

David | The Once and Future King

Worship and God's Holiness

Second Samuel 6

11.7.21

Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim. ³ They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. ⁴ So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. ⁵ Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals.

⁶ But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. ⁷ And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God. ⁸ David became angry because of the LORD'S outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. ⁹ So David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" ¹⁰ And David was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD into the city of David with him; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹ Thus the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

¹² Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God." David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. ¹³ And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴ And David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

¹⁶ Then it happened as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷ So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. ¹⁹ Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house.

²⁰ But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!" ²¹ So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. ²² "I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished." ²³ Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

We're looking at the Life of David – the King of ancient Israel (about 1000 BC); the man God was conforming to God's own heart.

Last week we saw a switch – David was rising and from now on David is reigning. He establishes a capital for the whole nation: Jerusalem, the City of God. But David recognizes that this nation, Israel, is NOT like other nations in that it was the only nation to be founded by God. It was God’s chosen nation.

For David this means that the capital is NOT simply the center for government but the center for worship. And THIS means that the visible symbol of the Presence of God, the Ark of the Covenant had to be returned to the center of the nation.

As David goes to transport this emblem/symbol, he is understandably overjoyed until there’s a kind of accident, a death – from overjoyed to overwhelmed with grief and anger. And when the Ark of the Covenant is finally brought to Jerusalem, David is again, so ecstatic in his worship (forgets everything else) but his wife looks on and is disgusted.

In these scenes, we have opportunity to think about WORSHIP. Is it more important to be sincere in worship OR to be correct and orthodox? What is the place that emotion should (or shouldn't!) have in worship? Cold orthodoxy or fanaticism – if you HAD to choose...which one? If you had to choose, would you rather be emotionally engaged in worship OR correct in the way you go about it (but without emotion)? Passionate or proper: to which do you TEND? AND is it possible to have both?

- 1) **Worship in Spirit**
- 2) **Worship in Truth**
- 3) **Worship In Spirit and In Truth**

Jesus Christ told the Samaritan woman at the well that God the Father was seeking worshipers who worship in SPIRIT and TRUTH?

By “spirit” He seems to have meant, emotion, fervor, passion, heat. To be lukewarm is NOT what God wants for His worshipers. There must be a level of ZEAL in worship and we find that well-represented in the first episode.

The Ark was 30 years ago captured by the Philistines and they all got sick...so they put it on a cart and sent it in the direction of Israel. Then the Israelites put the symbol of God’s Presence in the home of a priest named Abinadab. And now is the right time to put the Ark back at the center of national life.

And everyone’s excited – “we got spirit, yes we do...”

David is able to rally 30,000 soldiers to make a parade (I love a parade!). The Ark, to remind you, is a wooden box, plated with gold, with a lid of solid gold called the “mercy seat”. At each end of

this rectangular box (about four feet long and two feet deep and wide) there are cherubim sculpted of gold, angels with wings stretched toward the open center that symbolizes the invisible presence of God.

There's a great deal of national enthusiasm as they go to retrieve this, "ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim..." Everyone knows this is a very special moment. They apparently build a special new oxcart to carry the symbolic box. Nothing but the best!

There's music (I love a parade!): "all kinds of instruments." Everyone's elated and celebrating and the two sons of the old priest are escorting this new oxcart and then, the ox lurches and the cart tips and it's going down...into the dirt (like the most horrible thing that could possibly happen – a nightmare!) BUT the priest's son, Uzzah is there for just such a mishap and he saves the day, grabs the ark and saves it from falling ...but as soon as he merely touches the ark – God burned with anger and "God struck him down and he died by the ark of God."

Someone died.

David is distraught. He's is angry at God. David was afraid of God and sees this ark as only dangerous. He has it housed in the house of Obed-Edom and then David goes home to think about it for three months.

The parallel passage in First Chronicles CH 15 is more thorough in "chronicling" the names of all the priests and Levites and singers...who, after these three months of shock (that someone died!) and the introspection (like, "what did we do wrong?") and how this time they prepared for the coming of the Ark... so as NOT to make another fatal mistake (I'll come back to that passage in Chronicles in a moment).

For now let's just note...with sorrow...that Uzzah died. The priest, Abinadab, who'd housed the Ark for 30 years, lost a son today. Why?

Well, there appears to have been a lot of zeal, a lot of enthusiasm and music and a big parade (I love a parade) and passion and excitement ("a whole lotta shakin' goin' on!"); a lot of HEAT BUT not a lot of LIGHT, revival without reformation; spirit without truth.

In their ZEAL to have the Ark of God at the center of national life – no one stopped to think of what the Ark was...and how it was to be moved according to the TRUTH – God's word. It was NOT to be moved on an oxcart (not even a new one!). It was to be carried using poles slipped through rings on the four corners of the box itself and carried on the shoulders of priests who KNEW what God had said about the Ark.

And in the religious fervor and HEAT of the moment – they left the LIGHT – all heat, no light! Good intentions and passion and authenticity and spontaneity are no substitute for doing God’s will (2x). Worship in spirit but not with truth isn’t what God wants.

The second worship disorder here is worship in truth but NOT spirit. Michal, the daughter of Saul and the wife of David (who, let’s face it, has not had it easy! She was given to David, then taken away to be married to another man who she seems to have really loved and THEN taken from him and reclaimed by David) Michal sees David dancing and leaping, dressed like a priest and stripped down to his t-shirt (like a blue-collar...laborer...like a field-hand...like a shepherd – yuck!)

And the very proper princess...who’s now da queen of decorum and the monarch of manners... Michal is offended! “My father, the king, would NEVER have conducted himself that way!”

“Look at my husband the king who’s acting like the court jester! And all the young women are swooning at him – David the dancing monkey!”

She confronts David, “How ‘glorious’ the king of Israel looks today – like a weirdo! Is there no shame?!”

She’s the real Presbyterian in the story. “Order! Order! Where’s the concern for dignity? Where’s the majesty and manners? There’s a right way to do things and this ain’t (I mean ISN’T!) it!”

And we want to ask Michal – “Is there never a time for unfettered JOY IN THE LORD?” And she would’ve answered – NOT if you look silly! Never look silly! Ever! Where’s the focus on TRUTH?!”

Uzzah had maybe grown familiar with the Ark – maybe he forgot that it was the place where God touched down – where heaven met earth. He trifled with the Source of life and life was taken from him.

And Michal too – had no heart for life... no lust for life and life would not be entrusted to her (last verse).

But then there’s David. We’ll start with his answer to his proper, princess wife: “Look Michal – you’re right: I’m no king – I’m a shepherd. The reason I’m on the throne is not that I was more presidential than your father, Saul. It’s all about and only about God. It’s His grace toward me. Sometimes I get stunned by God’s grace (don’t you?)”

And about my humiliating myself – well, I’m WAY more of a fool than you’ll ever know! You’ll see if you stick around that I have to totally depend on God cause I got nothin! And don’t worry about the young women – they know I’m overjoyed by God!”

“I can handle myself around the women!” (Uh-h-h-h)

But truth is – when David had three months to think of how he’d rushed it, how he let raw emotion rule... In the Chronicles version of this episode all these names of priests and Torah scholars and of singers – David got them all together to ask: “What’s the truth about this this symbol and how we should be handling it that carries the very Name of God...”

And they came back with the truth – this is where our God has come physically to earth. He’s invisible; it’s not an image but a reminder of His invisible presence and His dealings with us – inside the box is the Law (that condemns us and tells the truth!) and the manna (God’s life-sustaining presence – bread from heaven) and Aaron’s staff that was dead-wood but that came to life and FLOWERED!”

And after David and all the clergymen and scholars and singers and musicians reflected on this truth, it didn’t make them stuffy or stoic or unemotional. They didn't say, “That’s very interesting!” They had a parade... LOUD noises and music and cymbals and trumpets. They show us that it’s NOT and either/or.

In Chronicles CH 16, it all culminates in that long Psalm of praise composed for this event. It’s a celebration of God’s grace in choosing Israel when they were nothing...and how God showed grace in choosing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That Psalm explodes with joy over two big ideas: God’s covenant with Israel and God’s “hesed” – His lovingkindness and loyalty to that covenant. It ends with this note:

“With (the priests were the many musicians) and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His lovingkindness (hesed) is everlasting.” (1Ch 16.41)

When David saw the mercy seat and remembered that God substituted bulls and sheep and goats – the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat... And He knew about God’s grace...and that symbol of “The ANIMAL’S life for YOURS”...and the idea that someday the symbol would be fulfilled...the invisible space on the cover became visible and God would actually fulfill the emblem: MY LIFE FOR YOURS!

The True Ark of the Covenant (see John 20.12: “and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.”) Jesus will enter Jerusalem NOT on a new oxcart but on a new donkey... He will be mishandled and left to fall into the dirt and it will then be, “My Life for YOURS” God in Jesus giving Himself in grace and mercy to satisfy both the human and the divine parts of the agreement/covenant – hesed made visible!

And when that TRUTH is vivid to your faith... when the Big Idea of the whole Bible comes home to your heart... sin loses its luster. Pain increases your longing for the world to come... You get a good hard look at your own sinfulness and see it atoned for by Jesus Christ Himself... and joy is like a crashing tide.

I love this song: (Bob Bennett, "Madness Dancing").

*"In the middle of this madness I am dancing
Though I'm not sure why just now
I tried to be sober, tried to be logical
But I could not stop my feet
I know I have not turned off my mind
I know there's evil all around
But for now, it's outside
And I am in my room
And joy is like a crashing tide"*