

Lesson 2

Worship and the Exodus: Understanding who God is.

Sabbath Afternoon

Ex. 20: 2,3. ***“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.”***

Did you ever wonder why the 10 commandments start with “I am the Lord ...” ??

If you perform a search for the phrase “I am the Lord” on a Bible search engine, you will get anywhere from 0 [Message Bible] to 249 [New International Reader’s Version] verses. Most versions I looked at have somewhere around 150 verses with this phrase in them. Most of the verses are in the books of Leviticus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. NO texts are in the New Testament. Any thoughts as to WHY??

Think about what life was like to the children of Israel having been just delivered from bondage in Egypt. For nearly four centuries your ancestors had been in slavery – working from dawn to dark building monuments to heathen gods. [For some perspective: the first printing of the King James Bible was in 1611 – 400 years ago.] Imagine how darkened your mind would be regarding a God you could not see/touch/hear/smell/etc.

We are sometimes prone to think that if we had lived back then, things would have been very different, but do we not still have mistaken God concepts now?? even after Jesus clearly revealed his character, and we’ve had 400 years of the Word of God available [now at just the touch of a button].

Sunday – Holy Ground

At the time Moses came upon the burning bush, did he have a correct God concept??

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” 5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The lesson states: “Reverence, awe, and fear – these are the attitudes that are crucial it is for us in order to engage in true worship.” Really?? Fear?? I hope the author meant respect instead of fear, but ...

Adam and Eve ran and hid because they were afraid, Moses hid his face because he was afraid – later on the Mountain, he asked to see God’s face [where’s the fear now??], and God, in his wisdom covered Moses with his hand and caused his “goodness” to pass before Moses, which made his face glow, but didn’t burn it ... hmmm.

Ex. 34: 6,7. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

In the last paragraph the lesson states: “In the same way, Jesus did not come to this earth merely to represent God and help us know more about Him. No, Jesus came to die for our sins, to give His life as a ransom, to die on the cross the death that we deserve. Through His death, of course, we know more and more about the character of God, but in the end Christ came to pay the penalty for our sins and thus give us true deliverance, the deliverance symbolized in part by what the Lord did for Israel when He freed the nation from Egypt.”

While I agree Jesus came NOT ONLY to reveal the character of God, He did NOT pay any penalty. He did pay a dear price [my understanding is He gave up his omnipresence, because **Phil. 2: 5-7. Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

He also came to develop the **remedy** to cure our terminal condition [sin] and thus its symptoms [sins].

Monday – The Death of the Firstborn: Passover & Worship.

Let’s start at the beginning of the plagues / miracles:

1. Moses’ serpent devoured the magician’s serpents [Serpents were objects of Egyptian worship].
2. Nile turned to blood. [The Nile and its inhabitants also objects of Egyptian worship].
3. Legions of frogs. [Nile god became a source of pollution to its worshippers].
NOTE: Miracles 1-3 counterfeited by the Egyptian magicians.

4. Lice. [The pagan priests were particular about approaching the altars for worship, and an insect on one's person would prevent them from offering food or gifts to the idols. Imagine the difficulty the infestation of lice caused on pagan Egypt.]
5. Flies. This was designed to destroy the Egyptians faith in Beelzebub [the Fly god], who supposedly protected the people from flies.
6. Destruction of livestock [except those of the Israelites]. This was intended to wake up Egypt to their entire system of brute beast worship.
7. [6th plague / 7th miracle] Boils. Human sacrifice was still practiced in Egypt at this time. Often the priests would burn human victims alive, and toss the ashes into the air to appease the god Typhon, or the Evil Principle. The people believed that wherever ash would land, evil would be averted. Consider the distress when severe boils broke out from the ash that Moses threw into the air. Instead of evil being averted, the ash caused evil.
8. Hail. This [along with the 9th plague / 10th miracle] was directed against the worship of Isis and Osiris – the moon and sun gods, respectively. Egypt was not accustomed to violent storms, much less those producing large hailstones. The hail revealed that the God of heaven was able to control the weather, as well as the heavenly bodies.
9. Locusts. This plague was directed against Serapis, the god credited with protecting the country from locust. He failed.
10. Darkness. See #8.
11. Death of the first born. This was designed to reveal that God is the only source of life. Period. [Source: PP Appendix Note 5 pgs 758,9]

See the below link for an interesting take on the Passover meaning. I have no idea if it is accurate or credible, but it makes sense.

In summary: In Eastern culture at the time of the Passover, when expecting a guest, blood would be sprinkled over the doorway in an expression of *welcome*, or a covenant of hospitality, not one of unwelcome. The more honored the guest, the more costly the blood. For example, the blood of a dove or pigeon might be used for a neighbor or distant family member, but the blood of a “fatted calf” would be used when welcoming royalty.

http://www.familyfoundations.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=148%3Aunderstanding-passover-article-by-craig-hill&catid=51%3Afree-stuff&Itemid=187&lang=en

Tuesday – No other gods.

The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” Luke 10:27. See also Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten

Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man. {PP 305.2}

Why does God want “no other gods before me”?? Some would suggest He’s that insecure, as to need our worship constantly. Seriously??

Wednesday – “These be your Gods ...”

While Moses was absent it was a time of waiting and suspense to Israel. The people knew that he had ascended the mount with Joshua, and had entered the cloud of thick darkness which could be seen from the plain below, resting on the mountain peak, illuminated from time to time with the lightnings of the divine Presence. They waited eagerly for his return. Accustomed as they had been in Egypt to material representations of deity, it had been hard for them to trust in an invisible being, and they had come to rely upon Moses to sustain their faith. Now he was taken from them. Day after day, week after week passed, and still he did not return. Notwithstanding the cloud was still in view, it seemed to many in the camp that their leader had deserted them, or that he had been consumed by the devouring fire. {PP 315.1}
During this period of waiting, there was time for them to meditate upon the law of God which they had heard, and to prepare their hearts to receive the further revelations that He might make to them. They had none too much time for this work; and had they been thus seeking a clearer understanding of God’s requirements, and humbling their hearts before Him, they would have been shielded from temptation. But they did not do this, and they soon became careless, inattentive, and lawless. Especially was this the case with the mixed multitude. They were impatient to be on their way to the Land of Promise—the land flowing with milk and honey. It was only on condition of obedience that the goodly land was promised them, but they had lost sight of this. There were some who suggested a return to Egypt, but whether forward to Canaan or backward to Egypt, the masses of the people were determined to wait no longer for Moses. {PP 315.2}

*Moses in the mount was warned of the apostasy in the camp and was directed to return without delay. “Go, get thee down,” were the words of God; “**thy** people, which **thou** broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it.” God might have checked the movement at the outset; but He suffered it to come to this height that He might teach all a lesson in His punishment of treason and apostasy. {PP 317.4}*

God’s covenant with His people had been disannulled, and He declared to Moses, “Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” The people of Israel, especially the mixed multitude, would be constantly disposed to rebel against God. They would also murmur against their leader, and would grieve him by their unbelief and stubbornness, and it would be a laborious and soul-trying work to lead them through to the Promised Land. Their sins had already forfeited the favor of God, and justice called for their destruction. The Lord therefore proposed to destroy them, and make of Moses a mighty nation. {PP 318.1}

“Let Me alone, ...that I may consume them,” were the words of God. If God had purposed to destroy Israel, who could plead for them? How few but would have left the sinners to their fate! How few but would have gladly exchanged a lot of toil and burden and sacrifice, repaid with ingratitude and murmuring, for a position of ease and honor, when it was God Himself that offered the release. {PP 318.2}

*But Moses discerned ground for hope where there appeared only discouragement and wrath. The words of God, “Let Me alone,” he understood not to forbid but to encourage intercession, implying that nothing but the prayers of Moses could save Israel, but that if thus entreated, God would spare His people. He “besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against **Thy** people, which **Thou** hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?” {PP 318.3}*

Love no less than justice demanded that for this sin judgment should be inflicted. God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. He cuts off those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin. In sparing the life of Cain, God had demonstrated to the universe what would be the result of permitting sin to go unpunished. The influence exerted upon his descendants by his life and teaching led to the state of corruption that demanded the destruction of the whole world by a flood. The history of the antediluvians testifies that long life is not a blessing to the sinner; God's great forbearance did not repress their wickedness. The longer men lived, the more corrupt they became. {PP 325.2}

The lesson correctly points out, in the last paragraph, the principle of “by beholding, we become changed.” We understand this as the Law of Worship.

Thursday – Show me your Glory

We saw in Sunday's lesson that at the burning bush, God kind of introduced himself to Moses. A few months later, Moses was asking God “...**show me thy way, that I may know thee** ...” WHY??

Still the prophet did not cease pleading. Every prayer had been answered, but he thirsted for greater tokens of God's favor. He now made a request that no human being had ever made before: “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” {PP 328.2}

*God did not rebuke his request as presumptuous; but the gracious words were spoken, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee.” **The unveiled glory of God, no man in this mortal state can look upon and live;** but Moses was assured that he should behold as much of the divine glory as he could endure. Again he was summoned to the mountain summit; then the hand that made the world, that hand that “removeth the mountains, and they know not” (Job 9:5), took this creature of the dust, this mighty man of faith, and placed him in a cleft of the rock, while the glory of God and all His goodness passed before him. {PP 328.3}*

This experience—above all else the promise that the divine Presence would attend him—was to Moses an assurance of success in the work before him; and he counted it of infinitely greater worth than all the learning of Egypt or all his attainments as a statesman or a military leader. No earthly power or skill or learning can supply the place of God's abiding presence. {PP 328.4}

To the transgressor it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; but Moses stood alone in the presence of the Eternal One, and he was not afraid; for his soul was in harmony with the will of his Maker. Says the psalmist, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18. But “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.” Psalm 25:14. {PP 329.1}

Friday

Suggested reading: Patriarchs and Prophets. Ch 1 “**Why was sin permitted**”, Ch's 22-29. “Moses, The Plagues of Egypt, The Passover, The Exodus, From the Red Sea to Sinai, The Law Given to Israel, Idolatry at Sinai, **Satan's Enmity against the Law**”.