

**2 Samuel 6:1-19** David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. <sup>2</sup> He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah {2 That is, Kiriath Jearim; Hebrew Baale Judah, a variant of Baalah of Judah} to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, {2 Hebrew; Septuagint and Vulgate do not have the Name.} the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. <sup>3</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup> with the ark of God on it, {3,4 Dead Sea Scrolls and some Septuagint manuscripts; Masoretic Text cart 4 and they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill} and Ahio was walking in front of it. <sup>5</sup> David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs {5 See Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint and 1 Chronicles 13:8; Masoretic Text celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of instruments made of pine.} and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. <sup>6</sup> When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. {8 Perez Uzzah means outbreak against Uzzah.} <sup>9</sup> David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. <sup>14</sup> David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, <sup>15</sup> while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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 {17 Traditionally peace offerings; also in verse 18} before the LORD. <sup>18</sup> After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. <sup>19</sup> 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.

**“The Proper Way to Approach”**

Having come from the States, the proper etiquette around royals was not part of my schooling. We just go by the American Revolution-ary assumption

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that there “ain’t nobody no better than nobody else”. Up here in Canada, people seem to be better informed on such matters since Canada still has affections for the Queen. There is a proper etiquette concerning the Queen as well as there being appropriate topics to discuss with her that Americans just aren’t taught. Take former President George W. Bush for example, at a White House State dinner in 1991 when his father was President, George W. remarked to the Queen that he was the black sheep of the family and asked who was hers. First Lady Barbara Bush quickly interjected, “Don’t answer that.” Later when George W. was President, the Queen visited and at a press conference he had one of his famous slips of tongue remarking on how she had toured America in 1776. Instead of apologizing he turned and winked at her. He later described the look he got as one “only a mother could give a child”.

So, to keep myself from possibly making the same mistakes should I ever meet the queen, I decided to find out what the proper etiquette around the Queen is. Here’s what I found. When the Queen enters the room everyone must stand. It’s not required or expected that a person would bow to her. But if you do, men may bow the head at the neck and women may give a small curtsy. If the Queen extends her hand, she’s not looking for a firm grip and the double pump, so don’t go in for a full handshake; instead go for a brief hand touch. Your initial address to the Queen will be “Your Majesty” and in later conversation you will use “Ma’am.” If you engage in conversation with the Queen, accepted topics include anything in the public realm except that which has been made public by tabloids. A few don’ts, one does not say “pleased to meet you”. It’s considered redundant. Everyone is pleased to meet the Queen. One must not chew gum, put an arm around her as if she were a buddy, kiss her hand, wear gloves, turn your back to her, or eat after she has finished.

Well, anyway rudeness, improper etiquette, in the presence of the Queen won’t get you beaten or put to death these days but it is important to be proper around her because in a way she represents the entirety of the British people. Moving to our text in 2 Samuel it is for a similar reason that Uzzah died. There was more to it than just trying to keep the Ark of the Covenant from falling. The whole event was a mishandling of the Ark in such a way as not to pay God proper respect for the Ark represented the Presence of the LORD. There was a proper way for the Ark to be handled and King David acted inappropriately and the result was Uzzah’s death.

To give a bit of history concerning the Ark, the Philistines captured it some twenty years prior and brought it back to one of their main cities and placed it in the temple to their god, Dagon. The next morning the statue of Dagon was mysteriously toppled over and lying before the Ark. The following morning they found the head and hands of the statue cut off and placed in the temple entrance. Then plague fell upon the Philistines and so they decided to load the Ark onto a cart and let a team of oxen walk off with it. They determined that if it went straight back to Israel, which it did, that would be proof that it was the LORD who plagued them. After the Ark arrived in Israel, there were some who tried to look into the Ark resulting in over 50,000 Israelites being struck dead by the LORD. The Ark finally wound up at the home of a priest named Abinadab and he

and his two sons looked after it. Uzzah was one of the sons. The Ark was a dangerous thing to have around.

Twenty years it stayed at Abinadab's. During those years Saul was made king and then the LORD gave David the kingdom. When David had established the boundaries and had relative peace all around, he decided that he would build a tent for the Ark and bring it to Jerusalem. This is where things turn bad. David's decision to bring the Ark to Jerusalem was the first time in his career that he did not consult the LORD on a matter of national interest. He put his own judgment as “the King” into the place of God. Secondly, God had given Moses instructions on the handling of the Ark and David completely ignored them and it is debatable that he even knew them. The Ark had rings on it through which the priests would slide two poles so that it could be carried by four men without being touched because touching the Ark results in death. Instead of following those simple instructions David just had the Ark loaded onto a cart so that oxen could pull it. He in essence was handling the Ark the way the Philistines did. 1 Chronicles 15:13 states that Uzzah died because of this improper way of carrying the Ark. It's holiness, sacredness was not being properly respected. If they had been carrying the Ark correctly it never would have been tussled on the threshing floor of Naccon and Uzzah never would have died for doing what would seem to be the right thing.

This incident with Uzzah is probably one of the most troubling passages in the Bible. It is one of the passages that has been brought up throughout the history of the church by those who say the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament. Here God does not seem to be the God who reigns in steadfast love and faithfulness over his people but rather he seems to be tritely caught up in petty rules that he says must be obeyed or death is the penalty. Those who have said that and continue to say that the Old Testament God is not the New Testament God misunderstand the reason for those rules. In love, God gave his people those rules so that he might live in their midst and them not die. One of the basic Christian beliefs derived from the Old Testament is that fallenness cannot come into the presence of the holiness of God without first dying. So the LORD gave his people rules for approaching him so that they would not presume upon his holiness and wind up dead. We say the same thing today by saying the closer we want to draw to God, who has drawn infinitely close to us as Jesus Christ now through the Holy Spirit, we must die to ourselves. The name of this particular doctrine is I think a bit funny, mortification –dying to oneself.

The other side of the coin of mortification is vivification. God the Father has made us alive in Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The more we cooperate with this remarkable grace the more we die to self and the more we come to life in the image of Christ Jesus. In, through, and as Jesus Christ and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has made it so that we can not only touch the Ark, but touch God himself. In the book of Hebrews Paul or whoever writes: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near

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with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:19-23). The invitation of the Gospel in the New Testament is that we the fallen may draw near to God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and instead of dying, live forever. Again in Hebrews it says: “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Again it says: “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Drawing near to God in confidence to pray is what Jesus has made possible for us. The more we let our lives be filled with prayer the more the Holy Spirit will be at work in us making us more and more like Jesus who himself is always interceding for us. God has opened the doors of the temple that we might enter so that he may not kill us with his holiness but rather make us alive by it. Therefore, pray without ceasing. Amen.