

## Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November Carrying His Presence

We have concluded our series on Divine Encounters and we are about to enter a series of “Preparing for His Presence”. Today’s message is just an introduction to this series as God begins to unravel to me what He wants to say to us. It is no accident, and it is no planning by me, that God has arranged the teaching of Dick Reuben on DVD that we are watching on Thursdays, to run parallel to the series He is opening up to me. He is the master architect, the master pattern maker, the Divine teacher and we should be excited to see Him at work. It means He is planning to do something amazing amongst us and He is seeking our co-operation in the process. There are many challenges for us if we really really want what He has for us, there is a cost.

During a recent training session at Yate one of our lecturers spoke on the two tabernacles of David, and it was as if the basic elements were nailed to my heart. The basis of the message was the preparation that was needed for David’s tabernacle, and the truth revealed in Acts 15 that we should be living in age of service and worship that matches David’s tabernacle.

We are in the coming weeks going to look in more detail at the elements of preparation for such an age of service and worship. However, my reading this week starts with 2 Samuel 7 followed by a reading from the passage in Acts 15.

### Reading

The passage in Samuel captured my thinking at the start of this week. Here was David after introducing the most incredible time of service and worship – 24/7 praise and ministry before the Ark of God (the representation of His Presence), in a tent with no veil preventing access from the very Presence of God – wanting to build a Temple, a permanent structure, for Gods presence. Why? Surely what he had built was fantastic, but his heart was not to have a residence for himself more splendid than what he had provided for God.

David’s heart was right, but he was about to remove the very model God intended to use to reveal how He wished to Tabernacle with mankind through the baptism of Holy Spirit. He did not want a permanent structure; He liked the freedom of service, worship and access depicted in the Tabernacle of David in the centre of the city of God.

God was willing to concede to David’s request, but not in his lifetime. God was going to let David’s son Solomon build a Temple, but for now let the 33 years of 24/7 service and worship continue in a tent.

God preferred the commitment, the flexibility, and the spontaneity of an army of worshippers who could move at any time. He had throughout the journeying of the Israelites, demonstrated in the Tabernacle of Moses; He was a God on the move with His people. He was the God who always determined when to move and where to settle, and right now at this point in time He had not told David it was time to settle in a permanent structure.

It is always a bad idea to build something, somewhere for God, in His name, without His say so and outside of His timescale. Notice how God had provided all the resources to David to build his palace through King Hiram, yet he had not sent the resources for a Temple yet. The resources came for the Temple when it was Gods time, and He gave them to Solomon.

God always provides the resources in for His places of worship, in His place and in His timing, but why the delay?

I can only surmise that a) God was enjoying what was happening in the Tabernacle, and b) it was a model He wanted imprinted on the minds of generations to come as His preferred dedication to service and worship rather than structure, and c) He might of wanted to see whether the people were at long last serious enough to give their whole being to service and worship. The people needed those 33 years of 24/7 to know how much preparation and dedication was necessary before setting up a permanent place of worship.

For 100 years prior to David erecting the Tabernacle in Jerusalem the Israelites had abandoned the Ark of Covenant, the symbol of Gods presence, to the Philistines and the house of Abinidab. The Levites had forsaken their priestly duties, and the people had turned to idols. The Presence of God, the Divine Encounter, was always with the Ark of the Covenant.

The Philistines could not handle the Divine Encounter, The Presence, their own god Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark (1 Samuel 5) On the second occasion the head and hands of their god Dagon were broken off, the people broke out in boils and tumours (1 Samuel 5:9) and so agitated were they by The Presence of God they sent the ark back on a cart to Beth Shemesh. Seventy of the people in Beth Shemesh died because they looked into the Ark, such irreverent treatment of the symbol of His presence cost them their lives and they sent the ark to Abinadabs house in Kiriath Jearim. Saying who can stand in the Presence of this Holy God.

So why did the people of Israel not establish a tabernacle immediately and install the ark into the centre of worship again? Why did they not take the ark back to Jerusalem? We unfortunately have a long sad history of their pagan worship until they could not stand the oppression of the Philistines that they gathered together to burn their idols, repent and sacrifice to God. Then they gained victory over the Philistines again but soon they rebelled against the prophet Samuel and sought a king and lived under the reign of Saul for 40 years.

Just as we heard on Thursday night of the way that Achan's sin had consequences for 36 others because he did not yield to Gods mercy and time given to make a sacrifice offering we see that Abinidab, the Levites, and Saul all failed to place the Ark back in its rightful place, at the centre of the nations worship. The consequences for the nation were drastic, significant oppression and injustice under the Philistines, and a turning to idolatry in desperation for hope, with the lack of the PRESENCE of God.

When we fail to place God's Presence in the rightful place at the centre of our lives, service and worship, we and the people around us will into sin finding pleasure in other idols. Pursuing and endlessly

working for money as our hope of survival. Pursuing self satisfaction in material and physical things, even turning to the sexual lusts of the flesh, and when we fall to these things the people around us are affected and they adopt the same attitudes to life.

Saul lost his kingdom for lack of complete obedience to the word of God, and died because he inquired of mediums. Both of these actions bought instability to the nations as a whole.

Without the Presence of God at the centre of our lives, we find ourselves liable to sin, we naturally find ourselves doing the things we do not want to do unless we KNOW Him as Paul says in Philippians

***Philippians 3:9-11***

***and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>1</sup> NKJV***

Pressing into knowing Him is what will keep us from sin, when we are pursuing His Face, His Presence, Divine Encounters that is what changes us to become more like Jesus day by day.

33 years of 24/7 service and worship before His Presence will have changed people. That was more important than a permanent building for Gods presence. More important than the rituals. More important than a select few entering the tabernacle. This is His design that all His priests, which includes all those saved by Jesus Christ, should serve and worship before His holy presence all the time.

We are individually the tabernacle of His Spirit, we carry His Presence, we are the Divine Encounters for many, but we need to stop in that place. As priests of the Most High God we need to ensure that we pursue holiness, and deal with all our trespasses living the sacrificial and repentant life to which we are called. Only by this way can we individually and corporately maintain the flow of the anointing.

Yes I accept that God is very gracious to everyone of us, and gives us generous amounts of opportunities to turn from our wicked ways, but we must love His presence more than anything else.

Love Him more than meetings. Meetings in themselves do not mean we are pursuing His Presence. Hunger after teaching and worship is good, but do not let it stop there. Love Him more than our families. Families are God given good gifts and responsibilities but they will not be blessed unless our pursuit is His Presence. Love Him more than our homes. Love Him more than our own lives. Seek first His righteousness and all the other things will be added unto us.

Just like David we want to build a place of service and worship, and God wants us to establish a place where His presence is pursued above all else, in our individual lives and our corporate lives. I have no doubt that He will make provision of a place for His presence for us to serve and worship in. In fact He already has it is right where ever we are at any minute in time and I suspect that it will follow a temporary structure, a temporary residence, that is already flowing in the anointing of His Presence.

We must dedicate ourselves to practising His presence in whatever we are doing. We have to actively remind ourselves He is with us all the time and seek to constantly involve Him in our thought processes. See how that changes your responses to situations

I am not saying we have to be perfect before we have building, that won't happen this side of glory, however let us determine to do everything we can to welcome His Presence and anointing. Let us be prepared, to remove all the obstacles, to raise the valleys and make the mountains low, let us straighten our walks. Let us deal with all the trespass offerings, and remember the importance of forgiveness.

### **The Ark of Covenant**

When we are filled with Holy Spirit, as I have said earlier, we become carriers of His Presence, we are the Face of God. There are times when we live in full recognition, and submission to this Presence in our lives and we flow in the anointing. We do not lose our salvation, but I am

sure you will agree the anointing does seem to ebb and flow. We cannot determine the amount of flow as Holy Spirit will flow where He wills, and we are channels.

The problem is that our lifestyles can often cap the flow of the well that should spring up from within us. As we pursue the knowledge of His resurrection power, as we pursue righteousness, as we deal with our trespasses upon His conviction, AND as we remain obedient to Him, then the well can be drawn on.

He always gives so that we can give away. We are meant to leak, ooze, His anointing to others, not cap the flow. Who have you deprived this week, as well as yourself, of a touch from Him because of a bit of rubble thrown into the well, a little bit of self serving interest, a bit of negative thought or comment, a careless glance or reaction, a trespass into areas you should not have gone? We all do it, and we all need to reach into that well and remove the rubble, deal with our trespasses before the well is stopped.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed , me, to preach good news to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to the captives. To proclaim the year of favour of our God.

Anointed to do, not to stew.

### **Holy to the Lord**

The priests who ministered before the Lord, and carried the ark, wore turbans to remind them that they were "Holy unto the Lord". When we have given our lives over to Jesus and accepted His forgiveness of our sins, we have begun the journey of Holiness. We daily appropriated the blood of Christ to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we seek to live the repentant life because we have been in His Presence and it has changed us.

Carrying His Presence requires that we deal with all those trespasses against God and our fellow man, so as not to cut ourselves from God and the flow of the anointing.

When we are in the flow of His Presence and anointing we can carry Him into all sorts of situations and see changes occur. The waters parting for us to cross over into our promised land, the blessings to fall upon our house and life because of His Presence.

Those that welcome His Presence, and host His Presence, by doing as He instructs live under the blessings like Obed Edom who would rather be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord. Whenever you read of Obed Edom he is there in the middle of things wherever the ark was he had learnt that's the place to be to have a blessed life.

Uzzah on the other hand, and David learnt, that to carry His Presence in a manner irreverent to God was costly. David failed to ask the Lord how to move the ark, and he used a cart, this was not Gods pattern. For 100 years the ark had not been the centre of Israels worship and movements, the people had forgotten the prescribed mode of transport was on the shoulders of the priests.

It is worth noting that the Ark was designed to be carried higher than any other piece of Tabernacle furniture. The poles were meant to go through rings at the base of the Ark, so the whole Ark was above the shoulders of the people. Most pictures actually depict the poles midway up the long side of the ark, which is incorrect, but was the way the rest of the furniture was carried. The Presence resided between the cherubims, and in carrying it in the prescribed way the presence remained between the priests and went FORWARD in the direction of the priests, the rest of the people following behind. The shoulder represents authority and responsibility. Pips on a uniform, epaulettes. PUT YOUR SHOULDER into it. The place of strength.

It took at least four probably eight priests to work in unison in carrying the Presence forward in an agreed direction which they had heard God direct them to go.

The same is true for us leading a people forward in Gods direction requires a unity of purpose, requires a corporate holiness.

Joshua 3:3 Joshua instructs the people to follow the priests carrying the Ark at least 2000 cubits behind it. The leadership gap – it is requisite on all leaders to be ahead of those that they lead. Each one of you as a leader of others needs to be ahead of those they are leading.

Under the Old covenant the priests were under strict instructions as to how they approached the Ark, the Presence of God. Aaron could not according to Leviticus 16:2 approach JUST AT ANY TIME, he had to wait until He saw Gods presence. The Levites who carried the ark were not allowed to look into the ark, in fact it was supposed to be covered with the Tabernacle veil whilst they carried it, so they could not even look upon the Tabernacle furniture.

The sin of Uzzah, the sin of David, in moving the ark on a cart and reaching it out to steady it was one of impetuous familiarity with the Presence of God. Uzzah had become familiar with the ark in his household and thought nothing of touching that which is sacred. David was eager in his pursuit of God to move the ark home without consulting the word of the Lord for the correct pattern.

We must be careful in carrying His Presence not to reach out in a presumptuous manner. We cannot afford to try and move Him in a way that does not follow His pattern.

The death of Uzzah led David into two experiences he had never had before

He was angry with God

He was afraid of God

These were life changing experiences for David, and so often they are life changing experiences for us also. We all have to come to that place of accepting God will do what He wants to do, and He is righteous and just in all His ways. Our anger will often stem out of our presumption on the way God should act, and He understands this, but asks for our faith in His divine nature of love, mercy and justice.

The Presence of God requires an acceptance by us of His Ways, His patterns, and His desire for us to come before Him holy to carry His Presence wherever we go.