
Day 65 – March 6

The Laws of Moses (1450 – 1400 BCE)

Responsibilities Under the Law

Obedience Enjoined

Duties to Promulgate

Blessings for Obedience

Punishment for Disobedience

Readings: *Leviticus 22:31-33; 26:3-46; Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 12:32; 22:12; 31:9-13*

Reflections:

- God is the one who sets people apart and makes the people holy. Remember that to be holy is not referring primarily to moral perfection but to being set apart for the purposes of God. This is why God says that he is the one who makes his people holy, “who brought you out of Egypt.” This is a reference to being set apart from other nations.
- The tassels on the clothes were to be like personal “stick-it notes” to remind them of the laws. Again, the law represents an externalized strategy many people try to employ that in the end never really works to change their hearts.
- The priests had to intentionally read the law because this was in a time when the average person could not read and people simply did not have the ability to replicate books. They would have scrolls that the priests would have and the people would come and listen to them read out the laws. If people think listening to some sermons are boring, imagine coming every Saturday to listen to a priest read all these laws.
- The blessings and curses are all external and physical. Compare this to Ephesians 1 where all of the blessings of being in Christ are spiritual and personal. Again it shows the contrasting natures of a physical kingdom and a spiritual kingdom. People who do not understand the change can tend towards a health and wealth gospel that ultimately becomes very legalistic.
- The ultimate blessing for obedience is simply God being near them. He does not dwell within them through his Spirit but he would be near them. “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.” It is also interesting how he reminds them

again of leading them out of Egypt and how he “enabled you to walk with heads held high.” He took away their shame (hanging the head) of being a slave and gave them inner confidence. God desires this for his children. This is not pride but a quiet confidence to know that they have been raised up and seated with Christ and they have become children of God.

- The curses are frightening! This section is the equivalent of preaching hell and damnation and appealing to fear as a motivator for obedience. What do we learn? God gave Israel the most fearful sermon in the world, followed it up with actual judgments and it did not work. Israel had all of these warnings and in the moment they still disregarded them and pursued their own self-indulgence and rebellion. So again we see that this reveals what ultimately does not work. Fear, punishment and even pain do not change the human heart. Only God's presence through his Spirit working inside out will change our hearts.
- The reference to repentance does again point to the importance of our internal heart condition though. Notice the verse: “then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled...” This will be the future focus. Paul will teach how in Christ our “hearts are circumcised” so that we are permanently set apart for God. Remember circumcision is not about all of sudden being morally perfect but simply permanently set apart for God. It is a sign of submission and humility.
- It is interesting that God imbeds in the law a foreshadowing of a coming king as was previously mentioned and of captivity here at the end of the law. God already knows that all this is not going to work and he promises to continue to act graciously towards them. God is playing out a storyline that will ultimately be to the benefit of the entire world, not just a small nomadic nation. He is using them as a prototype or case study of sorts to show all who would follow Christ exactly what doesn't work. Why does God do this? Our bent is not just towards self-centered sin and self-indulgence but more importantly towards self-saving sin and becoming blindly religious. God uses Israel to show us in painstaking detail how self-saving simply does not work. Only grace through Christ, only through the Spirit working in our lives, does God ultimately change our hearts and our lives. This is the new life Jesus offers to all who would follow him.