

## *Books of Exodus, Leviticus*

### **Lessons of the Exodus (Part II)**

Last month, we saw that there were many lessons America could learn from ancient Egypt at the time of the showdown between the Lord and pharaoh and the subsequent Exodus. There are many more things, however, that believers can learn from the Israelites who were liberated from their bondage in Egypt.

Egypt passes out of the picture after only the first 14 chapters of the Book of Exodus; the remaining 26 – not to mention the next three books of the Pentateuch and the rest of the Law and the Prophets (Old Testament) – deal with Israel and her relationship to God. And in that seeming bit of trivia is, perhaps, the first lesson to learn in all this, as referenced by the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 24:35:

*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.*

In the Revelation to the Apostle John, we also read it as “the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). The world as we know it will not continue (and if you can’t get happy about *that*, I don’t know what is left to get happy about). There is a day coming, long promised by God but soon coming, when the world as God meant it will arise, when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). The whole story of the Bible is the reclamation of mankind and the removal of the curse on planet Earth that came with the fall of Man.

On a smaller scale, so it was with the Israelites. God promised to deliver them from Egypt and return them to the country He had given to their ancestor, Abraham, and the day finally came when He delivered on that promise. But on the way there, the Israelites met with hardship and seeming privation; this actually turned into an opportunity to directly experience God as *Jehovah-Jireh* (“The Lord will provide”) – as if protecting them from the plagues He let loose on pharaoh and the Egyptians wasn’t enough – but they didn’t quite see it that way. The people couldn’t get their heads or their hearts out of Egypt, even when their chains were broken and something better was placed in front of them. Eventually, they paid for their disobedience by forfeiting the Promised Land and wandering around the desert until only Joshua and Caleb were left of that generation to take their children into that country.

God had tested the Israelites in numerous ways:

1. **Deliverance:** As long as the Israelites were still in bondage, they would keep crying out to the Lord. But when God sent a deliverer in the form of Moses, would they focus on the gift or on the Giver? Eventually, they saw the Hand of the Lord as a result of the plagues sent to the Egyptians. Americans still profess to believe in God, but after a generation or two of strange teachings, some of which having nothing to do with the Gospel whatsoever, will America recognize that Hand of deliverance when the Lord starts to move?

2. **Protection:** Of course, pharaoh wasn't going to let the Israelites go just on Moses' word, but made things even harder for them to discourage them and get their minds off of their God. God protected the people, however, from the judgment He was sending on the gods of Egypt, so that the Israelites weren't even touched by the plagues. When revival comes, the forces in America that are working very hard, indeed, to drive every mention of God from the public dialogue, are not going to give up so easily, and persecution could become out lot. Can we trust in that same God to have *our* backs, to protect us and to warn us (as He has *already* done) to take steps to be ready for the hard times ahead?
3. **Provision:** Seas and rivers split apart, leaving a path of dry ground. Drinking water for almost a million people on foot flows from a rock. Bread from literally out of nowhere... every morning (except the Sabbath). Look at a bronze serpent and snake venom loses its effectiveness. No clothes wear out – in 40 years. Now, *that's* providing for people! Such things come only from one Source. And it came when Israel needed it the most; when there was nowhere – or no one – left to turn to. God can do such things again; He does them today for those who are sold out to Him, and will do it for believers in this nation, if we are willing to lay our lives down for Him and do what He asks. More of this is coming for the ones who are sold out to Him when the hard times come. In fact, God will provide not only for His people, but for others *through* His people to being them back to Him.
4. **Presence:** The first time Israel directly encountered their God, it was through His voice coming from Mount Sinai (Exodus 20) giving the Law – The Ten Commandments. The people feared the Voice of the Lord, as Moses said the plan was (Exodus 20: 20). After that, it was with the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night; would these demonstrations of His reality be sufficient to keep the people from sinning against Him? In the times to come, God will move in ways that people haven't seen in centuries, especially when distinctions are made once more between believers and unbelievers; will this be enough to turn the hearts of this nation back to Him?
5. **His Law:** Distinct and different from the rules of the false gods followed by the Egyptians they left behind and the Canaanites God was about to drive out of the Promised Land, the Law of the Lord was one that even Joshua, Moses' successor, said could not be followed without doing so wholeheartedly (Joshua 24:19). The difference is that that Law does not blot out sin; the Law provides forgiveness for sin, but cannot remove it altogether. God showed His love for the Israelites unconditionally, based on the covenant He had with their father Abraham. Only the blood of the final, ultimate sacrifice for sin, pointed to by the Law – the Lord Jesus – has the capability to eradicate sin altogether for those who place their trust in Him. All else was mythology, a set of rules and practices and rituals that *might* get you into heaven if you did everything right, with no way of knowing for certain if you had. This was – and still is – difficult even for some believers to accept; some denominations still insist on dressing up the sacrifice of Jesus with rituals that must be followed if you want to get into Heaven.
6. **Inaction:** While Moses was receiving the Law of the Lord on Mount Sinai, the Israelites had been left to themselves for 40 days and 40 nights. They could have put the time to good use, studying the Law of God and learning of the One who

brought them out of slavery. Instead, they likely dreamed first of the Promised Land, then (when it became clear they weren't headed there yet) of Egypt and the things they had there that they didn't have anymore. The people may have been slaves there, but they still had more than they had in the desert. Rather than anticipate the Lord's promises and the land of milk and honey they were headed for, the people fell back on what they knew until the land of bondage started to look like the land of plenty. Sometimes, God lets us go through periods of inaction, where we feel like we've been put on a shelf somewhere. God has not forgotten you; He is waiting for you to seek His face, put aside the things that hinder your walk with Him and accept whatever He decides in order to transform you into the likeness of His Son. Do not let "down time" discourage you from getting closer to Him – put the time to good use.

7. **Blessings:** Sometimes, especially after hardship has driven us to the Lord, great blessings become our greatest trials, and the point where we forget Who blessed us and we experience our greatest failures. Nadab and Elihu, the eldest sons of Aaron the first high priest of the Lord, may have thought that being next in line to succeed their father meant they have "made it." As such, they could do whatever they pleased in terms of what they must have seen as the rituals before the Lord. But the regulations regarding sacrifices and how to approach God were not meant to be mindless ritual, but part of the Israelites covenant relationship to God; wholehearted, genuine worship to the Lord. Eventually, Nadab and Elihu tried to walk in to the sanctuary when they felt like it – offering incense when they chose, not when God said it could be done – and died before the Lord as a result. God is Holy and must be honored as such; nothing for Him should be done carelessly or flippantly.

Of course, anyone who reads the Word knows that the people's reaction to the Law – not the Law itself, which came from God – had become corrupt. The reason for this is that the Law had been seen *as* law, when it was meant to be more than that; it was not meant to be rules that had to be followed, but a lifestyle that was to be lived wholeheartedly. When a person goes on a diet to lose weight, they give up certain foods for the greater good of their overall health, or at least to drop some pounds and fit into their old clothes again. The problem comes when, after a few weeks of denying themselves, they start to look longingly toward the foods they gave up rather than keep their "eyes on the prize," as it were. (For proof, you need look no further than the lyrics to Jimmy Buffett's classic single, *Cheeseburger in Paradise*.) Eventually, once the dieter has lost what they feel is a sufficient amount of weight... often just short of their original target... they go joyfully back to the foods they gave up, and start to gain weight all over again.

So it is with the ways of the Lord. In their hearts, the Israelite generation that was rescued from bondage never *really* left Egypt, focusing on all the hardships and privations of the journey to the Promised Land. They saw the Law as just one more thing they had to put up with, instead of a way of life and a heart attitude that was better than what they had led before.

There is new teaching that is emerging that challenges what has become the "standard model" of end-times prophecy, in which the antichrist comes from Europe and

that every country on earth – including America – follows him. The new teaching (which has strong evidence of being Divinely inspired) places the antichrist and his armies as coming from the Middle East. The good news in this scenario is that the “jury is still out,” as it were, on the United States; this nation can still be reclaimed for the Lord. But if that is the case, we as believers have a great deal of work to do, and pastors need to prepare those under their charge for that reclamation, for the “Christian nation” as it could be. And that means making sure the congregations, those entrusted by God to the care of the pastor, do not look back during the hard times until the mess we are now in looks like paradise by comparison, but forward to the coming Kingdom of God... and along the way, possibly a reclaimed America.

For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ  
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