

Dancing Before the Lord

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“David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. ³ They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. ⁵ David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. It was told King David, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.” So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; ¹³ and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴ David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. ¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷ They brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. ¹⁸ When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts, ¹⁹ and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes” (2 Samuel 6:1-5 & 12-19).

1. Dancing in Worship

Have you ever seen dancing during worship? When I was in Korea, I attended a worship service on a US Army base in Seoul. During the service, a woman came to the front of the sanctuary and began to dance. Before that, I had never seen anyone dance during worship service. Yet, I was moved by her dancing and began to think about the positive power of dance in worship.

I had been taught that dancing was a sinful activity. Good Christians shouldn't dance. Yet, I saw that dance made people excited and joyful even in worship. This is what we learn from today's scripture.

2. David is Dancing

2 Samuel 6:5 says, “**David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.** Verse 12 & 14 also says, “**David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obbedom to the city of David with rejoicing.**”... “**David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod.**”

David is assembled with thirty thousand men to accompany the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark is taken from the house of Abinadab in Baale-judah to Jerusalem. What is the Ark of the Covenant in this passage? God told Moses to make an ark while they were near Mt. Sinai. The Ark was a chest that held the tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna and Aaron’s rod. Since it held the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant was also called the Ark of the Law. This was the holiest object in Israel and symbolized the presence of God.

When moving the Ark of the covenant, David and the others danced before the Lord with songs, lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals. David dressed in priestly garments and the people danced to celebrate that the Ark of the covenant was brought to the capital of Israel.

Why is the Ark being moved to the City of David? It was because David wanted the Israelites to know that God was with them not only in the wilderness but also in Jerusalem. He also wanted Jerusalem to be not only the capital but also the religious center.

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they carried the Ark with them wherever they went. It served as a shield of protection against trouble and danger. The Ark was considered the key factor for survival for the Israelites because the Ark represented God’s presence.

Do you notice how happy David was when the Ark of the covenant was moving to Jerusalem? Verse 14 says, “**David danced before the Lord with all his might.**” David was king of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. Do you think the Israelites thought dancing of king was appropriate? Maybe not.

Verse 16 says, “**As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.**” Michal was the daughter of Saul and David’s first wife. She despised David and felt embarrassed by his dancing. She didn’t realize the significance of the Ark of the Covenant. David defended his actions, affirming that he had done nothing wrong. Because of her attitude, David seemed to be separated from her and she had never any children.

3. Miriam’s Dancing

What do you think of dancing before the Lord? Can dancing be a form of worship to God? Dance has been controversial within church. But Exodus 15:20 says, "**Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing.**" Miriam and the women danced after the Israelites crossed over from Egypt to the other side of the Red Sea. The women celebrated their newfound freedom and gave thanks to the Lord for their miraculous deliverance with song and dance.

Psalm 149:3 also says, "**Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.**" The psalmist suggests us to praise the Lord with dancing, with singing, and with musical instruments.

Do you remember the movie "Sister Act"? The nuns' choir sang "I will follow him" with the voice and dance. The choir's music and dance brought lots of people from the streets. We are so grateful to our choir for their hymn singing in our worship. I wonder someday that we might see them dance as well.

4. What Happened to the Ark of the Covenant?

When the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, king David expressed his joy and happiness through dance and music. The Ark of the Covenant was a visible reminder of God's presence to his people. Without the Ark of the Covenant, there was no Jewish life. The twelve tribes camped around the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. In battle, they carried the Ark of the Covenant in the front. When priests carried the Ark of the Covenant across the Jordan River, the waters receded as the people crossed onto dry ground.

When the Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days, they carried the Ark of the Covenant and shouted, causing the massive walls of Jericho to crumble before them. And when the Israelites conquered the thirty-one kings of Canaan, they carried the Ark of the Covenant with them. The Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of God's presence and power with his people.

Do you know what happened to the Ark of the Covenant after it was placed in the Temple of Solomon? The prophet Jeremiah says, "**when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made.**" Jeremiah prophesies that the Ark of the Covenant would become obsolete. When Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 586 BC., the Ark of the Covenant disappeared from history. No one knows what happened to the Ark

of the Covenant. Since that time, how did the people recognize the presence of the Lord? People waited for the coming of the Messiah.

5. The Presence of God

Matthew 1:23 says, “**Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,**” which means, “**God is with us.**” Matthew tells us that Jesus would fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus would come into the world and be Immanuel, God with us. Jesus was God in the flesh. God was with His people in the body of Jesus.

What happened after Jesus’ ascension? 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, “**Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?**” After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, God’s presence is revealed to the world through the followers of Jesus. You and I are now the God’s Temple, and the Arks of the New Covenant is within us. Our lives are the physical reminder of God’s presence with his people and in this world.

6. Application

How can we express our joy when we notice the presence of the Lord among us? Today’s scripture suggests us that we can dance with songs of praise to the Lord.

Recently, a few of us visited one of church members who was waiting for God’s call to return to the heavenly home. He and his family welcomed us and was glad to see us. Although they did not dance before the Lord, they were comforted and encouraged because we are the reminder of God’s presence to him and his family. When we give and receive care, we experience God’s presence and care among us.

The Lord doesn’t live in the physical Ark of the Covenant anymore. The Lord lives in each one of us. You and I represent the presence of God among God’s people. When they see God’s presence through you and me, they would be filled with joy and love to dance and sing and give thanks to the Lord, for his presence among us. Amen.