

## David And Worship

1 Samuel 6:1-21, 1 Samuel 4:1-22, 2 Samuel 6:1-23, 2 Samuel 7:1-17

### **Slide 1**

This morning we continue to examine the song, *Days of Elijah*. Last week we looked at Moses and how he restored righteousness.

We saw that righteousness was both a relationship with God and also a standard of behavior.

We learned that we didn't need to meet a certain standard to come to God otherwise we'd all be doomed, but we do need to be willing to allow God to make changes in our lives to bring transformation.

Earlier, we saw how Elijah declared the Word of the Lord, not only when it was hard to hear but also when it was hard to preach. No matter what else we do, we need to be faithful to the Bible.

Then we learned how John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by urging the people to repentance and how we could also prepare the way for God in our lives through repentance.

Next, we looked at the Year of Jubilee; learning it was all about forgiveness and restoration. We saw how God wanted to forgive and restore us and how it was our response to forgive and restore others.

So today, we're studying the lines, "*And these are the days of Your servant David, rebuilding the temple of praise.*"

### **Slide 2**

Now the Biblical scholars among you, or at least those of you who paid attention during Sunday School, will see at least one small problem with this verse.

David didn't build the temple let alone rebuild it, his son, Solomon, did.

Some of you might even say, “*This is nonsense. There’s nothing to be learned here.*” Well, I suppose you could say that, but if that were the case, this would end up being a very short message.

This is why we’re going to look at an incident in David’s life where he got as close as possible to rebuilding the temple of praise.

As we do this, we’re going to learn just exactly what is acceptable worship and praise to God? All of this centers around the Ark of the Covenant.

Now I’m sure that nearly everybody has heard of the Ark of the Covenant, even those who have never read the Bible have seen the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Therefore, I’m guessing most people have a mental picture of what the Ark looked like.

Well, the Ark was actually a wooden box covered with gold and, instead of a wooden lid, it had a solid gold lid with two golden angels on top.

God commanded Moses to build it and put various things inside. The Ark not only symbolized the presence of God, but God sometimes used the Ark when He did the miraculous.

The most famous example is probably when Joshua came to the river Jordan at flood time.

Before the people crossed the river, God told Joshua to tell the priests to take the Ark and walk into the middle of the river and stand there. When they did, the river stopped, and the people crossed.

We can see what it can do and this is all well and good, but what was the original purpose of the Ark? Why was it built?

### **Slide 3**

Regardless that God had forbidden idols, the people still needed a visual symbol. The Ark represented God's presence.

It was the place where the Shekinah Glory, the visible pillar of cloud and fire rested, and when Solomon built temple and placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, it again took its place on the Ark.

It was the meeting place between God and man, a place of redemption, where once a year, on the day of atonement, blood was sprinkled over the lid, called the mercy seat, to cleanse all Israel from their sins.

It was a symbol of God's holiness, presence, and power. It represented God, but the fact that it was a box and not an idol reminded people it wasn't God.

It also contained several relics from the past, not because they possessed power but were a reminder to the people of God's power and presence.

First, there was Aaron's staff, which was not only used to part the Red Sea, but it provided water in the wilderness, and destroyed a number of plagues. It was symbol of God's saving power.

Then there was a pot of manna, the bread God provided in the wilderness. This was to remind them of God's provision; that He would always take care of them.

Finally, there were the stone tablets on which the Law was written to remind the people of God's requirements.

Like a lot of other things in the Old Testament, it was an object lesson and the meanings behind the Ark were to be taught to the children.

Part of those lessons included how it was to be transported, and the fact that no-one was to touch it. This was to demonstrate the unapproachable holiness of God.

#### **Slide 4**

But why were the people having to move the Ark in the first place? Why wasn't it already in Jerusalem?

This story is found 1 Samuel 4:1-22. In this chapter, we learn that the Israelites were involved in a war against the Philistines and weren't doing too good.

So, some bright spark remembered the Ark and the miracles that it had accomplished in the past. They thought that if they brought the Ark to the front lines, it would help them win.

But that failed and the Ark was captured. The people had forgotten that the Ark wasn't a magical thing that they could manipulate.

In fact, if Indiana Jones or the government officials from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* had actually read 1 Samuel, they wouldn't have been worried about the Nazi's getting a hold of it.

The Ark wasn't a guarantee of invincibility. In the past, following God was the key to victory not the Ark. This is the same lesson we need to learn when we talk about revival in the church today.

Too often, when it comes to worship or a lack there of, or when we see the church in decline or just not growing, we think all we have to do is drag out the Ark (revival), it worked in the past surely it will work for us today.

But unfortunately, we make the same mistake as the Israelites. We forget that it wasn't the Ark that made the difference, it was the presence of God.

The past was great, but we need to learn the real lessons from the past, not just copy the forms.

If we don't examine ourselves, we're just like the Israelites who, rather than look at their lives and seeing why God wasn't there, just dragged out the Ark. We do this all the time in worship and in church.

We look at the great open-air services of John Wesley and see how they brought a great and tremendous response. Then we think that the way to successful evangelism is to copy his example.

The problem with this is that when we think like this, we miss the real lesson of what Wesley actually did. It wasn't just the services, but the prayer, holiness, and lifestyle of John Wesley.

It wasn't because the services were open air that was important; it was the fact that he was taking the message to the people where they were and in a way that the people listened.

He even did things that were condemned by the church of the time because they had never been done before.

Most people don't realize that Charles Wesley's hymns were originally sung to popular pub songs of the time causing them to be denounced as too worldly by the Anglican Church.

What's the point I'm trying to make. Those old, cherished traditions that we like to cling to, were once new and modern, and were rejected by many within the church.

The way to revival isn't to replicate the outward trappings of success of the past, the methods, or the music. It's to have that same burning, all-consuming desire for God that motivates everything.

In other words, to have a desire for prayer, to have a commitment to holiness and godliness, to emphasize repentance and the truth of the Bible.

To emphasize the presence of God, not merely the symbols of the presence of God. This is the way to real revival.

### **Slide 5**

But back to David. In 2 Samuel 6, David believes the time of the Ark's exile is over and wants to bring it to Jerusalem where it can once again take a primary role in Israelite worship.

So, what do they do. They place the Ark on a cart and then he and his men set out in a great celebration as they escort the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, one of the oxen stumbles, though I think the cart hit a pothole, and the Ark looked like it might fall, so Uzzah reached out and grabbed the Ark so it wouldn't slip off the cart.

How was he rewarded for that act. God struck him dead! This is one of those Biblical events which typically produces responses like: *"That's not fair,"* or *"God was too harsh."*

After all, Uzzah's motivation for grabbing the Ark was only for the good. He just wanted to protect it, to stop it from falling off the cart. Surely, he was doing the right thing.

Unfortunately, he wasn't. He was disobeying God, as was David. God had given strict instructions about how the Ark was to be transported.

It was to be carried on poles by a certain branch of priests and nobody was touch it. This was part of the object lesson God had laid down.

The Ark represented God's presence and holiness. No one was to touch it because no one was holy enough to come into the presence of God without being destroyed.

Just the High Priest, once a year, could enter into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on it to atone for the peoples' sin.

It was only through repentance and blood that the people could come to God without His holiness destroying them. God had laid this down clearly, yet it had been ignored.

Was it harsh? In the Mosaic Law there were clear instructions and warnings about the Ark and how it was to be treated, but they went foolishly unheeded.

God has given us instructions about how we're to approach Him, but if we ignore them, we ignore them at our peril. Yet you might say, "*That was the Old Testament. That doesn't apply now.*"

Well maybe, but the story of Ananias and Saphira comes from the New Testament book of Acts where it tells us that they were struck dead for lying to God and the church.

Or what about Paul's warnings and teachings about communion in 1 Corinthians 11. It's the bit that's usually not read at communion services.

It's here where Paul told the church that because of the disgraceful way it was having communion people were getting sick and dying.

There's a proper way to approach God in worship but it has nothing to do with the instruments used, the songs sung, the location, the clothes we wear, the orientation of chairs, or how church-like everything looks.

It's a matter of attitude and respect. It's a matter of being aware of Who God is and approaching Him in the right way.

It's one of those great tensions in the church; the awesomeness and reverence for God that we must have and yet we are to call Him father.

What's proper reverence for God? How do we approach God in the correct way. Different cultures have different ways of showing respect.

The way a 60-year-old shows respect is different from how someone 15 shows respect.

The one might think the other is funny or not showing proper respect but showing respect is a function of culture not one of universal application.

For Jews, it shows respect when men cover their head, but for many people today, if a person doesn't take his hat off in a building that's a sign of disrespect.

Customs differ. We shouldn't expect everybody to show respect in the same way. But most important is how we approach God.

We come to God through Jesus Christ in acknowledgement that we can only approach God because He has forgiven us.

I think that's the only way to maintain an atmosphere of intimacy and reverence.

We can be intimate, we can come as we are, but only because of what Jesus has done for us and only if we come with a repentant, humble attitude.



This can be summed up in the words of Samuel to David's predecessor, Saul, where he told him that God desires obedience rather than sacrifice.

1 Samuel 15:22, *"But Samuel replied: Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."*

David and Uzzah could have claimed they were trying to honor God by bringing the Ark to Jerusalem

They could have claim they were doing that to make it the heart of Israelite worship again, but God said that's all very well, but I want you to obey me rather than do things you think will please me.

That's the key to worship. It's not a matter of the words or songs we use; whether we're formal or informal, old fashioned or modern, somber or celebratory, what we must do is be obedient.

God won't accept our worship if we come in sin and refusal to repent, or if we come confident in our own worth.

If we're obedient to God by trusting in His Son Jesus, coming in repentance, and wanting God to transform our lives, then He will accept us and our worship.

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that Majesty which we call *"Our Father Which Are in Heaven."*

John Wesley, printed a hymnbook and at the beginning of the book, he wrote some "*Directions for Singing*" which included several instructions, like:

Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.

Sing in tune. Whatever tune is sung be sure to keep with it, do not run before or stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move there exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow.

Finally, above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself or any other creature.

Now I'm not sure how many of his instructions were really important. While it would be nice if we all sang in tune, yet for some of us it's just not possible.

But Wesley's last instruction is important, "*Have an eye to God in every word you sing.*" We must aim to please Him more than ourselves.

We've learned that it's not the outward forms that are important, so we must resist the temptation to copy the forms of the past without following the spirituality of the past.

True worship is only possible through Christ, recognizing what He has done for us.

If we remember this and come to God remembering that we only come through Christ then our worship will be acceptable to God, no matter how out of tune we are.