



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

One of the more troubling passages in Scripture for many people is the story of Uzzah and the ark. In the account, recorded for us in 2 Samuel 6:1-11, the Israelites had just recovered the ark of the covenant from the Philistines. The ark represented the presence, power, and promises of God, as it contained the divinely autographed stone tablets of the Ten Commandments written with the finger of God. The ark (also called the ark of God) was regarded as sacred – a symbol of God's absolute holiness and sovereign glory. Consequently, God gave the Israelites very specific instructions as to how they should transport the ark, ensuring that no one would touch the ark itself.

Therein lies the serious problem. As David and the Israelites were bringing the ark back to Jerusalem, they disregarded God's commands and "*carried the ark of God on a new cart*" (2Sam.6:3). Rather than following God's Word, the Israelites decided to transport the ark in a way that seemed best to them. As the ark was traveling on this new cart, the oxen stumbled causing the ark to apparently totter on the cart. Immediately, "*Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it*" (vs.6). Then we read these severe, perhaps shocking, words: "*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*" (vs.7).

Sound too harsh? Do you think God may have over-reacted a bit? After all, we may surmise, Uzzah was just trying to be helpful. Why did God kill Uzzah for simply touching the ark? R.C. Sproul, renowned Christian theologian and author, offers this insightful explanation:

"[Uzzah] stretched out his hand and put it squarely on the ark, steadying it in place lest it fall to the ground. An act of holy heroism? No! It was an act of arrogance, a sin of presumption. Uzzah assumed that his hand was less polluted than the earth. But it wasn't the ground or the mud that would desecrate the ark; it was the touch of man. The earth is an obedient creature. It does what God tells it to do. It brings forth its yield in its season. It obeys the laws of nature which God has established. When the temperature falls to a certain point, the ground freezes. When water is added to dust, it becomes mud, just as God decided. The ground doesn't commit cosmic treason. There is nothing polluted about the ground. God did not want his holy throne to be touched by that which was contaminated by evil, that which was in rebellion to him, that which by its ungodly revolt had brought the whole of creation to ruin and caused the ground and the sky and the waters of the sea to groan together in travail waiting for the day of redemption ..." (*The Holiness of God*, 140-141).

God is dead-serious about holiness. He will not allow His holiness to be defiled, He will not approve of any unholy offering, and He cannot accept unholy people. This is a soul-staggering problem once we realize that we are unholy creatures – with unholy words coming from our mouths, unholy thoughts in our minds, unholy attitudes in our hearts, and unholy actions in our lives – utterly defiled by sin.

The real question is not "Why did God kill Uzzah for touching the ark?" but "Why did God not strike us down when we acted in an unholy way?" As always, the good news is found in Jesus Christ. The only way we can stand in the presence of the Holy God is by His grace through the atoning blood of His Son Jesus Christ (see Heb.9:11-14, 22; 10:4, 19). Those who put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior can stand in the presence of the holy God because – and only because – they are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ (see Rom.5:1; 8:1; 2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.3:18).

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David
(3/16/26)

Scripture Readings for the Week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #11):

Genesis 40-43; 1 Samuel 1-5; Psalm 30-32; Job 21-22; Isaiah 56-61; Mark 1-2; 1 Corinthians 5-6

Recommended Reading:

"The Holiness of God" by R.C. Sproul