

What does worship have to do with warfare?

At the beginning of our passage, David is focused on worship.

At the end of our passage, David is focused on warfare.

The Chronicler seems to think that there is a very close relationship
between worship and warfare.

We’ve already seen that Saul lost the kingship because he did not inquire of the Lord.

Now we see that David was a successful king – he was a great warrior –
because he inquired of the LORD and worshiped him.

Our warfare –

our *spiritual* warfare – begins loving and worshiping the LORD our God.

Our passage ends with 14:17

¹⁷*And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.*

Some people think that the Chronicler has a really simplistic view of things:
if you love and worship God, then good things will happen!

If you want to understand what Chronicles is doing, then remember that
the Chronicler records these events nearly 700 years after they happened.

The point is not that if “you” love and worship God, then good things happen,
but that if the *Davidic king* loves and worships God, then good things happen!

For the Chronicler, as for his hearers,
there was a “David-shaped” hole in their lives (Wilcock, 52).
“Back in the day” we had a great king.
“Once upon a time” we had a glorious king.

But now...

we are living in the land – but we have no king.

Chronicles reminds the people of God that this “David-shaped” hole
should be at the core of their lives.

As Augustine will say 700 years later,

“You have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

We need someone to fill this David-shaped hole in our lives.

We need a king who will go before us, the way that David went before Israel.

Chapters 13-18 tell one story – the story of how David’s devotion to the LORD,
and his inquiry of the LORD at the ark of the covenant,
resulted in David’s triumphs over the Philistines – and all his enemies.

In Samuel the order goes like this:

Hiram of Tyre sends carpenters and cedar trees (2 Sam 5)
David defeats the Philistines in the Valley of Rephaim (2 Sam 5)
David brings the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6)
The LORD makes a covenant with David (2 Sam 7)
David defeats the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites (2 Sam 8)

In Chronicles the order is slightly altered:

the episode of the ark being brought to Jerusalem
is split in two,
so that the stories of Hiram and David’s victories over the Philistines
come during the interlude while the ark was in the house of Obed-Edom.

In other words, Chronicles starts its account of the reign of David with the ark.

1. Bringing the Ark / Seeking the LORD (chapter 13)

a. “If It Seems Good to You and from the LORD Our God” (1-4)

¹David consulted with the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with every leader.
²And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God, let us send abroad to our brothers who remain in all the lands of Israel, as well as to the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasturelands, that they may be gathered to us. ³Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it^[a] in the days of Saul." ⁴All the assembly agreed to do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

And the way that Chronicles does this is by emphasizing
the relationship between David and Israel.

David consults with the commanders – “with every leader”
and then David said “to all the assembly of Israel.”

In the days of the Judges,

“there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Chronicles will also speak of *this* being “right in the eyes of all the people.”

What is the difference?

The difference is the king!

In Judges, where there was no king – everyone went his own way –
everyone followed his own path.

In Chronicles, when there is a good king – there is a consensus among the people

about what is good and right to do.

Notice that David does not merely impose his will.

The king does not rule by arbitrary force.

He rules by wisdom –

and so he *proposes* a course of action which the people ratify.

In verse 2 we hear language that reminds us of the Jerusalem Council –

who said that “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28)

You can see the implication:

the people of God can only be trusted when the Davidic king is leading them!

But I also want you to see the implications for us today.

Remember what we saw last time?

The biblical concept of a Mighty Man – of a great man –

is not only that he is a valiant warrior,

but also that he is a persuasive speaker.

How you wield the sword – and how you deploy your words –

are both essential to the OT concept of manhood.

In the NT, where our warfare is spiritual warfare –

the primacy of the *word* comes out that much more clearly.

Physical training, Paul says, is of some use,

but training in godliness,

training “in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine”

is essential.

I know that there is a renewed interest in “manliness” –

which is largely defined in physical terms.

Please don’t lose sight of the fact that biblical manliness

is first and foremost a matter of the *Word*.

How well do you know the scriptures?

How do you *use* the Word in your daily life?

Are you a “mighty warrior” in your use of the scriptures?

Verses 5-8 then tell us about the “joyful assembly”:

b. The Joyful Assembly at Kiriath-Jearim (5-8)

⁵ So David assembled all Israel from the Nile^[b] of Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. ⁶ And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim that belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD who sits enthroned above the cherubim. ⁷ And they carried the ark of God on a new cart, from the house of Abinadab, and Uzzah and Ahio^[c]

were driving the cart. ⁸And David and all Israel were rejoicing before God with all their might, with song and lyres and harps and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets.

Verse 5 provides the most expansive definition of Israel's geographical limits in the Bible
From the Nile Delta (120 miles west and south of the old borders of Judah)
to Lebo-Hamath (120 miles north of Dan – the northernmost city in Israel)
all Israel assembled.

Three times the Chronicler will use the geographical spread to describe Israel:
here, when he talks about the ark being brought to Jerusalem,
in 2 Chron 7, when Solomon dedicates the temple,
and in 2 Chron 30, when Hezekiah celebrates the Passover.

The more traditional designation, “from Beersheba to Dan” covers about 150 miles.
This one doubles the size of Israel's borders.

There are two things we should see here:

- 1) David's rule is embraced by (at least the Israelite population of)
a wider territory
(At this point, David's rule barely extends from Beersheba to Dan,
but the Chronicler anticipates the future)
- 2) But even more, the presence of the Davidic king in Jerusalem
results in the whole people of God assembling before him.

Where Samuel says that 30,000 people ‘gathered’ –
the Chronicler says that all Israel ‘assembled’,
encouraging us to focus on the religious significance of this moment.

So all the assembly joined David to travel around 9 miles west
from Jerusalem to Kiriath-Jearim, “to bring up from there the ark of God.”

(The ark had been in Kiriath-jearim since the days of Samuel,
when the ark had been captured by the Philistines,
and had been returned by cart,
after the ark had thrown down the statue of Dagon in the temple of Dagon)

Notice how the Chronicler describes the ark:

“the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD
who sits enthroned above the cherubim.”

This reminds us of the description of the ark in Exodus –
where the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle,
with the two cherubim on the cover (the mercy seat) of the ark.

All during the days of Saul, the people of Israel had allowed the ark of God
to remain forgotten in the house of Abinadab –
just as Saul had forgotten the LORD himself.

Now, “David and all Israel” (note how this phrase is used both in verse 6 and verse 8) engage in a corporate act of remembering,
as they carry the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem.
And this corporate act of remembering overflows in rejoicing before God
“with all their might, with song and lyres and harps
and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets.”

David has not yet instituted any of his liturgical reforms (seen later in Chronicles),
but we can see here that his liturgical reforms were not novel to him.
Israel makes a joyful noise to the LORD as they celebrate their godly king –
and as they rejoice before God because of his goodness to them.

c. Uzzah and the Anger of the LORD (9-10)

But there’s a problem.

God had told Moses that the ark was to be carried by the priests –
not on a cart!

And the reason for this prescription was because the ark of God is *holy*.

The ark is “called by the name of the LORD” –

and so if you profane the ark, you profane the name of the LORD.

⁹And when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put out his hand to take hold of the ark, for the oxen stumbled. ¹⁰And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark, and he died there before God.

God struck Uzzah down because Uzzah dared to touch the ark of the covenant.

God is holy.

And when an unholy man touches the ark of the holy God,
holiness and unholiness collide.

And when holiness and unholiness collide,
something has to give!

There are different levels of holiness in the OT.

There are some objects that become holy – foods, clothes, etc. –
if something unclean touches them, they become unclean.

But the closer something gets to God, the more holy it becomes.

There is no object on earth that is more holy than the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant is the place on earth where God’s feet rest.

The ark is called by God’s Name – the LORD (Yahweh).

Nothing in all of history is more holy –

until the coming of the Holy One himself!

So when Uzzah reaches out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant,
he is literally “taking the LORD’s name in vain”!

Uzzah seems to have been concerned that the ark of God was going to fall off the wagon.
Maybe he thought it would be a disgrace if the ark of God touched dirt.

And it is true – that God cursed the ground.
So if the ark hit the ground, that would not be a good thing!

But as R. C. Sproul has pointed out,
dirt is cleaner than Uzzah's hand!
Because God cursed the ground because of *man*.

The only reason why dirt is unclean is because man contaminated it by sin!

Or maybe Uzzah thought that *he would look bad* if the ark fell off the cart on his watch!
Or maybe it was instinct – the ark was sliding, and so Uzzah grabbed it...

When the holiness of God comes into contact with the unholiness of Uzzah
Uzzah is struck down by the anger of God.

Perhaps Uzzah meant well!
But good intentions will not get you *anywhere* with God!
God is holy –
and those who presume upon his holiness will suffer for it!

(And this has not changed in the NT:
Ananias and Saphira learned this the hard way
when they lied to the Holy Spirit
in *saying* that they were giving all the proceeds from the sale of their land,
when in fact, they were only giving a part.)

You can never forget who God is.
He is holy.

And when the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah,
the whole party came to a screeching halt!

You can imagine the scene:
one moment, all Israel is singing and playing music, and rejoicing –
and the next moment, Uzzah falls over dead,
and everything stops!

d. Perez-Uzza and the Anger and Fear of David (11-14)

¹¹And David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzza^[d] to this day.

Initially, David was angry.

Everything had been going so well!
All Israel has united under his rule,
and now the worship of God would be brought to Jerusalem –
and the ark of God – which is called by the name of Yahweh –
would be there in his own city,
so that he could inquire of the LORD!

But his anger quickly gives way to fear:

¹²And David was afraid of God that day, and he said, "How can I bring the ark of God home to me?" ¹³So David did not take the ark home into the city of David, but took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

This is a proper response on David's part.

When sinful man encounters God's holiness,
the proper response is to be afraid!
But why put the ark in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite?
(a Gittite is someone from Gath – Goliath's home town –
but he appears in chapter 15 as one of the gatekeepers of the ark,
which would suggest that he *should* be a Levite).

But in Joshua 19 Gath is identified as one of the Levitical cities –
so it is possible that some Gittites were of Levitical descent.
(even though the Philistines had ruled the city for most of its history)
And as we've seen in Chronicles:
sometimes a person's genealogy can be *very* interesting!

¹⁴And the ark of God remained with the household of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that he had.

Certainly the presence of the ark of God was a blessing for Obed-edom.

The holiness of God is a terror to the wicked – or the thoughtless –
but the holiness of God is a blessing to the righteous!

When God draws near, you can be certain that either blessing or cursing is coming!

In the book of Samuel, the narrative goes on
to speak of how David finally brought the ark to Jerusalem.
But here, the Chronicler turns aside from the ark narrative
to speak of the establishment of David's kingdom.

Chronicles has a lot more to say about the ark,
but the narrative about the ark is interspersed with other details of David's reign
so that we can see that David's love and worship for the LORD his God
is at the heart of everything else he does!

2. The King Is Established and the Kingdom Is Exalted (chapter 14)

a. Hiram of Tyre Bows to David (1-2)

¹ And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also masons and carpenters to build a house for him. ² And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.

The Chronicler has flip-flopped this material about Hiram at the beginning of ch 14 to show how David's piety in seeking the ark leads to David's kingdom being established.

Hiram of Tyre sends him cedar trees, masons and carpenters to build a house for him.

In later generations, Tyre will become hostile to Israel, but Hiram will be David's closest friend and ally in the region.

Verse 2 interprets this for us:

the royal gifts sent by Hiram of Tyre demonstrate that the LORD had established David as king over Israel, and that David's kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.

Again we see the relationship between king and people.

The king does not rule for his own selfish benefit.

We saw last time that the mighty men did not seek their own glory, but the glory of David's kingdom.

David *does*, in some sense, seek his own kingdom – his own glory – but he does not seek it *for his own sake*.

Think of Jesus.

Does Jesus seek his own glory?

Absolutely!

Jesus says “glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5)

David is preparing the way for Jesus.

b. David's Children (3-7)

³ And David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David fathered more sons and daughters.

⁴ These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, ⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷ Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet.

And in this pursuit of the glory of his kingdom,

David takes more wives and he fathers more sons and daughters.

Polygamy was not forbidden in the OT.
Deuteronomy 17:17 warned that the king must not take many wives –
but it did not forbid having a few.

And so David outdid even his ancestor, Jacob,
by having 13 children in Jerusalem
(in addition to the children who were born earlier)
It is curious that in his narrative the Chronicler never refers to Amnon, Tamar,
Absalom, or Adonijah
(the four most famous children of David, besides Solomon).

He does mention them in his genealogy in chapter 3,
but conveniently leaves them out of the narrative
(since they all belong to the “darker” part of David’s story).

In verses 8-16 we hear of...

c. David’s Victory over the Philistines (8-16)

⁸*When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went out against them.*
⁹*Now the Philistines had come and made a raid in the Valley of Rephaim.* ¹⁰*And David inquired of God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?"* And the LORD said to him, "Go up, and I will give them into your hand." ¹¹*And he went up to Baal-perazim, and David struck them down there. And David said, "God has broken through^{el} my enemies by my hand, like a bursting flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim.*

From the account in Samuel,
it would appear that this story comes immediately after David becomes king.
Indeed, verse 8 here says as much!

The Philistines recognize the danger to their rule if Israel unites under a king –
especially a king as popular as David
(remember that old line,
“Saul has killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands!”).

Verses 8-16 then help us understand
why the Chronicler has arranged his material in this order.
Having already heard about how the LORD “broke out” against Uzzah,
we now hear how the LORD “breaks out” against the Philistines.

It is true that the holiness of God is dangerous –
but it brings *good* to those who trust in the LORD!

Verse 12 is especially important:

¹²*And they left their gods there, and David gave command, and they were burned.*

In 2 Samuel 5, we are told that “the Philistines left their idols there,
and David and his men carried them away.”
(highlighting the retribution on the Philistines
for when the Philistines carried away the ark of the covenant!)

But here the Chronicler more strikingly refers to the idols as “their gods”
and says that David commanded them to be burned.
When the ark of the covenant was carried into the temple of Dagon
the God of Israel took vengeance on the Philistines;

no such vengeance will be permitted to Dagon –
he is ignominiously burned in the fire.

¹³And the Philistines yet again made a raid in the valley. ¹⁴And when David again inquired of God, God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; go around and come against them opposite the balsam trees. ¹⁵And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." ¹⁶And David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.

In verses 10 and 14, Chronicles highlights for us the difference between David and Saul.
Saul did not inquire of the LORD – but sought guidance from a medium.
David inquired of the LORD diligently, and sought the guidance of the LORD.

When God says “go up” David goes up.
When God says “go around” David goes around.

Notice that God gives the victory in two different ways:
in verses 10-11, God gives the victory through the hand of David.
in verses 14-15, God goes before David to strike down the Philistines.

In both cases, however, David and his army go forth into battle,
following the LORD’s command.
In the first case, there was no “miraculous sign” – merely God’s command.
In the second case, there was the sound of marching
in the tops of the balsam trees.

In both cases, God works his mighty deeds through the faithful obedience of his people.
When the Son of God goes forth to war,
the mighty deeds of God will follow.

But remember who is saying this!
Chronicles is saying this to a people who are *not* likely to win any wars!
Chronicles is saying this to a people
who have *not* seen any mighty deeds for generations.

¹⁷And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

Or, to paraphrase this,
the fame of Jesus has gone out into all lands,
and the LORD has brought the fear of him upon all nations.

And in your spiritual warfare,
remember that you are merely following Jesus.
Jesus has gone before you –
he has established his kingdom –
the fame of Jesus has gone out into all lands.

Therefore you are to speak his word, and trust that he will do as he has promised,
and the fear of the LORD will indeed come upon all nations.