

## The Heart of Worship • 2 Samuel 6:1-15

### INTRO

1. David is settled in now as king of Israel.
2. He's made Jerusalem the **political** capital of the kingdom.
3. Now he moves to make it the spiritual center as well.

<sup>1</sup> Again David gathered all *the choice men* of Israel, 30K. <sup>2</sup> And David arose & went with all the people who *were* with him from Baale Judah 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.

1. The last we heard of the Ark of the Covenant 70 yrs before when it was returned by the Philistines.
2. It was left at the home of a priest named Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim, referred to here by its ancient name – Baale Judah.

3. The Ark was the main fixture in the worship of Israel.
  - a. It held the stone tablets on which the finger of God wrote the 10 Commandments.
  - b. The Ark was where atonement was made & their covenant with God renewed each year.
  - c. It's where the visible presence of God was manifested in a cloud of light called the Shekinah.
  - d. The Ark was, in effect, God's Throne.

4. Thinking it would secure them victory over the Philistines, they'd taken it into battle years before, only to see it captured.

- a. When it brought nothing but trouble to the Philistines, they sent it back.
- b. But the tabernacle where the ark had been kept was in ruins.
- c. So it was stored at the home of Abinadab there in Kirjath.

5. David invites all Israel's leaders to join him in bringing the Ark to the new national center at Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> So they set the ark of God on a new cart, & brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which *was* on the hill; & Uzzah & Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. <sup>4</sup> And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which *was* on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; & Ahio went before the ark. <sup>5</sup> Then David & 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, & on cymbals.

1. It's 9 miles from Kirjath to Jerusalem. So they made a cart for it, loaded it on, & set out.
2. The whole way they celebrated by playing music & singing.
3. Abinadab's 2 sons were the ark's official keepers. Ahio went before the cart while Uzzah came behind.
4. This was one happy parade. Everyone was stoked. They're in for a rude awakening ...

<sup>6</sup> And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God & took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup> Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, & God struck him there for *his* error; & he died there by the ark of God.

1. Picture it:

- a. As the cart makes its way up that dirt road toward Jerusalem, 1 of the wheels drops in a rut.
- b. The cart tips, the ark slides toward the edge.
- c. Uzzah rushes over to steady it. But the moment his hand touches the ark, he drops dead.
- d. There's a gasp from the crowd. Followed by stunned silence.

2. Why would God slay Uzzah? Why kill him when all he was doing was steadying the ark?

3. To answer that, we go back 500 yrs.

4. In Exo25, God made it clear the Ark was to be moved only one way –

- a. Carried by poles thru the rings in its sides.
- b. And only priests from the family of Kohath were to carry it.
- c. Under **NO** circumstance was **anyone** ever to **touch** the ark itself.

- d. As the earthly representation of God's throne, it was **utterly holy** = Sacred to the n<sup>th</sup> degree.

5. God wanted the ark **carried** rather than moved by a cart because He didn't want the worship of Israel to become **mechanical**, mere ritual.

6. Their covenant with Him was an invitation into an intensely personal & intimate relationship, pictured by their **carrying** rather than **hauling** the ark.

7. But 70 yrs before, when the Philistines returned the ark, not knowing any better, they'd sent it on a cart.

- a. Now, as David moves it to Jerusalem, he did what the Philistines had done
- b. Makes a cart, loads up the ark, & sets out.

- c. The music was loud, the dancing exuberant, the celebration fervent.
- d. The smoke machines were going full-bore. Lasers & intelligent lights. It was a show!
- e. But God wasn't pleased because they ignored what He'd said.
  - 1) Not intentionally. It wasn't like David **KNEW** the Ark was supposed to be carried.
  - 2) But the **priests** did; Abinadab with his sons Ahio & Uzzah did.
  - 3) It was their **job** to know. And Uzzah knew **touching** the Ark was a sacred taboo.
- 8. When he reached out to steady it, it was the final act that demanded judgment.
- 9. His presumption was a signature symbol of the way everyone, including David, had come to view the Ark
- 10. It was little more than an interesting piece of **furniture**, the very thing God took pains to make sure it didn't become A mere religious **artifact**.
- 11. Contrast the moment **before** the cart tipped with the moment **after** Uzzah fell.
  - a. **Before:** Celebration, noise, excitement All **religious** in nature.
    - 1) They're bringing the ark to Jerusalem.
    - 2) **God** is going to be installed at the **political** center of the nation. YES!
  - b. **After:** Stunned silence, confusion, fear.
    - 1) All the excitement, as **religious** as it had seemed was in fact **void** of God.
    - 2) When God **did** reveal His power & presence – It's **Silence**.
- 12. Note that well:
  - a. Noise & excitement don't necessarily mean God is pleased.
  - b. Just because the music's loud, the smoke machines and lights are going at it.
  - c. Voices are raised and people are dancing are no guarantee God's pleased.
  - d. **We** may be – but that doesn't mean God is.
  - e. Not if what's going down ignores His Word & Way.
- 13. There was a greater awareness of God's power and presence in the silence than the noise that day.

#### Their Mistake

- 1. Why did Israel put the Ark on a cart instead of carrying it as God instructed?
    - a. Simple: They didn't look to God's Word for instructions on what to do.
    - b. They took their cue from the Philistines; that's how they'd moved it.
  - 2. Sadly, that's what many Christians & churches do today.
    - a. Rather than looking to God's Word for direction on how to live or conduct the mission of the Church;
    - b. They look to the world; so-called **experts**; psychotherapists & church-growth specialists.
  - 3. A group of churches unite to reach their city.
    - a. They appoint a **board**, which invites a **celebrity** to fill an arena; some **big wheel** who can pack 'em in.
    - b. **Boards & big wheels**. That's what a cart is = Boards and big wheels.
  - 4. God won't our carts, the slick programs we devise.
    - a. He wants us to look to Him, to ask Him, then make ourselves available to be used by Him.
    - b. He doesn't need or want carts, boards & big wheels He wants **us**.
  - 5. Uzzah dropped because Israel's disregard for God's **holiness** reached a critical point.
  - 6. We can be thankful what happened to Uzzah doesn't happen **every** time we neglect God's holiness.
    - a. There wouldn't be many of us left.
    - b. But at key moments in history, God sends a sober reminder He's holy.
    - c. Achan, Korah, Ananias & Sapphira all died at crucial points to affirm = God is Holy!
  - 7. Israel assumed they *worshipped* when in fact all they were doing was singing loud.
    - a. If they **continued** down this path of **self-indulgent religion**, there's no telling where it would end.
    - b. God loved them too much to let them carry on in what would end up being their ruin,
    - c. So He **halted it** in the death of Uzzah.
  - 8. Worship, however happy or joyous, which fails to recognize God's holiness is never pleasing to Him.
- <sup>8</sup> And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; & he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. <sup>9</sup> David was afraid of the Lord that day; & he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?"

1. David's 1<sup>st</sup> reaction was **anger**; "How dare God rain on our parade like this?!"
2. But as he pondered what happened, he realized anger was the wrong reaction.
3. His questions led to a search for answers that led to the realization they'd gone about bringing the ark all wrong.
4. They'd been **sincere**, but sincerely **wrong**.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite 3 months. & the Lord blessed Obed-Edom & all his household. <sup>12</sup> Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom & all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God." So David went & brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. <sup>13</sup> And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone 6 paces, that he sacrificed oxen & fatted sheep. <sup>14</sup> Then David danced before the Lord with all *his* might; & David *was* wearing a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup> So David & all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting & with the sound of the trumpet.

1. Now they **carry** the Ark. And they're so cautious of God's holiness they stop every few feet to offer sacrifices.
2. There's still celebration as we see in David's exuberant dancing.
3. But this time the celebration is pitched in the context of God's holiness.

CONCLUSION [Call worship team up]

1. There's more for us to learn about worship in the rest of the chapter that we'll look at in a couple weeks.
2. But this is where we end today, making sure our worship is pitched in the context of God's holiness.

The Story Behind 'The Heart of Worship'

1. In his book, *The Unquenchable Worshiper* Matt Redman, who's written so many of our favorite praise songs, tells the story of how he came to write the song, "The Heart of Worship."
2. The church Matt attended had been incredibly blessed w/some fantastic musicians & composers.
  - a. The worship was incredible. But after a time, something went missing.
  - b. As the bands became more proficient & the sound improved, the sense of God's presence diminished.
  - c. In Matt's words, "The fire that used to characterize our worship had somehow grown cold.
  - d. "Where once people would enter in no matter what, we'd **now** wait to see what the band was like first, how good the sound was, or whether we were 'into' the songs chosen."
3. The pastor decided to take some radical steps to turn things around.
  - a. 1 Sunday when the congregation arrived, they discovered the sound system had been removed & there was no one to lead worship.
  - b. Mike said, "When you come through those doors, what are you bringing as your offering to God? What are you going to sacrifice today?"

4. The first few meetings after that were awkward as people struggled to learn that true worship means offering one's heart to God.

5. Giving expression to that was difficult at first, but over several weeks, people realized worship is about more than singing songs.

6. It didn't take long before the power & presence of God was renewed as they gathered to worship.

7. Over the next weeks they added the instruments back in.

8. Matt shares, "Out of this season, I reflected on where we'd come to as a church & wrote this song,"

*When the music fades, all is stripped away, & I simply come;*

*Longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless Your heart.*

*I'll bring You more than a song, for a song in itself is not what You have required.*

*You search much deeper within through the way things appear; You're looking into my heart.*

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship, & it's all about You, all about You, Jesus.*

*I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it, when it's all about You, all about You, Jesus.*