

Lessons from the Death of Uzzah

by John Isaac Edwards

Much is to be learned from a reading of 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13-16, which records David’s attempt to move the ark of the covenant and Uzzah’s death.

You Gotta Go by the Right Standard. 1 Chronicles 13:4 records, “...for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.” A thing may be right in the eyes of the people, but not be right in the Lord’s sight! “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). God’s ways and man’s ways are different (Isaiah 55:8-9). Jeremiah exclaimed, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

There Is Nothing New Under the Sun. Remember the words of the wise man, “...there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9)? How true! When the Lord’s people “...carried the ark of God in a new cart...” (1 Chronicles 13:7), this really was not new. The Philistines made “a new cart” when they sent back the ark in 1 Samuel 6:7. The Lord’s people never have come up with anything new. They said, “Give us a king...” (1 Samuel 8:5-6), because the nations about them had kings. We don’t need any new carts today; just a newfound appreciation for the Lord’s way of doing things!

God Means What He Says. If you don’t think God says what He means and means what He says, you might want to have a little talk with Uzzah about that. God said, Don’t touch the ark, lest you die (Numbers 4:15). Uzzah “...put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God” (1 Chronicles 13:10). How sad! When God says not to touch a thing, I need to keep my hands off of it! When we learn the strictness of God’s law, we will learn a principle that many do not appreciate.

Seek God After the Due Order. David declared, “...the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order” (1 Chronicles 15:13). God’s order for ark-moving involved the Levites carrying the ark with “staves” (Numbers 4). God is a God of order and His order must be observed and respected. God has given order concerning the church: its organization, work, worship, name, terms of admission, and the like. For example Paul wrote the Corinthians, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Corinthians 16:1). We dare not tinker with the divine order!

A failure to learn these basic truths has led a multitude of people down the road of apostasy.

Altars from Damascus

by John Isaac Edwards

2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 record the reign of wicked Ahaz, who "...reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God..." (2 Kings 16:2).

Among the acts of Ahaz, 2 Kings 16 records, "And king Ahaz went to Damascus... and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof" (verse 11). When the king returned home, he "...approached to the altar, and offered thereon" (verse 12).

The Lord had given a clear pattern concerning "an altar" (Exodus 20:24-26; 27:1-8). Ahaz was so enamored with the Syrian altar that he laid aside the Lord's altar pattern and introduced an altar from Damascus. Think with me about some modern-day applications.

Mechanical Instrumental Music. The Lord's New Testament music pattern calls for "...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). The Roman Catholic Church introduced mechanical

instrumental music, protestant denominations adopted it, and some of our brethren have seen it and approached to it. This is but an altar from Damascus!

The Social Gospel. In the latter part of the 19th century, denominations in America became involved in trying to improve the society around them. The social gospel concept has become attractive to some among the churches of Christ as brethren have involved the church in the support of human benevolent institutions, contributing to Christian schools, supporting medical missions, sponsoring entertainment and recreation, building gymnasiums and family life centers, and on it goes. Jesus came "...to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and the church is "...the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Like Ahaz, who modeled his altar after the altar he saw in Damascus, sometimes brethren will be off somewhere and see something some church has or is doing and think we need that back home. May I kindly suggest that you just leave it in Damascus?

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