary (which include carrying the ark) belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders. ...”

Numbers 4:4

“...This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things. ...”

That includes all the seven furniture: the two in the outer court, the three in holy place and the two in the holiest of all. All seven furniture was to be carried by the Kohatites. This seven furniture represented the most holy things in all of the Lord’s worship. Reading further, we find that they were to bear the ark upon stakes, upon rods driven through holes attached to the Ark of the Covenant. Eight persons were to carry it. And they were to carry the Ark of the Covenant upon their shoulders. Jesus said, *“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me and ye shall find rest for your soul, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30). This great provision that the children of Israel, in moving the ark from one place to the other, should have recourse to sanctified priests, is something that we will have to speak about in another connection. But let us go ahead.

What made God to strike Uzzah with death? It was because he touched the ark. In the fifteenth verse of Numbers 4 we are shown that anyone that touched the ark apart from the priest is to be visited with the judgement of death.

It reads, “...And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it; but they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation. ...”

God had written in his word: don’t touch the ark with your carnal hand or you die, don’t touch the ark. Only the priests are permitted to touch the ark. Uzzah disobeyed that divine instruction under the penalty of death.

Now, let us begin to apply the message to our day. God has set forth in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament principles what should inform how the Lord’s people are to do His work. It is important for us to know that God knows what will satisfy Him. Someone may ask, *“is it not easier to carry the ark on a new cart or a new wagon instead of the shoulders of men?”* Let us know that the new cart or the new wagon answers to man’s mind. It answers to organising things according to man’s mind. Organisation is not God’s method of saving His people or of bringing glory to his people. Saving men are God’s method. Men whom He has anointed and laid hands upon are the means of God expressing Himself in the world, not organisations.

Now, one will be tempted to call it a tiny slip. Could God not have by passed that, some may ask. But the truth is that if God did that concerning the shadow, concerning those things which were merely symbolic, how much more should we know and understand that he requires the same level of obedience from His people today. There is set forth in all scriptures how the church should conduct her affairs. We are just going to make few points before we round up this meditation trusting that in other editions, we will take a fuller consideration of these things.

First, God has provided that in any given locality, the local congregation should conduct her own affairs under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, there is a close connection between the absolute headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the autonomy of the local congregation. In our day we see denominations with a great network of branches and one man or a few men sitting over all of that as head. It is a repudiation of the authority of Christ in his church.

The Baptist convention stands out as one denomination that gives an expression of this principle. Every local congregation conducts her own affairs. It is too much for one man to suppose that he can exercise lordly control over thousands of congregation as head. This is important. We made reference to the Baptist Convention, not because we approve of any denominational system, but indicate that a measure of this truth has been recovered. And we know that in this last hour, God will have a body of people living and operating exactly according to that which, is in his mind. When man sits in lordly control over so many congregations, he begins to see himself as a god and the people will accept and worship him as such. We are only touching upon this briefly. We shall go into fuller details in a later edition.

Again, the Bible shows to us clearly that even in the local congregation, there must be plurality of leadership. The word of God does not witness to a situation where one man is head over every other person in a manner that makes everybody subservient to him. In God's house, there must be plurality of leadership. This is the reason why you find that whenever the Lord talks about leadership, He does so in the plural sense.

Notice in Ephesians 4:11, we read that God has set in the church some apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, all carrying the plural term. This is important. One man as pastor sitting and issuing command over the congregation, with perhaps a board of "*ordained*" ministers made subject to his whims and caprices is an outrageous departure from the principle of God's word. The great spiritual poverty among God's people can be traced to this departure. When one man does all the thinking for God's people and he is just a human being, then there is bound to be decay. For all that that man got from Adam is death. And he can only operate in death if he had recourse to the wisdom of himself.

If a man sees himself as being inspired or anointed of God, then let Him do what God says. God does everything by reference to the principles of His word that He had already set forth. Whatever God does today is in harmony with what He did in time past for known unto God from the foundation of the world are all His works (Acts 15:18). Whatever a person witnesses, as being from God cannot be accepted if it does not agree with the principles of God's word. II Corinthians 13 simply put it this way, "*by the mouth of two or three (writing) witnesses, let every*

word be confirmed". Ten persons from a particular denominational church may be persuaded along one line. They may all be ministers of God. But that does not make them witnesses. A witness must be one who is called of God and who operates by the principles already set forth in scriptures. At the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established.

We are going to witness a return to the basic principles that govern the operation of the local church, for the greatest force upon the earth is the local church. When the Bible says "*the kingdoms of this world. Has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ*" (Revelation 11:15), we are to understand that He takes over the kingdoms of this world by operating through the local assembly of his people. In a city, it is the body of Christ there that is God's power and God's strength in that locality.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause His face to shine upon you. We might have rushed through this, but we believe the basic principles are plain enough. David and his people were not to excuse themselves from principles that old prophet Moses wrote many years ago, about six centuries back. They are to know that if they deviate from it, they will pay for it dearly, and know that God is not one among us but Lord over us.

