

Bring Back the Ark

by B. Courtney McBath

God will do in America what He is doing in the nations if we give Him preeminence in our lives.

A few weeks ago I preached on the subject of worship using 2 Samuel 6, a passage that outlines King David's two attempts to bring the ark of the covenant to the city of Jerusalem.

On his first endeavor, David transported the ark in the way that seemed best to him—on a cart pulled by oxen—and lost one of his men in the process. God struck the man down for touching the ark while trying to steady it. David became disgusted, fearful and unwilling to move the ark any further, and he dropped it off at the house of Obed-Edom, a Philistine who had become a Jewish proselyte. When David left the ark, God visited Obed-Edom's house and blessed the man abundantly.

At this point in the story, I began to think about the church in America—our history and our now arguably beleaguered condition. For generations, the American church has prioritized sending purveyors of the gospel throughout the known world. Now we are hearing reports of God blessing the people we touched.

Vibrant churches in Asia, Africa and South America are multiplying—many under persecution—at rates that defy logic. In fact, the presence of God for which we in America now long, the move of God for which we are crying, seems to be visible everywhere U.S. missionaries have gone except America. Maybe we dropped off some things in those places that we need to pick up again.

When David heard of Obed-Edom's good fortune, he made an executive decision: Go get the ark! David wanted to bring the presence and blessings of God into his nation's midst. So does

the American church. I submit that if we can recover our purpose, passion and prayer life, we can experience God in ways we've never dreamed and become the catalyst for change our society desperately needs.

Purpose. When Jesus established His church, He was clear about its destiny: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, KJV). If hell's gates are fighting to hold our children, our cities and our country captive, then hell must understand that we have the power to prevail. Now is the time to remember we were born to overcome our enemy.

Passion. When purpose exits, passion is never far behind. David allowed his failure with the ark to destroy his passion to re-establish worship as the central focus in Judah and Israel. He became angry, confused and afraid.

In Revelation, Jesus speaks strong words about passion to the church at Ephesus. While the works of Ephesus had been purposeful and consistent, the Lord took issue with the church. The Ephesians had forgotten their first love, a lack of regard that could have cost them the entire ministry (see Rev. 2:4-5).

We must do what Ephesus was commanded to do: repent and remember. Repent of our fall from passionate pursuit of God and His will. Remember where we used to be in our relationship with Jesus and return to that place.

Prayer. Before successfully retrieving the ark from the house of Obed-Edom, David learned that God had a protocol for the ark's transport. Rather than being pulled on a cart by oxen, the ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the priests. Technology and ingenuity can be assets in the church as we work to expand God's kingdom, but we must shoulder the presence of God ourselves—in prayer.

Our nation is blessed, and often that very blessing deters revival. The dearth of prayer in the American church has less

to do with our schedules and more to do with our dependence on ourselves. When we become convinced that our own efforts are in vain, we can begin to give attention to the only source of power capable of addressing the issues of our day: the power of God through prayer.

God is no respecter of persons. What He is doing in the nations He will do in America if we give Him preeminence in our lives. The ark of the covenant was a picture of the presence of God. If our churches will arm themselves with God's presence again, we, too, can experience the greatest days of the church.

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