

DAVID'S TENT

“When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ““After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ things known from long ago.” (Acts 15:13 – 18)

The passage before us was spoken at the Jerusalem Council by James, the brother of our Lord. The council was convened because of a doctrinal dispute.

- The church began at a Jewish festival called “Pentecost” (Acts 2). All of the original converts to Christ were Jewish.
- For many years the followers of Jesus preached only to the Jews. Please consider: **“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.” (Acts 11:19).**
- Peter, who first preached the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 2), was chosen by God to also preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). God made no distinction between the way the Jews were saved and the way that the Gentiles were saved. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Everyone is saved in the same way. God even gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles in the same way He had given Him to the Jews (Acts 2:4; 10:46).
- **“ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:1, 2).** This meeting is known as the Jerusalem Council and occurred around A.D. 50.
- It was during the debate on this question that James quoted from Amos regarding the salvation of the Gentiles.
- The Council concluded, with the consent of the apostles, elders, and the Holy Spirit, that the Gentiles could become Christians without first becoming Jews. The only requirements from previous history for the Gentiles were the same requirements for everyone. That is, they had to **“abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality” (Acts 15:29).** It is believed that these four prohibitions date all the way back to Noah. Everyone is a descendant of Noah but not everyone is a descendant of Abraham or bound by Mosaic Law. This decision was fair for everyone.
- Thankfully, this decision brought peace to the church. It allowed the Jews to be saved by grace, but to continue Jewish rituals if they chose to do so. It forbade the Jews, however, from binding their traditions on the Gentiles.

DAVID'S TENT

But what does this have to do with “David’s Tent”?

At this crucial time when the whole church was in transition and trying to understand the will of God, James quoted from Amos 9:11, 12. James understood these words to teach that God was offering salvation to the Gentiles. As Jesus said: **“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” (John 10:16).** Jesus does not want His sheep to be divided!

As a result of this decision by the Jerusalem Council, the barrier was broken down between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11 – 22). God made the two into one new man, so making peace. Now: **“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:4 – 6).**

BUT WHY BRING UP DAVID?

Among other things, it seems that the Jews associated David with times of transition and change that were approved by God. Please consider:

- God loves the whole world (Jn. 3:16).
- God began working with a select few, but His goal always involved everyone’s salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). Note that Jesus commissioned His apostles to preach to “all nations” (Matt. 28:18 – 20).
- The salvation of the Gentiles is in accordance with God’s eternal purpose (Eph;. 3:1 – 11).
- The eternal plan of God involved Jesus. He was that the “Seed” of the woman who would crush the serpents’s head (Gen. 3:15).
- The promise of this “Seed” became the “hope” of godly people throughout all of history.
- The fulfillment of this prophecy involved a “divine lineage”.
- This divine lineage is listed in Lk. 3:23 – 38. The promised “Seed” would not only crush the serpent’s head but ultimately bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1 – 3).
- This “divine lineage” included David (Lk. 3:31). Among all the ancestors of Christ it seems that David was the most prominent: **“ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. ‘In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.’ For this is what the Lord says: ‘David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel,’ (Jer. 33:14 – 17).**
- To illustrate the importance of David, note that he is mentioned before Abraham in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 1:1). This is remarkable because David was born over 800 years after Abraham died.
- The name of David is mentioned 1,127 times in the KJV of the Bible. Many of these references relate directly to Jesus. Here are a few examples.
 - The Lord called Joseph the “son of David” (Matt. 1:20).
 - Ten more times in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus is called the “Son of David”.
 - When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the people shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt. 21:9).
 - When Jesus asked whose son was the Christ, they replied the “Son of David” (Matt. 22:42).

- In the first Gospel sermon Peter quoted David because he predicted the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:25 -35).
- In the closing verses of the Bible we are reminded that Jesus is the Root and the Offspring of David (Rev. 22:16).

DAVID AND THE GENTILES

- We will seek to illustrate David’s relationship with the Gentiles by reference to his arch enemies the Philistines, and especially by these Gentiles from the city of Gath.
- David became famous for killing the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17:41 – 51). Goliath, as you know, was a Gentile from Gath (1 Sam. 17:23).
- Yet, when David was fleeing from King Saul he sought refuge from Achish the King of Gath (1 Sam. 21:12).
- David became friends with Achish and later settled in Gath with 600 of his men (1 Sam. 27:2, 3).
- Still later, when David was fleeing from Absalom, he was accompanied by 600 men from Gath who had become his loyal followers (2 Sam. 15:18).
- When Uzzah died because he touched the ark of the covenant, David entrusted the ark to Obed-edom the Gittite (2 Sam. 6:i9 – 11). The Gittites came from Gath.
- Later Obed-edom would be a gate keeper for David with 68 associates (1 Chron. 16:38).
- Certainly David was a pioneer in establishing good relations with the Gentiles!

DAVID’S TENT

The Ark of the Covenant was the focal point of Hebrew worship. This was where God promised Moses: **“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites” (Ex. 25:22).**

The ark was to be placed in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 26:34).

When the tabernacle was moved the ark went before it and led the way (Nu. 10:33). Those who wanted to follow God focused on the ark of the covenant for guidance.

When David moved the seat of his government to Jerusalem, however, he did not put the ark in the Tabernacle as Moses commanded. The Tabernacle was many miles away in Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39). But David built a special tent for the ark in Jerusalem. Note!

“After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.” (1 Chron. 15:1)

“They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God.” (1 Chron. 16:1)

This was a bold and radical departure from what God had commanded Moses. Yet we must remember, that just as Moses was a prophet of God, so also was David (Acts 2:30).

The fact that the ark was no longer behind the curtain in the holy of holies was a radical departure from centuries of worship. Wherever it was, however, the ark still represented the presence of God and remained the central focus of worship.

After placing the ark in the tent David prepared for it, we are told: **“He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel: Asaph was the chief, Zechariah second, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.” (1 Chron. 16:4 – 6).**

The next verse informs us that David committed a psalm of thanksgiving to Asaph and his associates. 1 Chron. 16:8 – 36 records that psalm.

The next verses (37 – 42) explain what happened in Jerusalem with the ark, and also what happened in Gibeon at the Tabernacle. The fact that the ark was no longer in the Tabernacle is significant beyond words.

It is also significant to note that the activities before the ark, quoted above in verses 4 – 6, happened on a daily basis. We are specifically told that Asaph and his associates ministered “regularly” and “each day”. These activities included petitions, thanksgiving, praise, playing lyres and harps, sounding cymbals, and blowing trumpets. It was also here that the Gentile Obed-edom and his 68 associates ministered with the others.

According to 1 Chron. 6 David put men in charge of the music in the house of the Lord after the ark came to rest. Three are mentioned who served the Lord with their sons.

- Heman (v. 33) was the son of Joel and the grandson of Samuel. Joel, as you know, did not walk in the ways of Samuel but perverted justice (1 Sam. 8:1 - 3). Heman composed the 88th Psalm. He had 14 sons and 3 daughters (1 Chron. 25:5).
- Asaph (v. 39) was Heman’s associate who served at his right hand. Several of the psalms bear his name.
- Ethan (v. 44 - also known as Jeduthun 1 Chron. 25:1) served at his left hand. He is considered the author of the 89th Psalm. Both Heman and Ethan are called Ezrahites.
- The sons of these 3 men were set apart for the ministry of prophesying (1 Chron. 25:1).
- 1 Chron. 25:7 indicates that there were 288 skilled musicians who served the Lord in the tent of David.

- David reigned 40 years over Israel (7 years at Hebron, and 33 years in Jerusalem - 1 Ki. 2:11). This would mean that the musicians appointed by David spent some 30 years ministering before the ark of the Lord in the tent of David. After Solomon completed building the Temple the ark was again placed behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies (1 Ki. 8:6 – 9).

THE TENT OF DAVID AND TRANSITION

Jesus taught that you cannot put new wine in old skins (Matt. 9:17). This tension between the old and the new was precisely why the Jerusalem Council was convened. This is why the reference to

David's tent is so appropriate. Even though David established a new way of doing things there must have been some objections to it. Later, as you recall, Absalom took advantage of those who disagreed with David and led a successful coup against his father. Surely there must have been some who found it offensive that the ark was no longer hidden away in the Tabernacle. Surely there must have been some who objected to the honors that David bestowed upon the Gittites. There may have even been some who objected to the many psalms composed in David's tent. Today styles of music are often divisive and perhaps it was the same way in David's day. Remember, however, that David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). His transition to something new was of God. Recognizing this would help the brethren in New Testament times to understand the transition they were going through. Receiving the Gentiles into the Family of God was not a mistake, it was an integral part of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:1 - 11).

The Scriptures teach that David served his generation and fell asleep (Acts 13:36). There is a sense in which we all do the same. David would find it difficult to function in our generation. If cell phones and computers are difficult for our own senior citizens to understand, just think how difficult it would be for David. Fortunately, however, David dared to follow the leading of God and pioneer in new dimensions of worship. In this regard he sets a good example for every generation that is timeless!

Before pitching his tent in Jerusalem, however, David learned a painful lesson. There are some things that we cannot change without fatal consequences. God intended the ark to be "carried" by the Levites but David foolishly transported it on a cart (1 Chron. 13:7). He apparently learned this from the pagan Philistines (1 Sam. 6:8). The result of moving the ark in a way not sanctioned by God resulted in the death of a man named Uzzah (1 Chron. 13:7 - 10). David's first response to his death was to be angry with God (1 Chron. 13:11). Fortunately his anger turned to fear (1 Chron. 13:12). As you know, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7).

As we have mentioned before, after the death of Uzzah David put the ark in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Remember, when the ark was under the control of the Philistines it brought curses everywhere it was (1 Sam. 5). Apparently because Obed-edom believed in the One True God, the presence of the ark caused the Lord to bless his household and everything he had (1 Chron. 13:14).

This gave David the courage to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but only in the prescribed way. Note: **"Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord." (1 Chron. 15:11 - 15).**

There are many lessons we can learn from "David's Tent". One lesson is that before initiating a "transition" to something "new", we need to make sure it comes from God and not from pagans!

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