

# 2 SAMUEL—WEEK 4

## GLORY LANDS



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is Bathing Bathsheba by Artemisia Gentileschi (1593 – 1656)  
On display in the Neues Palais in Potsdam, Germany*

The ark finally makes it to Jerusalem, but not without some major drama. They transport the ark and Uzzah is struck dead. Then Michal criticizes David for his dancing and celebrating, and he sets her straight.

But the ark still doesn't have a permanent home, and David is offended by that. This leads to the LORD making a messianic promise to David that his dynasty will be eternal.

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2 Samuel, Week 4 — Glory Lands  
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1 2 Samuel 6:1–7

*Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals.*

*And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.*

Step back for a moment and think about what's going on here. The ark is valuable. Compare its value to, say, the Mona Lisa.

You can't. The ark is incomparably valuable. It's more valuable than all the da Vinci paintings put together—by factor of ... what? It's not even that kind of valuable.

David understands this and wants to move it back to its rightful place. So, how would you move the Mona Lisa? Two men and a truck? Okay, so how would you move the ark?

*"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; ... You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. ... but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. — Exodus 25:10a, 12–15, Numbers 4:15b*

This isn't funny; it's an important lesson, but it sure sounds like a, "You might be a redneck if-" joke.

What were they thinking?

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Their problem isn't stupidity; it's ignorance.

That's not a joke. There is plenty of evidence that the whole nation only had one copy of the book of the law, and sometimes they couldn't even find it. The commands they violated would only be known to a select group of scholars. Besides, the ark had been safely transported on a cart before (by the Philistines).

*Then take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it away, and let it go. — 1 Samuel 6:8*

In our literate society, where everyone has a Bible, it's hard for us to imagine their lack of knowledge.

2 2 Samuel 6:8–13

*And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.*

*David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.*

*Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep.*

Who is David angry at? Is he angry at God for His harsh punishment of Uzzah? Is he angry at the sons of Abinadab, who were transporting the ark, for not knowing the law. Is he angry at the scholars who failed to teach them the law?

The text doesn't say. It's possible he was just angry. The Hebrew that's translated as "was angry" (יָחַר, yay-khar) actually means "was hot." He doesn't have to be hot at somebody. His plan to bring the ark home with a flourish of pomp has hit a major snag and he's hot about it.

And David's heat is combined with fear of the LORD. Maybe bringing the ark home isn't such a hot idea after all (pun intended). *So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.*

Only when the LORD blesses Obed-Edom does David feel he has a green light to finish moving the ark to Jerusalem. And notice this little detail.

*And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep.*

This time it's not on a cart.

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Just imagine the scrambling in response to the king's anger over the death of one of his servants. Can we call this a "come to Jesus" moment?

Surely someone recalled God's commands about how the ark is supposed to be moved. Maybe they even found the book of the law and looked it up.

But the important part isn't that they carried the ark properly; it's that they woke up to the seriousness of the LORD and His commands. Hopefully, they read more than just the section on moving the ark.

That can be worth the cost.

3 2 Samuel 6:14–23 (ESV)

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn.*

*As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.*

*And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!” And David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will celebrate before the LORD. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.” And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.*

How beautiful it is that Michal can call David out like this—even if she is wrong. The next person to call David out harshly will be Nathan the prophet lighting into him about his sin with Bathsheba. People (especially kings) need advisors who can talk to them frankly, and husbands need wives like Michal.

But she’s mistaken about the appropriateness of David’s dancing; so he sets her straight.

Then comes the heartache—Michal is barren. This is difficult, but the passage doesn’t say that the LORD did this, nor that He was angry with Michal. More importantly, Michal has been barren for years before this incident. The text could just as well have said that Michal *remained* childless to the day of her death.

Michal’s barrenness is context for this conversation, not a consequence.

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Michal is one of the more interesting and sympathetic figures in the Bible. If her criticism of David is the worst thing she’s done, she’s quite a saint. As David’s first wife—the only one he paid a bride-price for—she is, by all rights, his queen. Her bold confrontation with David seems to confirm that status.

But it’s a touch too bold. There’s a hint of jealousy here. Why couldn’t she wait for a more appropriate time to pull him aside and express her concerns? What’s the rush?

Michal’s barrenness, combined with her great love for David, plus his many wives, has put her on edge.

4 2 Samuel 7:1–7

*Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.”*

*Then Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”*

*But it happened that night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’ ” ’ “*

This is one of the most glorious passages in the whole Bible—not for what it says, but for how it feels.

David doesn’t just notice that his new house is nicer than the tabernacle; he’s ticked about it. A lot of guys would see that their house is the best in the land and say, “How cool is that?” But David is offended.

You don’t learn that by simply memorizing scripture.

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David has a “thing” about God’s glory—a thing we should all try to get. This is a deep lesson, but it’s essential, and it’s all over the Bible. It’s what Jesus was talking about when He said:

*“If you love me, keep My commandments.” — John 14:15*

The Greek word that’s translated as “love” here (ἀγαπάτε, agapate) is a conjugation of the verb for sacrificial love. When written as a noun, the King James Bible uses “charity” instead of “love” for this word. Keeping the Lord’s commandments is loving Him in that sense. It’s not about feelings, it’s about pursuing the good of another. That’s what David is doing in today’s passage.

Except that this is about feelings. The holiness and dignity of God and His ark aren’t just a priority for David; they’re his heart’s desire. Most kings would look at this scene and be pleased, thinking they’ve arrived.

But David notices what’s lacking. This is not because of something he learned in Saturday School, or a pledge he made to honor the LORD and His ark. It’s just how he feels.

Great. So, what’s the trick for gaining a heart for the LORD like David’s?

No trick; it just takes time—a lot of time, time with the LORD, time spent depending on Him, time learning that His priorities do not always match ours.

For David, that time came while he was guarding sheep.

5 2 Samuel 7:8–17

*“Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.*

*“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’*

*According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.*

Few passages in scripture are so highly praised by the commentators. It’s profound, beautiful, and messianic. Some consider it the summit of the Old Testament.

But consider how we got here. Imagine David tending his father’s sheep. We saw the attitude his father and his brothers had towards him. When Samuel came to anoint the next king, his father didn’t even think of David when he presented his sons to Samuel. David, stuck out in the field tending sheep, surely prayed that he would gain their respect.

And how did God answer that prayer? By sending a lion. And a bear.

And this didn’t just grow David’s skill with a sling; it grew his relationship with the One who sent the lion and the bear.

The summit had a long path to the top.

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The LORD didn’t just discover that there was someone after His own heart. He grew him from scratch.

And the key fertilizer was trials. David was blessed, but not with rest. Just imagine his reaction to a lion or bear showing up. If it was after he prayed for respect from his family, he might have said something like, “Really? This is your answer?” His faith would have been sorely challenged. Yet deliverance in the trial would have answered that challenge. Afterwards, he would have had plenty of time to think about it.

Eventually, maybe even not until after he killed Goliath, David figured out that the lion and the bear really were answers to his prayer.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What's the most valuable object in the world?
2. Have you ever messed up by not following the instructions?
3. What are the signs of a healthy marriage?
4. Are God's priorities becoming more "instinctive" for you?
5. What is the greatest blessing you've received?

*Items for prayer:*