

What's the Message? – Lesson 30

Today's study reviews the Book of Exodus, summarizing its themes, and relating them to what we have seen in Genesis.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Our prayer is that this study of Exodus will bless you and provide you with a model for your life . . . both the bad things to avoid as well as the good things to emulate . . . a living model that will enable you to be a blessing to others. Amen.

The Book of Exodus marks a major milestone in the history of Israel. The tribe of Jacob had grown tremendously during their stay in Egypt, but they had not developed into a nation. Rather, they had become slaves for the massive construction projects of the leaders of Egypt. Now, with Moses as their leader, they move . . . not as a single family, or a scattering of immigrants now and then . . . but as a united group.

This uniting factor is the first thing we want to talk about. Centuries earlier there was given to Abraham a practice that was to mark them as the people of God: the practice of circumcision. In Egypt they had been united in misery under the oppression of slavery. Then they were united in the experience of watching Yahweh defeat the gods of Egypt during the plagues. But then something different happened. Israel was now taking steps towards becoming a nation, a nation set apart by God to be His people. They were united by the Passover and marked by the blood of the Lamb as God's chosen ones. They were united by the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, which then collapsed back upon those who sought to take them back into slavery. They were united by the making of the tabernacle . . . a place where God would come and dwell among them visibly. They were united by the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, a law that would set them apart as a unique people, a people with whom God had made a covenant.

We need to recall that this is consistent with what we learned in Genesis about God's covenant with Abraham. It is the passing of this covenant – and all that entails – to a new generation. It is a major theme of the Old Testament that we shall see repeated in different ways throughout the rest of the Bible.

Speaking of recalling . . . I recall that in our first lesson on Exodus we looked at the training and preparation of Moses for the task God would later call him to. With our second lesson, in chapters three and four, we also looked at how Moses made pathetic attempts at excuses to avoid God's call and compared them to our own sorry actions.

Yes, and the point we emphasized there was that God can . . . and does . . . use many simple and ordinary things to help train us and prepare us for the work He wants us to do for His kingdom. He does supply us with the knowledge and ability to do the job He wants us to do as His disciples and witnesses. We need to rely on His strength, not our own

In our third lesson, we dealt with something you've already referred to, the significance of the plagues in Egypt. I remember that you emphasized God's justice upon Egypt and His mercy for Israel. There was one sentence in particular that stands out in my mind. It was the one where you said: "The plagues attacked the basic structure of Egyptian worship and cultural standards, showing the impotence of their gods before the might of Yahweh."

Yes, you remember well. And the conclusion was that The Lord God is all-powerful, and is not only to be trusted, but obeyed.

In our fourth lesson, on chapter 12 of Exodus, we extracted the significance of the Passover event. Although it happened to a different people thousands of years ago, it is an event that all Jews today can unite with as if they had experienced it firsthand themselves. It was something visible that they could see, something concrete that they could associate with.

Having a visible reminder is something important, for it gives a focal point that people can unite around. But it is much more than a reminder. It foreshadowed the coming of the Sacred Lamb of God, the One who would shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. It is the Old Testament edition of The Lord's Supper we rejoice in today, because through the blood of His Son God has purchased our freedom from slavery . . . the slavery of sin.

In lessons five and six we saw that some things are not learned sufficiently the first time, and have to be repeated in another manner. There were several events, the crossing of the Red Sea, the thirst for water in the desert, and the hunger for food.

Yes, in both of these lessons our conclusion was pretty much the same. We may be faced with obstacles that seem overwhelming. If we trust in our own puny strength, they are. But that is precisely the time when we need to trust fully and completely in God.

Our final three lessons in Exodus likewise had a common theme: one of obedience. First, there was the giving of The Law at Mt. Sinai, then the making of the tabernacle and all its parts, and finally, the punishment of the Golden Calf event.

Again, these three events do emphasize that God does demand obedience to His Word. There are absolute standards, in spite of what our society would have us believe, and God is the One in charge, not us. And when we disobey His clear command, such as with the Golden Calf, there are consequences that we must face.

I hope this quick summary helps our listeners to see the unity not only of this book, but the unity of Exodus with Genesis. They are both giving us examples of how we should, and should not, live our lives . . . to the glory of God.

Next time we shall begin our study of the Book of Leviticus.

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