

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers

God's expectations for his people

Then and Now

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Importance of today's study, because we need to know....

- **How should we live after we are saved?**
After the Children of Israel were miraculously brought out of Egypt, God didn't turn them loose in the desert to do whatever they wanted and
- It's the same for us today. Once we become a believer in Jesus, we can't simply live however we want to
- Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers help us figure this out.
- They aren't simply outdated collections of ancient rituals and odd laws.
- If we study them, we'll understand more clearly God's expectations of how he wants his people to live, not only then, how we ought to live today.

This isn't just my idea—an excuse to get you to read difficult passages

Let's look at two passages that my words are based on.

- These things that were written in the Scriptures so long ago are to teach us patience and to encourage us so that we will look forward expectantly to the time when God will conquer sin and death. Rom. 15:4 TLB

1 Corinthians 10 The Message (MSG)

- ¹⁻⁵ Remember our history, friends, and be warned. All our ancestors were led by the providential Cloud and taken miraculously through the Sea. They went through the waters, in a baptism like ours, as Moses led them from enslaving death to salvation life. They all ate and drank identical food and drink, meals provided daily by God. They drank from the Rock, God's fountain for them that stayed with them wherever they were. And the Rock was Christ. But just experiencing God's wonder and grace didn't seem to mean much—most of them were defeated by temptation during the hard times in the desert, and God was not pleased.
- ⁶⁻¹⁰ The same thing could happen to us. We must be on guard so that we never get caught up in wanting our own way as they did

In summary

- God specifically tells us that the Old Testament was written for US.
- We learn best from stories and instead of being simply told how we should live, we are given God's commands, but then we see what happened when these commands are either obeyed or disobeyed.
- Human nature does not change.
- Circumstances, technology, individual settings change, but the human heart and God's commands and expectations doesn't.
- God expects us to study the history in the Old Testament, to learn from it and apply it. That's why I go over what happened, but then always try to suggest applications in regards to what we've read.

- With all this in mind, let's go through the narrative and pause on the way with some observations and applications.

Background

- When left Egypt they were simply a group of slaves. God now will work to make them into a people, a nation to serve Him.
- They needed to learn everything.
- How to worship
- How to govern their nation
- How to live in their interpersonal lives
- Now a review of where they are....

Exodus, Deliverance of a Nation

- God hears the cry of Israel responds to his promises
- Call Moses as deliverer
- He confronts Pharaoh, work gets harder
- Plagues lasts 10 months
- Against gods and pride of Egypt
- People leave the land
- And then.....

How easily we forget

- More trials, Mara—bitter made sweet and Elim an Oasis of 12 springs & 70 palm trees
- Problems with water will be constant.
- About 6 weeks had gone by since they left Egypt—food running out
- ***Manna given Ex. 16:4 "Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.***
- TOLD THERE WOULD BE TESTING.....As we are:
- "I have told you these things, so that ***in me*** you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33
- What we learn from watching Israel here—not just one test—some are constant. Tests often repeated.
- The manna came every day; the same...always enough.
- Challenge to be thankful for what they had (freedom and food)
- Or complain. . . .

The next two challenges

- Again, no water
- Water from the Rock
- Attached by the Amalekites (descendants of Esau)
- ***Shows Israel could fight and win—VERY early on in their travels***
- Amalekites defeated with a ***combination of prayer and battle***
- Both always needed—in battles of life, we pray, but we must also always fight

At Sinai

- Moses goes up Mt. Sinai, God gives him
- 10 Commandments (some commentators say verbally given before Moses got them in written form)
- How to build Tabernacle
- Institution of priesthood
- Various laws concerning interpersonal relationships

- Preparation to be God's people
- Important to remember:
 - God cares about all of life
 - It isn't obvious what pleases God, he needs to tell us

While Moses is speaking to God

- **The people saw that Moses took a long time to come down from the mountain.** So they gathered around Aaron. They said to him, "Come. Make us a god that will lead us. This fellow Moses brought us up out of Egypt. But we don't know what has happened to him." Exodus 32:1
- The Golden Calf
- As Moses approached the camp, he saw the calf. He also saw the people dancing. So he was very angry. He threw the tablets out of his hands. They broke into pieces at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf the people had made. He burned it in the fire. Then he ground it into powder. He scattered it on the water. And he made the Israelites drink it. Exodus 32:19
- Many died in judgment

IMPORTANT Warning/Lesson Timing always an issue in obedience

- To them.... "Moses took a long time..."
- Saul, "it's been 3 days,"
- On the road to Emmaus, the followers of Jesus said the same thing...
- In contrast, We will see David waited for God's timing, for 15 years from when anointed until pronounced King
- Application: TIMING will often be a challenge. God always fulfills his promises and can be trusted.
- Can we be trusted to wait for his will to be done?

God is merciful

Covenant made—even after sin

- **Pattern of covenants—the duties of a king and his subjects**
- *Then the Lord said, "I am making a covenant with you. I will do wonderful things in front of all your people. I will do amazing things that have never been done before in any nation in the whole world. The people you live among will see the things that I, the Lord, will do for you. And they will see how wonderful those things really are."¹¹ Obey what I command you today. **I will drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites to make room for you.** ¹² Be careful. Do not make a peace treaty with those who live in the land where you are going. They will be a trap to you. ¹³ Break down their altars. Smash their sacred stones. Cut down the poles they use to worship the female god named Asherah. ¹⁴ Do not worship any other god. Exodus 34: 10-14*
- If...then...results follow through the rest of the Old Testament...they couldn't quit sinning....
- **BUT by Grace, the covenant NEVER revoked.**

Leviticus--How people of the covenant should live

- How sinful people can approach a holy God, the book sets forth these ways:

- Through mediation of priests
- Through Sacrifices
 - Shows us sin is ugly
- Commemorative Feasts
- Laws governing every aspect of life
- Punishments for violations

Radically different society if they would have obeyed Sabbatical year and year of Jubilee, Lev. 25

- ²³ "The land must not be sold without a way of getting it back. That is because it belongs to me. **You are only outsiders and strangers in my land.** ^{24 ... 39} "Suppose any of your own people become poor. And suppose they sell themselves to you. Then do not make them work as slaves. ⁴⁰ You must treat them like hired workers. Or you must treat them like those living among you for a while. They must work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then they and their children must be set free. ⁴² **The Israelites are my servants. . . . I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. It was never obeyed**
- **Importance of our identity as SERVANTS.**

Their identity & Ours as Servants

- Mark 10:42-45 ESV
- And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

We serve because Jesus gave that to us as his model

- 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 ESV
- This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. Servants, who we are
- Matthew 25:21 ESV
- His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'
- Many want to hear this, but aren't willing to do the servant work required for it
- 2 Timothy 2:15 ESV
- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. How we become a good servant

God doesn't hide his commands If/then Leviticus 28

- **3 "Follow my rules.** Be careful to obey my commands. 4 Then I will send you rain at the right time. The ground will produce its crops. The trees will bear their fruit. 5 You will continue to harvest your grain until you gather your grapes. You will continue to gather your grapes until you plant your crops. You will have all you want to eat. And you will live in safety in your land.

- 6 “I will give you peace in the land. You will be able to sleep because no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild animals from the land. There will not be any war in your country. 7 You will hunt down your enemies. You will kill them with your swords. 8 Five of you will chase 100. You will kill your enemies with your swords.
- 11 I will live among you. I will not turn away from you. 12 I will walk among you. I will be your God. And you will be my people. 13 I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. I did not want you to be slaves in Egypt anymore. I threw off your heavy load. I helped you walk with your heads held high.
- **14 “On the other hand, suppose you do not listen to me.** Suppose you do not carry out all my commands. 15 Suppose you say no to my rules and turn away from my laws. And suppose you break my covenant by failing to carry out all my commands. 16 Then here is what I will do to you. All at once I will bring terror on you. I will send sicknesses that will make you weak. I will send fever that will destroy your sight. It will slowly take your strength away. When you plant seeds, it will not do you any good. Instead, your enemies will eat what you have planted. 17 I will turn against you. Then your enemies will win the battle over you. Those who hate you will rule over you. You will run away even when no one is chasing you.
-23 “After all those things, suppose you still do not accept my warnings. And suppose you continue to be my enemy. 24 Then I myself will be your enemy. . . . I will be angry with you. I will be your enemy. I myself will again punish you for your sins over and over. 29 You will eat the dead bodies of your sons. You will also eat the dead bodies of your daughters. . . . I will scatter you among the nations. I will pull out my sword and hunt you down. Your land and your cities will be completely destroyed. . . . I will fill your hearts with fear.
- We will see the outcome, but keep this promise in mind

Also we are to worship Specifics of worship

- 2nd year, Tabernacle built, priesthood established, laws in place, battle experience
- God’s desire to dwell with his people—Genesis to Revelation
- But a sinful people can’t come into God’s presence
- Here a picture of how it would happen
- Sacrifice—pointing to the final sacrifice of Jesus
- Table of Shewbread—Jesus the Bread of life
- Golden Candlesticks—Jesus the Light of the world
- Altar of Incense—prayers, Jesus for us, us to God
- Ark of the Covenant—blood sprinkled once a year—Atonement, a covering until the Messiah would come and no longer only covered sin, but paid the final price for it.

NT commands on worship

- Flexibility in organization
- Command however on the importance of meeting

together

- *And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.* Heb.10:25 NLB
- And many commands on how we are to act corporately
- James—no favoritism, practical help to those in needs
- 2 Corinthians—much on giving, c8 and following on giving to another church in need
- Ephesians—begins with celebration of the gift of salvation, praise for God’s glorious future for us and then specifics on how we should “walk worthy”
- God expects us to study and obey, just as he did with OT believers

Comments overall

- Laws seem harsh, some very strange
- Historical context: idolatry, sexual immorality in Egypt, Canaan, Israel needed to be different as God’s people, needed to be taught
- Some a reflection of pagan worship
- Actually some of the most humane laws in history
- “eye for an eye” a limitation
- Laws applied equally
- Distinguish between ceremonial, (temple) Civil (for their time) moral (for all time) Some for that time only
- Laws that apply today clarified, repeated in New Testament

End result of the Law

- “Now we cannot...discover our failure to keep God’s law except by trying our very hardest (and then failing). Unless we really try, whatever we say there will always be at the back of our minds the idea that if we try harder next time we shall succeed in being completely good. Thus, in one sense, the road back to God is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But in another sense it is not trying that is ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment at which you turn to God and say, “You must do this. I can’t.” — C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- *Here is what we know. No one is made right with God by obeying the law. It is by believing in Jesus Christ.* Gal. 2:16
- *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Eph. 2:8,9

Worship and lives in order

Ready to go into the land

- Numbers 13: The Lord said to Moses, “Send some men to check out the land of Canaan. I am giving it to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of Israel’s tribes.”

The 12 spy’s return

- ²⁷ They gave Moses their report. They said, “We went into the land you sent us to. It really does have plenty of milk and honey! Here’s some fruit from the land. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful.

Their cities have high walls around them and are very large. We even saw members of the family line of Anak there. ²⁹The Amalekites live in the Negev Desert. The Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the central hill country. The Canaanites live near the Mediterranean Sea. They also live along the Jordan River.”

³⁰Then Caleb interrupted the men speaking to Moses. He said, “We should go up and take the land. We can certainly do it.”

³¹But the men who had gone up with him spoke. They said, “We can’t attack those people. They are stronger than we are.” ³²The men spread a bad report about the land among the Israelites. They said, “The land we checked out destroys those who live in it. All the people we saw there are very big and tall. ³³We saw the Nephilim there. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes. And that’s also how we seemed to them.” The family line of Anak came from the Nephilim.

People rebel, then repent

- But it’s too late
- **Look back at pattern of complaining:**
- The people weren’t happy about the hard times they were having. Num. 11:1-3
- Some people with them began to wish for other food. Num. 11:4
- Leadership issues Num. 12
- **Little issues create a pattern hard to break, fail when test comes**

Consequences

- They wander for 40 years
- Their children suffered for sins of parents
- But they were the ones who conquered the land
- DID not hesitate when their time came

A warning to us

Prepare for big tests in little ways

- “Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible.”
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- Look at obedience in your life in little ways.
- Big goals, little wins...faithful in the least, will be faithful in much
- Goal: a life that pleases God.
- Little win today: be kind to your family, the people at work

Back to passages—Application:

Redemption comes with responsibility

- OT: “Keep my commands and follow them. I am the Lord. Do not profane my holy name, for I must be

acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the Lord, who made you holy and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord.” Lev. 22:31-33

• **NT: You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Cor. 6:20**

• OT: You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own. Lev. 20:26

• **NT: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9**

• AT end, God forming us into a people for here for forever....we need to closely LISTEN to do what he wants us to because the world/even many churches do not tell us how to live

More applications:

- Keep reading, learning**expand or earlier, why we do this....
- Take sin seriously
- Live a holy (set-apart) life
- Know that redemption is not about your personal comfort, but service and need to closely LISTEN to HIS WORD to do what he wants us to because the world/even many churches do not tell us how to live
- Believe God even in impossible situations
- Remember God forming us into a people for here and for forever
- When you fail, an encouragement. . . .
- *No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep on picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean clothes are in the airing cupboard.*
— C.S. Lewis, in a letter to Mary Neylan, January 20, 1942
- *“Grace has brought us safe thus far and grace will lead us home.”*