

OT Survey Class 5 The Law and Wanderings

So far, in the last few weeks you've heard about an Introduction to the Old Testament; The Creation, The Fall of Man and the Flood; The Patriarchs and The Exodus.

As discussed in the Exodus lesson, Exodus 20 is where Moses brings the 10 Commandments to the people the first time, then the scene with the Golden calf, Moses smashes the tablets then goes back up the mountain to get another set. Exodus concludes with the construction of the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filling it.

Today we'll be looking at The Law and the Wanderings. This pertains to Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

These three books contain a very unique story about family. It's a story about a family with a mom and a dad (God represents both) who cared so much about their children they gave them guidelines and rules to protect them from harm, to teach them not to be like the rest of the world, to be clean and separate.

While Leviticus takes place entirely at Mt. Sinai,
Numbers records the family setting out to go to the promised land,
Deuteronomy occurs on the edge of their new paradise right before entering the land.

Leviticus

The book opens and concludes at that same geographical spot, where God gave the Law.

The Hebrew word *Vayikrah* opens the book, and it means "and He called." God had moved into the tabernacle at the end of Exodus and speaks from there rather than from Mount Sinai. He calls the people to Him and then in Leviticus tells them how to come. This is the exact meaning of the church — *ekklesia*, "called out ones."

This next question is not rhetorical...I want to hear what you think:

Q: Are modern day Christians supposed to obey Old Testament laws today? Are OT laws required of us?

Christians violate a number of Old Testament laws regularly

- "Rise in the presence of the aged," Lev. 19:32;
- "The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses," Deut. 14:8
- "Don't wear clothing woven of two kinds of material", Lev 19:19
- "Do not eat any animal found already dead." Deut 14:21

On one hand we tend to ignore most of the OT laws. In fact, there are 613 total (according to my research) where 248 are positive commands like things you should do while 365 are negative commands, things you should not do.

So, while we ignore many of the OT laws, we embrace others, especially the Ten Commandments, as the moral foundation of Christian behavior

- "Love your neighbor as yourself," Lev. 19:18
- "You shall not commit murder," Exod. 20:13
- "You shall not commit adultery," Deut. 5:18

Q: Why do Christians adhere to some laws and ignore others? **Q:** Which ones are valid and which are not?

Q: Can we use the existential approach to determine which ones we follow and which ones we ignore?

Q: Who can we ask? Would my opinion matter?

A: I know, let's ask Jesus and the Apostles. Here's a verse that some who still follow OT law would cite:

Matthew 5:18-20

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

However, we often forget about the critical verse that preceded these words.

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Woven into this one verse we discover the foundation of the Christian faith. Jesus' purpose here on earth was to fulfill the law, not only by living in total obedience to the law, but also by paying the penalty incurred by everyone who has ever lived or will ever live, who place their trust in Him, because we can't live by all the laws. Jesus was the only person who could unequivocally make such a claim.

James 2:10

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

So whoever in here is wearing a cotton/polyester blend is breaking the entire law. Jesus fulfilled the law.

Galatians 3:10-14

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

That's what Jesus means when he said on the cross, "It is finished" – he paid the price, he fulfilled the requirement of the law.

On the handout you received this morning you will see a short explanation of The Day of Atonement from Leviticus 16 and how it was the foreshadowing of Jesus. This was the foreshadowing of the last sacrifice needed.

Romans 10:1-4

Ephesians 2:14-15

Galatians 6:2

Matthew 22:37-40

Okay, we've determined that OT laws are not still required of us as Christians today:

Q: But are they irrelevant today?

Nine of the Ten Commandments are clearly repeated in the New Testament (all except the command to observe the Sabbath day). Obviously, if we are loving God, we will not be worshipping false gods or bowing down before idols. If we are loving our neighbors, we will not be murdering them, lying to them, committing adultery against them, or coveting what belongs to them.

Q: What then, was the purpose of the Law?

Let's read Romans 3:20 for the answer:

Romans 3:20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. (see also Galatians 3:23-25)

A: To convict people of our inability to keep the law and point us to our need for Jesus Christ

The Old Testament law was never intended by God to be the universal law for all people for all of time. We are to love God and love our neighbors. If we obey those two commands faithfully, we will be upholding all that God requires of us.

That's perfectly illustrated in Jesus's parable about the sheep and the goats in *Matthew 25*. Also known as "The Judgment of the Nations" where Jesus condemned those who wouldn't clothe Him, feed Him, visit Him in jail, give Him water etc. and they said, "When did we see you in all these conditions and not help you?", to which He replied, whatever you refused to do for the least of those in the kingdom you refused to do for me. That's loving God and loving your neighbors as the plan of salvation. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands.

Don't forget about the story Jesus told about the Good Samaritan in *Luke 10*. A teacher of the Law asked Jesus what it would take to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the man, "What is written in the law?" The expert quoted only two laws: Love God and Love your neighbor. Jesus said, you are right. Do this and you will live. Then the expert said, "so who is my neighbor". That's when Jesus laid down the story for the Good Samaritan.

There are those among us in this fellowship who don't do a whole lot of serving. It's the same people, week after week, month after month that serve. It's the same family group leaders year after year after year that serve.

"But Shawn, my family situation is so tough, I don't have the time to serve." Maybe so. But don't you think those that serve could use the same argument? Don't they have tough family situations too? Carl could use that as an excuse? He has it pretty tough. (He might not say so but it ain't easy). And he was made an elder in the midst of it. He serves more now than ever.

What did Jesus say, “Even though you are evil you know how to give good gifts to your children.” And then he summarized his point by saying, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7

In Luke 6:32-36 Jesus says if you love those who love you what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

The OT is relevant today as a continued way of pointing us to our need for a savior and our call to love God and love our neighbors.

But there’s more. It is absolutely fascinating to look at how God established what’s become known as the Health Laws for his chosen people. These are found in Leviticus 11 through 15.

Dietary Laws

The most familiar biblical health laws define clean and unclean meats—creatures that are acceptable to eat and those that are not. Far from being based on fad or fancy, these lists emphasize a fact not discovered until late in the last century... that animals carry diseases dangerous to man.

- Swine may be the most well known source of disease. Their parasites include the tapeworm, the trichinosis worm, which causes a wasting disease, and a form of streptococcus causing Erysipelas. Pigs wallow in or eat their own excreta. Typhoid and Paratyphoid come from such.
- Unclean aquatic animals, Virtually all of which are bottom feeders, or scavengers. They tend to carry many parasites because of human and animal waste in the rivers - Catfish carry typhoid.
- Rodents carry some of the worst pathogens known to man. Disease can be transmitted by touch or by bite. Bubonic plague, rabies, tapeworms, and ratbite fever are common bi-products of encounters with rats.

As a point of illustration: the SARS outbreak was traced to an area in southern China where cats (an unclean animal) are eaten as a delicacy! This was the Guangdong Province.

In Leviticus 3:17, we read that "you shall eat neither fat nor blood" (cf. Leviticus 7:23–27). One of the most significant discoveries in the last century was that *high fat diets* are linked to *increased* levels of heart disease, stroke, cancer of the colon and breast and a host of other pathologies—including obesity. That means we have to identify major sources of fat in our diet (visible fats on meat, fatty cuts of meat—like bacon, generous amounts of heavy dressings, spoonfuls of oil, etc.), and reduce our intake of fats that are high in calories and often high in saturated fats.

Childbirth Laws and Circumcision

Written not to alienate the wife but to protect the wife and her new child from infections.

Sanitary Laws and Quarantine

Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician in the mid 1800’s, known as the Saviour of Mothers, recognized in 1847 that disease could be transmitted from dead bodies to the living. He was working in a hospital in Vienna where newborn babies were dying at a rate of 1 in 6 from puerperal fever. Women prayed not to be taken there! Semmelweis made a careful study and observed that the women examined by a surgeon who had just come from conducting an autopsy on a puerperal fever victim were getting the same disease. He also reasoned that the disease could be carried on the physician's hands between live patients. He insisted that all physicians wash in chlorinated water before examining each patient. Within 3 months the mortality rate was 1 in 84.

God taught us this some 3,400 years earlier that anyone touching a dead carcass was to wash frequently in running water. Any articles or implements that might have touched the carcass were to be washed in the same way. Any open food vessels found in the vicinity of a dead person were to be smashed. The unclean person was to stay away from anyone else for the rest of the day. If our very best medical experts of 150 years ago saw no merit in washing between surgeries, how can we expect a mere nomad, an ignorant sheep farmer who grew up in pagan Egypt to have the foresight to invent these life preserving laws so long ago? It was God's laws!

Although we know the laws do not govern us, there remains true wisdom in their modern applicability. Take a deeper look yourselves.

The Wanderings (Numbers)

It's almost like taking a long family trip in the car. As you're getting ready for the long drive, packing your gear, putting food and drinks in the cooler, imagining what the destination is going to be like, there is pure excitement. Once you get in the car and start driving, what happens?

- Complaining, annoyance, frustration, etc.

That's sort of the story of Numbers. The first ten chapters are mostly like a census. It's like mom and dad taking roll call before the troupe gets in the car for the journey. Names are checked off and all the belongings are inventoried.

Chapter 10 is where the fun starts – Israel finally leaves Mt. Sinai and where are they headed? The Promised Land. What could go wrong right? You can see their path in the back of your Bible in the maps section. Most Bibles have the tracking of their journey.

Cool side note: Well, you'll see in chapter 10 what I call The Order of the March. Basically, it's a list of which tribes were to go first, then second, third etc. all the way down to the last tribe bringing up the rear.

Q: Care to take a guess which tribe God called to lead the way?

A: Judah

As part of the handouts today I reproduced a chart from the internet showing the highlights (lowlights) of their wanderings. It's called "Guidance in the Wilderness". Each scene listed is given a categorical reference in the far right columns. The reference is based on the six main themes throughout Numbers:

1. The Israelites' frequent grumbling about the journey's difficult conditions annoy both Moses and God, and even bring Moses and God into conflict with each other on occasion.
2. God usually answers Israel's complaints with provision of food and water.
3. Israel's sojourn is bracketed by conflict with other nations on the road to the promised land and even within the promised land.
4. In addition, at various times, groups of Israelites foment rebellion against Moses' authority, or even more directly against God.
5. On such occasions, Moses' intercession (pleading) for the people prevents their outright annihilation,
6. but God nevertheless inflicts serious punishment on the Israelites on several different occasions.

That handout will moreover be your guide for the further study of Numbers. What I won't fit into the lesson or even in the handout I still want to call to your attention so you might make a note to study it out on your own:

The Story of Balaam

As the children of Israel headed towards the promised land, they had to cross through the territories of a few countries. The Amorites not only refused passage, they sent their warriors after the people but were soundly defeated by the Israelites who took over their land. The king of Bashan also tried to stop the Israelites and was defeated. The Israelites were now on the borders of Moab. The king of Moab (Balaak) was terrified. He knew what happened to the other countries and he feared he was next. He remembered there was a prophet in his land named Balaam, who had a successful reputation. Those he cursed failed. Those he blessed prospered. Balak wanted a curse put on the people of Israel. The story gets very interesting. Research what God recorded about him throughout the Bible. Here are the verses:

Numbers 22-25

Numbers 31:1-18

Deuteronomy 23:3-6

Nehemiah 13:1-3

2 Peter 2:15

Revelation 2:14

Deuteronomy

The English title of the book comes from the word *deuteronomion* meaning "second law-giving," in 17:18, which actually means "a copy of the law."

It's organized in three main sections and a concluding addendum, the final "words" of Moses given to the Hebrews as they prepare to enter the land of Canaan. Their 40 years of wandering are over and the promised land is just ahead. The family trip in the car it at it's final destination. The whole family doesn't just jump out and run into the theme park or the grand canyon or wherever you took the trip.

Q: What do you do?

A: You assemble everyone, stretch your legs and start reminding them of the ground rules. You make a few plans to ensure safety, so that no-one gets separated and what to do if they do. And you remind them that you are in charge and they better obey or there will be trouble.

That's Deuteronomy: The three sections of the book are written in such a way as to recall the past activities of God in order to build identity for the present community. The people are then called to continued faithfulness in the future based on that communal identity. Have fun, stick together, obey the rules, listen to me.

1. The first section (1:6-4:40) summarizes the events between the encounter with God at Sinai and the encampment in Moab, a retelling of the spies being sent out and the people's rebellion against God, followed by an urgent appeal for faithfulness to God.
2. The second section (5-28) recounts the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai, followed by an explanation of the first and greatest commandment, Love the Lord Your God and an extended appeal to remain faithful to God in spite of the temptations that will come in the new land. Specific instruction in communal life begins in chapter 12, concluding with a covenant ceremony and a sermon focusing on their responsibilities to God and each other.
3. The third section (29-30) encapsulates the first two, with a historical review, covenant renewal, admonitions to faithfulness, and warnings of the consequences of disobedience.
4. The conclusion (31-34) includes instructions concerning Moses' successor, final instructions and public worship, the Song and Blessing of Moses, and then his death.

I want to highlight Deuteronomy 6 through 8

Read Dt 6:4-10 love God with all your heart, love me and teach others about me, especially your children
Read Dt 7:1-2 God will give us victory in our battles but we must not hang on to anything, totally destroy
(irrevocable giving over to God) v.3 says not to intermarry with them
James 4:4 friendship with the world is hatred toward God
Read Dt 8:10-18 Don't forget the Lord! Don't!