



First Chronicles - Chapter Sixteen

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

II.b 1 Chronicles 13:1-16:43 - David's Transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Sixteen

The ark was placed in the tent that David had prepared for it. After giving offerings, David appointed Levites to minister before the ark. David blessed the people of Israel and they then offered song worship to the Lord with a psalm that David had compiled from various psalms for the occasion.

The brief account in 2 Samuel 6:17-20 of the ark's arrival in Jerusalem and the festivities that followed is greatly expanded by details of David's provisions for worship (vv.4-7 and vv.37-42) and a psalm of praise (vv.8-36). Worship before the ark as the primary symbol of God's presence and power (see v.11 and Numbers 10:35) is the principal theme of this chapter.

The implicit message for the Chronicler's own audience is that such worship, diligently undertaken, will transform and embolden them as they call upon God's strength. This chapter also leads up to the first high point of Chronicles, the dynastic promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17:10-14. A reciprocal relationship of divine blessing and human obedience can be seen in this arrangement:

- Chapters 11-12 - God raises David to kingship over Israel.
- Chapter 13 - David's first attempt to retrieve the ark.
- Chapter 14 - God exalts David in Jerusalem and over the Philistines.
- Chapters 15-16 - David's second and the successful attempt to retrieve the ark.
- Chapter 17 - God promises David a perpetual dynasty.

II.b.v 1 Chronicles 16:1-6 - The Ark Placed in the Tent

The ark is placed in its tent, the Levites are appointed to serve it and the people of Israel are blessed by David.

¹ They brought in the ark of God, and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being before God. ² When David had finished offering the burnt-offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord; ³ and he distributed to every person in Israel – man and woman alike – to each a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins.

1 Chronicles 16:1-3

They brought in the ark of God, and set it inside the tent. After many years - since the days when the ark was lost in battle to the Philistines - the ark is returned to the centre of Israel's national consciousness. The emblem of God's presence and glory was set at its proper place in Israel.

The burnt-offerings spoke of consecration. The offerings of well-being or peace-offerings spoke of fellowship. This was a day of great consecration and fellowship with God. It was also a great barbeque and meal for all the people. These sacrifices were an important part of the ceremony, neglected in the first attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Just as Moses blessed the people after their completion of the tabernacle in Exodus 39:43, so too does David upon fulfilment of this task. Solomon will do likewise at the dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6:3.

A portion of meat. Most of the meat from the offerings of well-being were eaten by the people themselves, sitting down, as it were, as guests of God's table to a meal celebrating the restoration of their peace with him.

⁴ He appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel.

⁵ Asaph was the chief, and second to him Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, with harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, ⁶ and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow trumpets regularly, before the ark of the covenant of God.

1 Chronicles 16:4-6

He appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord. David institutionalises what he initiated in 1 Chronicles 15:16 for the procession: a permanent, daily ministry of worship by the Levites before the ark (v.6 and v.37), as well as in connection with the sacrifices, held at that time in Gibeon (vv.39-42). The musicians who took part in the procession (1 Chronicles 15:17-21) are assigned to this duty or to Gibeon (v.39 and v.41). Their task is to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord. This is a comprehensive description of worship through prayer and song, expressed above all in the psalms.

At the end of this spectacular day of celebration, David established an enduring institution of worship and commemoration at the Ark of the Covenant. It was not to be a one-day high, but an ongoing ministry unto God. David's appointment then of Levites to minister in music and praise to God marks a significant advance in the history of Israel's worship. His previous arrangements for music had been devised for just one occasion; but now a continuing service is envisioned.

In the Levitical appointments for that day and beyond, David selected some Levites to focus on commemorating what great things God had done. Simply remembering God's great works is an important and often neglected part of the Christian life. Spurgeon, in his sermon *The Recorders*, noted several ways that Christians can help themselves remember the great things of God:

- Make an actual record of what God has done, keeping a written journal.
- Be sure to praise God thoroughly at the time his goodness is received.
- Set apart time for meditation on the good things God has done.
- Talk about his mercy often to other people.
- Use everything around them as reminders of the goodness of God.

Asaph was the chief. This indicates that David elevated Asaph to this position even though the Levites had appointed Heman as the leader of worship in 1 Chronicles 15:17. No reason is given, although Asaph did represent the senior Levitical clan of Gershon as stated in 1 Chronicles 6:39-43. Personal ability may also have been a contributing factor, for Asaph and his descendants are listed as composers for twelve of the inspired OT psalms.

II.b.vi 1 Chronicles 16:7-36 - David's Psalm of Thanksgiving

Those gathered for this ceremony now offer song worship to God. This psalm of praise is a composite from Psalm 105:1-15 (vv.8-22), Psalm 96:1-13 (vv.23-33), and Psalm 106:1 and 106:47-48 (vv.34-36) that the composer has carefully woven together and modified slightly at various points for his purposes. It can be seen as expressing the thoughts of praise and gratitude evoked by the successful transfer

of the ark to Jerusalem, while also addressing some lively concerns of the Chronicler's own postexilic community.

All three of the canonical psalms that he quoted are anonymous, i.e. orphan psalms without title in the OT Psalter; but on the basis of the king's use of them here, they could well have been written, in part at least, by David.

⁷ Then on that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the Lord by Asaph and his kindred.

1 Chronicles 16:7

On that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the Lord. David was known as 'the sweet psalmist of Israel' in 2 Samuel 23:1 ESV, and to commemorate this occasion he put together a compilation of other psalms.

- ⁸ O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
- ⁹ Sing to him, sing praises to him,
tell of all his wonderful works.
- ¹⁰ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
- ¹¹ Seek the Lord and his strength,
seek his presence continually.
- ¹² Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgements he uttered,
- ¹³ O offspring of his servant Israel,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

1 Chronicles 16:8-13

O give thanks to the Lord. Like many psalms, this one begins with a call to praise, virtually in the form of a commandment. Yet the psalm breathes with too much excitement for this to be a true command; it is an exhortation to the community of God's people to join in praise to their God.

Charles Spurgeon comments, "All the good that we enjoy comes from God. Recollect that! Alas, most men forget it. Rowland Hill used to say that worldlings were like the hogs under the oak, which eat the acorns, but never

think of the oak from which they fell, nor lift up their heads to grunt out a thanksgiving. Yes, so it is. They munch the gift and murmur at the giver.”

Give thanks, call on, make known, sing, tell, glory, seek, and remember. In a few verses, David lists a remarkable number of ways one can praise and glorify God, although there are many others. Some of them speak directly to God, such as sing praises to him, some speak to others about God’s greatness, i.e. make known his deeds among the peoples, and some are a conversation with one’s self, for example, remember the wonderful works he has done: <<*I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old*>> (Psalm 77:11).

The summons to seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually is especially appropriate before the ark, and a characteristic thought for the writer: <<*Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God*>> (1 Chronicles 22:19a). Worship for the Chronicler means transformative engagement with God. The repeated instruction to Israel to remember God’s miracles in the past, and his promises of the land and protection to Abraham and Israel (vv.18-22), would resonate with the small and vulnerable postexilic community, whose hold on the land could seem tenuous and under threat, refer to Nehemiah Chapters 4 and 6.

Charles Spurgeon comments, “If we talked more of God’s wondrous works, we should be free from talking of other people’s works. It is easy to criticise those we could not rival, and carp at those we could not emulate. He who could not carve a statue, or make a single stroke of the chisel correctly, affects to point out where the handicraft of the greatest sculptor might have been improved. It is a poor, pitiful occupation, that of picking holes in other people’s coats, and yet some people seem so pleased when they can perceive a fault, that they roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel.” And again, “There is no gifted tongue requisite, there are no powers of eloquence invoked; neither laws of rhetoric nor rules of grammar are pronounced indispensable in the simple talk that my text inculcates, ‘Talk ye of all his wondrous works.’ I beg your pardon when you say you cannot do this. You cannot because you will not.”

Wisdom provides a reason for seeking the Lord: <<*I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me*>> (Proverbs 8:17).

O offspring of his servant Israel, children of Jacob, his chosen ones. This call to praise is directed to the people of God. As will be noted later in the psalm, all creation has a responsibility to praise its creator; but this is the special responsibility of God’s people.

The Lord had shown them they were special to him when he took them from Egyptian slavery: <<*Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of*

power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?>> (Deuteronomy 4:34), and: <<When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son>> (Hosea 11:1).

14 He is the Lord our God;
his judgements are in all the earth.
15 Remember his covenant for ever,
the word that he commanded for a thousand generations,
16 the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
17 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
18 saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance.'
19 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers in the land,
20 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
21 he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
22 saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm.'

1 Chronicles 16:14-22

His judgements are in all the earth. David will soon begin to sing about the special relationship between the Lord and his covenant people. Yet he prefaced those ideas with the thought that God is the Lord of all the earth: <<*My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness*>> (Isaiah 26:9), <<*But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgement and destruction of the godless*>> (2 Peter 3:7). His authority is not limited to his covenant people.

Remember his covenant for ever. God wanted his people to never forget the covenant he made with them. God's dealing with man throughout history has been based on the idea of covenant. God made a covenant with:

- Abraham regarding a land, a nation, and a particular messianic blessing (Genesis 12:1-3).
- Israel as a nation, regarding a law, sacrifice, and choice of blessing or cursing (Exodus 19:5-8).
- David regarding the specific lineage of the Messiah (2 Samuel Chapter 7).
- All who would believe on his Son, the new covenant through Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20).

It was entirely appropriate that this psalm focuses on the idea of his covenant, because it was written for the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant into the place David prepared for it in Jerusalem.

To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance. David here highlighted the promise of land that God made to Abraham as part of his covenant with the patriarch; refer to Genesis 12:1 and 13:14-17. The land belonged to the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through this covenant. In this it can be seen that this portion of the psalm is largely meant for teaching. This stanza was not primarily intended as a declaration of praise to God, but as informing the worship of God's people.

Wandering from nation to nation. In the story of the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant recorded in Second Samuel, this psalm of David is not included. Here it can be seen why the Chronicler - writing shortly after the Babylonian exile - was anxious to include it. This line of David's psalm praises God for his providential protection of his people when they were exiled from the Promised Land.

He allowed no one to oppress them. One might say that this was inaccurate - after all, the oppressive Pharaohs seemed to do much wrong to Israel and they had suffered from many nations throughout their history until the time of exile. Yet, in the longer view of seeing God's good work even through such painful times, David can truthfully say, "**He allowed no one to oppress them.**"

Of course, history teaches that this was not the end of Israel's troubles. They were under Persian rule at the time the Chronicles were recorded, they lived under Greek and Roman occupation, were invaded by the Arabic nations around them, and were finally under British rule before becoming independent. Even then attacks on the nation continue and yet they survive because of God's provenance towards his people Israel.

Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm. This seems to refer to God's people as a whole instead of particular anointed individuals or individual prophets.

23 Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Tell of his salvation from day to day.

24 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous works among all the peoples.

25 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.

26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

27 Honour and majesty are before him;
strength and joy are in his place.

28 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

29 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come before him.
Worship the Lord in holy splendour;

30 tremble before him, all the earth.
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.

1 Chronicles 16:23-30

Sing to the Lord, all the earth. God's covenant people have a special responsibility to praise him, but all the earth should also tell of his salvation from day to day. It is only good news when it is his salvation. Each person should know, 'My salvation is not enough to save me. I need his salvation to save me.' This is something worth proclaiming.

Declare his glory among the nations. David is back to a particular address to the people of God, imploring them to tell everyone of the greatness of God, and his superiority above all gods: <<*For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud – which draw the bow – to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations*>> (Isaiah 66:19)

The celebration in worship of God's kingship over all the earth is fitting before his ark-throne (v.6) and should evoke a similar faith and hope in Israel. The psalm declares that the gods of the peoples are idols and therefore worthless, whereas Israel's God reigns and will come to judge the entire earth (v.33).

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. This is not in the sense of giving something to God that he does not already have. It is in the sense of crediting to God what he actually does possess, but what mankind is often blind to.

Worship the Lord in holy splendour. God's holiness has a wonderful and distinct beauty about it. It is beautiful that God is God and not man; that he is more than the greatest man or a superman. His holy love, grace, justice, and majesty are beautiful.

- 31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice,
and let them say among the nations, 'The Lord is king!'
- 32 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.
- 33 Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

1 Chronicles 16:31-33

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice. David knew that creation itself praised God. He knew that the beauty and power and skill and majesty of creation was itself a testimony of praise to its creator.

Let them say among the nations. Israel had the Word of God to tell them of God's reign and his coming judgement. The nations have the testimony of creation to tell them what they should know about God: *<<For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles>>* (Romans 1:19-23).

The Lord is king! The creation itself reveals a God of infinite wisdom, power, and order; it logically deduces that this God reigns and will judge the earth, understanding that his order and power and wisdom are expressed morally as well as materially.

He comes to judge the earth. While earlier messianic prophecies had foretold of the Lord's universal, millennial reign, e.g. Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17 and 1 Samuel 2:10, these words - he comes - may be the first in all of written Scripture (Job 19:25 may well have been spoken earlier) to set forth the doctrine of the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

³⁴ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

³⁵ Say also:
'Save us, O God of our salvation,
and gather and rescue us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
and glory in your praise.

³⁶ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.'

Then all the people said 'Amen!' and praised the Lord.

1 Chronicles 16:34-36

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever. This is a common theme in Scripture, providing the opening verses for Psalms 107 and 118, and is very similar to: <<*Praise the Lord, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples! For great is his steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever. Praise the Lord!*>> (Psalm 117:1-2). That his love endures forever is repeated in every verse of Psalm 136, and is used elsewhere by the Chronicler in 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:3, 7:6 and 20:21. Elsewhere it is used in Ezra 3:11 and Jeremiah 33:11.

Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and rescue us from among the nations. This is yet another demonstration of why the Chronicler chose to include this psalm of David in the account of the ark's arrival in Jerusalem. These ancient words of David would have special relevance to the returning exiles. They would not only have confidence in God's ability to gather and deliver, but they would also be motivated to give thanks and to glory in your praise. This thought leads naturally to the petition for deliverance and salvation from among the nations as the climax of the psalm. At this point, the prayer speaks more to the Chronicler's generation than to David's, and expresses the longing for a greater restoration and consolidation of a scattered people to be gathered in worship before God.

To be rescued from the nations was part of Hezekiah's prayer when Jerusalem was being threatened by the Assyrians: <<So now, O Lord our God, save us, I pray you, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone>> (2 Kings 19:19).

Then all the people said 'Amen!' and praised the Lord. This is a reminder that David's psalm was not sung as a solo. The hearts - and perhaps the voices - of the people were in complete agreement with him through the psalm.

II.b.vii 1 Chronicles 16:37-43 - Regular Worship Maintained

Besides ministering before the ark, the Levites are also appointed to assist at the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon by offering praise at the times of sacrifice. Solomon will move the tabernacle and the Tabernacle from Gibeon into the temple at the time of its dedication: <<So they brought up the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up>> (2 Chronicles 5:5).

³⁷ David left Asaph and his kinsfolk there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, ³⁸ and also Obed-edom and his sixty-eight kinsfolk; while Obed-edom son of Jeduthun and Hosah were to be gatekeepers. ³⁹ And he left the priest Zadok and his kindred the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon, ⁴⁰ to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt-offering regularly, morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the Lord that he commanded Israel. ⁴¹ With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest of those chosen and expressly named to render thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures for ever. ⁴² Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music, and instruments for sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to the gate.

1 Chronicles 16:37-42

David left Asaph and his kinsfolk there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister regularly before the ark as each day required. This emphasises the point made previously in vv.4-6, that David deliberately planned for this to be more than a one day spectacular. He instituted ongoing service and worship before the Ark of the Covenant at its new resting place in Jerusalem.

And he left the priest Zadok and his kindred the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon. The centre of sacrifice was still

at the tabernacle's altar at Gibeon. For the time being, Israel's worship activities and personnel were to be divided between the ark at Jerusalem and the tended altar at Gibeon. It was at the latter that the daily offerings were to be made until the time when the temple was built by Solomon: <<***The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Command the Israelites, and say to them: My offering, the food for my offerings by fire, my pleasing odour, you shall take care to offer to me at its appointed time. And you shall say to them, This is the offering by fire that you shall offer to the Lord: two male lambs a year old without blemish, daily, as a regular offering. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; also one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour for a grain-offering, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil. It is a regular burnt-offering, ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord. Its drink-offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the sanctuary you shall pour out a drink-offering of strong drink to the Lord. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight with a grain-offering and a drink-offering like the one in the morning; you shall offer it as an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord***>> (Numbers 28:1-8).

⁴³ Then all the people departed to their homes, and David went home to bless his household.

1 Chronicles 16:43

Then all the people departed to their homes. The celebrations were now completed and the people could return to the various parts of the land where they lived. It points to the fact that the people were willing to travel great distances to be part of the central worship in Jerusalem.

David went home to bless his household. David took all his duties seriously. His first priority was to serve the Lord, then to serve the Lord's people and finally to serve his family. However, most of David's problems came because he did not always act as a father should and this can be seen in the accounts of Amnon, Tamar and Absalom in particular.