

EXODUS

Lesson 32 - Chapters 34, 35, 36, and 37

We are really going to accelerate now, until the end of the book of Exodus. In fact this lesson and next weeks lesson will conclude the book of Exodus, and then it'll be on to Leviticus.....a truly fascinating study.

As we continue our study in Exodus in chapter 34 it is good to realize that what we're essentially reading about are the God-ordained **legitimate** festivals and ritual obligations as opposed to similar but illegitimate festivals and ritual obligations as practiced by the Canaanites and other world cultures. The schedule of Yehoveh's appointed times, which includes the 7 Biblical Feasts, did indeed have somewhat comparable holidays in the pagan world. Just as the 7 Biblical Feasts were agriculturally based festivals that were timed to occur in the various seasons and stages of planting, growing, and harvesting, so did the nations outside of Israel do the same thing.

Yet, the Lord says that the WAY and the DAY and the REASON for celebrating those set apart days and festivals was NEVER to be done in the way that the pagans did they're celebrating. And that it was equally as much an abomination to add in some elements of those pagan traditions to the pure mode of worship authorized by God as it would be to adopt those pagan holidays.

Let me mince no words: it is astounding to me that someone who claims the Lord as his or her God would celebrate Halloween, for example. I have seen many a Christian group adopt practically every element of this pagan holiday, only to change the name to Fall Festival or Harvest Festival in some rather lame attempt to make it OK. This past year I cut out a picture from the Florida Today newspaper that has a woman Sunday school teacher sitting in the pumpkin patch display of a local church, dressed in a full witches costume (hat and all), sitting on a bale of straw and reading from the Bible to about a dozen attentive children. Think about it: did or did not God establish a true Fall Festival? Did or did not He say to celebrate His festivals but to avoid all others? Of course He did, and the fall seasonal festival He established is called Sukkot. The point of any agricultural Fall Festival is to celebrate the final cuttings and storing of produce before winter comes on and everything goes dormant. That is the exact timing and mode of the Biblically ordained fall festival called Sukkot in Hebrew, the Feast of Tabernacles in English. Now let me ask this rhetorical question: why would a Christian choose to celebrate a patently pagan festival day ostensibly to celebrate the end of the yearly agricultural cycle, but completely disavow God's holy festival that also celebrates the end of the yearly agricultural cycle? I'll leave that for you to ponder.

Let's re-read the section of Exodus chapter 34 that we'll cover today.

RE-READ EXODUS CHAPTER 34:18- end

Though we've seen most of these commands before, Yehoveh repeats several of them as He reconfirms the Mosaic Covenant. Remember: we have just observed the consequences of the Golden Calf incident result in the Mosaic Covenant being broken and invalidated. Therefore it was necessary for the covenant to be reinstated. In vs. 18, the Biblical Festival of Matza is re-ordained. Let me remind you that in the Bible, when you read of the Festival of Matza, it generally is referring to a bundle of 3 different festivals: Passover, Matza, and firstfruits. They all overlap and intertwine. Passover is the beginning of the Festival of Matza, and then 1 day later begins Matza proper that last for 7 days: 1 day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins is the one-day Feast of the Firstfruits. So Firstfruits occurs during the Feast of Matza. Now to the Hebrews they were celebrating their release from captivity in Egypt (Passover was when God went throughout Egypt and killed all the firstborn but passed-over those who trusted Him by smearing the blood of a sacrificial Ram on their doorposts); Matza was to remind them of how they hurried to get out of Egypt and didn't have time to make bread with yeast, leaven, and let it rise; and firstfruits is a spring agricultural festival, when the first of the new year's harvest is brought in.

What Israel didn't, and couldn't, have realized, is that this holiday period was prophetic and a physical demonstration of a heavenly principle and ideal. It speaks of the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. Now, please listen carefully: for the Hebrews while the Passover and Matza was a commemoration of a past happening, it was also looking forward to the FUTURE event of Messiah, right?.....it was prophetic. However since this prophecy has now been fulfilled (Messiah has come and He has died and arisen) for US it is entirely a memorial.....a remembrance...of supreme importance for us. It is a sad commentary that Believers, under NO authorization from God whatsoever, have abandoned these God-ordained holy observances and changed them to Good Friday and Easter even employing the name of the pagan fertility goddess Ishtar for the holiday's name, Easter, and using her typical symbols, rabbits and eggs, as part of our holiday ritual. I would suggest that we reconsider and reinstitute God's ordained festivals and perform them in as close a way as possible to the original, but in the context of our era and culture. Because what we have done is to choose Man's ways over God's, call it good, and then attach holiness to it; always a bad idea.

In vs. 19 Yehoveh reconfirms the principles of redemption and the firstborn.

In vs. 20, the Sabbath, the 7th day, a day of rest, is yet again reinforced.

In vs. 21, another God ordained festival is emphasized: the Festival of Weeks. This is called Shavuot in Hebrew and the Church calls it Pentecost. This is to be a Pilgrimage Festival. That is God has already commanded, and confirms in vs. 23, that 3 of the 7 ordained festivals are to be celebrated in Jerusalem (or more technically correct, at the central sanctuary). And everyone is to make a pilgrimage; they're to travel, to Tabernacle/Temple to celebrate these 3 festivals. The first is Matzah, the second is Shavuot, and the third is Sukkot. Sukkot is what it means in vs. 22 when it speaks of the Festival of Ingathering.

Note that it is said that only males are required to come to the Tabernacle on these pilgrimage festivals. Later, in Deuteronomy, it makes clear that every effort should be made for the whole

family to come.

Now, obviously, it was going to be a while before the Israelites would be able to carry out Yehoveh's command to make a pilgrimage. First, they'd have to settle into the land of Canaan. Shiloh was where the Tabernacle would be located for a while, and then finally in Jerusalem. As of the time of Exodus, Jerusalem was a small city, built and ruled by the Jebusites. It was King David who eventually captured the city, changed it's name to Jerusalem, and made it part of Israel.

Let me also make a quick observation about Pentecost; Pentecost being the day the Holy Spirit came and began indwelling men. We know of this event primarily as that day when people started suddenly speaking in tongues, and some very strange ideas have formed about what actually happened there.

First, Pentecost is just a Greek word that means 50 days. Second, the 50 days means this holiday occurs exactly 50 days after the day Christ rose from the dead. Pentecost is not a NEW holiday designed by Christians to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit...although that IS the way it is typically taught. Rather, Pentecost is a Greek word that the early Christians used in place of the Hebrew Shavuot. Third, understand: when the Holy Spirit descended upon man a NEW holiday was NOT created in remembrance of that event. Rather, it was on Shavuot, a Biblical Feast instituted by God at the time of Moses, that the Holy Spirit descended.....which is exactly what the Feast of Shavuot was prophetic of.

The Holy Spirit descended upon a whole bunch of Jews, who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Weeks, Shavuot. But, these were special Jews, because they were Believing Jews....they believed Yeshua was the Messiah. They had come, because as we see right here in Exodus, Israelites are commanded to do so.....that is, they are commanded to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for this festival (as well as 2 others). The language issue, speaking in tongues, I'd like to straighten out; Jesus died and the Holy Spirit descended about 30 A.D. The known world, including Judah and Jerusalem, was under Roman rule. Jews now lived all over the Roman Empire. Probably only something on the order of 10% of the total population of Jews lived in the Holy Land, all the rest lived scattered around the known world. These scattered Jews are, to this day, called the Diaspora.....the dispersed. And, naturally, these scattered Jews took on the language of whatever nation or culture they were a part of. But.....they fiercely held on to their Jewish ways and religion. So, these Diaspora Jews, as well as the Jews still remaining in the Holy Land, came to Jerusalem, as usual, for the Feast of Weeks, each speaking various languages. There is no Greek work that translates to the English word "language". Rather, in that era the term was "tongue". Therefore the Bible word used for languages is literally "tongues".

The miracle of tongues that occurred on Pentecost was that Jews from one area, who therefore spoke a certain language, could suddenly and supernaturally speak a language that they didn't know, or, they could understand a language they couldn't speak. So we get this Biblical description of how some observers (undoubtedly Judean Jews who lived there in Jerusalem) were saying that these guys were just drunk and babbling meaningless nonsense. But some of the Diaspora Jews who had come a long way from remote nations are saying no, I

recognize that language they're speaking, and I know exactly what they're saying, because it's MY language. Just how many languages, tongues, were represented we don't know.....but at this time in history there were scores of languages spoken within the vast Roman Empire.

Here's another way to look at it: what happened at Pentecost was a kind of reversal of what happened at the tower of Babel. At the Tower of Babel a whole lot of people who were rebelling against the Lord, and who spoke a single universal language, were suddenly and supernaturally given a whole bucketful of different and new languages and so they could no longer understand one another. But at Pentecost, a whole lot of people who trusted the Lord, and who came to Jerusalem unable to understand each other because they spoke so many different languages, suddenly could understand one another! Amazing connection, is it not?

Then we get this strange command in verse 26 about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk. Today this is interpreted by not serving dairy with meat. There have been many theories set forth as to why this is; it even keeps the Rabbis scratching their heads. But, I think that if the simplest solution is usually the best answer, the reason is fairly obvious: boiling (cooking) young animals in their own mother's milk was a standard Canaanite religious ritual. And, above all else, the Lord continuously reminds Israel NOT to do their rituals in a manner that the Canaanites do. I doubt there is much beyond that in significance.

Beginning with vs. 28 we get some information that sounds eerily familiar: Moses spent 40 days and nights (this was an ADDITIONAL 40 days and nights after the last time he went up to the summit) in God's presence, and he didn't eat or drink during that time either. We're also told in a number of places in the OT, including directly from Moses' own mouth, that sometime in the future a "prophet like Moses" would come to Israel. That prophet turned out to be none other than Yeshua of Nazareth. And, the list of parallels between Moses and Jesus is long. The most obvious is that Jesus came as the highest earthly Mediator possible between God and man.....just as did Moses. Jesus spent 40 days without food or drink "in the Wilderness".....which is exactly what Moses suffered and even corresponds to WHERE he was. Yehoveh gave physical Israel the law written on stone through Moses, and through meditation and self-discipline they were to write these laws on their own hearts (meaning minds). Yehoveh gave TRUE spiritual Israel the SAME law through Jesus but it would be supernaturally written on their hearts. Moses was higher than the High Priest of Israel. Jesus was higher than the High Priest of Israel.

And now we're told that light radiated from Moses' face when he came down that mountain.....not allegorical light, REAL visible light that the people could observe. Jesus not only radiated spiritual light, light that people could see with their eyes and detect in their spirits, He WAS light.

As Moses approached the camp, Aaron and the people of Israel saw the stone tablets of the Law, and they saw the light emitting from Moses.....and it frightened them. So, from this time forward, we're told that Moses put a veil over his face to block out the light. This harkens back to when God spoke to Moses and all the people, and it frightened them so severely that they pled with Moses to be their spokesman; they didn't WANT to hear God's voice again, just as they now didn't WANT to see His light.

I wonder: do we REALLY want to hear God's voice and see His light? Oh, I don't know a Believer who would admit to anything else. But, I know what my honest choice was for so many years, and I suspect some of you were, or are, in the same boat. Maybe we only want to hear ABOUT God's voice and be told ABOUT His light. God was willing to tell the people directly, even to let them see a glimpse of His glory via the supernatural light emitting from Moses' face; but the Israelites declined, and preferred to just be told, 2nd hand, about God. You can sit in this classroom listening to me; you can listen to Christian tapes, music and teachings, or go to Churches and religious seminars, until the cows come home, and hear all about God; but none of that is a substitute for a personal experience with Him. Further, we can accept the bumper-sticker theology that Walter J. Kaiser, Jr. speaks of whereby a short list of shorthand doctrines are what we learn in our religious institutions; or we can diligently study the Lord's Word...actual Holy Scripture... and gain so much more understanding. We can get God 2nd hand or 1st hand.....it's our choice.

Let's move on to Exodus chapter 35.

READ CHAPTER 35 all

This begins the last of the 6 divisions of Exodus; the one Everett Fox calls "The Building of the Dwelling".

Moses, a veil over his face to filter out the visible radiance resulting from being in God's presence, assembles the whole community of Israel to announce to them all that Yehoveh had told him over those two 40 day periods of time. As much as anything though, this formal gathering was to commemorate the renewal, or better re-institution, of the covenant in a public way.

For a total of 80 days Moses had been getting instructions from God for Israel.....two times he ascended the Mountain for periods of 40 days each; coming down after the first period to interrupt the Golden Calf catastrophe. It's no wonder it took him years, and the help of some scribes, to write down all that the Lord told Him.

Now it would have been the elders of Israel, the people's representatives that assembled before Moses to hear these edicts and affirm the renewal of the covenant. That was usual and customary to have only the leadership present; and besides, there is no way Moses could have made himself heard to 3 million people.

Let's be clear: for many chapters Yehoveh has been instructing Moses on the specifications for the Tabernacle, the furnishings, the ordination of the priests, establishment of certain festivals, and more. NOW, however, the instructions are finally being passed along to the people of Israel and actual construction is about to commence. And one cannot help but notice what the very first instruction concerns: the Sabbath. We need to come to grips with God's priorities; and if it is not obvious to you by now that Sabbath is right at the top of the list, you either haven't been here, or you've not been paying attention.

In vs. 3, God's command is that not only is Israel not to do ANY work on the Sabbath, but

even starting a fire is prohibited, at the expense of death. Why was starting a fire such an issue? The only reason to have a fire was to either keep warm from a chilly evening, or to use it for some form of work. They could keep warm in plenty of ways out in the Wilderness without fire; it simply was not harshly cold where they were living. But a fire was needed for most types of work; for cooking, for the metal arts, for concocting dyes for cloth, for baking earthenware, and a wide range of crafts. For you physicists out there, notice what the essence of fire is: it's the conversion of matter into energy. Fire is a transforming force, and God was ordaining a state of stillness on Shabbat. The ONLY authorized use of fire on the Sabbath was for sacrificing and the priests performed that exclusively at the Tabernacle.

The idea, here, is that NO work, a complete rest AND dependence on God was to be observed on Sabbath. Recall that the Hebrews were now living primarily on Manna. And that God instructed them to gather double the amount of Manna needed on the day BEFORE the Sabbath so that they could prepare it and have it ready and not have to gather or cook on Shabbat.

Hundreds of years later, Yeshua would tell his disciples to rest in him. We are to rest in, and depend on, the finished work of God. It is the Sabbath that sets up this principle and gives us a model for what this is trying to communicate. You see, in so many ways in the OT and the NT, we are shown that our works, our efforts, to achieve a saving kind of righteousness before God is worse than useless....its offensive. In fact when God provides the way, His way, for our holiness, it is THAT which we are to rely on. We're not to dismiss it and work towards our OWN way; we're not to try to use His way in combination with our work. We can never add to what God has done; to do so is to diminish what He has done. A couple of chapters ago Yehoveh told Israel that the way to be holy in His eyes was to observe the Sabbath; the Sabbath would clothe Israel in His holiness. He didn't give Israel a choice "B" or "C". With the advent of Christ, the way to be holy in Yehoveh's eyes is to have faith in Christ....and THAT trust and faith will be our holiness. Our human efforts to be holy, to work our way towards holiness, are as filth to God. They can do nothing but pollute and defile the ONLY means of holiness that He has provided. The Sabbath rest, and Christ's rest, are one in the same. And the one did not abolish, nor end, the other; nor is one a substitute for the other.

Beginning in verse 4, Moses calls for a contribution from the people of Israel to build the Tabernacle and all associated items. Then we see an important theme play out through the rest of this chapter: those who were WILLING and WISE were the ones who responded to Moses' call for contribution. The contribution consisted of two classes: labor and materials.

Verse 22 makes it clear that WOMEN were to be included in this effort. Men and women alike.....EVERYONE of willing mind participated. While it was men, in this patriarchal society typical of the times, that were the appointed leaders the men did not just sit and order the women around. They worked with their hands, side by side with the women.....men doing crafts customary for males of that era, women tending to crafts appropriate for females.

Now, from here, through Exodus 39, we're going to move very rapidly, primarily just reading the scriptures; because this simply repeats things we've already studied.

READ EXODUS 36

The people, who gave, gave so generously of their materials, that Moses had to command a halt to the giving! They had collected more than enough. I like this. I really like it that Moses didn't have an endless list of things to do with the people's money. God instructed what He wanted done, and so Moses went to the people to collect ONLY what was needed. Not skimpy, but not more than needed.

You know, the church is an imaginative and generous group of people. I can, and you can, imagine wonderful things we suppose God would want done....almost without limit. But, when we consult the Bible, it just doesn't seem to work that way. Our sincerity, our goodwill, our energy, our viewpoint of mercy and generosity, counts for nothing. We can do the most beautiful, kind, acts; but, as a child of God, saved by Grace, if we're not specifically led by God to do them, then what we do carries no eternal value and is not done within the Kingdom we now belong.....the Kingdom of God. It's just another worldly work of man that will burn along with all the others.

Too much, particularly in wealthy America, our contribution is seen almost exclusively as money. Here in Exodus, we see that it is our money AND our time that forms our contribution. Please don't think that I'm criticizing those who contribute money, but not time. If that is what you know God is leading you to do, than by all means obey him. The Jews have a rather interesting view of what the contribution of money to the Lord's work is; they see it as frozen work. That is, your work, your time, is represented and stored away within the value of the money your work earned. So, when the time comes to give a contribution, and you give money, you are in essence giving work that was stored away, frozen. But, above all, regardless of what our contribution is, it MUST be God appointed. Just as it says in Exodus, though, it is the WILLING and the WISE that listen to God and do as He commands. God **will** appoint you to contribute from time to time; but He will NOT take it from you. God will NOT instruct your church authorities to monitor your giving, cheering on the big givers and laying guilt on the lax.

All that we give is a free-will contribution, today.....just as it is here in Exodus. It is not a sacrifice....that is, our giving is not part of the sacrificial system as most giving was in Moses' day. And, it must be given by YOUR will, not somebody else's. Yet, it is the WISE man (and woman) who obeys God when you hear Him calling you to contribute.....time, or money, or both.

READ EXODUS 37 all

Notice that as we're given a play-by-play account of the building of the Tabernacle, which starts with the dwelling structure itself. That is, just as with any construction effort, one begins with the outer portion, and works its way into the interior. The final phase, of course, is to furnish the completed structure. In earlier chapters, though, when God was giving Moses instructions, it was the opposite. God's instructions began with the furnishings, the innermost items, and worked its way outward to the structure.

If we were to look very closely some of the detail is left out. The stress in this part of Exodus is on the people actually doing God's bidding, carrying through with God's commands, rather than like in earlier sections, when God was detailing the blueprints, the plans, on what WAS to be built.

Next week we will complete our study of Exodus.