

Some Rights and Wrongs of Worship.

2 Samuel 6:1-23

July 2018

2 Samuel 6:1-19 (ESV)

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

6 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 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. 3 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, 4 with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.

Uzzah and the Ark

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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 And David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" 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. 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.

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. 13 And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. 14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. 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.

David and Michal

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. 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. 18 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 19 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.

21 David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. 22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor."

23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Opening Question:

This is a service of worship unto the Lord.¹

Q: Look into your soul and ask: Am I here totally for God?

- Am I here 100% purely to worship God alone?

Or,

- Is my coming to worship partly for God and partly for me in some way?

A: I strongly suspect that we come to worship with blended purpose, God's glory and our own benefit too.

Here for God?

Here for you?

¹ That is root meaning of word 'Liturgy'

For myself, I come to worship God and I expect to enjoy it or be positively blessed in some way.

About 23 years ago a church I knew in Watford, England named 'Soul Survivor' ran into a worship crisis. They produced worship musicians such as Matt Redmond and Tim Hughes. The music was right up there and still is but week after week the musicians would spend ages critiquing the music. It was a bit this or, a bit that.

Their pastor took a bold step in this youth church where good music and worship of God were inseparable. He announced a 3 month music fast. So Sunday church worship would be without music for 3 months. There was lots of silence, stillness and waiting while hearts learned to focus on the Lord of the music instead of the cool music of the Lord.

Out of that process Matt Redman wrote this song:

1. *When the music fades
All is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring
Something that's of worth
That will bless Your heart*

*When the music fades
All is stripped away
And 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*

Chorus:
*I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And 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*

2. *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*

Chorus:

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And 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*

Soul Survivor Church held that music fast to shift focus from worship music to regain full-hearted devotion to the Lord in worship. They tested their hearts.

We who worship need to be constantly in a process of discerning and refining our hearts on this. For God or for me?



It's about getting the horse and the cart in the right order!

Text

This leads us to today's text that has so much to say about worship that includes no horse but an ox and cart. We are in 2 Samuel and all of chapter 6.

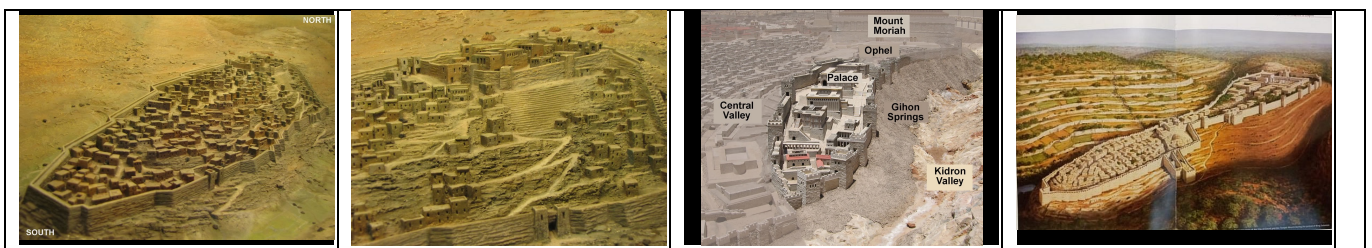
The background here takes us immediately into things that can complicate worship, power and the real estate of power.

David had become king, the second King of Israel after Saul.

On his own initiative just before 1000 BC he had captured what will become Jerusalem or Zion from the Jebusites and it became known as the 'City of David'. It's his city.

This was NOT Jerusalem, Not even OLD Jerusalem

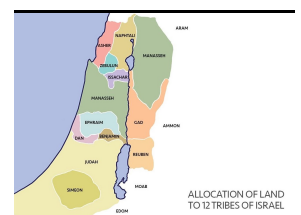
These pictures show Jebus as it was and as David developed it.



This is the City of David and all lies south of what would be Jerusalem.

This was very strategic: David was consciously building a nation and making himself central to that.

He was transforming the 12-tribe alliance into a kingdom, a nation with a royal capital city.



He is secure with the crown and even married to Michal the daughter of Israel's first King Saul.

Now comes something difficult!

We have been told for a few hundred years that Church and State should be separate. Most nations do but that is actually not the case in every country -including England- but it's a principle that we might still hold to.

So at this time the 12 tribes are centred on the shrine of Shilo and have been for 367 years. Let's go there:



For this to all happen well the worship of Israel had to change.

Until now for the previous 367 years the shrine of Yahweh had been in Shiloh about 20 km north.

Joshua 18:1 says the “tent of meeting” (the tabernacle) was set up in Shiloh. This points to its use as Israel’s first capital city.

The centre of God’s presence among the tribes had always been wherever the ark of the covenant was.

David wanted that presence in his city as the new capital of the Nation and Kingdom.

He wanted the place where the Lord God of Israel could be found and worshipped in his royal capital.

So joining of politics and religion, ‘church’ and ‘state’ or worship of the Nation’s God and nation-building would require some change to overcome the 20km distance between Shilo and The City of David.

Again, this is not uncommon as in many capital cities around the world the seat of political power is not far from the traditional seat of religious power. Even in Dunedin the Anglican cathedral is next to the Town Hall. In Wellington, St Paul’s Cathedral stands eye to eye with Parliament so echoes abide.

Today we heard about of part of this process.

David sets out to relocate the ark of the covenant in his new capital city and consolidate his kingdom.



The Ark was of course the most sacred location of God's presence. It was a box containing the tablets of law and some items associated with Moses and the Exodus. It was the footstool of God's throne.

He knows that relocating the ark of the covenant of the God of Israel is a big thing.

His task is to bring the Ark from Shiloh, 20km south to his new city. He involves thousands of people in this national event and there is lots of music as we read of, 'songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.' No expense is spared.

This all seemed a good idea. It sounds like what most people might expect of worship in church: lots of people and lots of music! It was bigger than Ben-Hur with a cast of thousands!

But there was an oversight:

David had not bothered to consult or check on what the Lord God of Israel had specified for worship around moving the ark of the covenant.

The specification in the Law was that the ark was to be carried by priests on poles.

Q: What did David do?

A: He arranged a hi-tech arrangement with a new ox cart to carry it on.

This became an issue when the oxen stumbled and some one named 'Uzzah' thought it would be a good idea to reach out and steady the ark to prevent it sliding or falling off the cart.

That was the last thing Uzzah ever did.

And we read:

'David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah'.

This was supposed to be David's big day and affirmation of his designs as the Ark of the Covenant came to his city. This was to be a moment of splendid worship that no one would forget. Instead of God's manifest blessing there was tragic loss of life. God had broken out of his box and it was not sweet. Holy power had brought death.

To step into this: How would I feel if someone died because I set up worship the wrong way?

Q: Why had this gone so wrong?

A: It had gone wrong because David had forgotten, or not realized, that YHWH is a holy God to be taken seriously and not presumed upon. David was not in ‘Fear of the LORD’. Worship of the Lord is not like a walk in the park or a party with sacred music. David had presumed on the Lord-God and learned a costly lesson.

Can you see the implications for those who want to seriously worship the living God?

It means that what God seeks and requires needs to be taken seriously.

Worship needs to be focused on what the LORD seeks and not on what we want or according to our ideas of what is practical or expedient. Unless we do this holiness may break out in ways that hurt.

Q: Is this just Old Testament drama from a vengeful God?

A: Let’s remember that Paul says something very similar to the Corinthians about how they minister and share Holy Communion. (1 Corinthians 11:29-30)

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on themselves. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

Consequently:

David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, “How can the ark of the LORD come to me?”¹⁰ So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David.

Handling the ark of the covenant was serious business so at this point he needed someone to take care of this terrible ark while he worked out what to do next.² So we read:

But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.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.

This is significant because the blessing of the ark was still there. Just don’t put the ark on an ox cart!

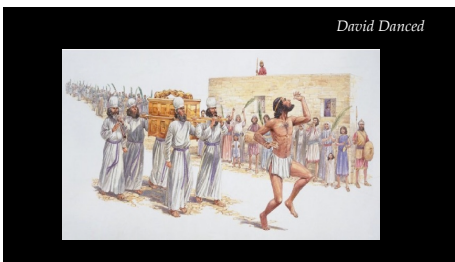
So three months later David tries again. This time the ark is being carried, as it was meant to be by the priests on wooden poles.

David had dressed himself in an ephod.

Q: How big was his ephod?

A: Don't know but it might have been a bit revealing in vigorous movement? ³

This time the musical instruments mentioned are a horn (Shofar?) and lots of shouting. There is no mention of 'lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals' but there is full-on dancing. Remember David is 30 – he still has his moves!



So its now linen clothing, horns blowing, shouting and full-on dancing by King David and that's not all: an animal is sacrificed every 6 paces.

David has learned his lesson to worship as the LORD prescribes. This is now real worship in the fear of the LORD and it's about to be tested. Never think that godly worship pleases everyone!

So as his procession enters Jerusalem his first wife Michal sees it and she is not amused. Michal grew up a princess. She had been raised to present herself as royalty. She understood the power of impression. Serious royals don't do wild dancing – not even for God. They don't get sweaty and excited in worship. Real royals stay cool, impassionate and somewhat aloof.

David had been a shepherd boy, a musician, a warrior who had been to hell and back. He was no mouse and on this day wanted to worship the Lord he loved with all his might. This might also have been about his city becoming the political and spiritual capital of Israel but it was also the worship moment of his life.

So we read:

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.

³ In today's Arab culture a man's shame extends from his knees upwards. If this is an indicator anything revealed above the knee was less than decent.

To end this day perfectly David made the final sacrificial offerings to God, blessed his people and then sent them home with bread, meat and raisin cakes. True worship of God does not forget the poor.

He then went home and words were said to Michal and her despising heart:

“It was before the LORD, (*that I worshipped*) who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. ²²I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.”

That is quite a slap down!

My second big take-away for today comes from that commitment:

²²I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes.”

This was David at his finest. Doing what he understood God required even if it diminished him in the eyes of others. He was focused on God and not people.

Conclusion:

I hope this inspires us to be worshippers seeking what God desires from us for his glory, even when it’s not what we might think seemly, cool or impressive.