

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#26 Feast of Weeks: Liberation Unto God

Exodus 19 finds the children of Israel camping at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

Moses ascends the mountain to meet God who told Moses to tell Israel:

Ex. 19:4-6 *Ye have seen* what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: ⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

When Moses descended and told the people God's words, they agreed to listen and obey.

Notice the emphasis: What they had personally seen and/or experienced.

God had liberated them from the Egyptians and the hand of Pharaoh.

They saw the Nile turn to blood and 8 other plagues.

They knew God spared them from the effects of plague after plague.

They heard the Egyptians' cries when the Death Angel struck their firstborn.

They had walked on dry ground when God parted the Red Sea.

They saw the flood waters converge on the Egyptians who were on their heels.

They saw all God had done to the Egyptians to liberate and free them.

God's protection and miracles of provision extend after the crossing of the Red Sea.

They knew firsthand God's care as an "eagle."

Bitter water was made sweet.

They gathered manna and feasted on quail.

They drank from a rock.

They experienced victory over the attacks of the Amalekites.

Question: What was God's purpose in liberating them and providing "eagle care?"

To bring justice to an oppressed people?

To demonstrate God's awesome and miraculous power?

Ultimately: "To Bring You To Myself"

Words to Pharaoh: "Let my people go, so they may WORSHIP Me."

Ex. 6:6-7: I am God, I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians...

I will take you for My people and I will be your God.

Ex. 3:12: The sign to Moses at the burning bush. "When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall WORSHIP God on this mountain."

Key Point: From the call of Moses at the burning bush through all the plagues, sea and desert, the purpose of God had been to bring Israel to Himself.

The goal wasn't just liberation from Egypt...but Liberation To God.

Question: Do I have a terrible tendency to stop short of God's purpose?

We love the thought of liberation from _____, but we tend to want God's work to end there. Then we can do what we want with our freedom and go the way we want.

We want liberation from things that bind us and we call on God to set us free.

Liberation is always to "bring us to Himself."

It is liberation TO and not merely liberation FROM.

He gives us liberation to come to and abide in Him in a unique relationship.

When God brought Israel to Himself at Mt. Sinai, He used the words: "therefore, if...then..."

Therefore: All God has done for them in bringing them to Sinai.

IF: Obey His voice; keep His covenant? Then God will do more; give them a new identity.

Then: God will make Israel His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God would dwell in their midst and make them the earthly abode of His presence and His precious instrument for reaching the nations.

IF they refused to listen, the relationship is stymied. They failed to respond to God's liberating salvation. Therefore, they will never experience God's greatest purpose.

Israel replied: Yes! We Will & We Do! When that answer is given, it means that...

SALVATION DOES NOT STOP with liberation and provisions.

NOW: Grow in the relationship with God.

I am to listen carefully, remain and abide in Him.

I will be amazed and humbled by what Christ will do in me.

One of the greatest events in the Old Testament is also one of the saddest.

When God first appeared to Moses in Exodus 3, it was by means of a burning bush.

As Moses approached the bush, God told him not to come any closer, but to take off his shoes for he was on holy ground.

God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery.

A sign God gave to Moses was that one day the Israelites would worship Yahweh on this same mountain. [Mt. Horeb or Mt. Sinai]

God's fire transformed Moses' reluctance into obedience.

Moses has returned to this mountain with the whole people of Israel.

Instead of a burning bush, the whole mountain is on fire.

Ex. 19:16-20 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

¹⁸ And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

¹⁹ And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

Exodus 20:2-17 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain...

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.... Honor thy father and thy mother...

Thou shalt not kill. ¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery. ¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal.

¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. ¹⁷Thou shalt not covet...

Interesting Note: Where was Moses when the 10 Commandments were initially given?

Moses went up the mountain but came back down BEFORE God spoke the Commandments.

Ex. 19:25 So Moses went down unto the people.

God spoke the 10 Commandments to ALL THE PEOPLE.

God met with Israel on Mt. Sinai; not just Moses.

God brought them to the mountain and then descended upon the mountain to meet them.

One of the greatest events:

In the Garden, God used to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. [Gen. 3:8]

When they sinned, they hid from God.

Part of the consequences of their sin was expulsion from the Garden.

God and humanity no longer walked together.

Key: From Gen. 3 to this point, we do not find God meeting with peoples, but only with individuals.

God walked with Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses, but nowhere had God come to meet or dwell with a people.

NOW: God was coming to Sinai to meet with all Israel - not just Moses.

Question: How did the Israelites' respond to God's move towards intimacy and relationship with them? A great event followed by one of the saddest. [Ex. 20:1-21]

v. 18-19 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.

God was seeking relationship and intimacy; Israel was seeking distance.

God came and the people turned away in fear.

Their reaction is the opposite of Moses at the burning bush.

Moses drew closer; Israel backed away lest they die.

Consider: They would die if they remained in the holy presence of God. But like Moses it would not have been a physical death. It would be a transforming death.

Something about Moses did die at the burning bush. How else can you explain the change in him?

Earlier, he was running from Pharaoh and his own people.

Then, he was going back to lead his own people and stand before Pharaoh.

Key: The "fire" of that bush was a transforming fire. It did something to the heart of Moses.

He was then willing to become a servant to God and a vessel of His Presence.

Israel now stood before the same Fire and faced the same transforming death.

This Fire desires to meld them into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

This Fire desires to purify them so they will be servants to God and vessels of His Presence.

Israel backed up! They turned away from God's treasured calling!

We might be rather harsh and think: How could they turn their back?

After all God did for them, they didn't want to go through this "death to self."

Remember the call of Jesus Christ on us: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him, come and die."

Charles Stanley: Our intimacy with God is His highest priority for our lives.

Our intimacy with Him determines the impact of our lives.

How often have I backed up from God's fiery intimacy and His intentions to transform me?

Am I reluctant to get too close? I might have to die to something my flesh desires.

Moses Tries to Ease The Peoples' Fears

Ex. 20:20 "God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Where have we encountered "test" before?

Exodus 15:25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved [tested] them,

Ex. 16:4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove [test] them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

Gen. 22:1 God "tested" Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac.

Key: "Testing is a tool for training and shaping character, for developing and purifying our faith and our commitment."

Key: God came in a holy fire so the people would learn the Fear Of God.

Prov. 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. [Able to make godly decisions.]

The greatest visible evidence of the fear of the Lord is obedience to the Lord.

As we encounter the Holy One, the impurities of our lives will be purged.

God's fiery Presence will transform Israel so they will become a holy nation.

Sad Result: Moses was unable to persuade the people to draw near and open themselves to the Holy One who came to them via a burning mountain. "The people remained at a distance while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was."

They sought to continue to enjoy Yahweh as their Liberator but not as their Sanctifier.

The burning mountain would mean their death. They could not see through the flames that it would also mean their resurrection.

Chadwick: "Awe is one thing: the submission of the will is another. Israel had plenty of awe, but little submission of their will."

Consider: God's purpose is to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Many Christians are content with Jesus Christ as their Liberator from hell and gladly accept His blood atonement for salvation and eternal life. However, many seem to have no desire to offer themselves a "living sacrifice" in full surrender to the Lord.

They are content with their justification and stand on the promise of glorification.

Rom. 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

What is missing? _____ Why? I must surrender and draw near.

A grave hindrance to spiritual progress is the idea that because we can quote Scripture we possess the content and experience it.

Many knowingly refuse to obey truths and commands. Spiritual growth STOPS!

God will not compromise with anyone over the issue of disobedience to truth which He reveals. Many believe that changes on the outside [activity, busy working and serving God] will take care of their spiritual growth. The heart of the man is never changed!

The Apostle Paul possessed an earnest desire to press forward and to become a special kind of Christian.

Phil. 3:7-10 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

That I may win Christ	Yet He already had Christ.
That I may be found in Him	Yet He was already in Him
That I may Know Him	Yet Paul already knew Him

I follow after: Phil. 3:12-14

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I Pet. 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

Rev. 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Paul's burning desire was to continue on with Christ and experience ALL of that for which Christ had apprehended him.

Am I a stranger to the desire and the spirit which drove the Apostle Paul day by day?

Do I back away when God wants to draw me near in an intimate, transforming, "cross" relationship?

Do I want Jesus Christ as my Liberator but not my Sanctifier?

My sanctification and transformation are the goal of my liberation.

Will I permit the testing to transform me, or will I back away from the tests?

May we follow Moses, heed the call of Christ and draw near to our Savior.