

dation stone of all our discussions. Our African counterparts readily accepted the Divine benefits this confers upon family life in the Lord. From a culture which places greater values on the extended family, their insight into its development for the ecclesia was enlightening. “. . . the two shall become one flesh’. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church”. (Eph. 5:31,32).

On a visit where we encountered no fewer than four different ‘fellowships’ of Christadelphian origin from the UK, the question raised was most revealing: “As the Ecclesia of Christ, should we not uphold the same sanctity of fellowship with our Lord that is intended between a man and his wife?”. How incongruous our position is when we consider that the *raison d’être* for many such

‘fellowships’ has arisen over the very issue of marriage itself!

Yet it will be by God’s grace that we shall be included within the worldwide family when our Lord returns to the earth: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev. 7:9,10). May we recognise now that it is from the Father that “every family in heaven and on earth is named”, that we may be “rooted and grounded in love” so that in His day we may be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:14-19).

## The ark comes to Zion

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*The bringing of the ark to Zion is prominent in the Scripture record of David’s reign. Careful examination of the role of David in this reveals that David knew full well the significance of what he was doing and that he carried out actions which prefigured the work of his greater Son as king and priest.*

**T**HE ACCOUNT of David bringing the ark to Zion, recorded in 2 Samuel 6 and 7 and 1 Chronicles 13–17, seems to be straightforward. David’s expressed desire to bring the ark to Zion was accomplished, although failure to observe the specific requirements for handling the ark caused a temporary deferment of the project. However, as we read the records, in particular about David’s role, a number of questions emerge:

- What was the impetus for moving the ark? Was it a whim of David’s or was it by Divine direction? If the latter, was this already given in Scripture or was it by direct revelation?
- What had happened to the tabernacle after the ark had been captured by the Philistines?
- How are we to understand David’s role in this and other events, especially in the light of God’s condemnation of apparently very similar behaviour by Saul?

We will look at these questions in turn.

### What was the impetus for moving the ark?

The move of the ark from Shiloh to Zion was a Divine choice. It arose from Israel’s persistent idolatry and the degeneration of the priesthood in Eli’s days: “For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand” (Ps. 78:58-61).

Thus Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim was abandoned, and remained a stark reminder that God is a God of judgement (see Jeremiah 26:6). Its position was to be usurped by Jerusalem and Judah: “Moreover He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved” (Ps. 78:67,68).

But how did David know this? It is clear from David’s action following the killing of Goliath that Jerusalem, then in Jebusite control, was of great interest to him, for he took Goliath’s head there (1 Sam. 17:54). It seems that he took it at that time rather than later. Maybe it was displayed as a sign of David’s intention to take Jerusalem, either on Israel’s behalf under Saul or when he became king. Presumably at some stage the head would have been buried, and thus the site was called Golgotha, the place of the skull (Mt. 27:33). If this



PICTURE: TONY BENSON

**Looking towards what is generally considered to be the Biblical Kirjath-jearim, now the Arab village of Abu Ghosh.**

is so, then David as a young man already knew of God's intention to promote Jerusalem.

It seems from Psalm 132:6,7, "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool", that as a child David had heard about the ark, its significance and its loss of prominence (1 Chron. 13:3). From his upbringing by faithful parents he understood the central role of the ark in the nation's spiritual and material wellbeing. Again, Psalm 132 reminds us that "the LORD . . . hath desired it [Zion]" (v. 13), but this was said with hindsight, for the reference to the covenant with David in verses 11,12 shows that this was written after the event, for the covenant with David was given after the ark was brought up to Jerusalem.

Perhaps there is a clue to the choice of Zion in the next psalm: ". . . as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (v. 3). This implies a special significance for Zion, but when did the Lord command the blessing of life for evermore there? The context of this verse is one of fellowship (v. 1) and priesthood (v. 2). This is paralleled in Abraham's experience when he met Melchizedek, as Genesis 14 records. When Abraham met Melchizedek there was fellowship—"Melchizedek . . . brought forth bread and wine" (v. 18)—but as priest of the most high God Melchizedek also involved Abraham in fellowship with God.

We are not told that there was any discussion with Melchizedek about the promises God had made to Abraham, but Abraham's reply to the king of Sodom in verse 22 shows that Abraham had reaffirmed his trust in God's promises and that these were prominent in his thinking. The next chapter records God's confirmation of His covenant with Abraham. This arose from Abraham's question: "whereby shall I know that I

shall inherit it [the land]?" (v. 8). Since there is no promise of immediate inheritance, by implication Abraham would need to rise to life to do so. New Testament exposition confirms Abraham's resurrection and place in the Kingdom of God, which will never be destroyed. It would seem therefore that David appreciated from Scripture, and from God's provision of a tabernacle, with the ark as a

symbol of God dwelling among His people, that it was the Divine intention to bring Jerusalem to prominence, and to place His Name in the ark and tabernacle initially, but ultimately in His seed.

**What had happened to the tabernacle?**

It seems that the Philistines' capture of the ark was also accompanied by the overrunning of Shiloh. Certainly, when the ark returned to Israel it was not taken back to Shiloh. It arrived at Bethshemesh (1 Sam. 6:12,13) and was then taken to Kirjath-jearim (6:21–7:2), where it stayed at least twenty years, in fact until David first attempted to take it to Jerusalem. This seems to indicate there was no tabernacle at Shiloh to which it could be returned. Psalm 78:59-64 indicates that Shiloh was overrun: "Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation" (v. 64). But the tabernacle must have been removed before Shiloh was devastated because we find that it had been erected at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39; 21:29). Its rituals were being carried out there, however, without the ark in the most holy place.

**What was David's role?**

As king, David had the leading position in the nation, especially as he had been selected by God and anointed on His behalf by Samuel. However, since Moses' day there had always been a distinction between the place and function of the king and that of the priesthood. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and subsequent events, recorded in Numbers 16 and 17, made it very clear that the descendants of Aaron were the only group in the nation empowered to act as priests. Yet a number of records about David seem to show him in the role and activities of a priest. Consider these passages:

- "And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen . . . David also had upon him an ephod

of linen" (1 Chron. 15:27). The ephod was a priestly garment: "Samuel ministered before the LORD . . . girded with a linen ephod" (1 Sam. 2:18); ". . . did I choose him [Aaron] out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest . . . to wear an ephod before Me?" (v. 28).

- "So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it" (1 Chron. 16:1). Yet God said through Moses that He would choose the place (Deut. 12:11), which initially was Shiloh. On what basis could David choose to pitch a tent for the ark in Jerusalem?
- "And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings . . ." (1 Chron. 16:2). Yet when Saul attempted the same, Samuel rebuked him: "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD . . . thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Sam. 13:13,14).
- ". . . he [David] blessed the people in the name of the LORD" (1 Chron. 16:2). Yet the blessing of the people in the Name of the Lord, recorded in Numbers 6:23-27, was a priestly function, to be carried out by the high priest and his sons.
- "And he [David] dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine" (1 Chron. 16:3). Presumably these came mainly from the peace offerings which had been offered by David on behalf of the people (v. 2), a priestly function.
- "And David the king came and sat before the LORD" (17:16). Where did David go? The ark was in a tent in Jerusalem and the tabernacle was at Gibeon (21:29). Is this telling us that David went into the tent containing the ark to 'sit before the LORD'? This seems more likely than that he went to the tabernacle, which, without the ark in the most holy place, was missing the symbol of God dwelling among His people at that place. Of course, we do not know whether the tent in which David placed the ark was divided into two parts, with the ark hidden from view in one part so that access to the other part was possible without the ark being visible. Even so, access to the holy place in the tabernacle, of which such a part would be the equivalent, was only for priests, by God's ordinance (Num. 18:1-5). Indeed, later in history, Uzziah was smitten with leprosy for entering the holy place as though he was a priest (2 Chron. 26:16-20).

- 1 Chronicles 21:18-30 records what happened following David's numbering of Israel. David was commanded to build an altar, and then "[he] offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering". These sacrifices, clearly accepted by God, were at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which became the site for the temple built by Solomon (22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).

#### **Priest after the order of Melchizedek**

What are we to make of these priestly activities of David? One approach to the question is that David acted through the priesthood, and that the record is written this way simply to highlight David's leading role and provide a typical foreshadowing of Messiah. The record in 1 Chronicles 16:1 says that "they brought the ark . . . and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God". The context shows the "they" to be the priests, supported by the Levites, David and the people (15:15,25-28). So, when it says in verse 2 that David offered, we are being told that he did so through the priests. There is precedent for the record of Scripture being phrased to have a typical meaning. Hebrews 7:1-3 tells us that the record of Melchizedek shows him to be "made like unto the Son of God", thus foreshadowing Christ's priesthood.

However, the alternative, especially in view of the record of David's activities in 1 Chronicles 21, is that David was a priest. Clearly he could not have been a Levitical priest, being of the tribe of Judah, but he could have been a Melchizedek priest. Membership of this priesthood, as also of the Levitical, was by Divine appointment. Psalm 110:4 confirms this: "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek". The New Testament applies this psalm to the Messiah and thus to Jesus. Jesus himself quotes verse 1, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool", in connection with the statement that Christ is the son of David (Mt. 22:42). This same psalm is quoted in Hebrews 5:6 to show that the priesthood of the Christ was by Divine appointment to the order of Melchizedek.

One would be tempted to see this psalm as supporting the idea of David prefiguring Jesus, but its use in the New Testament seems to indicate that it does not speak of David being a

Melchizedek priest. However, we are reminded in Hebrews that the name Melchizedek means 'King of righteousness' (7:2), and David is spoken of in this way in Psalm 18: "the LORD [hath] recompensed me according to my righteousness" (v. 24); and, "Great deliverance giveth He to His king; and sheweth mercy to His anointed [Messiah], to David, and to his seed for evermore" (v.

50). Psalm 18 also speaks of David's deliverance from the people and from his enemies (vv. 46-48), ideas that are similar to those in Psalm 110:2,3.

The events of the bringing of the ark to Zion have given us an opportunity to think about David's role and to conclude that it is very likely that David was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, although we are not told so explicitly.