

Second Samuel Chapter 6 - John Karmelich

Have you ever considered how God wants us to corporately worship Him? As we all know Christianity (and Judaism as well) has many different denominations with one difference being their worship styles of each one. I don't think worship styles matter much! As a former Presbyterian ("the frozen chosen" as they refer to themselves!) to the other extreme, Pentecostals ("swinging from the chancellors" as they'll jokingly say!) Anyway, Chapter 6 has a few lessons in how God desires to be worshipped. Yes we can disagree on worship style, but some things about worship are non-negotiable as this chapter implies!

Let me try to explain that a little better. Here in Chapter 6, David is king over all of Israel. It is about a 1,000 BC if you care! I'd argue Israel had no major enemy issues to fight at that moment so it's time for them as a nation to corporately seek God. One of the things Jesus proclaimed as God is how much and how often He wanted Israel to corporately come together to worship Him as a nation! (Matthew 23:37, implied!) This doesn't mean we have to travel to Jerusalem to worship Jesus, nor does it imply any one denomination has worship exactly as ordained. I'm positive God delights in His people gathering as for the purpose of worshipping Him. I don't think the specific style matters as much as our sincerity and a desire to worship God as He desires and by His rules. With that said, let me go through this chapter as they give us clues what God does and doesn't approve of as we worship Him.

In the last chapter, David was anointed king of all of Israel. The last part of the chapter talked about the fact he conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital. He defeated the Philistines the other major enemy in the land. Apparently whenever Chapter 7 started, things were calmer and David who had a heart for God figured in effect, "OK as God said, I'd be king now, and I've conquered all significant enemies we have in the area so it's time to thank God and worship him corporately. A parallel passage to this exists in 1st Chronicles Chapter 19. That chapter emphasizes that all of Israel came to the ceremony! Here in this chapter it emphasizes 30,000 soldiers who went with David to where the "ark of the covenant" was to bring it to where he wanted it (Jerusalem). I picture Israelites making a long trail and 30,000 soldiers went to get the thing with David.

For those not familiar with the most holy object in Jewish worship it's described in detail in Exodus. It is best to think of it as a "footlocker" sized box. It's a gold-covered wood box that contained a copy of the 10 Commandments. On top of was a detachable lid with two angelic statues on it. The last we saw of it was back in the early chapters of 1st Samuel when it was lost in a battle with the Philistines then it got returned. No mention of it since then. I suspect it hasn't moved since. All that probably did occur before David was born or maybe a young child! David realized it was the "centerpiece" to how God is desiring worship of Him, so off to fetch it David went! Today nobody knows where "it" is, but there is some theories and I'll leave it at that. Obviously, God's everywhere but just as we gather at a church to corporately worship Him the Israelites were called to worship God at a central spot, and "it" was going to be moved to Jerusalem to make that it's central spot for centuries. As Jesus stated, it was His desire for the Israelites to gather there to worship Him corporately. That's what David's organizing here! I'm convinced it's here to teach us the importance of how and why God wants us to seek Him corporately.

Anyway, back to the story. David took the ark from its location on a house on a hill. They made a new cart to carry the thing with the goal of transporting it to Jerusalem. My guess is a few days journey. If you read how the ark was supposed to be transported, it is supposed to be carried on poles, not in a cart as was done here. In fact, as the parade started, one of the ox pulling the cart caused the ark to stumble, so one of the priests guarding it set it right. At that point, God got ticked off they were not transporting it as ordered and that priest was killed there on the spot. That had to put a damper in the parade! Before

that happened we read of the Israelites celebrating with musical instruments as they started traveling to Jerusalem with the ark. Let's just say when the priest died, things came to grinding halt. The lesson is that God desires to be worshipped "His way". Carrying the ark represents the fact we're called to carry God as part of our lives as He is to be the center of it! Obviously, we don't have ark replicas where we worship, but the idea is we as Christians carry Him wherever we go.

The question at that point is what to do with the ark since they messed up? David didn't know if they're to continue and obviously he didn't want anyone struck dead! So David got a local there and asked him in effect, "Do you mind keeping this in your garage until we figure out what to do next?" I suspect that person was nervous, but one doesn't say no to the king. The guy's name was Obed. The text states God blessed him. My joke is "He won the lottery, his mother-in-law died and his business grew". I figured David found out God blessed him and David then said in effect, "Grateful you could hold on to "it" for me, but it's time for all of Israel to be blessed and not just you!" If nothing else this teaches us that God desires to bless those who worship Him as He desires. How does He bless us? The obvious is we don't have to worry about the eternal life issue! We can't sin enough to lose our salvation if we trust in Jesus, but we can be a bad witness for Him by sin!

Bottom line there was "Parade #2" with this time the ark carried and made it all the way to Jerusalem. I believe the ark remained there, till close to the time Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians many centuries after David! The text emphasizes the fact animals were sacrificed every six steps in this new parade. Obviously, God doesn't demand us to sacrifice animals in church. He does expect giving as to support those in the "professional ministry". Anyway, David danced among all of those parading their way to Jerusalem. (Sorry Presbyterians, God condones dancing!) You'd suspect that'd be the ending to this short chapter about honoring God!

However, we get one more story about proper worship. One of David's wives was the daughter of Saul. She complained that David's dancing wasn't dignified or "king like". David responded in effect with "if I want to dance with all my might to honor God what is that to you?" That wife was punished by David to no longer having sex with her again so she never had children! We can debate if that punishment did fit the crime, there was other underlying issues as to Saul's family having children that would be part of the royal line as opposed to just David's descendants, so I suspect there was more to that story.

Bottom line, God wants us to gather to worship Him. God does have rules in the sense we must honor Him and not ourselves when we worship God. We honor Him not to earn more blessing or be noted in say our community for how we worship, but simply because we are grateful for what God has done for us (our salvation) and out of gratitude we honor him corporately.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John