

Kingdom Ways: The Way of Sacrifice

Introduction:

This morning I want to talk about creating a holy place for the Kingdom of God released, whether in our lives personally or corporately as a congregation. There are times in the Scriptures where we see heaven invading earth in profound ways. The Incarnation of Jesus is the most significant reality of “heaven on earth” the world has ever experienced. At other times God has chosen to reveal himself in dreams and visions and supernatural encounters.

I hear of Christians, myself included at times, that are crying out for God’s Kingdom to Come and his Will to be Done on earth as it is in heaven. We long for what some call an “open heaven” where God can freely interact with his people. However, many times we experience what others call “the heavens are made of brass”. The struggle between an open heaven and the brass heaven is something we must learn to overcome. There is a great movie called “The Field of Dreams” where an Iowa corn farmer, hearing voices, interprets them as a command to build a baseball diamond in his fields; he does, and the Chicago Black Sox come. I believe the same longing is in each of us for a miraculous encounter of sorts. The challenge in today’s world is to be able to truly encounter God and not some false deception of the enemy. The enemy is always helping us to find short-cuts to God, taking the easy road so to speak, whereas God’s ways challenge us to the very core of our being.

2 Sam 6:

I want us to look at a passage of Scripture that can give us some insight as to appropriately pursuing God with regards to his Kingdom coming and his Will being done on earth as it is in heaven. There is a story in the Old Testament that describes King David and his passion for God to be first in his life; this is seen in the context of the Ark of the Lord. So let’s turn to **2 Sam 6 (1 Chron 13:1-14; 1 Chron 15:25-16:3)**.

Firstly we need a little background information to set up this story well.

- **1 Sam 4-6** describes the defeat of the Israelites and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. Hophni and Phinehas were Eli’s sons and priests of the Most High. They did not handle the Sacrifices of the Lord with respect which I believe ultimately led to the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by their enemy.

God causes the Philistines to experience all sorts of problems directed towards their god Dagon and tumours towards the people because of their holding the Ark hostage. Eventually the Ark of the Lord is returned to Israel on a “new cart” pulled by two cows; key point to remember. The Israelites sacrifice the cows on the cart and celebrate the return of the Ark of the Lord. The Ark remained in obscurity at Abinadab’s house until David seeks to return the Ark to Jerusalem.

- The Ark of the Covenant, also called Ark of the Lord, was a small rectangular box made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The lid, or the mercy seat, sat on top of the Ark and had two cherubim facing opposite each other. It contained the two tablets of the Law and also the pot of manna and Aaron's rod. The Ark was a meeting-place in the inner sanctuary where the Lord revealed his will to his servants Moses, Aaron, Joshua and the Priests. Thus it served as the symbol of the divine presence guiding his people. Note: in the New Testament God's people now become the residence of God's Holy Presence.

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

2 Sam 6:1-11 - David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷ The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

⁸ Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

⁹ David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" ¹⁰ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

King David is committed to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem after staying fifty years in the house of Abinadab. In his previous battles with the Philistines David gathers the army and inquires of the Lord as to should he fight and how he should fight. However, in this passage of Scripture he gathers the army without inquiring of the Lord. Sometimes after a little success we can find ourselves self-confident rather than humble and dependent upon the Lord.

David does not follow God's direction (the Ark was to be carried by the Priests) and set the Ark on a new cart. David's passion for God was not in question; he led Israel with great celebration and praise, singing and dancing before God. We know that worship and praise of God are honourable but only when done so in humble obedience.

Uzzah reaches out to steady the Ark as a result of the oxen stumbling. A noble act, one of concern and yet God strikes him dead for his irreverent act. How many times have we tried to help God out in the business of his Kingdom only to find ourselves under great trial and opposition. We confess our sins and rebuke the enemy but nothing seems to change. Why; possibly because God is the one opposing our self-efforts to encounter the Kingdom of God. There are no shortcuts to an open heaven. There are no easy roads as we contend for the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. King David's celebration lacked any real consecration and the result was a cheerless death and the fear of God.

2 Sam 6:12-23 - Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷ They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

²⁰ When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!”

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.

After a period of three months, David had time to regain his composure and find out how to move the Ark according to God’s way. Some believe the distance between Obed-Edom’s house to Jerusalem was about 7 miles. Some Christian scholars think that every six steps they sacrificed a bull and calf – out of great reverence to God while others believe that they began the journey with a great sacrifice. Whichever is true, King David begins this journey home with the Ark with great fear and rejoicing.

King David’s abandonment to God is his act of worship; he is not in any way self-conscious of his passion for God. The Ark is placed in the Tent of David as more offerings are presented to God. It is interesting to note that in the Tent of David there was no veil covering the Ark of the Presence of God.

The story ends with Saul’s daughter Michal despising David’s ‘undignified’ celebration and ending her life married to King David but childless.

In Conclusion:

What are some of the lessons we have learned today.

- Celebration of God’s Presence must be accompanied by Consecration. There is a heavenly protocol so to speak with regards to drawing near to God.

- We are not to seek to protect God or defend God. God is more than capable to accomplish his will on earth. However, he is looking for partners in the Great Commission but this is carried out in his strength not our own.
- David learned the hard way to fear God by taking a shortcut with the Ark on a new cart. Man's ways are not God's ways and we must inquire of the Lord on a regular basis.
- King David sacrifices before God as he brings the Ark home. This is a great picture of brokenness. We must learn how to repent and be broken before God. Remember **Psalm 51:17 - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**
- One last lesson for me has to do with being God-conscious and not man or self-conscious. So often we are easily distracted by our self-life or by the people around us. We miss the opportunity God affords to us – to lose ourselves in him – because we are too afraid of what people may think or say about us. Peer pressure needs to be taken to the cross and killed.

In Application:

I am sure there are many other lessons that we could identify from today's passage of Scripture. I want to remind us all of the desire and passion to see Apprehend God's Heart and Fulfill His Dreams. Our entrance into the Kingdom of God is a wonderful gift of grace and faith through Jesus Christ. We need to celebrate and worship God for his generous gift to us – Jesus Christ our Saviour. However, Jesus is also our Lord and King. To know him as Lord requires a process called sanctification, whereby we are made into the character of Christ and our will is surrendered to his. This process has no shortcuts and is the only way to fully experience open heavens with our Father; shortcuts are often the reason we experience brass heavens.

Let's take some time to pray with one another for God's Presence to increase in our lives; remembering that there are no shortcuts.

Let's take some time to pray with one another for God's Presence to increase in our lives; remembering the way of repentance and brokenness.

Let's take some time to pray with one another for God's Presence to increase in our lives; remembering the need to crucify our self-consciousness and let God fully have his way with us.

Let's pray...