

Message #21

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Life of David

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THE ROLE OF WORSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

2 SAMUEL 6

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The setting was 1000 BC. The people of God were enjoying a time of relative peace. The leader of the country was trying to get his various states to work together with him. God's word was available to these people. It was clear that they were supposed to be meeting together for worship. But they were not doing it. Some recognized that the situation needed to change.

Is there any relevance here to our situation? In the New Testament in Hebrews #10 v. 25 God's word instructs us Jesus followers, "**[Do not neglect] to meet together, as is the habit of some, but [encourage] one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**" This is the best that we can do right now to fulfill that commandment. We do also have Zoom group meetings. The causes of our respective situations are different. But the passage before us this morning is instructive and relevant in regard to the importance of worship and the ingredients which are necessary to please the One who is the object of our worship.

We have been studying the life of David on Sunday mornings, and we have seen two significant developments in the progress of his life and in the unfolding of the kingdom of God last week in our look at 2 Samuel #5. Twenty years after David received the promise from the prophet Samuel that he would be king over Israel, he finally was installed as king over the whole country. Then also we saw last Sunday in #5 that Jerusalem became the capital of the nation. Such it still is today. Our country finally came to a formal recognition of that on May 14, 2018, on the seventieth anniversary of Israel's modern independence, as the US Embassy was opened in Jerusalem.

The northern tribes of Israel have finally come together with David's tribe of Judah to unite under one government. As the political leadership of Israel gets organized in Jerusalem, King David recognizes a need for the nation to get its spiritual act together. This ruler, who is described by the Bible as "a man after God's heart," makes a move to establish a central worship center in Jerusalem. He does it in order

to please the God who has put Him in power and who has brought the nation together. Now in #6 of 2 Samuel we will see what his move to do that teaches us about proper worship of the God who is there.

I.

In the first eleven verses of 2 Samuel #6 we learn about DAVID, UZZAH, AND THE PROBLEM OF SLOPPY WORSHIP. According to v. 1, **“David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.”** Perhaps these were representatives from all of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Verse 2: **“And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.”** Baale-judah is also known as Kiriath-jearim. It was a town halfway between Jerusalem and the Philistine border to the west.

This ark has considerable divine significance. It is called not only “the ark of God,” but it is also described as being “called by the name of the Lord of hosts (the angelic beings) who sits enthroned on the cherubim.” The word for “Lord” here in Hebrew is YHWH. Religious Jews today believe that it is sacrilegious to utter that name. Often instead they will call Him Hashem, the Name.

This ark was made when God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai after the Lord had led the Hebrew people out of their slavery in Egypt. That was roughly 1500 BC. Now it is 1000 BC. God gave Moses instructions about how to make this ark. It was to be the central object of religious worship placed in a tabernacle, or tent, that would travel around the wilderness with these people.

The ark was about four feet long and two feet wide and two feet high. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold. On top of this ark was a slab that was called the mercy seat. On either end of it large angel creatures with wings were made that stretched above the ark and faced the mercy seat. These cherubim were also made of gold.

During the wilderness wanderings of the Hebrews three objects were placed inside of the ark. They were the stone tablet with the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s budding rod, and a jar of manna. Each object had symbolic significance. The Ten Commandments represented the Law of God. Aaron’s budding rod represented the authority of God. The jar of manna reminded the people of God’s provision in the wilderness.

The ark had rings and bars by which it was to be carried when the people moved around in the wilderness. When the ark was set up in the inner part of the tabernacle, the high priest was instructed to enter the inner room once a year and to sprinkle the blood of an animal sacrifice on the mercy seat of the ark. This was to symbolize the covering of the sins of the people. When the ark was first set up we are told that a luminous cloud filled this inner room. In Exodus #25 v. 22 the Lord told Moses, **“There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”**

When the Hebrews finally entered the promised land of Canaan about seventy years after leaving Egypt, they beat up the bad guys and placed the ark and the tabernacle in Shiloh in central Israel. A couple of centuries later when Samuel was just a young man, there was a big battle looming against the Philistines. The Israelites were not doing well spiritually. Their leaders decided that if they brought along the ark, they were more likely to win the battle. They were wrong. They lost. The Philistines captured the ark and put it into one of their temples. The idol in that temple just happened to fall down and get smashed. All kinds of bad things started happening to the people of that city. The Philistines sent the ark around to all five of their chief cities. Bad things happened in each one. They finally sent the ark back to the Israelites.

According to 1 Samuel #7 v. 1, **“And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the Lord.”** We are not told whether Abinadab and his son were priests who descended from Aaron. The ark ended up in this town of Kiriath-jearim, also known as Baale-judah, and there it sat for at least fifty years. Nothing much with worship seems to have been done with it.

Saul was appointed by God through the prophet Samuel after that to be the first king of Israel. During his forty year reign, there is no evidence that he encouraged his people to worship there or that he sought to bring the ark to his capital. We also know that Saul during most of his reign turned away from the Lord and spent considerable effort trying to kill David, who was appointed by God to replace him.

When one’s life gets out of line with the true God, there is less motivation to pursue worship of Him. We might show up in church occasionally to please our parents or to please our mate, but to pursue the God of the Bible when our lives are not right with Him causes us uncomfortable tension. The pressure is to either turn away from this God, or to recreate Him in our image so that our misbehavior becomes acceptable.

King David has a heart for God. So he decides that it is time to get this holy ark to Jerusalem and to make sure that it plays the role in worship that God intended for it to play. So we read in vv. 3 & 4: **“And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.”** Perhaps the ark had been sitting on the old cart on which the Philistines had sent it back to the Hebrews. At the very least, it seemed appropriate to put it on a new cart.

Uzzah and Ahio were probably the grandsons of Abinadab. The word for “son” in the Old Testament can be used for any male descendant of an ancestor. Thus it is that Jesus will be called the Son of David.

According to v. 5, **“And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.”** This was a joyous celebration. There was great music and singing and praising the Lord. There must have been a large crowd. There were religious words said and sung and prayed. If we had come upon this scene, we might well have been impressed. We might well have thought that this was a worship experience that was truly worth remembering.

But there is a very important lesson that we need to learn from this. The presence of religious excitement and great music and large crowds and prayers and spiritual words does not necessarily mean that God is pleased. For look what happens next.

Verses 6 & 7 tell us: **“And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.”** That must have been a real downer. The tone of the celebration had a dramatic change.

What kind of God would do this? Uzzah was probably just trying to keep the ark from falling off of the cart. For that he is struck dead?

When the Lord gave Moses instructions about the ark of the covenant, he gave specific directions about how it was to be transported. In Numbers #4 v. 15 the Lord told Moses, **“And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out,**

after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the sons of Kohath are to carry.”

This one verse tells us three things about the transportation of the ark. It is first to be transported by descendants of the priestly family of Kohath. We don't know if Uzzah was a descendant of Kohath. Maybe he was; maybe he wasn't. Second, the ark and the other objects were to be carried by hand, not put on a cart. Third, the holy objects were not to be directly touched.

David and Uzzah may have had good intentions. Uzzah may have just been following orders. But the worship of both of them was sloppy. The ark of the covenant had been around Kireath-jearim for Uzzah's whole life. Had he never read the directions? Did he and his family not care enough to find out what God said about the proper care of this special object? In 1 Samuel #6, just before the ark took up residence in Uzzah's hometown, a bunch of Israelites were killed when they curiously looked inside of this ark. Had Uzzah not learned anything about the holiness of God?

In other crucial situations David sought out guidance from the Lord about how to do things. Why did he not seek it out here? Was the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem not important enough to check on the right way to transport it? Was David willing to simply follow the old example of the Philistines in how they did it?

How is it that we do worship? Do we just follow the example of how everyone else is doing it? Do we take our example from popular music concerts? Perhaps we don't want to think about a God who is holy and strikes down somebody who ignores His holiness and who ignores the directions which He has provided about how to worship. We would rather have a God who is a kindly grandfather who always loves us and just ignores our little shortcomings.

This passage reminds us that the God who is there is holy. He is to be taken seriously. He is a loving Father. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven..." But He is also holy. For Jesus next said, "Hallowed be Thy name." In other words, God is to be treated as holy. Holiness in worship means at least taking the time to look at what His word says about the kind of worship that is pleasing to Him. There is a definite freedom and latitude and variety in worship that is pleasing to Him. But there are some boundaries and there are some principles and rules that tell us about what is important to Him. We need to consider those things.

The story continues in vv. 8 & 9: **“And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, ‘How can the ark of the Lord come to me?’”** We saw last time that the Hebrew word “perez” means “break through, or out.” In #5 God broke through to destroy the Philistines. Now the Lord breaks through to strike down Uzzah for his lack of respect for His holiness. This YHWH is not just our neat, warm, fuzzy, buddy in the sky.

David is angry about what happened. He is embarrassed. He probably spent a lot of time and money and energy planning this celebration and this move. Now he has lost face. This joyous occasion has become a tragedy. But David had been sloppy. He did not do his homework. He did not inquire of the Lord or of a priest or of God’s word about how to treat this holy ark, this representation of the God who is there. So David seemingly abandons this project. David is the man after God’s heart, but he is not perfect. He definitely has his flaws.

Verse 10: **“So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.”** Obed-edom is an enigmatic figure. His name literally means “servant of Edom.” Edom was a country southeast of Israel. It was often at enmity with Israel. So was this guy a Gentile? It seems doubtful that David would leave the ark with a Gentile. “Edom” literally means “red.” Maybe his name had something to do with his ruddy complexion.

“Gittite” could also be a reference to Gath. Gath was the Philistine city home to Goliath. But there were also at least three Israelite towns which had Gath as part of their names. “Gath” means “wine press.” Later on Obed-edom will be given Levitical duties in the tabernacle in Jerusalem. So probably he was a Jew and a Levite. As the story plays out, it seems that he was a good and godly guy.

Verse 11: **“And 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.”** What was a cause of anger and fear for David became a cause of blessing and delight for the family of Obed-edom. Just his hosting and respect for the ark led to this blessing. We are not told the nature of the blessing, but it probably involved various forms of prosperity and well-being. That blessing stands in contrast to the sloppiness of the worship of David and Uzzah.

There are two aspects of the worship of the true God. One is a general way of life that reflects a belief in that God. A life of high ethical standards and service and good values and general obedience to God’s word ascribes worth to the God who is described in the Bible.

The other aspect of worship is direct worship. It is meeting together with other believers to give attention to God. It is words and songs of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. It is sacrificial giving of money toward his work, toward his workers, toward the poor, and toward the spread of the Gospel. It is participation in the Lord's Supper.

Sloppy worship is worship that goes outside of the boundaries for worship that are outlined in the Bible. An example of that is provided in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians. In #11 we are told that some people were coming to the Lord's Supper under the influence of alcohol. The Apostle Paul says that some have died because of this disrespect, because of this sloppy worship.

II.

In vv. 12-15 and 17-19 of 2 Samuel we come to DAVID, GOD'S PEOPLE, AND THE JOY OF PROPER WORSHIP. According to v. 12, **"And it was told King David, 'The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.' So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing."** It is becoming clear that the ark and its proper treatment are important to the Lord. That lesson is learned by King David.

In a parallel passage in 1 Chronicles #15 vv. 11-13 we are given this additional information: **"Then David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab, and said to them, 'You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites. Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. Because you did not carry it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule.'"** Somehow David learned his lesson. He read the Old Testament law himself, or one of the priests filled him in, or a prophet explained why Uzzah was struck down.

Verse 13: **"And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal."** There was no mention of animals being sacrificed the first time that David tried to move the ark. There was no requirement in the Bible demanding this, but perhaps David was acknowledging his sin and seeking to show respect to the Lord and to His ark. True worship certainly does require the acknowledgement of our sinfulness.

The sacrifice of animals was normally the job of priests. In 1 Chronicles #15 v. 27 we are given this additional note: **“David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. And David wore a linen ephod.”** The linen ephod was the normal garment of a priest who was carrying out his religious duty.

David as leader of the nation of Israel had a certain priestly role. He was, remember, a type, a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ, who is our priestly king. Back in Exodus #19 v. 6 the Lord declared to the Hebrews, **“...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** Thus it was that David, and eventually Jesus, served as a priestly king.

Back in v. 14 of our text we read, **“And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.”** Notice, again, the reference to the linen ephod. The word for “danced” does not appear elsewhere in the Old Testament. It literally means “to whirl.” Perhaps the picture is of one who turns in circles. It probably does not mean that David was dancing with a female partner. I have seen in a Messianic synagogue which I have visited that women during the service did a kind of folk dance in a circle. It appears that we have a Biblical basis for that right here.

Verse 15: **“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn.”** 1 Chronicles #15 v. 28 gives us an additional description: **“So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.”** There is the same joyousness and diversity of music that was present on the earlier occasion. But this time they are treating the ark properly.

Skip to v. 17: **“And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.”** There are more animal sacrifices, which serve as a reminder of man’s sinfulness and God’s holiness. David is again appearing to take the lead in this priestly duty. With the offering of peace offerings, only part of the animal was burned up on the altar. Most of it was given back to the worshipers to consume. So, as we shall see, the celebration involved feasting and the eating of meat, which was not a regular part of the diet for most commoners in these ancient days.

Thus in vv. 18 & 19 we are told, **“And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a**

cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.” The act of blessing was also a priestly role.

The establishment of the worship center in Jerusalem was a big deal. In itself it was a worshipful experience. There are memories of it reflected in the Psalms. For example, David writes in Psalm 68 vv. 24-29: **“24 Your procession is seen, O God,**

the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—

25 the singers in front, the musicians last,

between them virgins playing tambourines:

26 ‘Bless God in the great congregation,

the Lord, O you who are of Israel's fountain!’

27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead,

the princes of Judah in their throng,

the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

28 Summon your power, O God,

the power, O God, by which you have worked for us.

29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem

kings shall bear gifts to you.”

The lesson of vv. 1-11 is that worship pleasing to God must show respect for His holiness. The lesson of vv. 12-19 is that worship pleasing to God should be joyous. Once we have acknowledged our sinfulness and God's holiness, there is freedom to celebrate before the Lord. Psalm 2 v. 11 perhaps reflects this balance, **“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”**

III.

In v. 16 and vv. 20-23 we encounter DAVID, MICHAL, AND THE PROBLEM OF SPECTATOR WORSHIP. Look at v. 16: **“As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, 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.” There may be some issues in this marriage, do you think? David has just come from Obed-edom’s house of blessing to his own house where he finds a place of contempt.

Why does Michal have this attitude toward her husband? Michal was the younger daughter of King Saul who fell in love with David. She became his first wife. After David fled from Saul, she stayed behind and was given to this other guy to be his wife. We don’t have all the necessary information. Perhaps she was not happy to be pulled away from this second husband and forcibly returned to David. Certainly there had to be challenges that came from being a part of a family where there were multiple wives vying for David’s attention.

Notice also that Michal in this verse is identified not as the wife of David but as the daughter of Saul. That same identification is made in vv. 20 and 23. Perhaps the narrator is hinting that Michal is like her dad in personality and character. Perhaps she was into decorum and dignity and position and not so much into having a close relationship with the Lord.

We might also wonder why she is not participating in this worship. She is simply a spectator. She seems to see herself as part of the audience, and she does not find that this worship experience is pleasing to her. Is that how worship is to be treated? Is it really a spectator sport? Who is the real audience?

Skip down to v. 20: **“And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, ‘How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!’”** In the Ancient Near East a victorious army which returned home from battle was normally greeted by women and wives coming out and joining in the celebration. This was a kind of spiritual victory which has been accomplished. But David is greeted here by a wife who is unhappy about the celebration.

What was her complaint? He had taken off his royal robes. He wasn’t keeping his social distance. He wasn’t acting like a king. He was identifying too closely with the people. But you see David is a type, a foreshadowing, an actual ancestor of the future Messiah who is frequently called in the New Testament the Son of David. What was the complaint of the religious leaders about Jesus in His day? He hangs out with tax gatherers and sinners. But that is the wonderful story of the Gospel, isn’t it? The Son of God left His royal position in heaven and became one of us. He hung out with sinners. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we might have forgiveness and eternal life. If we will put our trust in Him, we will go to heaven some day. We will be part of His kingdom.

There is a place for critical thinking in worship. In the first transportation effort, in the first worship experience, some critical thinking would have revealed that they were outside the bounds of proper worship. They were ignoring what God had said about proper handling of His ark. But now this worship experience was within the Biblical bounds, and Michal was just critical about the style of worship. And that is the warning to us about when we become the critical spectators and miss out on the proper worship of God.

Verses 21 & 22: **“And David said to Michal, ‘It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.’”**

David is basically saying: I don’t care if I am hanging out with slave girls. I am willing to identify with the people on the bottom of the social scale. My real focus is upon the Lord. It is Him whom I serve and worship. That marks me out as distinct from the clan of Saul.

The story concludes in v. 23: **“And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.”**

There are two ways to interpret this. The narrator could be telling us that this conflict produced a separation in their marriage, and David and Michal were no longer intimate. Or it could be telling us that God intervened in sovereign judgment, and Michal was not allowed to have children. In that culture such a situation for a woman was regarded as especially shameful.

Michal was part of a religious family. She had a godly husband. But she lacked a genuine love for God. That was reflected in her worship. It was a spectator worship. That is a temptation in our culture. We live in an entertainment culture. We live in an area especially noted for its entertainment. The temptation is to evaluate all of these experiences in terms of what we get out of them, about how they make us feel, about how happy I am. If we really want to please the God who is there, our focus needs to be upon the God who is really there.

Robert Webber is a seminary professor who has specialized in worship. He leaves us with this challenge: **“...Christian worship [is] a performance in which God is the audience, the congregation is the performer, and those who stand up before the congregation (preachers, readers, choir, soloists) are the prompters. The popular mentality of evangelical Christians has the professional preachers and musicians (who should be prompters) playing the role of the performers and the congregation (who should be performers) playing the role of the audience. It is bad enough to have the prompters doing what the performer ought to be doing. But it is blasphemous for the performer to presume to play the**

part of the audience--- for that is to presume to stand in the place that only God can occupy. Most congregations are functional blasphemers in that they come to Sunday morning worship as an audience.” May that not be true of us.

May 6, 2020

Religious Service Attendance and Deaths Related to Drugs, Alcohol, and Suicide Among US Health Care Professionals

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Audio Interview (20:36)

Religious Service Attendance and Deaths Related to Drugs, Alcohol, and Suicide in US Health Care Professionals

Key Points

Question Is frequent religious service attendance associated with a lower risk of deaths related to drugs, alcohol, and suicide (referred to as deaths from despair) among US health care professionals?

Findings In this cohort study of 667492 female registered nurses and 437141 male health care professionals in the US, attendance at religious services at least once per week was associated with a 68% lower hazard of death from despair among women and a 33% lower hazard among men compared with never attendance.

Meaning The findings suggest that frequent attendance at religious services is associated with lower subsequent risk of deaths from despair.