

Worshipping God in God's Way, Part 1

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Bible Text: 2 Samuel 6:1-11

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Introduction: Open your Bible to **2 Samuel 6**. We all want to get close to God. A man named Uzzah was the same way. There was a great celebration in Israel. David wanted the Ark of the Covenant brought back to Israel. But Uzzah touches the Ark and dies! This seems unreasonable. I mean, can't we come to God any way that we want to? What we are going to find out is that we must come to God through His way. He has given us ways to approach Him, and we must use those ways. As we think about that, consider...

A. The Purpose of the Ark

The ark was the centerpiece of the nation of Israel. It was a symbol of the throne of God. David desired God's presence. He wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant (the visible sign of God's presence) back to Jerusalem. But it was going to take a lot of care and meticulous effort to bring the Ark back home.

B. The Construction of the Ark

The ark was a chest made of wood, overlaid with gold on the inside and out. It was approximately 4' by 4' by 2', a rectangle box. Four rings were fastened to the feet of the Ark so that the Kohathite priests could carry it at a distance (See Numbers 4:4; 7:9). No one was ever to look inside the Ark or touch it.

If the Ark was transported, Numbers 4 stipulates that only the Levites could transport it, and it must be a certain family within the Levites: the Kohathites. They must carry it upon their shoulders.

Exodus 25:8, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle..."

Look at **verse 17**, "Thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold... Verse 20, "and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings. 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat".

Remember Asaph's words in **Psalms 80:1**, "thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." The Ark was a symbol of the presence of God.

C. The History of the Ark of the Covenant

When the Tabernacle was erected, and later on in the Temple, the Ark of the covenant was to remain in the Holy of Holies. We don't have an Ark of the Covenant. The Bible says that if you are a believer, you are God's habitation.

God's plan is to meet with people. Did you come here to meet with God, or did you come to hear a sermon about Him? With that question in mind, I want you to look at 2 Samuel 6.

Before we begin, let's have a word of prayer. [Prayer for Guidance]
The first thing we see in 2 Samuel 6 is...

- I. Any time we meet with God in worship is a **Sacred Occasion**. David knew it was a very special and sacred occasion. I'm sure he had the best of motives. We read that he gathered 30,000 people around Jerusalem for the eight to ten mile trip to obtain the Ark. We read in **verses 1-2**, "Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims".

This was not just a religious ceremony. This was the symbol of God's presence, and they were going to meet with God. They needed to make every preparation. But they didn't. Here's the second principle.

- II. Be careful of **Thoughtless Preparation** in your worship of God. Consider how irresponsible the people were. They should have had the Kohathite priests obtain the Ark. Instead they did the best man could do. They had Abinadab's son drive a new cart. It was the best man could do. Look at **verses 3-5**, "And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals."

What thoughtless preparation! We must come to God His way, or we will set ourselves up for trouble. It is possible to have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof" (**2 Timothy 3:5**). Everything looked great. They had their beautiful music. They spirit among the people *seemed* as if God was there, and He must be pleased!

Application: We must never confuse a man made atmosphere of excitement with the moving of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit is just as real in exciting truth as much as He is present when we are in pain and conviction over our sin.

The people thought they were pleasing God, but they were headed for disaster.

Here's the third principle:

- III. Worship does not help God, **in worship God helps us**. We find next that Uzzah tries to help God. He tries to steady the Ark. He should never have touched the Ark. God is holy. God doesn't need our help. We need God's help. We need to approach God in God's way, and God will help us. If we try to come to God any other way, we are headed for disaster.

Look at the disaster in **verses 6-11**, "And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, **How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?** 10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David **carried it aside into the house**

of Obededom the Gittite. 11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household".

The ark of the covenant was being carried in a cart. This was not the way it was designed to be carried. It should have been on the shoulders of priests. When one of the oxen stumbled the ark looked like it was going to fall. Uzzah was probably a pretty pious Jew.

A. Uzzah should have known about God's requirements for the Ark.

1. He knew that when **Nadab and Abihu** offered strange fire to God on the first day of the Tabernacle, God killed them (**Leviticus 10:1-7**). These were Aaron's sons. The day should have been a day of great celebration. The Tabernacle was completed. Yet it was a day of mourning for Aaron.

2. Uzzah also knew about **Achan**. There should have been a great spoil and victory in Israel against Ai, but they were defeated because Achan had stolen the "accursed thing" (Joshua 7). He held back all of Israel from victory, and God killed him. They could not have victory in God while hiding idols in their heart and lives.

B. What was so bad about touching the Ark?

R.C. Sproul comments,

Uzzah keeps the ark from tipping in the mud. God's reaction was not, "Thank you, Uzzah!" No, God killed Uzzah instantly. Uzzah believed that mud would desecrate the ark, but mud is just dirt and water obeying God. Mud is not evil. God's law was not meant to keep the ark pure from the earth, but from the dirty touch of a human hand. Uzzah presumed his hands were cleaner than the dirt. God said no.¹

We cannot improve the worship of God with our own ideas. We must be careful to not think that when we have great numbers or a great feeling that God is present. It may just be "strange fire" that we are offering the Lord. We must not try and steady the Ark.

Conclusion: Let me close with some principles we learn from Uzzah.

1. Uzzah shows us that while it is good to be near to God, we must come to God in His prescribed way. We don't need to help God.

2. We must understand that in worship, we cannot help God, God is helping us!! We don't need to steady the ark. God needs to steady us!

3. There is power in the presence of God. God does not need our assistance. Consider the taking of the city of Jericho. They were to take 6 days and go around once each day carrying the Ark. On the 7th day they were to go around seven times and "shout with a great shout". What occurred? The walls came down.

¹ See R.C. Sproul. *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000), 108.

4. We must put "no confidence in the flesh". Our ideas will not get us very far.
"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

5. We must serve God mechanically. He comes into your heart through the mercy seat of Christ. The blood satisfies the Law on the stone tablets beneath. You are accepted in the beloved. He's come to do a work in you.

Use the means that God has given to draw near to Him. Don't build a cart when God says to carry the Ark. Use the Word of God. Get it into your heart. Meet with Him in prayer. Follow His ways for your family. You can't talk to your spouse any way you want and worship God in the congregation. You cannot be irresponsible at work and try to "steady the Ark" on the Lord's Day.

The best thing we can do is get out of God's way and come ready when we worship Him. Stand back and see the salvation of the Lord. Worship Him in His prescribed way.