

Prayer

All our praise belongs to You, Lord Jesus Christ
Receive it with our thanks.

All the glory in the heavens is Yours, Holy Father
Receive it with our love.

All power and authority in the world is Yours Holy Spirit
Use it as You will.

Thank You Lord God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Amen.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Seas

We will pray this week for a number of issues to do with the sea. Water covers a vast amount of the world's surface, and yet we must pray that it is respected and well treated.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks to God for Christian friends and fellowship
- Continue to pray for the world economic situation
- Pray for those who maintain the safety of our coastlines

Meditation

All around us, people are rushing about doing normal things,
Keeping themselves going with the regular things of life;
Shopping, looking after children, visiting relatives and friends:
Travelling in cars, phoning on mobiles, eating snacks.

All around us, somewhere just beyond our usual horizons
Are people just about holding on, keeping their lives going
Despite the break-up of families or the death of loved ones;
Not knowing what they are doing. Lost, and looking for help.

All around us, God is breathing His Spirit, and Jesus is alive,
Just waiting to be found and offering the strength and help
People need to overcome all the trials and tribulations of life;
Will you share with them the Good News that His help is at hand?

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 6:1-5

¹ David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all.
² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

Review

David proved that He was the King the people expected by the astute move of capturing the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Sam 5:6-10) and by immediately following this up with a military campaign to liberate Benjaminite tribal lands from the Philistines (5:17-25). All of these moves were intended to give strong signals to the people of Israel that David was utterly sincere about bring all God's people together. The next most important move was to bring the whole country together under God. True, all the tribes had a common history of the worship of the God who had brought them out of Egypt, but different tribes had at various times involved themselves in the worship of golden calves (Ex 32:4ff) to household gods (Judges 17:1ff) and the 'Ba'als' (Judges 6:25ff). To worship God as the one true Lord, as David had done all his life, was the foremost command of Moses (Deuteronomy 28ff) and the primary thrust of the Ten Commandments, held in the Ark of the Covenant since the time of Moses. In a further stroke of genius inspired by the Lord, David proposed to bring the Ark of the Covenant to his new capitol city, Jerusalem, as the religious focus for all God's people.

The people of Israel and the Ark During the life of Samuel, the Ark had been placed at Shiloh, and it had been effective as a unifying religious focus for the people of Israel, but towards the end of the life of the priest Eli, it had been taken into battle against God's will by Eli's sons, and captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). Following strange signs and wonders (1 Samuel 5) the Philistines became scared of it and returned it to Israel, pulled on a cart by two cows (1 Samuel 6:10-12). It was eventually taken in by the people of Kiriath-Jearim, where it remained until David's day. Kiriath-Jearim was part of the land of Benjamin, and although we cannot be certain of its location, it may well have been in the region of Benjamin liberated by David from the Philistines immediately after the capture of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:17-25).

David gathered a large army of thirty thousand men to go and retrieve the Ark from Kiriath-Jearim, (6:1). He did this not simply to protect this ancient place or the Ark itself; the gathering was a great demonstration of national unity, and was the first time David had called together such a large assembly. The whole ceremony of bringing the Ark up to Jerusalem bound the people of Israel together in faith, and this unity would be necessary in future years when David would have to use this and larger armies to secure the borders of Israel. We should remember that at the time, much of the north of Israel still lay under Philistine bondage, even though David had liberated the south.

Drawing together the faith of the people After the death of Joshua, the story of the people of Israel had been full of intrigue; of wars, battles, and in-fighting amongst the tribes (e.g. Judges 17-21). One would be forgiven for wondering what had happened to the faith and religious practices of the people. There is little evidence in scripture of either the worship of God, or knowledge of and obedience to the command of God given through Moses. This was now beginning to change. Although the life of David would have many twists and turns yet, David took the essential early steps to unify God's people under the symbolic presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant situated at Jerusalem. This is celebrated in the very worshipful acclamation to God found in verse 2 'the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark.'

It is quite appropriate that David would have arranged a great celebration to go before the Ark. David had been a musician and would have appreciated the beauty of music, song and celebration. This great scene of the Army, the Ark, and celebration amongst the people created the 'feel good' factor necessary for the early days of David's reign, and essential after years of war and darkness. However, before the Ark reached Jerusalem there was a problem, which we will read about this next time. Also, please note that David

had the ark brought to Jerusalem on a cart. If you recall the instructions given to Moses for the movement of the Ark, it was supposed to be carried. It seems only a small point, and David would find out soon that he could not take God, or the Ark, for granted, despite his evident enthusiasm and worship of the Lord.

We would not say that God is uniquely present in some place, in the same way that the people of Israel thought of God as being present in the Ark of the Covenant. We all know, however, that God uses certain special things and certain places in order to reveal Himself to us, and we tend to think of these as holy, and the Ark bound God's Old Testament people together in celebration and praise.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What is it that unifies the people in your church? Answer honestly, and consider all possibilities!
2. Try to summarise what this text tells us about David's early days as King of all Israel.
3. In what way can we enable Jesus Christ to be the focus and the point of unity for all God's people today?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The progress of David's work to unite God's people is interesting. Perhaps David had been thinking about how he could do this for years, and therefore had much of this planned in his mind. We cannot tell how much of this was planned and how much of it was a reaction to events as guided by the Spirit of God. One thing is certain, however, which is that God was certainly in control of events doing a truly great thing for His people Israel and establishing them as a nation under David as their earthly King.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *When you are called to do something for the Lord, have you been called to plan things over a long time or react spontaneously to the events that have emerged? What is the difference between the two? Pray and ask the Lord to show you what you should be planning, long term, to achieve His will in your life.*
- *Write down your own statement of what your church should be doing in the years ahead. Then, if you have a 'vision statement' within your church, get hold of it and look carefully at what it says. Compare it with what you have written.*

Final Prayer

Glorious and faithful Lord, cover my life with the protection of Your love. Keep the enemy at bay, save me from my sin, and keep me from worldliness and temptation I pray; In Jesus' name, my Saviour and Redeemer, AMEN