

God's Everlasting Covenant

presents

Study 3 – The Purpose: How Then Shall They Live?

Review – We learned the Covenant God made with Abraham & his descendants was unconditional & irrevocable. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God made; God changed Abraham's name and brought him into the new land because He was starting a new nation that would belong to Him. The 4 key places (altars) where God revealed Himself and confirmed the Covenant are now in what is called The West Bank.

Now, we are going to jump ahead. We know the story of Joseph, and how the Israelites ended up in Egypt in slavery. It would seem they were forgotten, but the Lord raised up Moses to lead them out of bondage into freedom – to live differently than all the other peoples of the earth.

I. Israel, A Light to the Nations

“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a *light for the nations...*”

(Isaiah 42:6)

“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a *light to the nations.*” **(Isaiah 51:4)**

“*Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*” **(Isaiah 60:3)**

“The *nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.*” (speaking of the New Jerusalem - **Revelation 21:24**)

A. How were they to live in this land?

We all know the story of God's appearance to Moses in a burning bush. What we sometimes don't think about is that Moses knew nothing about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew nothing about being a Hebrew, a descendant of Israel (Jacob). He was raised as Pharaoh's son – the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was in every way, an Egyptian. Moses was banished from Egypt because he had murdered a fellow Egyptian. He lost everything and became a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian. It is in this circumstance that God appeared to him. Let's read **Exodus 3:1-6**.

QUESTION: What did God say to Moses?

ANSWER: Take off your sandals, for you are standing on *holy ground*. God then introduces Himself as the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. God tells Moses who He (God) is, and then Moses finds out who he (Moses) is.

Remember, in our Introduction, we talked about God's *revelation being progressive*. He doesn't always reveal everything about Himself, His purposes & plans at once. He reveals something, and then asks us to obey Him in faith. And when we obey, we find out more because He reveals more. This is the first time that God reveals Himself as *holy* in the scriptures. If He is holy, then it follows that the place where He reveals

Himself is also **holy**. God is revealing for the first time that wherever **His presence** is, the ground is holy. I believe the scriptures teach us that this is an eternal truth. In Hebrew, “*holy*” is the word “*qodesh*”, which means a consecrated or sacred place or thing. Consecrated = set apart for a special purpose.

I believe from this, we can infer that when God revealed Himself to Abraham in Shechem, Beth El, Hebron & Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem, He was saying those places were holy, although Scripture does not say so directly. When we learn a truth in Scripture, we can often look back at previous events, and apply that ‘new’ truth to past events. This is the nature of progressive revelation. So, it follows logically that a **holy** God who was calling a **holy** nation of people into existence, was also giving them a **holy** land, and His appearance validates this.

Let’s read **Exodus 19:5-8**. Here, God’s purpose is becoming clear.

QUESTION: What do you think, is God’s purpose?

ANSWER: He wants to call into being a holy nation, a kingdom of priests.

QUESTION: In verse 8, when the people respond all together “We will do everything the Lord says,” what are they saying?

ANSWER: *they are accepting* God’s invitation to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

It is no coincidence that immediately after this event, God calls Moses back up to the holy mountain to give the Law – **Torah** – the 10 Commandments. By the way, **in this study, I’m going to use the words “Ten Commandments”, “law”, and “Torah” interchangeably**. The rest of the *law* that is revealed in Exodus, Leviticus & parts of Deuteronomy, are all further detail & clarification of the **Ten Commandments**.

Last week we talked about God doing something new – we take these things for granted – our land was built on the Ten Commandments. We are a culture that has been influenced by them for over 200 years. But these laws were revolutionary to the Israelites back then. They were coming out of living 400 years in Egypt. Sure, there were laws in Egypt, but the Torah was unique. God was bringing a revolutionary social & worship system into existence for the first time, as we shall see.

We won’t go into every aspect of Torah, but there are certain things God commanded that are really key. And we’re going to cover those briefly. I wish we had time to really study each of these in more detail. I highly encourage you to do so. There are many excellent resources available, such as *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*, by Dr. Ron Moseley; *Celebrating Biblical Feasts* by Martha Zimmerman; *The Feasts of the Lord* by Kevin Howard & Marvin Rosenthal, and *The Tabernacle*, by David Levy.

1. No other Gods – Read **Exodus 20:1-4**. Don Finto in *Your People Shall Be My People* writes on p. 52:

“It was this uniqueness of the one true God – his insistence upon their faithfulness to Him alone – that was Israel’s challenge. The Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans did not object to Israel’s God as long as He was only one of many. But God clearly stated, “No other gods.” Israel was set apart to worship Him alone, to keep faith alive in Him. The nations of the world have worshipped their many gods, but only Israel and religious faith born out of Jewish roots have maintained that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

2. A Holy Sabbath - Read **Exodus 20:8-11**. This is an amazing revelation. God announces Himself as a God who wants his people to *rest from their labors*. These people had just come out of a nation that had enslaved them, where they worked all day, every day. God is saying, “I’m not going to enslave you. I want you to rest, and that day will be a *holy* day, a day set apart from the other six days, a day to worship Me. As I rested on the 7th day, so you will rest.” Voila! A new 7-day cycle of life was brought to the earth. Six days of work, one day of rest! This had everything to do with a revelation that God would be their Provider. Don Finto writes, pp.52-53:

“Economics were not to be the determining factor of their lives. If they would live in obedience to His commands, He would provide enough in six days so they could rest on the seventh.”

God affirmed this commandment when He allowed them to gather manna every day in the wilderness, but on the 6th day, the day before the Sabbath, they were to gather a double portion. No gathering on the Sabbath. This rest was for both man and beast. And God also said that every seventh year, the land was to rest – the people had to trust in God to be their provision. (Read **Leviticus 25:6-7**)

“Israel was practicing what farmers were later to learn – that the nutrients of the soil can be replenished by allowing the land to lie fallow for a year.” (Don Finto, *Your People Shall Be My People*, p. 53)

3. Social System Supreme! – All the rest of the commandments are about social relations – in the family & community. God’s system was chocked full of justice and mercy. Finto writes on pg. 54:

“Honor your father and mother...You shall not commit murder...You shall not commit adultery...You shall not steal...You shall not give false testimony...You shall not covet (Exodus 20:12-17). These commands, if obeyed, would revolutionize society. There would be no need for courts or prisons, no need for police or security systems. Parents would remain together and both children and the elderly would be cherished members of the family...Provisions were made for orphans and widows, there were guidelines to be followed when accidents occurred. No nation had ever been given such humane and compassionate laws. Yet knowing that the people would not follow these laws,

God also allowed for their weaknesses and the age in which they lived, providing rules for indentured servants and slaves and rules for divorce and polygamy.”

4. Feasts of the Lord

“To encourage His people and to proclaim to the world both His faithfulness and the coming righteous King, God ordered the observance of certain annual festivals. Israel, as priests for the world, was to instruct the nations through the story of redemption made clear in the enactment of their biblical feasts.”
(Don Finto, *Your People Shall Be My People*, p. 56)

Other writers have explained that there are seven major annual feasts – the Spring feasts are: Passover (Pesach), Feast of Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah), Feast of Firstfruits (Bikkurim), and Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Shavuot). The Fall feasts are: Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth). The God of Israel gave His people very explicit instructions in how these festivals were to be observed. And it is no wonder! In studying the feasts, you will discover that Jesus literally fulfilled, down to the minutest detail, the spring feasts in His first coming. It is believed that His second coming will fulfill the Fall feasts. I encourage you to do a study of these. They are rich with meaning and all point to our glorious Messiah, Yeshua.

5. The Temple Worship – In **Exodus 19:5-8**, as we read already, God tells them they will be His treasured possession. He reminds the Israelites that although the whole earth is His, He is specifically choosing them to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, which will live differently than the rest of the world. Living out the law would be how they manifested the God who created the world as the God who also loved the world and wanted to have a relationship with all people everywhere. They were to be His emissaries, His ambassadors to a world that had fallen into sin and desperately needed redemption. And the Temple, which included sacrifice & service was intricately designed by God. It was the ultimate Worship Service that would point the way for *the* coming and final sacrifice of the Lamb of God who would come and take away the sins of the world. Let’s hear what Sandra Teplinsky has to say in *Why Care About Israel?* On page 105, speaking of the priesthood, she says:

“...God limits the priesthood to one lineage in the tribe of Levi, which then ministers to Israel at large. At the same time, the whole Jewish nation functions, on another level, as a nation of priests. Yahweh anoints corporate Israel to mediate His Kingdom on behalf of all other nations. This is in keeping with His promised plan to bless all nations through Abraham.”

Let’s read **Zechariah 14:16**. Here we get a great view of the future of all nations. We can see that God’s intent is for *all peoples* to participate in worship, and celebration of the feasts, particularly the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast is celebrated during the final ingathering of the harvest. The faithful live in a sukkah (booth) for 8 days. It commemorates the time when Israel wandered through the wilderness for 40

years. They lived in temporary dwellings as they were always on the move. And yet, God provided for all their needs – so much so that even their clothing never wore out. In John 1:14, the apostle tells us that Jesus tabernacled (dwelt) among us. This also reminds us that we dwell in temporary houses (our bodies). We are aliens in a foreign land. Our real and eternal home is in Heaven, with our God. Although gentiles were never required to observe the feasts, in these last days, many are returning to these truths and reclaiming the riches of the Jewish roots of their faith.

QUESTION: Let's digress a bit. When gentile Christians hear about the 613 "laws", that make up Torah, that had to be obeyed, it conjures up all sorts of words & images. What are they?

ANSWER: restriction, slavery, legalism, impossible to keep.

Yet God called the Israelites *out of slavery into freedom*. Once they were out of harm's way, He called Moses up to Mt. Sinai and gave them the Law. Do you believe God would call them out of slavery only to impose upon them another form of bondage? As Paul would say, "May it never be!" We need to think of Torah differently. It is God's instructions to us on how to live in relationship to Him and others. It is a system of social justice, a healthy way of living life & a celebration of the goodness of God – Torah then becomes an act of love and worship to our King. He knew we would not be able to obey 100% of the time. He knew we would need a Messiah to cover us for those times when we sinned. The Law was never meant to save us. But neither was it meant to be abolished or neglected. This is a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Scriptures. Who of us thinks we should not practice the Ten Commandments? They are a foundation for the laws of this country. Without law, there is chaos. There is no freedom for us apart from the law.

God knew there would be a time when He would put His law in our minds and write it on the tablets of our hearts – the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. Why would He put His law (Torah) on our minds and write Torah on our hearts if we weren't meant to keep it. We don't keep it legalistically, as in Rabbinical Judaism, with man-made traditions. But rather we keep it in our hearts, and live it, through the power of the Spirit, out of love for the One who died for us, knowing the Cross covers us for the times when we fall short.

This is a very brief summary of some of the main aspects of the Torah. As we study these important parts of God's law, we can clearly see that our Messiah is the Torah. The **Word** (*Torah*) was made flesh and dwelt among us. It is easy to understand why Jesus said, "I have not come to abolish the law (Torah), but to fulfill it." He is the end of the Law. It is summed up in Him, completed in Him. In other words, the law was pointing to Him. He was a talking, walking, breathing, in the flesh, Torah. This gives us an entirely different view of the law than what is typically taught in gentile Christianity.

Read **Leviticus 11:44-45** – "Be holy as I am holy," is still the call of our Father in Heaven. As Christians, we are now an inseparable part of this wonderful nation called

the Jewish people, Israel. We are called to join them and together *with them* be “a light to the nations.” Although we are not physical Israel, by accepting the Jewish Messiah, we are grafted into this nation of priests. It only makes sense that we would love these people, pray for them, and seek to have relationships with them. Why? So we can stand with all Jews everywhere and encourage them to live out their God given destiny!

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