

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning, we are continuing our study through the book of Exodus, we are going to cover chapters 23 and 24.

We are going to continue to look at some of the laws that God gave the Children of Israel through Moses –

The Children of Israel had already received the Ten Commandments from God; these laws provided more details on what the Ten Commandments were all about.

As a young Christian, this was the portion of scripture that always derailed my pursuits of reading the bible from cover to cover.

And my thinking was – “Why do I need to read and understand all these laws” I am not saved by adhering of the law – I am saved by grace.

The thing to understand is that the Children of Israel were not saved by the law either – they were also saved by grace.

They are no longer in under the bondage of slavery – God delivered them without giving them the law.

By giving them the law. God is giving them principles to live by so that they can stay in the Promised Land.

God is letting them know, “This is how I want My people to live”, “This is how I want My people to conduct themselves in this world”

And as you do these things, you will draw closer to Me.

Let's pray...

[Exo 23:1-33 NKJV] 1 "You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

So the first law that we find is one of spreading things that are not true.

God commanded that an accusation required at least two witnesses to be verified – so people would be tempted to ask someone else to falsify their testimony in order to act as a second witness.

This is lying – providing a false witness against your neighbor – it's one of the Ten Commandments.

This could also be someone spreading gossip about another person – “I heard that she was doing this with this person”

This could be someone only providing one side of the story in order to sway someone to their side.

Or it could be the recirculating of false rumors –

We live in a time where we get so much misinformation from social media.

It is bad enough we get it from the news – but we also get it from individuals who decide to spread something just because they heard it or because someone posted it.

We are supposed to verify that something is true before we open our mouths or hit the enter button – that is what the word of God commands.

We are not to sin with our mouth.

That is why James commands us in his epistle – “let every man be swift to hear and slow to speak”

That is why God gave us two ears and one mouth -

2 "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert [justice].

The next law we have one here has to do with peer pressure.

There is something about our human nature that wants to belong.

We want to be accepted by others – we want to go with the flow.

However, the danger of this is that often, the flow can be going in the opposite direction of what God desires for us.

Sometimes you will hear someone try to justify their own sin and at the same time tempt you by saying, “Well that is what everyone is doing is today”

This goes for our actions as well as the words we speak.

3 "You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

In the same way that we don't show partiality toward the rich in a court case, the judges were not rule in favor of a poor person simply because they were poor.

Just because someone is poor – it doesn't mean that they are innocent.

So, God wants us to treat everyone with integrity regardless of their social status.

4 "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

This is a "who's-my-neighbor" thing.

As Jesus would describe it, the real question is, "Who's neighbor are you?"

You're everyone's neighbor - including your enemy's.

You're to do good, as a good neighbor should.

Don't just help people you like, help out the individuals you don't like (enemies).

This law goes beyond the rescuing of the animal – I believe the focus is on the restoration between those that are at odds against one another.

And the only way we get rid of the bitterness that resides in our hearts regarding those individuals is by praying for them.

Jesus said -

[Mat 5:44 NKJV] 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

6 "You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

Earlier we saw that we shouldn't show partiality to those that are poor – here it says the opposite - that they were not to found guilty or prevented from receiving a fair hearing simply because they were poor.

7 "Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. 8 "And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

God is makes sure to emphasize to these judges and elders the importance of pronouncing judgments solely based on the truth.

They were not to allow themselves to be persuaded by false testimonies and bribes.

God wants to make sure that they don't kill innocent people.

9 "Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

This is the second time we find this command in the Book of the Covenant that God gave to Moses.

We saw it last week in verse 21,

And God is commanding the Children of Israel not to be bigoted toward the gentiles. Not to look down upon them or treat them badly simply because they were gentiles.

For the believer, this means that we do not look down upon those that are not saved – those that are still struggling with sin.

And we tend to do this because we forget that we were just like them before we came to Christ.

We were once strangers as well.

[Eph 2:11-13 NKJV] 11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

You see, God adopted us in His family – He did all the work.

Therefore, we are to demonstrate no oppression or prejudice toward others.

10 "Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, 11 "but the seventh [year] you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard [and] your olive grove. 12 "Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed. 13 "And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

Here we have the laws of the Sabbath –

Now, Jesus Christ is our Sabbath – He did all the work so that we can have rest.

We do not work for our salvation.

In the New Testament, not once did the early church force it upon people to observe the Sabbath.

There are however, religious groups that still try to force this idea of having to keep the Sabbath.

And they will make a big deal about worshipping on Saturday and not doing work that day.

My question to them is, "What Sabbath do they keep?"

Because there is also a Sabbath year – They were allowed to work the land six years and then allow the land to rest that seventh year –

So if you claim that you keep the Sabbath, does this mean that you quit your job and not work during the Sabbath year? And of course, the answer is no –

The Children of Israel were not to work the land on the seventh year and this is a law that they broke and one of the reasons that they were exiled for 70 years.

14 "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: 15 "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); 16 "and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in [the fruit of] your labors from the field.

There were actually 7 feasts that the Children of Israel were supposed to observe every year. You can find them in Leviticus 23 – some of them coincided with each other.

But here we have three of them –

And they all point Jesus Christ.

Let's take a look at them.

Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Passover) –

This was a feast that commemorated their deliverance - The unleavened bread was related to the fact that on the night of the first Passover, the people had to leave Egypt so quickly that they didn't have time to allow their bread dough to be leavened, so they ate unleavened bread.

Prophetically, it was related to the coming of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who would give up His blood so our sins could be "passed-over".

He lived a sinless life (leaven is a type of sin in scripture)

It was no coincidence that Jesus died at the Passover.

The Feast of Harvest or Pentecost -

This feast took place fifty days after the Passover.

Agriculturally it was related to the time of the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22), when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were offered up to the Lord.

During this feast two loaves of fresh wheat bread were offered to the Lord as an offering of “firstfruits”.

The Greek word for fifty is “pente”, so the feast is known in the New Testament as “Pentecost.

Prophetically, this is the day when the “first-fruits” came, when the church was born through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

It was no coincidence that the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.

The Feast of Ingathering – Feast of Tabernacles –

This was a feast where the Children of Israel were supposed to commemorate the 40 years that they would live in tents while in the wilderness.

Prophetically, this Feast will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again and rules on the earth for 1000 years, this will be a time when God will dwell with men. The meaning of tabernacle means to dwell.

I like the fact that God was building into the culture of the nation of Israel these feasts that would give the very hints of what was coming – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

17 "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. 18

"You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the

fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. 19 "The first of the firstfruits of your

land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

In these verses, we see a few do's and don'ts regarding sacrifices.

When someone brought a calf to offer as a sacrifice/offering, they were not supposed to bring it while there was sin (or leaven) still in their home.

So God didn't want people to mix their sin with their offering.

This doesn't mean you don't come to church if you have sinned this week.

But it means that when you come to church you come to God for forgiveness and cleansing.

Regarding fat – God wanted all the fat to be completely offered up to Him. That was His portion. He wanted all of it.

He didn't want the people to hold back on what they had already promised to give to Him.

Regarding the boiling the goat in milk –

The Children of Israel will be given a set of dietary laws that they will have to adhere to – one of them is not mixing dairy with meat products – so no cheeseburgers allowed.

However, this had more to do with God not wanting the Children of Israel to offer the same sacrifices that the Canaanites were offering their own pagan gods.

20 "Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21 "Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name [is] in Him.

This was no ordinary angel – here we have another example of a theophany or Christophany in the Old Testament.

This is Jesus Christ.

This will be the same Angel that Joshua will encounter 40 years later before the battle of Jericho.

And Joshua falls before Him and worships Him –

So that is how we know that it is no ordinary angel.

So Jesus led them through the wilderness bringing them into the Promised Land.

The same principle is true of our life with Jesus today. Not only is it true that Jesus goes before us to prepare a place for us in heaven (John 14:2-3), but the place we walk in today and the place we will walk tomorrow, was also prepared by God.

22 "But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

This was a characteristic of God's covenant with Israel – if you obey, I will bring blessings.

But did you notice that God was also preparing them for the battles that awaited them.

God had prepared the land for them by allowing enemies and adversaries to remain in it.

They were headed into battle.

Our ideas about preparation are very different than God's.

I'm thinking He should have already driven-out the enemies, so that they could walk right in and start farming.

Instead verses twenty three and twenty-four describe what was waiting for them:

23 "For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. 24 "You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their [sacred] pillars.

The Angel of the Lord would overcome these nations.

All the Children of Israel had to do was not bow down to their gods, but instead utterly destroy their places and objects of worship.

25 "So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. 26 "No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

If the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land and remained faithful to God and didn't bow down to the gods of the Canaanites, God promised that He was going to bless every aspect of their lives down to the most basic things like bread and water.

God was going to fulfill His promise to Abraham and make them a great nation.

27 "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn [their] backs to you. 28 "And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. 29 "I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. 30 "Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. 31 "And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

When the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the book of Joshua tells us that the Canaanites didn't have the heart to fight – because they heard what God while the Children of Israel were in the Wilderness. They were grasped with fear – they knew that judgment was coming – yet they still refused to repent.

Here God says, besides fear – I am also going to send hornets ahead of you and they will chase some of the ites away from the land –

God promises to take care of their enemies, but He said He wouldn't do it quickly.

It would take Joshua seven years to conquer the land of Canaan.

If the inhabitants left too quickly, the land would be overcome by animals – the land would become to wild for them.

32 "You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. 33 "They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For [if] you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

God didn't want the Children of Israel to compromise with the enemy.

You shall make no covenant with them!!!

And the reason was that the Canaanites were a wicked people – God had already given them over 400 years to repent – and now God was bringing judgment on them.

[Exo 24:1-3 NKJV] 1 Now He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. 2 "And Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him." 3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do."

Here we are introduced to Aaron's eldest sons – you might write down Lev 10 next to their names, they decide to not follow God rules when it came to the burnt offerings so God burns them to a crisp.

So here at the beginning of chapter 24, Moses provides the people with all the laws and the judgments of the law – and upon hearing them, they were determined to keep them.

We can do it.

However, Paul tells us in Rom 3

[Rom 3:10 NLT] 10 As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous--not even one.

So it sounded like the right thing to say – however, upon hearing the law – they should have realized that they were incapable of doing it on their own and they should have asked God for help instead.

We can't obey God on our own.

We need His help.

[2Pe 1:3-8 NLT] 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

God alone is our resource, and all growth comes by grace through Him, but we are responsible to make the choice to obey.

Amen.

Let's pray...

