



2 SAMUEL
CHAPTERS 1-7

Study # 5 - 2 Samuel 6

2 SAMUEL 6 | THE LORD'S PRESENCE WITH US

2 Samuel chapter 6 deals with the centrality of God's presence with his people in his eternal plans. With David now crowned King over all Israel it is not his place on the throne that his primary purpose, but the Lord's (Yahweh) dwelling among his people. David learns what it means to give honour where honour is due when it comes to the Lord Almighty.

Judgment in the Lord's presence (vv 1-7)

The movement of the ark to Jerusalem reflects David's intention to make Jerusalem the earthly city where the Lord would finally dwell with his people. Jerusalem is the place where Solomon would finally build the temple, which would represent the established earthly presence of Yahweh. In saying this we need to remember it is only representative presence for as David would learn (2 Sam 7:5-7) and the Apostle Paul would echo (Acts 17:24) the Lord does not dwell in places made by human hands.

None the less the Ark of the Covenant plays an important role in understanding the Lord's presence among his people. The background to the construction of the ark can be found in Exodus 25:10-22. Moses speaks of its significance in Numbers 10:35-36. It was the symbol of God's presence among his people, leading them through the journey to the Promised land. The ark was a very real and visible presence of a spiritual reality, giving the Lord's people confidence and assurance that he was guiding and directing them through his sovereign and saving rule. David describes it as 'the footstool of our God' in 1 Chronicles 28:2. The stone tablets containing the commandments given to Moses recognised that the ark was also the symbol of God's **revelation** to his people, expressed in particular to Moses his servant as Israel travelled (Exodus 25:22). The ark was also central to the Day of Atonement for God's people and was sprinkled with blood to signify the **reconciliation** that had been achieved (Leviticus 16:14-15).

David is returning these central tenets of the Lord's presence (rule, revelation, reconciliation) with his people as he establishes his throne in Jerusalem. Ultimately Christ fulfils all that is anticipated by the ark's presence: God's ruling, reconciling, revelation of himself.

Uzzah's act of reaching out and touching the ark (v 6) is a reminder that no one can dwell in the presence of the Lord, other than on his terms. This irreverent and met with immediate judgment, and the narrator writes as if to leave little room for debate. Previously specific directions about how the ark should be transported had been provided (Numbers 4:4-6, 15, 17-20; and 7:9). Yahweh's presence is both real and holy, and cannot be compromised by anyone. Uzzah came to know this first hand. David had to be reminded of it once more. Even when our plans seem in accord with his purposes (bring the ark to Jerusalem, the City of David), we must always approach our kingdom work with a right sense of the holiness of the Lord.

Blessing in the Lord's presence (vv 8-15)

David's anger (v 8), and then fear (v 9), is a recognition he has begun to grasp the place and power of the Lord's presence amongst his people. We are reminded how easy it is for us to be flippant about Christ's dwelling in us by his Spirit. This should be a continually life transforming experience, yet we are prone to enjoying God on our terms, not his.

David's response is to distance himself from the ark, perhaps lest the same judgment come upon him? However, the chapter reminds us of a gospel truth; the Lord brings blessing to those who come to him on his terms, as apparently takes place in the house of Obed-Edom. We are not told what the content of the blessing is, but we can assume it had something to do with the generosity God provided for his people in David's day, often couched as freedom from enemies and material abundance. This is the turning point in the chapter (v 12a), when judgment makes way for blessing.

In V 13 David resumes his plan to bring the ark to Jerusalem, expressing reverence with sacrifice and celebration. The ark is now being carried as instructed. David is once more celebrating, but now with an understanding that joy in the Lord's presence must embrace the necessity of acknowledging his

holiness. Intriguingly he is now described in priestly terms, wearing a linen ephod and offering sacrifices before the Lord (v 14, 18). As the Lord had provided blessing to the house of Obed-Edem, now David would reflect this hand of grace to the people of Israel (v 19).

Joy in the Lord's presence (vv 16-23)

In contrast with the joy of the scene in v 19, Michal's reaction is one of personal spite against the new king who replaced her father (daughter of Saul is mentioned three times in vv 16, 20 & 23). The accusation of vulgar behaviour is met with David's response of being prepared to be even more humiliated if it brings honour to the Lord (v 22). He is pictured as the servant of the Lord rather than the king of Israel. Decorum in outward appearances cannot supplement a king who knows his place before the Lord of Heaven and Earth. What brings joy before him cannot be eroded by jealousy and despising. The narrator's remark of Michal bearing no more children suggests the passing of the household of Saul as the new Kingdom under David's joyous leadership prevails.

Some conclusions

1. **God's presence is now personal.** The New Testament speaks of Christ dwelling among us as God's Son (John 1:14). This is the culmination of the promises made to Abraham and brought about through the mighty act of the exodus, where God rescued a people for himself, among whom he would dwell. From the ark in the tent, to the temple in Jerusalem, to the coming of Christ, God was assuring us his presence with us would always be more than a religious institution or rite. The central blessing of God's presence is found in his Son's death and resurrection, where not only is his holiness preserved through the righteous death of Christ for sin, but it is then shared with us through the gift of the Spirit. We are personally blessed in a way that the prophets could only anticipate (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 1:1-4).
2. **We cannot domesticate the Lord Almighty.** Because of our sinfulness we will always be tempted to come to him on our terms.

Sometimes it will be out of **ignorance**, because we are not spending continued time in his word, and therefore taking his blessings for granted. We expect God to fit in with the rhythm and expectations of our lives, rather than seeking the change he promises to bring about by his presence through his Spirit. We need to remember that because of our sinfulness, we will always be underestimating the blessings the Lord can bring about in our lives through the death and resurrection of Christ. We have been seated in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) but our view of life often denies the eternal horizon the resurrected life brings us.

Sometimes it will be out of **preference**. We've been Christian for so long, or perhaps just got into a rut, such that we begin to maintain that form is as important as content when it comes to the gospel. David's activity is no doubt surprising for many of us. Michal's appeal to decorum is much more within our expectations. But the gospel must be allowed to challenge all our assumptions when it comes to the form of our faith, not to suggest we must do away with them, but to ensure they serve to encourage us to more confidently live for Christ and his kingdom.

Sometimes it will be out of **negligence**. We read about Jesus being our friend (John 15:15) and the privilege of calling God 'Abba, Father' (Romans 8:15) and we become casual about our relationship with the Lord. We think of him as a mate with whom we hang out from time to time, and before we know it we are changing God to become more like us, than we like him. It is surprising how we will often describe our relationship with God more like a mentor we turn to advice for, rather than the Lord of Heaven and earth who promises to guide and direct our every step (Psalm 23).

GETTING STARTED

1. If you could narrow down the essential characteristics of a Christian leader to three, what would they be?

INTO THE TEXT

Read 2 Samuel 6

2. What is the significance of the Ark of the Covenant for God's people (see Numbers 10:35-36)?
3. In what ways does Jesus bring fulfilment to the ark's presence among the people of God in David's time (see John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1-4)?
4. Uzzah's judgment seems harsh. What do Numbers 4:4-6, 15, & 17-20 tell us about the place of the ark among God's people?
5. Why does David choose not to move the ark to Jerusalem after the incident with Uzzah? What changes his mind after 3 months?
6. What do you think might be the significance of David's practice and dress in vv 13 & 14 as he moves the ark for a second time?
7. Michal questions David's actions in his celebrations as the ark is brought into Jerusalem (v 20). David responds that he did what he did because the Lord had chosen him (v 21). Is it possible to be joyful and humble 'before the Lord' (v 22) at the same time?
8. According to Philippians 2:1-11, what does true humility look like?

TAKE AWAY

9. The work of the cross humbles but does not humiliate us. Discuss.
10. Jesus speaks of the Spirit being an Advocate in John 15:26. He further explains the Lord's presence in our lives in John 16:12-15. What comfort and encouragement does this bring the believer?