

The Compass

Week 21

OT Readings – 1 Samuel 29:1 – 2 Samuel 12:31

NT Readings – John 11:55-16:33

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- Remember that 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel are one story.¹ 1 Samuel will end with the death of Saul (1 Sam. 31); 2 Samuel will focus on David.
- David will first be the king of Judah and then after a period of struggle, king over all of Israel. (2 Sam. 5)
- 2 Sam. 7 has implications that will play out in the rest of the Bible. In the NT one of David's descendants, Jesus, will become King of kings, thus bringing about the Davidic kingdom that "endures forever." (2 Sam. 7:16)
- Following a short description of David's achievements (Ch. 8, 10), the narrator focuses in detail on David's greatest failure – the sin with Bathsheba (Ch. 11-12).²
- Beginning with Nathan (2 Sam. 12), watch for the role of the prophet in the OT scheme of things.³

New Testament

- John 12:37-50 is a summarization. Jesus' rejection fits Isaiah's word; then John provides a brief summary of Jesus' message.
- 13:1 begins the final section of John. The setting of chapters 13-17 is the last Passover meal. Jesus demonstrates who He is, the greatest Servant (13). He then prepares them, "I am leaving, but the Spirit is coming." (14-16) Untold riches are to be mined in these few chapters!⁴
- Picture yourself with them in these last hours. What would you be thinking and feeling?⁵

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

John 14:5-9. Here is one of those direct statements about Jesus' identity, His essential oneness with the Father. We might smile a little at Phillip's lack of perception, but do we really get it? The picture the Gospels present of Jesus is clear, even if it is limited and leaves us wishing for more detail.⁶ Are we *gripped* with the truth that Jesus is not simply God's representative, but He is God incarnate; He is God's *representation* in human form? (Heb. 1:1-3)⁷

If we are to truly know God, to see Him for who He really is, then we must start with Jesus. How did He treat people? What was His heart toward those around Him? What was important to Him? What did He value? If you could have walked beside Him as one of His disciples, how would that have changed your understanding, shaped your understanding of God?

Many question the "difference" between the portrayal of God in the OT and the NT picture of God in Jesus. Here is where we must start – with God in human form, living in our space, fully seen on our turf. When we see Jesus, then here is the Father! What do *you* see?⁸

Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

Jn. 14:15-18. Jesus is sharing intimate, personal and final thoughts with His disciples and friends before the tumultuous events of arrest and death. He says, "IF you *continue* to love Me, THEN you will *continue* to obey Me." How often have we reversed this? "When I obey, then I show that I love Him." If we make obedience the *foundation* for the relationship we will quickly slide into some sort of legalism and performance. Isn't obedience important? It is essential and absolutely important. The question is why and how? Jesus gives us both.

The *why* is that "obedience is the reasonable **response** to a love relationship." When we focus on getting to know God, letting Him love us and resting our lives in His love, we find that obeying will naturally

follow. The *how* is the Holy Spirit. In Jn. 14:16-18, Jesus promises that another “Helper” is coming. This Helper will be to them exactly like Jesus was to them; He will come alongside them, teach them, empower them, live “inside” them. It is the Spirit who now enables us to know God and walk in His ways.⁹

Difficult Question of the Week

2 Samuel 6.¹⁰ Q. Why would God kill Uzzah for touching the ark?

The ark was the single most important symbol of God’s presence and relationship with His OT people. Regulations for its care and movement were given so as to protect the ark and more importantly what the ark represented.¹¹ It seems that David ignored these regulations and in doing so devalued God and the ark’s purpose. It was an act of presumption and it cost Uzzah his life. Had the ark been handled as it should have been and by the right persons, this incident would never have occurred. *The way they handled the ark revealed something of the condition of their hearts toward God.*

Because of their presumption, they put God into an extremely difficult situation. When the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out to steady the ark, God was faced with an incredibly difficult choice. If God let touching the ark go, He would be encouraging their casualness and irresponsibility; more importantly it would devalue all that the ark represented. So Uzzah died.¹²

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¹ In fact, 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings form one story.

² Clearly David’s character is of primary concern to the narrator.

³ The prophetic voice will continue to be very significant to the life of Israel. The prophets would be the voice of God to challenge not only the kings, but also to confront the people with their sin and disloyalty to YHWH and to call them to repent and return when they so frequently strayed.

⁴ One thing is for sure – Jesus knows that His time with them is now limited. If you were Him, what is it that you would want to say to them? Without a doubt He shared with them only those things which He felt were absolutely essential; the things nearest and dearest on His heart. Watch for the intermixture of instruction, comfort and preparation. The Spirit passages are hugely important and find their fulfillment in the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost.

⁵ One could spend weeks reflecting and meditating on these chapters! What is the Holy Spirit bringing to your attention? How should you respond?

⁶ John says that the “many other things Jesus did” couldn’t be contained in all the world’s books. Jn. 21:25.

⁷ Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus is the “character,” (καρὰκτῆρ) the exact representation of God, i.e., He is God.

⁸ The Trinity is an established understanding of the NT, albeit a mystery (meaning not fully comprehensible). We must continually remember the context of the OT if we are to correctly understand the portrayal of God in the OT. Also, remember that the picture of God in the OT is limited – it simply doesn’t tell us everything we want to know. How often have you said, “Now I understand” when you get just a little more information about a situation or person? Jesus is that “more” insight to help us process what we read about God in the OT.

⁹ I believe that Jesus was excited at this prospect. He knew that in human form He was limited, but now with the Spirit’s coming, there would be no limitation to His presence in the lives of His followers! Read John 16:7.

¹⁰ Take time to read the parallel account which is found in 1 Chron. 13-16, it helps with our understanding of what happens here.

¹¹ I have likened the ark to the wedding ring. It represented something intimate and profound between God and His people which is why God asked that it be treated with the utmost respect. By devaluing the ark, they were devaluing God’s presence with them and their relationship with God. Worse, it may have been a repeat of Eli’s son’s attempt to use the ark as a talisman. (1 Sam. 4)

¹² I do not believe that this in any way means that Uzzah was being punished or “went to hell.” Rather, Uzzah was in the wrong place at the wrong time and took the wrong action, though perhaps the natural one, given the oxen’s stumbling. Fundamentally what happened had little to do with Uzzah and everything to do with God’s ongoing relationship with Israel. It bears pointing out that this incident occurs early in David’s reign. If God has been casual about all of this, then what would have been the implications for the future with David as king, especially given the earlier issues with Saul?