

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, Part I

Call to Worship: Psalm 47

1st Scripture: Numbers 4:1-20

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:1-10

Hymn #5 (Supp)- *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*

Hymn Insert- *Speak O Lord*

Hymn #87- *Holy, Holy, Holy*

Introduction:

David has been established as king over all Israel and God has given him a great victory over the Philistines, who have oppressed the Israelites since they had defeated King Saul, his sons, and the Israelite army, several years ago.

It is, indeed, a joyous time for the people of God, and now David, unlike Saul, exhibits a further confirmation of his Godward heart, by taking steps to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. David knew that God had brought him to the place, where he now stood, and he wanted to retain that Godward emphasis before all of Israel; he wanted to greatly emphasize his own commitment toward and love for God, before all Israel, by bringing the Ark (that most holy and precious part of the tabernacle furnishings, which represented God's presence with the people)...he wanted to relocate it near David's stronghold, in Jerusalem. Indeed, David's desire was pure and righteous, and more than warranted. It is atop Mount Zion, where David's son, Solomon, will build the temple, and within which, the ark will be placed, beyond the veil, in the Most Holy Place, in accordance with God's design.

However, even in the context of such a wonderful time of joy and celebration, filled with noble desires and good intentions, David will commit a great error, and by this means, tragedy will strike in the most severest of ways, and David will never view God the same. Right here, at the beginning of David's full reign, God will bring David to the school of His own holiness, so that David will be better equipped to serve God with a proper balance of both joy and reverence. And brethren, we would do well to spend time in this classroom with David this morning, so that we will never forget, that while God is a God to be loved and cherished (as our Heavenly Father), he is also a God to be feared and revered (as our infinite, and eternal, heavenly Creator). We would do well to humbly adopt this glorious balance, as we worship and serve our God, who never changes!

I. Divine Tragedy Strikes

"Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah (Kirjath Jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the Lord of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim" (vs. 1-2).

Ever since the Israelites had battled against the Philistines, during the time when Eli was high priest, the ark had been removed and separated from the tabernacle. Remember, after the Philistines had defeated the Israelites the first time, Hophni and Phinehas, those wicked sons of Eli, were encouraged to bring the ark up to the battle, so that the Israelites would be given the victory over the Philistines, in the second battle. However, because of the sins of Israel, and especially the gross sins of Hophni and Phinehas, who had defiled the priesthood with their debauchery, God gave the Philistines a second victory, and after killing Hophni and Phinehas, they had captured the ark. But following this, God brought judgments upon the Philistines and their god, Dagon, which led the Philistines to send the ark away from them. And ultimately, the ark wound up at Kirjath Jearim, in the house of a man named, Abinadab, and under the care of his son, Eleazar. There, the ark remained, all throughout the reign of Saul, and right up to the present day. Apparently and symbolically, Saul had little concern for restoring the ark to its proper place in the tabernacle. Concern for God's presence and glory, was obviously not a top priority to King Saul. But here, David goes to Kirjath Jearim, to retrieve the ark, so that it might be brought to Jerusalem, which would be both the political and spiritual capital of Israel, from this time onward. And in the last chapter of 2 Samuel, God will designate the specific place for His temple (and the ark), atop Mount Zion.

Before we move on, it is important to note the significance of the way in which the ark is described here. This will set the tone for the whole text, highlighting the great level of care and respect, which ought to have been shown God, when transporting the "ark of His presence." Notice the author adds this descriptive detail, to the ark, "whose name is called by the Name, The Lord of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim." This ark was to be hallowed and treated with the utmost care and respect, in accordance with the divine instructions given Moses by God. Retrieving the ark was a noble and good task, and a joyful one as well, but one ought not to lose sight of the Name of God, which was attached to it, by treating it in some casual or common manner, not in keeping with the Mosaic Law. This ark was called by the Name of the "Lord of Hosts," the Most Holy, Creator of heaven and earth, who rules over spiritual powers in the

heavenly places, and who sits, surrounded by the glorious praises of the cherubim! He is not like us! He is to be revered, feared, and honored by all, and especially by the dust of man!

"So they set the ark of God on a new cart [red flag!], and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart" (vs. 3).

Here, a huge red flag ought to have been raised in the sight of David. All along, we find David carefully inquiring of the Lord, before taking steps forward in life. He inquired of the Lord before going up from Ziklag to Judah, to be crowned the king of Judah. In our previous text (at the end of chapter 5), David inquired of the Lord, concerning the course of action he should take with the approaching Philistines...two times! But here, when handling the ark, which was called and hallowed by God's name, there is no inquiring of God, concerning the care that ought to be taken, in transporting it. And if he had done so, he would have found, very clearly written in the Law of Moses, that the ark was not to be transported in just any fashion. Great care had to be taken in transporting it. In our first Scripture reading, we observed these instructions. First of all, only an appointed Aaronic priest (son of Aaron) was to prep and cover the ark, before it was transported. Even the specific group of Levites who carried it, were not permitted to view it. And then, after being given the go ahead by the Aaronic priest, a particular group of Levites were to carry it by its staves/poles, which always remained inserted through the rings, which were attached to the ark. They could not even touch it. They had to transport it, by lifting it up by its poles, and carefully walking it to its next destination. And so, it had to be carried by permanently inserted poles, and only by Levites, not placed on an ox cart (not even a new one). Man's "new ox carts," and recommendations and ideas for purification and holiness, are detestable filth in the sight of our holy God. Needless to say, this error on David's part, and on the part of Uzzah and Ahio, will bring about terrible and sobering consequences.

"And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals" (vs. 4-5).

And so, as the ark of God is being transported to Jerusalem, there is great rejoicing and celebration, musical instruments are being played and the people are worshiping God, totally unprepared for that which is about to happen.

"And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled" (vs. 6).

On the surface, this would seem like a very noble act on the part of Uzzah, wouldn't it? The oxen stumbled and the ark was about to fall off of the cart and onto the ground. With quick thinking, Uzzah reached out and laid hold of the ark, so as to steady it, and to keep it from falling. You can imagine a sigh of relief coming out of David and all of the people, when Uzzah kept the ark from falling. But what they failed to realize, was that the impure hands of a sinner had just touched that which was hallowed, and bearing the Name of God.

And so, we are told, "Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error (irreverence); and he died there by the ark of God" (vs. 7).

Talk about the ultimate killjoy! How quickly the scene changed from one of singing and rejoicing, to one of absolute fear, sobriety and shocking silence! Uzzah's heroic act, in the sight of the people, was a gross act of irreverence in the sight of God, because he dared think for a moment, that he could touch the ark of God, under any circumstance. Clearly, God was sending a solemn message to David and the people here, by this profound act of swift judgment, wasn't He? By those who would come near to God, He must be regarded as holy! He must never be treated in an irreverent and casual fashion, even when the intentions are positive and good! Uzzah's life was immediately taken from him, without delay, and he laid there right by the ark, which he had foolishly touched.

"And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah ("Outburst against Uzzah") to this day" (vs. 8).

It was an event not to be forgotten; a memorial of judgment, to commemorate God's zeal for His own holiness among the people. A critical lesson was to be learned here; indeed a costly one, and David would not allow the people to easily forget it. One error in this regard was costly enough...a man's life was taken!

"David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, 'How can the ark of the Lord come to me?'" (vs. 9). David had been here given, another view; another critical angle of the Person and Character of God, which he had never quite appreciated. And while he ought never to forget the overwhelming grace, mercy and compassion of God, with which he was already very familiar, he needed as well, to carry this understanding of God's holiness with him, at all times, as he exercised his reign over the people of God. This was a lesson that needed to be embraced from

the top down, lest the people forget, and ever dare adopt the attitude, of confusing God's mercy and grace, with the notion that the objects of such blessing, could ever treat God in some common and casual fashion. God is a God to be feared and revered by all! Even the salvation of man, is never to be exalted above the passion that God righteously and properly has, for maintaining a proper view of His holiness, by all. He is the Lord of Hosts! And so, understandably, David, at least for a short time, back peddles, not seeing how he could possibly bring the ark of God with him to Jerusalem. A healthy dose of fear, has overwhelmed him for a time. And while God will reassure David of His covenant love and relationship to David, leading David to go forward with properly transporting the ark to Jerusalem, this immediate "fear" effect, would serve its purpose well.

"So David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite" (vs. 10).

II. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

Having considered the event, and the divine tragedy, which struck David and the people, let us then consider a few closing thoughts and applications, before concluding, brethren:

1) Consider again the critical importance of seeking the Lord's counsel and direction concerning all matters in life. Indeed, brethren, there are a multitude of snares and traps laid before us in life, and to think for a moment that we are beyond falling, is grossly presumptuous, which is why "pride comes before the fall." Pride casts off God's help, and seeks to rest in the arms of sinful flesh. Without God, brethren, we would go far astray, daily. But, He is able to keep us from stumbling, and to present us faultless before His throne with exceeding joy, is He not? God can provide us with every bit of insight, wisdom and favorable providence, enabling us to trudge safely through this life...but we must constantly pursue Him. David did not inquire of the Lord here. David, even with good intentions, put on the robe of Saul, in this one sense. And because they failed to inquire of God; to consider that the same God, who commanded the ark as a representation of His Name and Presence, had given careful instructions on how to transport it, this one grave error, led to the next, which cost Uzzah his life. There would have been no stumbling of the oxen, if the ark was properly transported by its poles. And so, a failure to inquire of God at the first; the failure to reverence God at the first, led to a progressive lack of reverence, which cost Uzzah his very life. Reverence for God, begins with pursuing God,

especially concerning matters that surround His worship. And herein, we learn that (in accordance with the often repeated and detailed instructions of how God is to be worshiped, found in Scripture), that we ought not to be creative, by infusing our own ideas into matters of worship! Such an area is holy ground, and we would do good to remove the sandals of our own devices, before approaching God in any sense. [III. *Not* like a child making a card for dad...etc]

2) God has not changed, and while we enjoy the benefits of a *New Covenant* in Christ, our worship ought always to be tempered by a proper balance of joy and reverence before God. Joy, at the expense of reverence, will inevitably lead to treating our Holy God in a casual and relaxed fashion. Holy reverence without joy, will lack sincerity of heart, and will inevitably become ritualistic at best. There ought to be a proper balance of Joy and reverence in our worship of God! God is holy, and those who approach Him must hallow Him, striving unto holiness themselves.

3) And brethren, how many of us can say with assurance, when considering how far we fall short, how irreverent we have been in God's presence, even as believers?! Do we not, in part, fail to understand and appreciate Uzzah's judgment, because we have found ourselves equally as culpable in our own lack of reverence toward God? Brethren, let us never see some greater good in us, since we still stand, living and breathing, but let us rather marvel over the grace of God toward us, in Christ, which alone, has preserved us!

Indeed, how often have we come before God's presence, too casual and unworthy, but the target of God's wrath and anger was moved away from us and onto Christ! As Uzzah's lifeless and struck body, rested at the foot of the ark, Christ's lifeless and struck body, rested limp on the cross, having born our sin for us; having born our curse for us, so that nothing but the smile of God, finds us in the present. Again, this does not give us the right and warrant to willfully continue on in sin (in fact, it compels us *not* to sin all the more), but it grants us a sure peace, and access to a bottomless fountain of grace! The sobering, wrathful, instant strike that crushed Uzzah, likewise crushed the Lord Jesus Christ, but for no sin of His own...but rather, for our sins! Christ could very well touch the ark; indeed, greater than the representative object, He is the living God, and yet, He bore our sin in His own body, and He carried it into the holy presence of God, and crushed it in His own soul, for us, brethren! And now, we can enter the Most Holy Place of God's heavenly tabernacle, and stand before Him, unscathed and unharmed, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in King Nebuchadnezzar's furnace! Behold, one like a

Son of Man is in the fire with them...and there was not so much as the smell of smoke even on their clothing!

4) Finally, unbeliever, see that God is not toying around with even the least of your sins! Do you see the holiness of God here, clearly manifested in the striking down of Uzzah? And if this happened to Uzzah, who had good intentions, what will happen to you, who willingly continue on in your sin, rebelling against God and His Christ! Oh friends, don't toy with a holy God! For, there is an eternal hell to pay, for those who do! Don't die in your sins, friends! Don't die in your sins!

And don't think for a moment that you could ever, by means of any of your good works or your innovative religious ideas, practices and traditions, merit God's favor, such that somehow, you could ever be received by Him, apart from Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone! Leave your nice, new, pristine ox cart at home; don't dare come before God with your defiled works...but rather, cling solely to the crucified Christ, who died for sinners, and was raised again, three days later, unto their justification! But Pastor, are you saying that there is no other way to God; that there is no peace with God, outside of Jesus Christ? Absolutely! In fact, forget what I say, read it all throughout God's Holy Word! And what of the Muslim and the devout Buddhist and the Hindu and the Jehovah's Witness and the Orthodox Jew and the Mormon and the devout Roman Catholic, all of whom are trusting in their own efforts to be right with God? Are they not sincere? Are they not moral? Everyone, who is outside of Jesus Christ; everyone who is not covered by the shed blood of Christ, trusting in His merit alone to be right with God, is most certainly damned forever! Thus saith the Lord, not me! And so, what of you this morning? Will you go on, committed to your own way, apart from Christ? Or will you repent of your sins, and flee to Christ this day, before it is too late, and your fate is forever sealed in hell! God give you the grace to see your desperate need of Christ! God give you the grace to desperately call out to Him for salvation, before it is too late!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25