

Greatness: The Life of Israel's Greatest King and How Yours Can Be Better
Worship – Part 1
2 Samuel 6

Introduction: The Book of Deuteronomy is the final sermon of Moses to the people of Israel, and in it, he made sure the people understood that there is only one way to properly respond to the revelation of who God is. Moses wrote,

4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Over a thousand years later, while being questioned by a group of religious leaders known as the Pharisees, Jesus made sure we understood the preeminence of this very simple to understand truth as well. Jesus said,

30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' (Mark 12:30)

Moses and Jesus were talking about worship, which is the proper response to who God is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Worship is not the singing of songs to God but rather a term used to describe the kind of relationship we are meant to have with God. While worship can drive our heart's songs and be a proper response to God, you can also sing all kinds of things about God and even to God, and it not be worship.

Worship is not a methodology or practice but rather the proper response to God that is fundamentally inseparable from the truth of who God is, what He has done, and what He will do, as well as necessarily genuine. Love is not love if it is not genuine; thus, it is impossible to properly worship God with anything else other than a genuine response.

Therefore, a lost world that either doesn't know the truth about God or willfully rejects it can't worship God. It's also why we who are followers of Christ are not actually worshipping God either when we rebel against His authority and power or refuse to believe His love for us! We cannot claim to be worshipping God if we are not properly responding to Him!

Now, with that as a very basic baseline understanding of what worship is and isn't, nothing has served my heart as a catalyst to worship the Lord more than the Book of Psalms, and nobody wrote more of those Psalms than David! First and foremost, we believe those Psalms were written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit; that is, they were breathed out by God through David (2 Timothy 3:16-17). But, as true worship always is, it wasn't God breathing some sort of creative genius into David as a poet and musician to arbitrarily come up with things, but rather God using those creative talents in the real-life circumstances of the victories, trials, and even defeats David went through to let us peer into what a genuine and proper response to God looks like in them! Therefore, if you want to really understand and appreciate the Psalms of David, to truly be inspired by the

sincerity of worship in them, then you need to know the circumstances of life that created them, and that's where books like 1st and 2nd Samuel help us.

As you read the stories of David's life, if you know the Psalms, you will frequently find yourself connecting the dots to specific situations that formed the environment for their creation. Even though the stories themselves are not about worship, you can quickly see how they created the environment for the Psalms to erupt from David's heart as a proper and, thus, also genuine response to God. However, in 2 Samuel 6 and 7, we have two stories that of themselves directly teach us about worship and, as such, point us straight to how the New Covenant in Christ, the Gospel, is an even greater lesson and inspiration for us to properly respond to God. We are going to walk through 2 Samuel 6 today, and then next week, we are going to tackle 2 Samuel 7. So let's get started.

After David had conquered the city of Jerusalem and established it as the new capital, the Bible says in 2 Samuel 6,

**1 David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand.
2 He and all his men went to Baalah in 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 on the ark.**

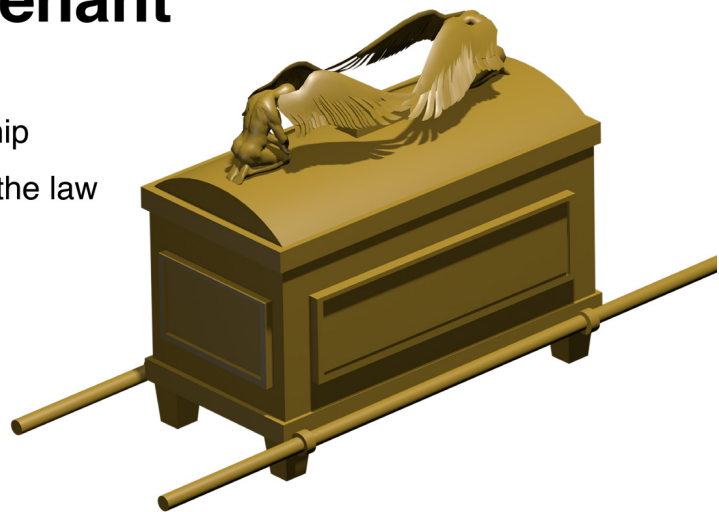
Ark of the Covenant

Exodus 25:10–22

Holiest object of Israelite worship

Contained the stone tablets of the law

Symbolized God's presence



COPYRIGHT 2011 FAITHLIFE / LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

The Ark of God, a rectangular box also known as the Ark of the Covenant, had been around since Moses, and it was explicitly built according to the instructions God gave him in Exodus 25.

“A chest made of acacia wood, the ark was 3¾ feet (about 1.1 meters) long, 2¼ feet (about 0.7 meter) wide, and 2¼ feet (about 0.7 meter) high.”¹

It was covered inside and out with gold. It held the tablets God gave Moses on Mount Sinai containing the Law for the Jewish people and Aaron’s rod, which God caused to bloom and bear ripe almonds overnight as a sign of the authority He had given Aaron and Moses (Numbers 17). It also held a pot of manna to remind the people of God’s faithfulness in supplying their needs when He brought them out of slavery in Egypt and thus the worthiness of God to continue to be trusted (Exodus 16:33)!

The lid to the ark was called the Mercy Seat. At each end of the lid were two golden cherubs with their wings outstretched towards each other as they bowed towards one another.

“Cherubim were the traditional guardians of holy places in the Ancient Near East.”²

And this is where the importance of the Ark starts to emerge. Thomas Crane did an exceptional job of digging into this subject last fall when he preached on the doctrine of the atoning work of Christ, so if you want to go deeper into this, hop on our website or podcast and check out that sermon. But in short, initially, according to Exodus 25:22, this box that was guarded by the two cherubim and contained the statement of His standards for the Jewish people as well as two testimonies of His power and trustworthiness was most frequently used by God as the place where He would speak to Moses and give him instructions for Israel. However, the ultimate use for the Ark beyond Moses was to serve as the place the high priest would go to once a year to pour the blood of a spotless lamb over the lid as a covering for his and the Israelites’ failure to not only uphold the standards of the Law within it but also their failure to properly respond to the God who had clearly demonstrated His authority and faithfulness to them (the truth clearly symbolized by Aaron’s rod that budded and the jar of manna).

Furthermore, there was a detail in Exodus 25 that may seem inconsequential, but it can’t be overlooked. Not only was the entire box covered inside and out with gold, but it was also supposed to have four rings forged of gold attached to it, one on each leg. Those four rings were designed to have two specific wooden poles that were also supposed to be covered in gold placed and left in them at all times. God’s instructions were very specific. Those poles were never supposed to be removed (Exodus 25:15), and whenever The Ark got moved, it was to be carried with those poles!

When it was made, the Israelites were very much a nomadic people with no permanent territory to dwell on. However, the instructions God gave Moses were not to leave those poles in the rings as long as they were a nomadic people but to always leave them in

¹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Hebrews* (Vol. 15, p. 239). Baker Book House.

² Alexander, T. D. (1994). *Exodus*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 112). Inter-Varsity Press.

there—period. Now, this may seem like an unimportant detail, but God’s instructions can never be considered as such, no matter how insignificant those instructions may sound to us. If God gives an instruction, the significance of the instruction is not so much in the instruction itself but in the one giving it. Therefore, if God says to scratch our head with our right pointer finger, it doesn’t matter how trivial that instruction may seem to us because the significance of the instruction is ultimately defined by the one giving it—God!

So, with that in mind, here’s what happened.

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 all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals. 6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

Now remember, the Ark is NOT supposed to be transported on a cart by oxen but by priests using the poles that are never supposed to come out of it! So,

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.

You and I can say it shouldn’t matter how the ark is transported, nor the law that God gave that nobody was to touch it (Numbers 4:15), but it doesn’t change the fact that we are not God, and therefore, we don’t get to decide. If God said don’t touch the ark and always transport it by the poles that are always supposed to be in the rings attached to it, then it’s not up to us what we think! But David didn’t see it that way. The Bible says,

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.

David was judging God’s instructions based on what he thought should matter to God rather than what ultimately matters to God—Worship! Worship is the proper response to God, and that starts with us understanding He’s God and we aren’t. Therefore, whatever He instructs us to do, no matter how we view those instructions, is to be fully obeyed because He, the almighty sovereign ruler of the universe, gave those instructions—period! God doesn’t have to justify anything He tells us to do because the justification is that He, the almighty ruler of the Universe, said so.

David’s anger soon led to fear. He wanted this powerful testimony of God’s covenant and favor on Israel to reside in the capital God had clearly allowed them to take so that there could be no doubt that God was with them, but there in seemed to be the problem. David seemed to want the Ark in Jerusalem for the same reason the Israelites went and got the Ark in 1 Samuel 4 and ended up losing it in the battle to the Philistines. It wasn’t a tool for David or anybody else to accomplish their agenda and certainly not for them to get glory

but a testimony of the one they were to live in submission to, the one they were to live bowed down to in worship because of His glory!

So, fearing what happened, David abandoned his plan to bring it to Jerusalem. The Bible says,

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 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.

When David found out that everything was, in fact, going awesome for the house Obed-Edom after receiving the ark, it shook David to the core in a significant way. The holiness of God that demands obedience angered and frightened David, but God's holiness and righteous wrath are not the whole story of God. If all you know is His holiness and righteous wrath, then you don't know God; thus, you can't properly respond to Him. However, when the news of the gracious blessings of God got back to David, David realized his response to God and the Ark God made for Israel to remind them of His covenant, authority, power, and faithfulness was not proper at all, and as such, David changed his tune.

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 to bring 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.

The book of Chronicles gives us a little more detail into what happened and how David was reminded that worshipping God and obeying God are necessarily linked!

11 Then David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab, 12 and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites. Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. 13 Because you did not carry it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule." 14 So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD. 16 David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. (1 Chronicles 15:11-16)

Now, here's where the story takes a really interesting twist. For those new to our study, David's first wife was the daughter of the first king of Israel. Her name was Michal and she

eventually betrayed David when she lied to her dad, telling him that David had threatened her life to make her help him escape the men Saul sent to arrest David. Saul then seemingly used that information to turn his government against David, and as such, David spent the rest of Saul's life on the run! However, after Saul's death, Israel ended up divided. David was declared the King of the tribe of Judah, but Abner, the feared general of Saul's army, used the remaining worthless son of Saul, Ish-bosheth, as his puppet king over the other eleven tribes. Eventually, Abner saw the writing on the wall and reached out to David to unite the Kingdom under David's rule. But David refused to even have the conversation until his former wife, who had since been divorced from David and married to another man by her father Saul, was returned to him as his wife. This was an utterly unbiblical act of vengeance toward Michal by David, and it doesn't deserve any justification at all, but nonetheless, Michal, the proud daughter of Israel's first King, was now one of David's wives. So why did I remind you of that? Well, here's what happened.

14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, 15 while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

“David, in token of a humble spirit, laid aside his finery for plain clothes—‘a linen ephod’—and ‘danced before the Lord with all his might’ (6:14). When they arrived at Jerusalem, David was still dancing.”³

“Yet that passage could also be understood as saying that he wore the linen robe up until he began to dance, at which time he removed it and wore only the ephod. In Phillips' view: “[W]hile the linen ephod was an entirely appropriate garment for a child to wear, it was not fitting for an adult. By wearing only a brief loin cloth normally found on young children, David indecently flouted the proprieties. ... This then explains why he is condemned for wearing the identical garment to that worn by the child Samuel. The linen ephod is not to be understood as a special priestly garment but a brief loin cloth suitable for young children.”⁴

So, what's David's ecstatic exuberance for God got to do with Michal? Well, watch what happened as the parade led by David entered the city!

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

³ Keddie, G. J. (1990). *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel* (pp. 43–57). Evangelical Press.

⁴ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (Vol. 2, p. 279). Lexham Press.

household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, **“How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view 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.

The fact of the matter is that Michal was intensely bitter towards David, and understandably so. David had taken her away from a husband who clearly loved her and put her in the house with all his other wives and concubines. Furthermore, despite the toxic relationship between the two of them, Michal clearly took pride in the fact that she was the wife of the King and, therefore, saw David’s actions as demeaning his kingship and thus her status as the wife of a King. What would other Kings think when they heard David was acting like this? Her father would never do such a thing! He ensured everyone knew he was King and treated him as such, which is why David pointed out to Michal that God had chosen him, not her father, to be King. It was clear to David that Michal expected him to act like her dad, and David had zero intention of doing that! As a matter of fact, David had no intentions of trying to respond to anybody’s expectations except God’s!

Although soiled with his bitterness towards Michal, David's response is still telling of what happens when we start understanding who God is! We don't care what people think of us, especially those who see themselves as important. Once we realize the only one worthy of praise and glory is God, we don't care what the people who think they are worthy of praise and glory think about us. Ironically, the slave girls that Michal thought would now mock David, David said, would actually respect him more because they have seen that the one David is living for isn't himself but God!

Summarizing how this chapter ended, Gordon Keddie wrote,

“David celebrated the goodness of God. When there was occasion to rejoice, he did just that. And even though there are occasions when the people of God have cause to be solemn and reflective, or to be crying out to the Lord in brokenness of heart, the predominant theme of our personal devotion and public worship ought to be a rising sense of the joy of salvation. The psalms show us the way. Many a time, the psalmist begins in the depths of his troubles and sorrows. But as he worships the Lord and reflects on his grace to his people, his heart is lifted above the earth-bound horizon of his problems [to the goodness and trustworthiness of God].”⁵

Once David saw the blessing of God on Obed-Edom, he realized he needed to stop responding to God in fear and instead respond to him with obedience and praise! God had made a promise to Israel, as well as David, and that promise included a Law they had to obey, but it also promised blessing and prosperity if they did. Once that truth, which David

⁵ Keddie, G. J. (1990). [*Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*](#) (p. 57). Evangelical Press.

had based so much of his life on prior to this occasion, got back into David's heart and mind, it led David to properly respond to God! David couldn't help but worship the Lord with obedience and outward exuberance—God, the almighty and all-powerful one, had chosen Israel and David to place his hand of favor on them, so what else could you do but properly worship Him?

Now, to wrap this up, let me give you three clarifications from the New Testament that amplify the lessons we learn about worshiping God in 2 Samuel 6.

Proposition: The following three lessons about worship in 2 Samuel 6 are best seen in the Gospel of Jesus.

The first lesson in 2 Samuel 6 about worship that is more clearly seen in the Gospel is that,

- (1) A proper response to God (worship) begins with a proper perspective of His wrath. It doesn't contradict His grace; it clarifies it.**
 - A. You and I have a much clearer testimony of the holiness and wrath of God than the death of Uzzah. God's wrath on sin is seen no more clearly than a bloody Savior on a cross. But it's that same bloody Savior that shows us His grace because that bloody Savior is the one and only eternally begotten Son of God!
 - B. **16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)**
 - C. That God was willing to pour out His wrath on His Son to rescue us from sin doesn't mean much if His wrath was nothing more than a stern talking to. But knowing the wrath of God is the horror of the Cross and that what Christ suffered in that horror was eternal death; that is, He fully suffered eternal separation from the Father and the Father from the Son, only serves to amplify the testimony of God's Grace in Christ! It's why Paul wrote,
 - D. **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 3:23-25)**

The second lesson in 2 Samuel 6 about worship that is more clearly seen in the Gospel is that,

- (2) A proper response to God (worship) is based on a proper perspective of His grace. It doesn't excuse disobedience; it confronts it.**

- A. When David saw God blessing Obed-Edom, he realized he had no reason to be angry at God. God is incredibly gracious. David just needed to remember He didn't get to disregard the Law of God. The goodness of God in Obed-Edom led David to go back to God's Word and find out how God said the Ark, which represented His covenant and presence with Israel, was to be treated.
- B. In an even greater way, when you and I hear that Christ paid the penalty for our sin, it should in no way lead us to excuse our disobedience but the opposite; it should make us realize how ridiculous we are in rebelling against a God who is so gracious!
- C. **1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4)**
- D. **1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:1-6)**
- E. John wasn't preaching sinless perfection but rather that those who know the incredible grace of God to send Jesus to be the full satisfaction of his wrath on our sin (propitiation) in no way causes us to want to sin more but rather to walk in what His death has freed us to walk in—His life! The forward lean of a person who is convinced of God's grace isn't to run from a relationship with God, but into it, and thus, it isn't to run to sin but righteousness!

The third lesson in 2 Samuel 6 about worship that is more clearly seen in the Gospel is that,

(3) A proper response to God (worship) is based on a proper perspective of His glory. It doesn't lead us to bow before man; it leads us to bow before Him.

- A. David refused to let his wife Michal deter his passion for God! He refused to worry about what people thought of his absolute love for God and the overwhelming belief that God's favor was on them in such a way that no matter what happened in their life, they had no reason not to praise him!!

- B. If that's true of David simply because of how he saw God bless Obed-Edom, then how much more should we respond knowing what we know about the cross, the empty tomb, and a soon-coming King? It's why Paul wrote,
- C. **9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-10)**
- D. Knowing the Gospel, this is how Peter and John responded to some religious leaders threatening them before a court to be quiet!
- E. **18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-20)**

Challenge: Who or what are you allowing to convince you to bow down to instead of God? Who or what are you allowing to rob you of the experience of properly worshiping God?