

Session #3

Moses: Exodus, Covenant at Sinai, and Desert Wanderings

Exodus 1-20, 32, Numbers 11, 13-14, 20-21

From Abraham to Moses

In the later chapters of Genesis we learn that the 12 sons of Jacob, who was Isaac's Son (while Isaac himself was of course Abraham's son), moved to Egypt in order to avoid a famine. Because one of these sons, Joseph, had been in Egypt for years while serving as an official in the Pharaoh's kingdom this first group of Israelites was welcomed into Egypt and things went very well for them.

Then things changed. (Exodus 1:1-:14)

IMPORTANT DISTRACTION # 1

Exodus 1:15-:17, 1:18-:22

Did the Hebrew midwives lie? Yes

Was this a sin? No

What does Exodus 20:16 say you shall not do? Bear false witness

This refers to lies meant to hurt someone or meant for selfish benefit. When someone doesn't have a right to certain information it is *not* a sin to not tell them the truth.

The Call of Moses

Exodus 2:1-:10, Moses was a Hebrew boy who ended up being raised by an Egyptian, Pharaoh's daughter.

Exodus 2:11-:14, He killed an Egyptian who he saw beating a Hebrew slave.

Exodus 2:15-:22, He fled to Midian, east of Egypt, married, and had a child.

Exodus 3:1-:10, God appeared to Moses and told him that he would be the one to free Israel from Egypt.

IMPORTANT DISTRACTION # 2

Exodus 4:24-:26

Why did the Lord threaten to kill Moses?

What hadn't he done? (see Genesis 17:9-:14) Circumcised his son

God wanted people who were obedient to him. If Moses wasn't going to obey God then the Lord could have found someone else to free the Israelites.

Exodus 7:4-:6, Moses and his brother Aaron were sent to ask the Pharaoh to free the Israelites, but God had to punish Egypt because he was not willing to listen.

The First Nine Plagues

The First Plague, Water Turned into Blood, Exodus 7:14-:25

(1) God gives his instructions to Moses and Aaron, (2) they do what they're told, and (3) Pharaoh doesn't let them go. This pattern is repeated again and again in the book of Exodus.

IMPORTANT DISTRACTION # 3

Exodus 7:10-:13, 7:20-:22

How did the Pharaoh's magicians do this if God wasn't on their side?

What source of spiritual power is there besides God? Satan/The Devil

Who wins when these two powers fight? (see Exodus 7:12) God

Frogs (7:26-8:11)

Gnats (8:12-:15)

Flies (8:16-:28)

Dead Livestock (9:1-:7)

Boils (9:8-:12)

Hail (9:13-:35)

Locusts (10:1-10:20)

Darkness (10:21-29)

These plagues showed God's power and the consequences if the Egyptians continued to defy him. But can you think of any reason that these particular plagues might have been chosen?

The Nile was identified with the Egyptian god called Hapi.

The Egyptian goddess Heket was often worshipped in the form of a frog.

The plague of darkness was directed at the Egyptian sun god Ra.

The Egyptians had a bull god named Apis, a cow goddess called Hathor, and a ram god named Khnum

Which plague is significant in light of these facts? The dead livestock

This isn't directly related to one of the first nine plagues but the protector of the Pharaoh was Wadjet depicted as a snake. (Ex 7:10-:13)

These plagues were directed at the Egyptians false religious beliefs. It showed that everything that they worshipped as a god was less powerful than God.

The Passover and the Death of the Firstborn, Exodus 11-13

Pharaoh was worshipped as a god by the Egyptians.

If God was going to attack even Pharaoh's family (Exodus 11:4-:5, 12:29-:30) then what did this say about Pharaoh's power?

12:12-:13, The Israelites were to be spared. Those who followed God were protected. Those who weren't...

The Passover and the Eucharist

The Israelites were told by God to continue to celebrate this Passover. (Exodus 13:3-:5) The Passover was to become the greatest of the Jewish holy days as every year they celebrated that God had freed them from Egypt, and passed over them because of the blood of the lamb. This was what Christ's Last Supper was. (Matthew 26:17-:30) In talking about the eating of his body and the shedding of his blood in connection with the Passover Jesus is connecting the Eucharist with the lamb that was slain in the first Passover. This follows along with the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the World." (John 1:29)

For the Passover the Jewish people were to find a lamb, it had to be without blemish, then they were to kill it, use it's blood as source of protection, and eat it. Christ was the Lamb of God, he was without sin, he gave his life, his blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26), and those who wish to be saved from their sins through his blood were told, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." (John 6:54)

God had his people use the blood of the lamb to show their faithfulness to him so that their firstborn would be saved from his death. Then he had them remember and celebrate this every year. This was all done to point to the real Passover, the true Lamb of God who would save us from our sins by shedding his blood for us and giving us a meal, the Eucharist, where we could share in this.

Like the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22, the story of the Passover from the Book of Exodus is one of the passages in the Old Testament that points towards the work of Christ. God the Father was preparing his people to understand the truth that he would give his Son as a sacrifice to save us from our sins.

The Crossing of the Red Sea

Exodus 15:3 tells us that "The LORD is a warrior." As they escaped from the Egyptians the Israelites were fighting an all out war against a ruthless empire that wished to destroy them. The Egyptians were so determined to destroy Israel that nothing less than their complete defeat would be enough to protect Israel. The Egyptians had been given chance after chance to let God's people go, and finally it was necessary for them to face the death of their firstborn and the destruction of their army in the Red Sea.

There are some interesting historical questions about the crossing of the Red Sea. No one is 100% positive where this occurred. It could have been through a deep and wide body of water, or it could have been through a shallower swampy area. Also there is some debate about which Pharaoh was ruling Egypt at this time so some scholars debate whether this happened around the year 1280 BC or 1440 BC.

The Giving of the Ten Commandments

Exodus 19:5-:6

God chose Israel from among all the nations. He set them aside to prepare one nation to bring his message to the entire world. Jesus, the Savior of the World, was to come from the Jews and they were prepared by God to be the people who would do this.

Exodus 19:15

God gave them a temporary command to be celibate. This wasn't because marriage or sexuality was bad, but because he wanted them to take a step back from the ordinary so they could be more focused on what he was going to do for the nation of Israel when he gave them the 10 Commandments

Exodus 20:2-:17

The Ten Commandments

20:8-:11, Keep Holy the Sabbath

The strict commandment to not work at all one day out of seven was loosened in some ways by Jesus. But it is still a binding commandment that unless there is some sort of truly exceptional circumstances, like an illness or some other emergency, that we are bound to worship God (attend mass) every week.

20:14, You Shall Not Commit Adultery

This is tied in with 20:17, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." This is phrased in such a way that it speaks directly to men, but that was just the style of writing and speaking during the time the Old Testament was written. This commandment does certainly apply to both men and women.

Also in Matthew 5:27-:28 Jesus said "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Again this is not meant to apply to only men, and what it means is that you think about having sex with someone and the only thing that keeps you from doing that is because you're afraid of getting caught or they're not willing, you've sinned.

The Golden Calf, Exodus 32

Exodus 32:1-:6

32:6 very likely means very bad things. It is most likely a reference to the sort of sexual sins that were connected to idol worship among the nations that neighbored Israel. This means Israel had completely rejected God and the way in which he wished them to live. It can seem crazy that they sinned so greatly but before we are too quick to judge we should think about the sins of our own day and age.

Discussion

Exodus 20:8-:11, missing Mass

Exodus 20:14, :17; adultery, premarital sex, and pornography

32:15-:24, Golden Calf Destroyed

32:25-:29, Levites set aside for special service to God

The Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Each tribe was descended from one of Jacob's sons. When they showed faithfulness to God by punishing those who had sinned by worshipping the Golden Calf they were set aside for special service to the Lord. They lived this out from this point onward by serving alongside the descendants of Aaron (Moses' brother) who were the priests of the Jewish people until Jesus came.

God Provides His People With Food (and Leaders), Numbers 11

Numbers 11:4-:9, God miraculously provided the people with food, called manna, but they complained and wished they were back in Egypt.

Numbers 11:10-:15, Moses said he would prefer to be killed rather than continue to deal with all the responsibilities he had to deal with.

Numbers 11:16-:17, God promises to give Moses help.

Numbers 11:24-:30, God gives Moses help.

This story is important because it shows God organizing his people and providing them with a structure of leaders. This points to what God would do later with the Church as he provided them with the apostles as leaders. God never intended for his people to just be some kind of disorganized blob, he always gave his followers structure and leadership to help them.

The People Fail to Trust that God Can Give Them the Promised Land, Numbers 13-14

Numbers 13:17-:24, Spies go into Canaan, the land that God has promised to give to his people. They discover that it's a rich land that was good for growing, making it an ideal place to settle.

Numbers 13:27-:33, The spies say that the inhabitants of the land are strong and powerful.

Numbers 14:1-:4, The people get scared, lose their trust in God, and say they want to go back to Egypt.

Numbers 14:26-:35, God says that none of the adults among the people of Israel, those who were old enough to be part of the decision to stop trusting in him, will live long enough to enter into the promised land. It is only their children who will be able to do this.

Moses Claims Credit for Himself, Numbers 20

Numbers 20:1-:8. The people didn't have watered and they complained against God again. God told Moses to speak to a rock and water would flow from it.

Numbers 20:9-:13, Moses strikes the rock with his staff and water flowed from it. But then God got angry at him and told him that he would not live long enough to enter into the Promised Land. He had initially been exempt from the punishment, faced by the other adults, that was given out in Numbers 14.

At first this doesn't seem fair. What Moses did, hitting the rock instead of speaking to it, seems so minor that God's punishment seems extreme. After all both ways showed that it was a miracle only God could bring about.

You can't bring water out of a rock by speaking to it.

And you can't bring water out of a rock by hitting it with a stick.

Well, actually...

...in the area where the Israelites were the water was filled with minerals, which sometimes collected thickly enough to block the channels the water came from. If you broke through the blockage water would flow out naturally. So God was telling Moses to bring water out simply by speaking, which would be supernatural and would show that it was really God who provided it. Instead Moses used his staff to break through a mineral deposit, which was a natural and normal way of getting water, so that it looked like Moses had done it himself. So Moses wasn't punished arbitrarily, he was punished because he took credit himself for what was supposed to be clearly seen as God's work.