



First Baptist Church of Bradenton, FL

Watchman Prayer Alert

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On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. – Isaiah 62:6

Comfortable with the Presence

“By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.”

-Matthew 10:34

“How can you make this request of me? We’ve been friends. I’ve served you many years. My lord, did you miss what just happened?” Obed-Edom asked the king.

For many years, the Ark of the Covenant had been housed in Kiriath Jearim at the home of Abinadab, about eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. During the life of the prophet Samuel, the Ark was taken in battle. After the plague broke out and decimated two royal Philistine cities, they placed the Ark on a cart and hitched it to two milk cows. Miraculously, the cows

headed straight for Israel. The people of Kiriath Jearim appointed Abinadab to house the Ark and set aside his son Eleazar to tend it. Saul never moved the Ark during his 40-year reign.

Shortly after his rule began, King David decided to bring the Ark to Jerusa-

lem, and they loaded it on a new cart. Ahio and Uzzah, two of the sons of Abinadab, drove the cart. When the oxen nearly toppled the cart, Uzzah put out a hand to steady the Ark. Uzzah died instantly when the power of God struck him.

Now, the king was asking Obed-Edom to take possession of the cherished national treasure. David offered the challenge once more: “ My friend, who else can I trust with our nation’s greatest treasure? You are

a valiant warrior, and you are a Levite. You must guard the Ark of the Covenant for me, for our glorious God!”

Perhaps somewhat reluctantly, Obed-Edom took the famous ark into his own household, and it changed his family forever.

I took some liberty as I described how this scene might have played out, but you can find the story of Abinadab and Eleazar in 1 Samuel 7 and the story of Obed-Edom in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 and 15. Let’s take some time to look at the lives of these two men and see how the presence of God affected them.

Ark of the Covenant

When Moses built the tabernacle in the wilderness, he also commissioned the construction of the Ark of the Covenant. It was built of the lightweight acacia wood 3.75’ long by 2.25’ wide by 2.25’ deep. It was covered with pure gold, inside and out (Ex. 25:10-12). At one time, the Ark contained a golden jar of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the Law that Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai (Heb. 9:4).

Atop the Ark was the mercy seat of God with two gold cherubim facing each other (Ex. 25:17-22). This is where Moses (Num. 7:89), Aaron (Lev. 16:2) and Joshua (Ex. 33:11) would go to meet with God, because this is where the presence of God rested. The Ark was housed in the tabernacle in the holy of holies, and once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go in to burn incense and talk with God (Lev. 16).



Inside this issue:

Comfortable	1
A Word from Mark	3
Pastor’s Corner	3
Member’s Needs	4
Military	4
Salvation	4
Friends & Family	4
Cancer	4
Shut Ins	4

Before Excalibur (continued)

“Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.”

*1 Chronicles
28:20*

Decades with Abinadab

When the Philistines returned the Ark, and it came over the hill pulled by milch cows, the men of Kiriath Jearim elected Abinadab to take care of it. We don't know how long the Ark remained with Abinadab. At one point, the Bible tells us 20 years (1 Sam. 7:2). However, Saul was king 40 years (1 Sam. 10:24), and the Ark was not moved during his reign. At any rate, the Ark remained on the hill in Kiriath Jearim for several decades before King David came to claim it.

We have to wonder how Abinadab stewarded the presence of God in his home. Was the Ark stored in his barn? Was it given a place of honor as a museum piece might have been? Perhaps it became the heart of his home where he actually went to meet God for himself.

When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, two of Abinadab's sons led the cart, Ahio and Uzzah. Neither Abinadab nor Eleazar is mentioned. I would have expected Abinadab to accompany the precious Ark he tended. If Abinadab had already died, I would expect Eleazar should have led the procession. Instead, two other sons are assigned the mission. One of them, Uz-

zah, was killed for his irreverence. Perhaps he was a little too comfortable with the familiar presence of God in his home.

Because of this circumstantial evidence, it is my guess that Abinadab fulfilled his civic responsibility to protect a sacred relic, and he assigned the chore of its care to his sons. There is no mention of Abinadab apart from this story to indicate that the Ark held any significant meaning for him. You'll have to judge the story for yourself, but I believe Abinadab's story is included to show the dichotomy between Abinadab and Obed-Edom.

Three Months with Obed-Edom

On the other hand, I believe the presence of God became the central focus of Obed-Edom's life. His devotion affected his sons for generations. The Ark was only stored at his home for three months, and the Bible tells us that God blessed Obed-Edom.

Rabbinical legend tells us that Obed-Edom lit a candle in front of the Ark every morning and every evening while it was in his home. We don't know if that's true, but judging by the rest of the story, I think it's safe to conclude that the presence of God captured his heart and he was wholly

devoted in his service to the Almighty.

After only three months in the presence of God, Obed-Edom relocated with the Ark to Jerusalem. Then, he, along with 68 relatives (1 Chr. 16:38), served in the tabernacle, near the Ark. They were security guards, musicians and worship leaders.

We are told that Obed-Edom was a Gittite (2 Sam. 6:10), but we can only guess what that means. Perhaps he was born in Gath-Rimmon in Dan. Perhaps it means he was from the Philistine city of Gath. If he was from Gath, he could have been one of David's bodyguards, because David sought refuge in Gath with King Achish when he ran from Saul. However, I don't believe Obed-Edom was a Philistine, because he is listed later in a line of Levites (1 Chr. 15:18).

Obed-Edom was one of the Levitical guards who accompanied the Ark to the Jerusalem tabernacle (1 Chr. 15:18). He couldn't leave the "chore" to another. He was also a musician who played the lyre before the Ark (1 Chr. 15:21).

Years later, Obed-Edom, his eight sons and many grandsons served before the Ark, keeping guard. God blessed Obed-Edom for his devotion and 62 of his direct de-

scendants were consecrated for tabernacle duties during his lifetime (1 Chr. 26:8). His passion was contagious. His entire family caught his vision. The hunger for presence of God drove them.

We are told that Obed-Edom sheltered the Ark and then accompanied it Jerusalem. He moved his family to Jerusalem because of his encounter with the presence of God. His name "Obed" means the "servant who honors God in the right way." He certainly lived up to his name, and God honored him in return.

In My Home

If you've asked Jesus to be the Master of your life, then His tabernacle is within you, and you are also a steward of the presence of God. When all is said and done, I want to be an Obed-Edom kind of steward.

Abinadab cared for a price-

less box. Obed-Edom saw the true treasure, the Presence that rested above the Mercy Seat. Tending the presence must not become a chore or a duty. Rather, passion must drive deep devotion. I will not settle for taking responsibility for the stewardship of a relic. I want the blessing of the intimate relationship with the God enthroned above it. Are you fulfilling a ritual or going through the daily motions of caring for a work of art? Or, have you discovered the true meaning of that masterpiece? Is your Master in the box, or is it His dynamic presence that you chase.

Uzzah became comfortable with the presence of God in his home. Levitical law gave clear instructions on the handling and transport of the Ark. If the Ark had been stored at my home, I'm sure my husband would

have read and memorized every rule for its proper care. Surely the priests or Samuel left explicit instructions with the family. However, the years of casual contact with the Ark led to complacency. God must not be treated casually or placed in an elegant coffin. The Lord of the Presence resides above the mercy seat, and He is to be feared. He is awesome in majesty, not to be taken lightly.

"Abinadab" means noble. He lived up to his responsibilities. Obed-Edom, however, honored God the right way. It was Obed-Edom who was blessed. Now is a good time to check our own motives. Why are we serving God? Is it because our devotion is expected or is it service from the heart?

May we never become complacent or completely comfortable with the presence of God. May it always hold the wonder to be pursued at all cost. ✂

A Word from Mark



Mark Fulghum is our Watchmen Prayer Coordinator. You can e-

mail him at mark@vprayer-warrior.us.

Why is it that one man pursues God with a passion and another becomes complacent? How do I make sure I do not take the Lord God for granted? Psalm 63 was written by David when he was in the wilderness. It was a difficult time, but if you read this passage you see the hunger he has for God.

In this Psalm David expects God to do great things. David recognizes the character of God. He acknowledges that God is his provider, and he is in pursuit of God. David says, "My soul follows close behind You." This is a model for us. Expect God to do great things, recognize His blessing and follow close behind our Lord. Passion doesn't just happen. ✂

Pastors Corner

- Rick and Tracey Lineberger
- Russ and Jane Kitching
- Pete and Jodie Rodewald
- Jimmy and Brenda Vann
- Eric and Emily Vorhies
- John Gregory



