

FEBRUARY 6

Exodus 23:14-25:40

Exodus 23:14-13

Vs. 14-19 These feasts were a great idea by God to have the entire nation, and the men in particular, always focused on God's salvation, redemption and selection of Israel. The feasts made the people think of God's provision and His cleansing of their sin. There is actually much more to this, but it is amazing to think of what is built into these three festivals. More than anything, in a heart of faith, these feasts would have made Israel strong in knowing that the promise of God to redeem all mankind was being worked out through them. They were the chosen people through whom the promise to Adam and Eve and the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled and proclaimed in the world.

As a footnote to these feasts and the presentation of sacrifices and firstfruits, three stipulations are given. Looking at them, it seems to me that each applies to each feast in that order.

V. 18 This has to do with the Passover feast where yeast or "leaven" was not allowed.

V. 19 They should offer only the best as firstfruits. This was the feast at Pentecost, 50 days after the Passover.

The young goat and its mother's milk - this has to do with the feast in October, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. Men smarter and godlier than I have broken their heads trying to understand and explain the prohibition here, but it makes sense to me that it's just out of line, so if God said not to do it, don't do it. It could be that there was a pagan ritual involving this. It could also be that since a goat plays a significant part in the Day of Atonement, any goats offered were to be roasted.

In a practical sense, for all the men to come to Jerusalem three times a year would have made Israel very unique in the eyes of all its neighbors. They would have been unique not just religiously, but in terms of sanity, leaving the country unguarded for weeks, in fact, the same weeks every year. For Israel itself, it would have demonstrated great love, faith and dependence on God their Savior.

As disciples, we live with reminders of our salvation and the grace given to us. That God would choose us to love, forgive, and call to His service is incredible. The Word reminds us of God's plan to redeem and bring salvation through Jesus. Communion reminds us of the price that was paid to redeem us. The very fact that the Church exists should be a reminder of our Savior, our place in God's kingdom and our mission to reach a lost world, making disciples. God has built all this, and more, into our lives as disciples; but they only stay vital and meaningful if we are in love with Christ and are following Him in the harvest.

Vs. 20-22 This is a promise to the people that God will give them the land. They have seen His power, so there should be no doubt that God will do this. They see the mountain smoking, burning at the top, lightning, thunder, a blaring trumpet...all indications that what Moses is telling them from God is a pretty good bet.

One question I have is regarding the angel. Is this just an angel or is it Christ? I say this because of what Paul/Spirit says in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

In the verses above it says Christ was represented in the "Rock" or provision of water; but since there is the aspect of following or accompanying them, I would guess that Jesus was that angel

who led them. God's presence was with the people, not by proxy, but He was actually there in the person of Christ, the angel of the Lord. Now, in the promise of the Holy Spirit, God is not only "with us," He dwells within us. Amazing.

Vs. 23-33 There is a lot to observe here.

Notice that God says He will bless them and give them victory, but it is repeated that they dare not worship the gods of these people. That sounds like the warning about the tree of good and evil.

Notice that God says He will not drive the people out immediately and why. Also, God says He will drive the people out of the land. This means that, in a sense, Israel never had to fight against anyone. There never had to be any bloodshed. The people of the land knew that God was giving the land to Israel and they could have responded to God and left. That is an interesting wrinkle on what we'll be reading in Joshua, especially when we see what Rahab says.

Exodus 24

Vs. 1-8 This is the "Mosaic Covenant," that is, the covenant that God made with Israel through Moses. It is a conditional covenant, in that the people have to agree to obey in order to see the blessings. This obedience was to have been driven by their love of God for their salvation from Egypt. It would be saving faith by believing that God was fulfilling the promise to Abraham through them. Even here, the focus was not on them, but on God, who would show them love as a witness to draw the nations.

Moses had already been writing, since he mentions a *Book of the Covenant*. The Ten Commandments actually signified other commands God had given and those He would still give. This is why in the New Testament we'll see statements that loving God and one's neighbor actually fulfill the law. Just as loving God and one's neighbor fulfilled the Ten Commandments (Romans 13:9), the Ten Commandments summarized all of the laws of the Old Testament.

The people agreed to the covenant and in the only time this happens in the OT, they are sprinkled (somehow) with the *blood of the covenant*. Those words, *the blood of the covenant*, will be repeated when Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, in making a new covenant.

Just for clarification, the covenant that Jesus makes with us for redemption and righteousness before God is unconditional. In the Mosaic Covenant (MC) obedience was a mandate. The MC was an "If/Then" arrangement, not for salvation, but for national blessing. I think that the "faith that saved" was in the God of Israel, who redeemed Israel according to His promise to Abraham. No one could ever be saved by obeying the law. Paul says that salvation is, and always has been, through faith.

Vs. 9-11 A meal usually followed the making of a covenant. It says they see God. Jesus, John and Paul all say that no one has ever seen God. So what is happening here? Again, I think that they are seeing the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God. Seeing Jesus is the only time mankind has ever seen God.

Another thing worth mentioning has to do with the men at this meal, two of whom are Aaron's sons. We need to keep in mind that through these 40 years, God is going to be teaching the people His holiness and the deadliness of sin. These two men are given a great privilege. How many people have eaten with God? Surely they've gotta be like "buds" with God, and if they mess up, He'll cut them some slack. Right? Wrong.

Vs. 12-18 Joshua went further up the mountain with Moses, but didn't go up to the place where Moses met God. This does mean that Joshua is being given great privilege. I find it interesting that Moses' successor is already shown to us.

Aaron and the guys went down to the people to take care of stuff. I doubt that Joshua or Moses had food for 40 days. God must have somehow been providing for them too.

Exodus 25

Vs. 1-9 It is interesting that the first thing God does after the covenant is to begin forming the nation around their worship of Him. Notice that the materials for the tabernacle and everything in it were to come from their free offerings as their hearts led them.

God either gave Moses detailed plans or He gave Moses a supernatural memory.

Also, some of these materials for building the tabernacle were probably what the people brought out of Egypt. But in the forty years they were living in the wilderness, I'll bet this community of 2-3 million people became a stop on the caravan routes.

Vs. 10-22 Beginning from the very innermost room, the Most Holy Place, God describes the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. It was here every year on the Day of Atonement that the sins of the nation would be provisionally forgiven as a symbol of the forgiveness that would come through Jesus.

Vs. 23-30 Now God describes the furniture in the Holy Place, the room right before the veil that covered the entrance to the Most Holy Place. It is interesting that the next thing God talks about is the table for the bread of the Presence. The twelve loaves (Lev. 24:5) represent the people of Israel always being before God. That this symbol was bread probably signified that the life and provision of Israel came from Him.

Vs. 31-40 The lampstand signified God's light and life to the people. The talent of gold in v. 39 was about 75 pounds.

As you think of these pieces of furniture, remember that in all God is doing here, He is setting the visual aids to what redemption in Jesus would look like. The three pieces mentioned symbolize the light God gives, the care and provision He gives, and most importantly, the forgiveness and grace we receive from Him. The mercy seat was set atop of the ark of the covenant which held the Word. The forgiveness is given to us based, not on the law, but upon the promise of the living Word. These three pieces represent what God gives to His people.

The only piece missing from the Holy Place is the altar of incense representing the prayers of God's people rising up before Him. This is our part. Of course, there is still the veil, but in a couple of days in Matthew, Jesus will take that away.

There is deep symbolism in these pieces of furniture, and blessings for those who take the time to consider and meditate on them.

Matthew 24:29-51

It is good to keep in mind that all of this prophetic information will have a very helpful and specific meaning to the people going through the Tribulation. They will understand these words better than we do. The Lord is giving them a basic outline of what will happen. It is OK if we don't understand everything fully. They will.

Vs. 29-31 I've always thought this was comical. In v. 15 from yesterday, the antichrist goes into the temple with an attitude and declares himself to be god. Then he walks out on the temple steps, and basically the earth and the universe go kaput. Cool, he has just pronounced himself captain of the Titanic.

This is not the rapture of the church before the Tribulation. This gathering refers to all believers on earth at the end of the Tribulation. Because of the persecution, they will be driven into all nations. The believing on earth will be supernaturally gathered, but not be "changed" as Paul says the raptured church will be "changed" in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53. These believers will enter the Millennial Kingdom as normal humans with normal and untransformed bodies. It is at this

time, too, that the Lord will resurrect all the OT believers and they will enter, enjoy, and serve in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Vs. 32-51 The fig tree illustration is a reference to the “birth pangs” that are not the coming of Christ, but give the sign that His “day” is coming. This coming “day” will be all seven years of the Tribulation. For those disciples who are watching, there will be a sense of alertness when they see times of great distress hit the nations and the earth.

Vs. 36-39 Jesus says that the day will come totally unexpected. There will be enough peace on earth to allow the normal flow of life. The reference has to be to the beginning of the Tribulation. This “day of the Lord” will bring such severe judgment that all normal life on earth will end. Once the Tribulation begins, people who are wise can begin marking X's on their calendars.

I understand vs. 40-41 to refer to the rapture, that is, God removing the church from earth before the Tribulation, thus introducing the Tribulation. Just as God made a choice between belief and unbelief in the plagues of Egypt, He will do that also as He begins the Tribulation. The result will be turmoil on the earth and many in Israel will be awakened to belief in the gospel and their Messiah.

Vs. 42-51 This is the second time Jesus has used this example with His disciples. Now all of this information will have a great meaning to the people going through the Tribulation, but Jesus expects all of His disciples in all ages to be awake and alert. I know the final thing Jesus says about the lazy servant can be taken to mean that this servant wasn't a believer. I think that defeats the purpose of the warning; but then, you don't want a believer thrown into hell. What are we to do?

My take on this is that the servant is a believer, like millions we have today who live for themselves as good Christians but do not follow Christ into the harvest. When they are judged...and we all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ...their lives and works built on the foundation will be looked at. I think this is another view of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. To *cut him in pieces* is a figure of speech like, “the fir will fly,” or “tear him a new one.” These hypocrites will suffer. I think those who live a lukewarm life for Christ will feel deep distress and remorse in that moment when they see their life's work burned away and realize, in the presence of their Savior, what a waste it was. I know the *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is usually reserved for those who end up in hell, but I think the anguish can be applied in this case to those who, though believing, treat the love and grace and mission of Christ with contempt.

Psalm 30

The note here that this was at the dedication of the temple probably means the tabernacle when David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. David must have had times he wondered if he would ever see this day. David's deep despair is felt here, but out of that despair and crying out came this amazing testimony of God's care. Verses 11 and 12 came out of that suffering.

Vs. 1-3 Look at all the things David mentions in these verses. These are the things God would also do for those who came to the tabernacle and sought God's help and mercy. Notice the connection between crying out to God and being healed.

Vs. 4-5 After all of the civil war and the oppression of enemies, this nation was now united under God, under David. The waiting was worth it. The morning had come.

Vs. 6-7 David had to experience betrayal and persecution to become humble. That oppression was a blessing.

Vs. 8-10 In persecution is where David learned to cry out to the Lord.

Vs. 11-12 And look what David learned and how finding God as his help changed him.

As we read these psalms, they should give us hope as we are crying out and waiting on the Lord. The joy that God gave David will be given to us also, if we wait on the Lord.

Proverbs 7:24-27

There she is again. In my book, Looking Out For Number One, I used these verses of warning for Andreas when Angela came to get him. I intentionally made Angela look “normal” and “moral,” because most men are smart enough not to go after a wild looking prostitute; but the woman next door, or at church, or in the next office who they see at lunch, comes right through their radar. But it all leads to the same place.