

Holiness and the Ark of the Covenant

Life of David—part 7

March 10, 2019

2 Samuel 6-7

DAY 1: The downward spiral of Israel away from God and into misery

1. After the people of Israel moved into the Promised Land, they began to settle their farms, towns, and homes.

2. The first five books of the Old Testament were in place, the land was divided among the twelve tribes, and there was a general time of peace ... for a while.

3. But as the book of Joshua ends and the book of Judges begins, a very ominous word is heard:

Judges 2:10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

Judges 2:11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.

¹² They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

6. What could God do to awaken the people and shake them back to Him?

Judges 2:14 In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist.

¹⁵ Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

7. In spite of repeated cycles of raiders, and then God providing rescuers, the people continued in their downward spiral. And then, the bottom is summarized in the following sentence.

Judges 21:25 (NIV) In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

Judges 21:25 (RSV) In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

8. The last three chapters of the book of Judges are illustrations of just how far down a culture can erode. The once thriving culture that God oversaw had become a former shell of itself.

Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

9. The goodness and holiness of God provide a nation and a people the bedrock they need to become a righteous and honorable people and culture. When holiness is lost, a culture will go into decline.

DAY 2: The rebuilding of holiness begins in shocking ways...

1. The ark of God was a box covered in gold, and contained the tablets of God's law Moses received on Mt. Sinai.
2. The ark was considered by God as the holiest of items in the nation.
3. The ark was also the symbolic presence of God among His people.
4. Since the ark contained the tablets of God's word, the ark was seen as the way of holiness for God's people.
5. If you've read the book of Leviticus, you realize just how high a value holiness is to God. God surrounded the people with pictures of holiness in virtually every area of their lives.

6. When the people understood the holiness of God, and the benefits of seeking holiness themselves, the goodness of God was demonstrated in the blessing of the nation.

7. But that lesson is a hard one to fathom when you have fallen as far as Israel had. This story makes that crystal clear.

2 Samuel 6:2 He (David) 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.

2 Samuel 6:3 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. When we casually read this story, we usually assume that Uzzah was doing something helpful, but the scriptures tell us something very different was going on with Uzzah. What does the scripture describe as Uzzah's intent and motivation? (v. 7)

2 Samuel 6:8 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.

9. At first David was stunned, then angry, then sullen and then passive aggressive. It took him a while to see the situation from a holiness and national perspective.

10. A severe lesson, to be sure, but this lesson would turn the corner in Israel's history, as the people began to build their lives and nation around the holiness of God again. A time of immense blessing and prosperity would follow all through David's kingship.

DAY 3: The ark sits at “home”

2 Samuel 6:12 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.

1. David's sullen and mopey response finally ends. David receives a stunning message about the ark. What message does he receive?

2. How do you think David responded?

3. Notice these five observations:

a. The blessing of God is very evident.

b. The blessing of God on someone is evident to others.

c. You can connect the blessing of God to a why.

d. The blessing of God is so evident that people mention it to others.

e. The effect of God's blessing upon Obed-edom was so profound that it snapped David out of his spiritual pity party and doubts.

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: David repents, the ark comes to Jerusalem; the holiness of God is reestablished

1. David has gone back to the scriptures, not only to determine how the ark is to be handled and carried, but the importance of returning to the holiness of God and the honor of God as bedrock for the nation.

1 Chronicles 15:2 Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever."

³ David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it.

⁴ He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites:

1 Chronicles 15:12 He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. ¹³ It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." ¹⁴ So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel.

2. There is a completely different attitude established as to how the people see God and how they relate to Him. What things do you notice?

3. One of the attributes you see in the people is a healthy fear of God. There is a healthy fear of God and there is another kind of "fear of God" that is not biblical. In the items below, place an "H" next to a healthy fear of God, and place a "U" next to an unhealthy fear of God.

Spiritual

Hurtful

Showing honor

Excellent

Apprehensive

Laudable, based on His character

Worthless

Servile

Reverential

Fear of displeasing God

Fear of torment

4. The fear of God is the awareness that God is God and I am not. It is to understand His laws are for our benefit, and to take His ways seriously, which ultimately lead to our eternal joy and benefit.

DAY 5: David's prayer for what he would not build

1. Now that the ark is in Jerusalem, and the holiness of God has been reestablished in Israel, David has it in his heart to build a temple for God.

2. That night, the prophet Nathan hears from God and delivers God's message to David.

2 Samuel 7:5 "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?"

⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.

⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

⁸ "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.

⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.

¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning

¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. "'The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:

2. God reminds David of all the things God had done for His people. Underline the deeds of God that strike you most, above.

3. God now turns to make promises to David about the future.

2 Samuel 7:12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

4. What is the essence of these promises to David?

5. As we age, we think more and more about the legacy we will leave behind. How do you think these promises struck David?

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?