

Seeking God after the Due Order ó Part 1 of 2
(I Chronicles 13:5-14)
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

- A. Today we will be considering a passage of scripture found in chapter 13 of I Chronicles where it is described how the Lord made what is called a ðbreachö upon a man named Uzza, striking him dead simply because he touched the Ark of the Covenant to steady it on the cart as the oxen pulling it stumbled. In my study, I found this phrasing of God having made a ðbreach upon Uzzaö interesting and we will examine how that same phrase is used not only in chapter 13, but in chapters 14 and 15 as well.
- B. In fact, Iød like to introduce this message by having you look with me at the usage of this phrase in I Chron. 15 where David is referring back to the events recorded in chapter 13. In verse 11 of chapter 15, we see that David is speaking to these leaders of the Levites and picking up in vs. 12 we read, ð*And said* (i.e. David said) *unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.* ¹³ *For because ye did it not at the first,* (referring back to how it was handled as recorded in chapter 13) *the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.*” Here he is referring back to the same ðbreachö made upon Uzza as it is likewise referred to back in chapter 13 where weød read about Godø immediate breach (or outburst) in striking Uzza dead when he merely placed his hand to the ark to steady it. And here in chapter 15, David tells them this took place “*for...*” (or because) they did not seek God after the due order. And thatø what we will be examining today in the 1st of a 2 part series of messages that Iøve titled, ðSeeking God after the Due Order.ö

II. Background:

- A. Well, to understand what this means, it will be most helpful if we understand why their actions, specifically Uzzaø action, resulted in what is called this ðbreachö (or outburst) by God against Uzza, God immediately striking him dead when he put his hand to the ark. As Iøve said, I found the use of word, ðbreachö intriguing as it is used here I Chron., chapters 13 (which weød focus on today), but also in chapter 14 (which weød look at in the part 2 of this series).

B. Meaning of the word, ðbreach:ö So first let me share with you some insight into the meaning of this word, ðbreach.ö The word means ðoutbreakö or an ðoutburst.ö I checked the usage of the original Hebrew word as it is used throughout the O.T. and found that it was often used in the context of something bursting or a breaking out or a breaking in. As we will see in the message to follow this one, in chapter 14 the same Hebrew word is used to describe God's action, but there the English translation is that God ðbroke in uponö David's enemies and he described it as like the ðbreaking forth of waters.ö And so the word seems to indicate an immediate breach, like that of a dam bursting. And likewise as we will see in today's text, chapter 13, it denotes an immediate manifestation of God's wrath being poured out, as in an immediate intervening act or a breaking in upon by God. And so by understanding why God made a breach upon Uzza, intervened or broke in with an immediate judgment in striking down Uzza, perhaps God might teach us lest we would in like manner tragically fail to seek God after the due order ó that is, in opposition to His prescribed way.

C. Background on the Ark: Now before considering the text, I need to share some background information concerning the Ark of the Covenant that will help us understand the significance of Uzza's mistake.

1. In the book of Exodus, God gave specific instructions to Moses regarding how Israel, as His chosen nation under the terms of the Old Covenant, were to worship and commune with Him. The main elements of that covenant depended upon (1) the Tabernacle, (2) The Priesthood, and (3) the Sacrifice and Altar. And without these there was no covenant or provision for worship and communion with God. And all of these typified eternal salvation (not for national Israel as they were in fact God's chosen people under the terms of the Old Covenant for temporal deliverance by God). But rather, these elements typified eternal salvation for spiritual Israel ó a likewise chosen people, but from every nation ó chosen unto eternal salvation in Christ. And these elements all typified how God saves or delivers His people eternally per God's specific, prescribed way ó that is based solely upon the shed blood and imputed righteousness of Christ, and that alone being His due order ó God's way of salvation.
2. Now the whole tabernacle was built primarily to house the Ark of the Covenant. In Exodus 25, God gave very specific instructions to Moses regarding the construction of the ark, its dimensions, its materials, etc. And among all the precise instructions, He told them to cast 4 rings of gold and to put them on the 4 corners of the ark. And to make staves of shittim wood (believed to be acacia wood) and to overlay those with gold. ðStavesö is simply the plural form of staff ó like rods. And He told them these staves were to be put in these rings on the sides of the ark that they might be borne (or carried) by them. And He said that these staves were not to be taken out of these rings.

II.C. Background / The Ark (Con't.):

3. And God told them that inside of the ark they were to place the testimony (referring to the Ten Commandments that He would give to Moses, inscribed on the 2 stone tablets). He goes on in chapter 25 to describe the details of how the mercy seat was to be constructed of pure gold, giving all the dimensions, etc. And He told them that they were to put the mercy seat above and upon the ark.
4. Then in Ex. 25:22, he tells them, ***“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”*** It was in the Tabernacle, above the mercy-seat over the Ark of the Covenant, by the High Priest, based on the shed blood of animals, that God would meet with and commune with them.
5. These detailed instructions were so important and vital that they were not to be tampered with, corrupted in any way, or ignored. Why did these things have to be so precise? Well in the last verse of Ex. 25, verse 40, after telling them how to make all these things, He said to Moses, ***“And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.”*** It was because of the ðpattern,ö and the cause for which these were all intended. God had actually revealed to Moses the Person and mediatorial work of Christ that was prefigured by these types. Christ was that pattern and so to worship any way other than God’s prescribed way which typified the way of eternal deliverance by Christ, was not to be tolerated. The nation Israel was to worship God in this Tabernacle, through God’s appointed high priest, and based upon God’s appointed sacrifice. To seek to worship God in any other place, through any other priest, based upon any other ground, was idolatry and disobedience.

D. Christ is the Ark: The book of Hebrews makes it clear that these earthly things typified heavenly things. As was revealed to Moses, Christ Himself was the Pattern they were built after. He was the Tabernacle, the Priest, the Sacrifice, and the Altar. And the law residing inside of the Ark of the Covenant was a magnificent representation of Christ. He is the true ark wherein the law is magnified and honored, for he alone kept it perfectly and satisfied its just demands. This law contained in the ark, having been broken, served as a continual reminder that they needed a covering ó they needed mercy.

E. Christ is the Mercy Seat:

1. And just as that mercy seat that sat atop of and covered the broken law, Christ is the mercy seat for spiritual Israel. The word ðmercyö in Hebrew signifies propitiation and in the N.T., the same Greek word is translated both as mercy seat and propitiation. As many of you know, in Romans 3:25, God tells us specifically that Christ is the propitiation or the mercy seat.

II.E. Background / The Mercy Seat (Con't.):

2. So herein we see the importance and the reason for the preciseness regarding these elements of the Old Covenant. Propitiation or mercy seat means the appeasement of God's wrath whereby God shows favor (or mercy) that is unmerited by the sinner ó but it is merited. It reflects that God shows mercy, but only by way of justice being satisfied. These elements teach us that it is in Christ alone (the mercy seat), based upon His satisfaction alone that any find mercy before God ó i.e. ó we have portrayed precisely how God forgives and purges spiritual Israel from their sins. In Christ's Person and work (correctly understood), we see how God's wrath would be appeased in such a way that reconciliation before a holy God would be made. We see that this only comes by the complete and perfect satisfaction to God's justice that Christ alone could and did make in His obedience unto death. And that is the sole basis upon which reconciliation is made for law-breakers (sinners) before a holy God who cannot commune with sin.

F. A perfect righteousness required: And so none except those for whom the satisfaction due unto their sins has been rendered by Christ's shed blood at Calvary can ever know, worship and commune with the one living and true God. Mercy is only found for those who possess a perfect righteousness / a perfect satisfaction that allows them to stand accepted before a holy God ó accepted in the beloved, the mercy seat. The law must have been kept perfectly for them ó both with regard to the obedience of its precepts and with respect to the sufficient penalty having been extracted ó the debt paid in full to God's justice due unto their sin. And the only way to possess such a righteousness is by God's gracious imputation or crediting of it to the sinner's account, in the same way that the sins of all whom Christ represented in His life and death were charged or imputed to His account, that He might bear the penalty in full that would satisfy God's holy justice.

G. Why it is so precise: So like those elements that were patterned after Christ, God's way of salvation in Christ is likewise a precise way that is set forth in His specific Gospel message ó the gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. God's mercy is in Christ, Crucified ó nothing subtracted, nothing added, nothing else! As Paul said in I Cor. 2:2, "***For I determined not to know any thing (i.e. ó any other thing) among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.***" Well that's why the instructions pertaining to the ark and these other elements under the Old Covenant were so specific and so important ó they pictured the Person and work of Christ ó Christ and Him crucified.

H. Intro to Text:

1. In the beginning of I Chron. 13, it is recorded how David consulted with the leaders of Israel and they were in agreement to bring the Ark of the Covenant back from where it had been kept in the house of Abinadab. The history of the possession of the ark prior to this is interesting and you can read about that in I Samuel 4 and following.

2. To summarize its immediate history leading up to our text, in I Sam. 4 you can read how the Philistines had fought Israel and taken the ark away and they kept it for about 7 months. And it was nothing but trouble for them to have done so. God sent them plagues and killed many of them with these terrible tumors referred to as *emmerods* in the scripture. Accordingly, they couldn't get rid of the ark fast enough and finally decided to build a cart to be pulled by oxen and to send it back to the Israelites. Well, the oxen providentially found its way to Israel, first to Bethshemesh. And even there, God killed over 50,000 of the men of Bethshemesh because they had dared to look into the ark. Well, the men of Bethshemesh sent messengers to Kirjath-jearim (Kirjath-Jeairim) to come and fetch the ark and they took it back with them to the house of Abinadab where it remained there for at least 20 years (& some say 50 years or more not certain.).

III. Breach of Uzza: (I Chron. 13:5-14)

- A. Now, in I Chron. 13, after having agreed to bring back the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Abinadab, we pick up our reading in verse 5 (Read I Chron. 13:5-14, adding commentary).
- B. Borne by a new cart:
 1. Well, we see that their mistakes actually began back in verse 7 where we read that they set the ark of God upon a new cart. It was not to have been put upon any cart (old or new) but as I've already mentioned, God had instructed that it was to be borne upon men's shoulders and only carried by Levites (the tribe from which the priests were appointed). And in Num. 7:9, we learn that it was also to be borne by those Levites of the family of Kohath to whom no wagons were given (unlike other families) for they were the ones appointed to the service of the sanctuary and to bear the ark upon their shoulders with the staves through the rings.
 2. It is not clear why that with so many gathered together here, including Levites, priests, not to mention David, who were well versed in the law, that they did not proceed according to its due order, by having the Levites bear it upon their shoulders with the staves inserted through the rings. A reasonable assumption is that they were led by the example of the Philistines, who put it in a new cart that took it to Bethshemesh and appeared to not have been punished for having done so. Now there is a distinction to be made in that the Philistines were heathen, ignorant of the Law of Moses and they had no proper persons (no Levitical priesthood) appointed by God to bear it. And in actuality they did not go unpunished for having taken the ark and for their dealings with it. As I've already noted, God sent plagues of tumors that killed many of them over the 7 months that they had kept the ark.

C. Why was this breach made upon Uzza?

1. Good intentions:

- (a) Uzza, as Abinadab's son, had been attending to the ark, and was engaged in this honorable endeavor to take the ark to a place prepared for it in Jerusalem.
- (b) And so, when the ox stumbled, Uzza dare not let it fall.
- (c) David's displeasure (as we read in vs. 11) was most likely because he could not readily submit and understand why God would break in so harshly for what probably seemed like a small matter. No doubt this put an immediate damper upon their festive mood of celebration and worship, resulting in David's decision to reconsider things, taking the ark to the home of Obededom instead of to Jerusalem as planned.

2. Well verse 10 gives us the answer. It says there that God's anger was kindled and He killed Uzza ***"...because he put his hand to the ark:..."***

- (a) Some of you may be wondering how the ark was transferred to the new cart without someone having touched it. Perhaps it was transferred by using the rings, perhaps with the staves as God had specified. I even considered that it could be the same new cart that the Philistines had built, though it seems unlikely that it would still be called *ōnewō* by this time. In any event, we can't be sure how it was handled because it isn't recorded for us to know. But we can learn something from this sudden outburst (or breach as it's called) of God's judgment and wrath in killing Uzza, then and there on the spot.
- (b) When it comes to the ark of the covenant wherein God's greatest glory was pictured ó the mercy seat representing Christ's work of redemption ó man's hand cannot touch it ó man can play no part whatsoever in God's way of deliverance. It is by His mercy, the propitiation or satisfaction that Christ alone can and did make in His sacrificial obedience unto death. The insertion of man's hand is contrary to the specific and precise provision that God made for His people by sending His Son as the propitiatory sacrifice. As Romans 11 teaches us, if there is any element of works, it is no longer grace and salvation is by grace alone. The involvement of man's efforts, his hand, (no matter how well intentioned, and no matter how small of a role it may presume to play) is indicative of the notions of all who continue to travel down the broad road that leads to destruction as they continue to imagine that surely there is some little something that I must do, or must be done through me, the sinner to make a difference in my salvation ó so as to contribute to my gaining or maintaining the favor of God.

D. In keeping with the truths of the whole of scripture, we see pictured in this story several truths:

1. That God's outpouring of His wrath will come when He decides. Perhaps in transferring the ark others had touched it and were not immediately struck dead. We have to look no further than prevalent sinfulness of our own generation to see how long-suffering God is to not simply go ahead and end it all as He will when all of His people for whom Christ died have been brought unto Him. Yet ultimately, He will be vindicated in the day of His choosing. Perhaps others had touched the ark without immediate retribution from God, we don't know.
2. But we see from this outburst (or breach) that God's judgment, when it does come, is sudden and swift. Scripture tells us that no one knows precisely when Christ shall return in judgment on this world but it does tell us that it shall be swift and sudden, like a breach of a bursting dam ó in the twinkling of an eye.
3. Thirdly, we see that God's judgment shall surely take place ó it is sure. When it comes to the vital issue of the gospel ó of salvation conditioned on Christ alone, in sharp contrast to its antithesis ó the religion of works (man's hand touching it in imagining that salvation is conditioned on the sinner in some way or to some degree), God will not play. Let's not kid ourselves. There awaits a dreadful end for many equally well-intentioned, zealous, religionists. God ultimately will make a breach of final judgment upon any and all who persist in the natural, initial self-righteous notions that imagine that some work of our own hand plays at least some small part in obtaining or maintaining God's favor or appeasing His just wrath against sin.
4. Lastly, we see the terrible, but just results when folks ignore or neglect God's due order pertaining to His redemptive glory. All of the specifics given to Moses concerning the treatment of these elements, including the ark, hereby are proven to be not mere trivial details that are optional, that one may choose to ignore, but rather this preciseness was critical to the well being of those privileged to possess the ark where God would commune with them and they could worship.

IV. Summary / Closing

Now, up to now I've been majoring on God's just wrath against sin. But it's important that we recognize that God's Breach (or Outpouring of His wrath) is not a dreadful truth for all. God's people are not drawn to seek God's prescribed way of salvation, (a way so opposite to our own preconceived, sinful notions), simply out of an awareness of how strict and devastating His judgment against sin ultimately will be.

You see, God also has made a breach (so to speak) that favors His chosen people. We will look at that in more detail in part 2 of this series where we will see an excellent example of this in the very next chapter, chapter 14. There we will see God's favor upon His chosen people, the nation Israel, as He intervened; He broke in and delivered them from their enemies, the Philistines.

And likewise, there is deliverance for spiritual Israel, God's chosen people from all nations unto eternal salvation ó a complete and total deliverance from their enemy, sin and Satan. And this deliverance is due to God's breach or breaking in ó His intervention in having sent Jesus Christ and having imputed or charged the demerit of all their sins to Him that He might endure the wrath of God as their Substitute. Now that's a breach that is glorious to those who look to Christ as their true mercy seat for all of their salvation. For there and there alone, we find mercy or propitiation.

Well, when you consider this, how is it today that men fail to seek God after the due order? How do blind, lost sinners, such as we all are initially, err in our approach to God, in seeking to gain His favor and avoid His just wrath? Well, like Uzza, many are well intentioned, sincere, and even zealous. Just as Uzza was busy attending to the ark ó God's prescribed place to commune with His people, so many today are busy in attending churches where much is said about Christ, the One pictured by that ark and the mercy seat. And they mean well as did all of us while we groped about trying to seek God in the lost, blind condition that all sinners begin with. Like David, we naturally struggle with imagining that God would be so precise and so harsh as to pour out His wrath on such well intentioned men who know many truths pertaining to the triune God.

Many make much ado about Christ and His death on the cross, particularly this time of the year (near Easter). But here is the sad part: we all naturally presume that there is nothing wrong with the small little part we presume to play in our own salvation ó as we put our hand (perhaps ever so slightly) to that which in reality only the precious blood of our mercy seat could and did accomplish.

That putting of our hand to it comes in various forms. Some of the more popular versions will have us imagine that God has done it all through Christ, but you must appropriate that blessing to yourself. You simply have to let Him into your heart, or accept Him as your Savior, or pray some prayer, or just open your hearts door unlike those more obstinate sinners who shall perish, etc. But in imagining that the difference between an eternity in heaven or hell rests in our decision, we dared to put our hand to that which took nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness ó His perfect satisfaction.

God will not share His glory. Dare not imagine that anything done by, in, or through you, the sinner, could ever assist, complement, complete or rival in any way the work of our Savior that He alone finished at Calvary by totally bearing away the sins of His people ó by the shedding of His precious blood!

But there is good news for all of those who are brought under this gospel of grace ó brought to rest in the truth that God's wrath was poured out on their Substitute, the mercy seat, the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross! And God raised Him from the dead, thereby evidencing His complete satisfaction with His propitiatory sacrifice.

We need mercy ó God's favor by way of satisfaction to His justice ó that's the righteousness we must have. So, seek God after the due order ó exclusively in Christ, the Lord our righteousness, our ark, our mercy seat!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.