

2 Samuel 6

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel chapter 6 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000.

And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baal Judah to bring up from there the Ark of the Lord, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, who sits enthroned on the cherubim.

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 with the Ark of God, and Ahio went before the Ark.

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. 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.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his heir, and he died there beside the Ark of God. And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah.

[1 : 14] And the place is called Perez-Uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, How can the Ark of the Lord come to me? 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. 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.

And it was told to King David, The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because 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.

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

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn. As the Ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michael, the daughter of Saul, looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord.

[2 : 27] And she despised him in her heart. 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.

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 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. And David returned to bless his household. But Michael, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself.

And David said to Michael, It was before the Lord who chose me above your father and above all his house to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord.

And I will celebrate before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.

[3 : 45] And Michael, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. One of the more stunning chapters in 2 Samuel.

From Rome, archaeologists have discovered, and now preserved in museums for any of us who desire to see them, a popular art form, which goes by the name diptych.

A diptych is a smallish, handheld, two-paneled work of art. The nicer ones are made from ivory.

Some of them are made from wood or metal. And they have a hinge between the panels. It opens, in other words, to two carved renderings on either side.

Figures, most likely. When it's shut, it made a nice writing tablet, something you could almost carry around with you.

[5 : 10] And usually they were made to commemorate a very important event in the life of someone who commissioned it. The art on either side, it wasn't quite like a Rorschach drawing.

It wasn't an exact representation. But in balance and in proportion, in symmetry, they were beautifully one, although two tablets.

We have one of Flavius Probus, who was a politician in late antiquity. He had his maid to celebrate his election to council in 406 A.D.

It's preserved in a museum in Italy. One day I hope to see it. In a literary way, 2 Samuel 6 resembles a diptych.

It's a version written by a narrator to present the reader two perfectly balanced halves.

[6 : 24] They mirror one another in structure, in perspective, and in emphasis. I want you to see it. This is one of those moments when the translator's notes don't quite represent the narrator's intention.

When I look at chapter 6 in my Bible, there's a large heading, The Ark Brought to Jerusalem. And indeed, this is true. This, in a sense, is the commemorative event of the two panels we find in the chapter.

But they are perfectly hinged in the middle of verse 12. 1 through 12a. The left panel of this great art form.

Perfectly balanced by this second bringing up of the Ark in 12b and following. You'll see that unfolded today with great beauty. David, on the left panel, verses 1 to 5, as you look at this carved etching on tablet, desires the presence of God.

That's what you see first. David desires the presence of God. By that I mean he wanted the Ark with him and he wanted it in Jerusalem.

[7 : 52] It reads, David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baal, 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 chair of him.

Now the Ark had a long history with Israel. If you're not a regular reader of the Bible, this Ark is a strange object to be appearing in the text.

It was a very small box, almost just a little over a yard long, in proportion, a couple of feet wide, had a certain depth to it, overlaid in gold.

On top of it, these two carved cherubim with outstretched wings, in a sense, over the covering.

And it had a distinct purpose. It was given to Moses back when God's people came out of Egypt. And it was to represent God's presence. In fact, at that time, he sprinkled blood on it.

[9 : 04] It was not only the presence of God in the midst of his people, it was actually called at times, because it dwelt in a tent, the tent of meeting. It's where God met with his people.

It just didn't signify that he was there, but it was the place where sacrifice was made so that he could be there. This history with Israel reaches far back before David's time.

In fact, in the book of Numbers, those recountings of Israel and their wandering years, they were given particular instruction on how to travel with God.

And what would happen is, Judah was to camp east of this ark, with two other tribes falling out behind him.

And to the south of Judah is Reuben and his entire tribe and two more. To the west would have been Ephraim, representing the world of Joseph and the deliverance from Egypt, and two of the other twelve tribes.

[10 : 30] And then north was the tribe of Dan and two more. So this is what you have when you read numbers. The people of God were actually instructed to situate themselves in circling the ark.

It was the focal point of all of them. They faced the ark. And when the cloud moved in the wilderness or the fire, Judah's company broke out first behind it.

And after Judah and all those tens and tens and thousands of people following the presence of God in the air, came Reuben and three tribes followed by the Levites taking up the ark and then those tribes represented by Ephraim and Dan.

So the ark, even as the people moved through the wilderness, was right in the middle of them all. And when the cloud came to rest, Judah would encamp east of it.

Reuben would fall underneath. The ark would be set up in the middle and Ephraim and Dan and again, the people of God, all of them facing the ark. Not like you're facing today.

[11 : 43] Four quadrants in one direction. But encircling with the presence of God and the place of sacrifice in their very midst.

So as you begin to read David gathering these chosen men and determining to bring up the ark, I want you to just know and record the long history that the presence of God had with Israel in the tent of meeting.

So bringing it up, verses 1 and 2, was a very big deal. It says he brought 30,000 and all the people.

In fact, the chronicler will inform from a later reader somewhat like a commentary on this text that David sent word to even the tribes on the other side of the Jordan.

this is his first executive move as the commander in chief. And he sends word to the furthest reaches of the kingdom.

[12 : 59] This is to be a national day of celebration. And so he goes to bring it up. He's going to execute something as a national event.

And it had been a long time since that ark had moved. Take a look at verses 3 and 4. 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 with the ark of God and Ahio went before the ark. So you almost have this understanding of Ahio walking before it, the cart with the oxen.

Uzzah to its side and they are now leaving the house of Abinadab. Interestingly, the last time the ark showed up in the narrative of Samuel, you have to reach all the way back.

For us, two summers ago, for the reader, all the way back to 1 Samuel 4-7. At that time, the ark had been an object of great consternation amongst God's people and the Philistines.

[14 : 09] The Philistines had captured it, but then they broke out in this plague-like life that was destructive and they wanted to get rid of it.

They send it on an ark, on a cart, a brand new cart, and it winds its way to the house of Abinadab. And then the people of God look at it.

And then the people of God are struck and many of them die. And so they shut it up. It says it's out of his house. I almost envision this, you know, like a rural barn that when you open the doors, there's an old, vintage, classic car that hasn't been uncovered or moved.

In this case, probably for 20 years. 20 years. God stuck in a barn in the house of Abinadab. And David says, enough.

God's now returning to the center of his people. And so, it was attended then by a day of dance and celebration.

[15 : 22] Look at verse 5. And David and all the house of Israel went celebrating before the Lord with songs, lyres, and harps, and tambourines, and castanets, and symbols.

In other words, David's desire for the presence of God was informed by its long history with Israel, by the importance of it being in return to the center of Israel, by the length of time that it had not been active in Israel, and so, he celebrates and he dances.

In other words, the narrator wants you to know when it comes to David's desire to have the presence of God in his life, he is all in. All in.

Evidently, beyond any sense of personal reservation. He even wore on that day a silk, thin, linen, ephod, and that was about it.

Off he went to celebrate the return of God to the center of his people. That's what you see as you begin to gaze on the left-hand side of the panel.

[16 : 40] But to the center of the left panel of this text, David's day becomes a complete disaster. Look at verses 6 and 7.

And when they came to the threshing floor of Nakan, Uzzah put out the hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled, 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.

Uzzah dies as a result of touching the ark. I can't really fathom what kind of day stopper this would have been.

I read just yesterday that there was a 4th of July parade somewhere where somebody began in the parade and very soon after the beginning collapsed of a heart attack and passed away.

But the parade went on as all parades must. But not this parade. here's the death of one within the family who long ago had been anointed the priestly care of the ark seemingly having done nothing wrong.

[18 : 05] And so the reader and David himself and I'm sure you ask why. Why? The book of Numbers had given instructions concerning the ark.

If you have a text you might want to look back to it. Numbers 4 is what I'm thinking of. Verses 4 through 6 this is the service the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting the most holy things when the camp is to set out Aaron and his son shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it then they shall put on it a covering of goat skin and spread on top of that a cloth of all blue and shall put it in its poles.

But then as you look down to verse 15 and when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary as the camp sets out after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these but they must not touch the holy things lest they die.

These are the things of the tent of meeting that the sons of Kohath are to carry. Look a little further verses 17 to 20 the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying let not the tribe of the clans of the Kohath be destroyed from among the Levites but deal thus with them that they may live and not die when they come near to the most holy things Aaron and his son shall go in and appoint them each to his task and to his burden but they shall not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment lest they die and so the instruction for the ark was clear all the way back from its original construction in Exodus 25 there were gold rings on the base of it through which poles were run and Levites instructed to carry numbers reiterates that and the text that we're reading indicates indicates that

Uzzah stretches out his hand because the oxen stumbled and touches the ark as if to say I'm here to help and who of us wouldn't have done the very same thing what does this say about God God of the Bible I mean it seems a bit capricious unfair harsh certainly harsh beyond the degree of the act we live in a culture of course that would say God wouldn't do this if there is a God sincerity is what God is concerned with God isn't like this yet here it is

[21 : 35] God does this God the God of the Bible is evidently like this in fact this isn't the first time you see this kind of arbitrary judgment of God nor is it the last time do you remember Adam and Eve in the garden told to live under my word lest you die and when they disobeyed God's word they were forced from the garden and by Genesis 5 we see they died do you remember when the people came into the promised land under Joshua and they were given specific instructions concerning their approach to a city Ai and Achan broke faith with

God's word and as a consequence many people died and then Achan himself in the judgment of God including his whole family were stoned all for not following God's word think of the New Testament it isn't as if you can just say well I'll take the God of the New Testament not the old that won't be of much help to you either there's a very early moment in the history of the church where Ananias and Sapphira decide to not calculate their tithe in accordance with reality and they die think of the Corinthian church under Paul's leadership writing concerning their abuse of the body of Christ and the pride with which they interfaced with one another in the church when coming to the Lord's

Supper and he says because you are living so unworthily that is not under God's word that is the reason why some of you are sick and die on this meal that's before us today at pivotal moments in the scripture at early moments at creation when entering the promised land at the construction of the church under the apostolic teaching at the beginning of the planting of that word in local congregations outside there have been multiple moments when God has seen fit to manifest his holy otherness to his own people when we decide not to live under his word David will be recorded as saying by the chronicler and first chronicles 15 that the

Lord broke out on this day because we did not do everything according to the rule but it's not a legalistic rule in the sense it's really what it means is we didn't listen to God's word and the consequence of not listening to God's word and living under it is death we have here such an event in other words what does this teach us about the God of the Bible he's not a God after our own making he's not I can't explain it to you in any other way he's not a God that you would fashion he's more requiring than any God we would construct he's more demanding than any God we would build perhaps we ought to ask what does this say about us when we say God isn't like this what we really mean is my God isn't like this when we say God would not do this what we really mean is the God of my making would not do this we all fashion God in the likeness of our own choosing could it be that we don't so much desire God as revealed to us here but a God who would suit our desires you ever asked yourself that do I desire

God or a God that would suit my desires there is a great difference between the two the God of the Bible has the last word the God of our making well we subordinate him to our own word notice David's response isn't quite an absolute rejection of God as it is one of despair and not knowing what to do with God look what he does in verse 8 through 10 David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah and the place is called Perez Uzzah to this day those very phrases about breaking out had appeared across the column in chapter 5 when God broke out against the Philistines and

[27 : 36] David was angry and he was also afraid verse 9 of the Lord that day and he said how can the ark of the Lord come to me so David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David but he took it to the house of all that eat him to get tight he reminds me here of Isaiah who when confronted with the presence of God in a vision says first off woe is me I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips David is in a sense asking how can this God who is so different than I am actually dwell with me as I am it reminds me of a much later character in the scriptures Peter when

Jesus manifests his glory to him in the boat through this great catch and Peter looks at Jesus and says what do you have to do with me a sinner in other words I need to step away from you there needs to be a degree of separation between me and my God such is the distance between us fortunately there's a hint even as this left panel closes that this is not the only side of God's character look at 11 and 12 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 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 left panel complete what does one do with

God well we're told that the one who merely received him was blessed there's probably strong connotation here that it dealt not only with his material blessing like wow this guy's pulling in a he just made a couple of unbelievable deals this quarter this month or you know I had a good year last month kind of blessing but probably a notion of fertility children servants household something's happening in the house of Obed Edom in other words it was something that was so strange that they could only say well what did you do differently this month and he said I didn't do a thing differently other than this ark has been sitting on my land that's the only

I can't explain it I can't explain what's going on in my house other than the presence of the ark on my land I received it now he just took him in on his own terms that is God's terms I want to say something to you about Jesus because the Bible presents Jesus as something that is even more than merely a symbol of God's presence rather the Bible presents Jesus as Emmanuel or God with us now I know that that's a moment much later in the text but the Bible presents Jesus almost as if he is this tent of meeting he's the presence of God in the midst of the world around whom his family is to encircle we are all to be facing in a sense the cross the

Bible will end on that very note that everyone will be encircled around him from every tribe nation people and tongue I actually think we're going to be divided out along tribe along along lines all encircling around him and he's more than merely a temporary place of meeting when it says that Jesus tabernacled among us I don't want you to think of him merely as wow he was here once as God's presence I want you to think of him on the cross for that is the place of meeting that is where blood is shed forgiveness is given one time for all people who will receive it and don't begin to think that in coming to Christ you can kind of help him along the way

[32 : 52] Peter tried this hey Lord that meeting place death you're talking about cross that's not going to happen I'm not going to let it happen I will not let you fall off that cart you're going into the city king big time now Jesus says get behind me you can't help me on this and you can't do anything anything to help Jesus secure atonement for your sin it's folly just allow him to plant on your land receive him and ask him to dwell with you as frightening a concept as that truly is and then begin to live under his word

Obed Edom was blessed because of the ark take a look at the right panel in much shorter fashion it mirrors in proportion verse two of course David is bringing up the ark of the Lord and here so David when he knew that God could be had in a way that he would dwell with us and that we would be blessed he went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed Edom to the city of David with rejoicing his mourning had turned into joy and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal and David danced before the Lord with all his might and David was wearing a linen ephod so David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn in other words what began on the left with his desire for the presence of God we see on the right

David's desire for the presence of God rekindled he still wants God and it's attended by dance and celebration and notice this time the ark is carried!

accordance with God's word it says verse 13 those who bore the ark of the Lord no more cart for when that thing had arrived 20 years earlier in the house of Abinadab and they came out 20 years later to roll it they said we can't take it on this thing it got flat tires build a new cart now David said no I don't come to God in accordance with how I think I want they carry it and he goes up into the city and here comes the ark of God born on the shoulders of the Levites through the gates into the center of the city tent of meeting all the tribes now dispersed around it and facing Jerusalem Zion city of God same city that Jesus will one day enter and die that we might gather in his name interestingly just like the left side of the panel though there's this tragic event that occurs it isn't this time the death of

Uzzah but now it's David being despised by another look at verse 16 as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the!

[36 : 46] and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord and she despised him in her heart or look at verse 20 Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said how the king of Israel honored himself today dripping with sarcasm uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants female servants as one of the vulgar!

fellows shamelessly uncovers himself David is despised and he's despised by his closest personal relation his wife daughter of Saul for David the consequence of following hard after God meant rejection by those who were closest to him I will say this to you this is this is going to happen for some of you that when you decide to go on with God anyway there might be a breaking out against you by those who have traveled to this point in life with you it may be someone in your own family they may not only reject God Christianity they may reject you reminds me of the words of

Jesus in Luke 12 51 to 53 where he says hey look I didn't come to bring a lot of stuff together in fact as a result of my coming there's going to be a lot of things divided house against house father against brother sister against mother there's going to be a despising of those who want God to rule from the center David's response not so much anger or despair at this point I love what he does in verses 18 and 19 there's a redirection of his attention to a new family look at verses 18 and 19 and David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts 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 that all the people departed each to his own house his response is as the anointed one having been rejected by those who are closest to him nevertheless to begin to provide for those who are following in the way he begins to feed them care for them and notice what he says to

Michal at the end not only is his attention on a new family there's an indication to that rejected person that honor will come to him from outsiders look at verse 21 it was before the Lord who chose me above your father above all his house to appoint me as prince over Israel the people of the Lord and I will celebrate before the Lord I did this before the Lord I was unashamed in my desire to worship the Lord and have him at the center of my life and I made that known to everyone!

And if you don't like it guess what your servants are going to honor me anyway I will be honored if not by you by others for I shall be held in honor so says the anointed and so says the one we love so dearly and then it closes with a hint again just like the first panel what you do!

[40 : 40] with the ark determines everything whether it be blessing Obed Edom or the withdrawal of it Michal and Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death the already rejected line of Saul now dying out even within the household of David to one who could have seen a great personal reversal of fortune if she had merely embraced the presence of God in her life and so we come to the Lord's table that which signifies God's presence in our midst and the place of atonement it's a joyous table it's a sober table it's a table of thanksgiving but it's not to be trifled with in fact there are three kinds of people who shouldn't come to the table one are those who reject that

Jesus death actually mediates relationship with God how absurd for someone here today who doesn't believe that Jesus alone mediates relationship to partake of something that symbolizes that very thing and we would just encourage you if that's where you are today don't come but also perhaps there are some even in the church who are under the discipline of the Lord through the session of our church where this happens on occasion where the session actually requests that people would not come until certain things in their life are squared away under God's word we exercise that kind of protection in our family in all four congregations someone under the discipline of the church might not come and then there might be those who just are so out of whack with your own life and you know that it's a contradiction in terms for you to take this meal and yet be so unwilling to forgive anyone else what a contradiction in terms to treat this body and this body as if you won't live under what all of this is that calls you to but that said those three caveats aside what a table to come anyway sinners saved by grace in need of his strengthening that desire the presence of

God to be at the center of your very life in the life of our family a cake of bread a portion of meat a cake of raisins to each one our Lord gives you himself in this hour thing