

"DAVID AND THE ARK"

2 Samuel 6:1-23

David was now king of Israel. This was a fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy pronounced over David when he was anointed as a 15-year-old. What do you remember most about David? Is it that he was . . .

- **A young teenager who killed Goliath**
- **The man who sinned with Bathsheba**
- **A bold, faithful shepherd of the sheep**
- **A brilliant king and a skilled leader**

Here's what God remembers most about David . . .

Acts 13:21–22... "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. **22** "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'

Genuine worship starts in the heart, and David had a heart for God! The Ark of God represented the presence of God to the Jewish people. The Philistines made off with it for a short period of time. After undergoing God's fierce judgment, they sent it back to the Jews. It rested in the home of Abinadab for 20 years. Finally, David and 30,000 of his soldiers came to bring it back to Jerusalem. That's when the story gets interesting!

2 Samuel 6:1–2... 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.

God commanded Moses to make the Ark of the Covenant more than 400 years earlier. It was a wood box completely covered with gold and with an ornate gold lid or top known as the mercy seat. This ark was placed in the innermost part of the tabernacle, in what the Jews called the most holy place, which was intended to be the place where God's presence would dwell.¹

It was 3 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet 3 inches wide, and 2 feet 3 inches high. In it were the tablets of the law that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that miraculously budded as a confirmation of his leadership. The last mention of the Ark of God was when it came back from the land of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7:1.

The Ark of God represented the presence and glory of God in Israel. David considered it a high priority to bring the ark out of obscurity and back into prominence. David wanted Israel to be alive with a sense of the presence and glory of God. *The king's motive was good, but, as we shall see, his method was bad.*

2 Samuel 6:3-5... 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.

One can't read David's many psalms without grasping how vital the worship of God was to him. Remember, he was designated as "*a man after God's own heart.*" Carrying the Ark to Jerusalem was a noble thing to do. However,

¹ J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, [*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 182.

transporting the ark on a cart was a serious violation of God's specific command . . .

Exodus 25:12–15... "You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. **13** "You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. **14** "You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. **15** "The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it.

Numbers 4:15... "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy *objects* and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*, so that they will not touch the holy *objects* and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

So, the ark was designed to be carried only by Levites from the family of Kohath. The Philistines transported the ark on a cart (1 Samuel 6:10-11). They got away with it because they were pagans, but God expected more from His people.

Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were tasked with transporting the ark of God on a new cart (2 Sam 6:1–11; 1 Chron 13). Ahio walked ahead of the ark, while Uzzah managed the cart from behind. Judging from the importance of the occasion and all the instruments mentioned, this was quite a production. The atmosphere was joyful, exciting, and engaging. None of it pleased God because it was done in disobedience to His Word. Authentic worship must be designed to please the Lord!

2 Samuel 6:6-7... 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.

Touching the Ark of God was strictly forbidden (Numbers 4:15). Uzzah made a huge mistake. He erred in thinking . . .

- it didn't matter who carried the ark
- it didn't matter how the ark was carried

Uzzah did what was right to him. This can be a recipe for disaster in any of our lives . . .

Proverbs 14:12... There is a way *which seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

His intention to help was right enough; but there was a profound insensibility to the sacredness of the ark, on which even its Levitical bearers were forbidden to lay hands.

***GOD SETS THE STANDARD FOR WORSHIP.**

The presence of God can bring blessing, but as the Philistines learned, it can also bring massive destruction. This is no lucky rabbit's foot its owners can wield for their benefit. This is God's presence, dynamic but dangerous. This story alone should tell us how God feels about the attitude that says, "I worship God in my own way. It doesn't matter how one worships God or what you do, as long as it's sincere." God does not take kindly to worship that disregards His standard. ²

2 Samuel 6:8-11... 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

² J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, [*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 184.

Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

David knew it was important to bring the ark of the LORD into the center of Israel's life. He wanted all Israel to be excited about the presence and glory of God. With Uzzah's death, David was left with confusion and anger.

- **Was David angry with God?**
- **Was he angry with Uzzah for touching the ark?**
- **Was he angry with himself for not taking God seriously?**

Having witnessed a dramatic demonstration of the Lord's zeal to protect his holiness, David became "afraid of the Lord that day" (v. 9). His deepened respect for the Lord's power and for His willingness to use it against anyone who would violate the Torah caused David to ask, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?" Brueggemann notes the fear generated by this event was positive . . .

"When people are no longer awed, respectful, or fearful of God's holiness, the community is put at risk."³

***REVERENCE FOR GOD IS ESSENTIAL.**

Instead of completing the journey to Jerusalem with the ark, David placed the ark in the home of a man named Obed-edom the Gittite, and it remained there for three months. Obed-edom was a Levite of the family of Korah (1 Chronicles 26:4). This was the family within the tribe of Levi that God commanded to carry and take care of the ark. During the three months that the ark was in the possession of Obed-Edom, the Lord blessed him and his entire household (1 Chronicles 13:13–14). We can infer from this that Obed-

³ Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 330.

Edom was a God-fearing man and showed proper reverence for the ark, unlike Uzzah who may have become overly familiar with it while it remained in his father's house for twenty years.

2 Samuel 6:12-16... 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.

God's blessing on the family of Obed-edom included 8 sons (1 Chronicles 26:4-6). In total he had 62 strong male heirs, and it appears that all were faithful to the Lord. This proves that God delights in blessing those who honor Him.

1 Samuel 2:30... "Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD declares, 'Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.

David must have boned up on his Old Testament before his second attempt to bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem (**1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 11-15**).

The caravan had not even taken a dozen steps before David called a halt and offered up animal sacrifices as an act of worship. The Jewish people were familiar with this, going all the way back to the first Passover. In the Passover, God had provided a way of salvation for His people: through the death of a spotless lamb, God's wrath would "pass over" the households of Israel. And

Israel's worship centered on rehearsing this scene, reminding them that God's presence with His people could only come at the cost of substitutionary death.⁴

***TRUE WORSHIP INVOLVES OUR SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY.**

It is a mistake to think that David was immodest as he danced and worshipped the Lord. In fact, he was dressed like the Levites . . .

1 Chronicles 15:27–28... Now David was clothed with a robe of fine linen with all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the singing *with* the singers. David also wore an ephod of linen. **28** Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the horn, with trumpets, with loud-sounding cymbals, with harps and lyres.

David's dancing before the Lord irked his wife Michal, Saul's daughter. To her, it was conduct unbecoming of a king. She, like her father, prioritized public image above personal spirituality.

2 Samuel 6:17–19... 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.

The burnt offerings spoke of consecration. The peace offerings spoke of fellowship. This was a day of great consecration and fellowship with God.

2 Samuel 6:20-23... But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of

⁴ J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 187.

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.

David didn't let Michal's sarcastic criticism ruin his day. He simply explained the truth: "*I did it for God, not for you.*" When David considered the context of the procession and the whole setting, his conscience was clear. He knew his dancing wasn't inappropriate to the setting or context. Someone who acts inappropriately to the setting or context of a meeting can't simply justify it by saying, "It was for the LORD." Only one person can be large in your life. It is either you or God. Here are J.D. Greear's thoughts about worship:

It is unfortunate how often the word worship gets reduced to singing. Worship includes singing, of course, but biblical worship encompasses so much more. Worship is, in essence, our response to the gospel. It is less about what we sing and more about how we live. The word itself hints at this, since the original meaning had more to do with *worth* than with songs. People offer "worth-ship" to something because it demands it, because it has inherent worth When we come together as a body of believers and sing praise to God, we are putting on display God's greatness and glory in our lives. Our worship should put our hunger for God on display. Our physical response should demonstrate admiration, awe, gratitude, and wonder.⁵

***GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP.**

⁵ J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, [*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 189.