

the Royal

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9

Week 11: "Loyalty Part 1"

If you were to take a poll of the least popular portion of all Scripture read by Christians it would probably be the Law, specifically Exodus and Leviticus. However in the early Church, and in Judaism, the Law is the most prized portion of Scripture. It was what the definition of worship was centered around. The next few weeks, Pastor Miles will teach us how to read the Law and give us practical insight on how to apply this genre correctly.

Two major objectives this week:

1. Get the group familiar with the proper way to read and apply the genre of Old Testament Law. The first portion is simply reviewing the rules, and give people the opportunity to discuss what they learned from the message.
2. We want to continue in our Read, Reflect, and Respond in Exodus 23:10-19. The first portion is about the keeping of the Sabbath, and the second portion is about the strict observance of the 3 major feasts: Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of the Ingathering. The "Read" portion is getting historical and cultural context of the significance of both the Sabbath and Feast observances. The "Reflect" portion will allow us to see how Israel treated these commands. We will also look at some other select passages that will require us to look at it from their eyes. Finally the "Respond" portion will help us to look at it biblically. How do we apply these laws that were created 5,000 years ago? This should create great discussion.

Even if you are unable to follow the entire curriculum, or answer any of the questions, you are encouraged to be aware of the study notes and facilitate discussions that will meet these two objectives above.

In Him,

Rock Church Small Group Team

Part 1: Opening/Recap Weekly Challenge/Small Group Sermon Discussion

Opening:

- Open in Prayer
- Worship (optional)
- Recap Week 10 Homework
- Small Group Sermon Discussion

Recap Week 10 Weekly Challenge:

- 1. Recite John 11:25-26.**
- 2. Discuss experiences practicing the Discipline of Meditation.**

Small Group Sermon Discussion:

- 1. The new series on the Old Testament Law provided a lot of rules we need to consider while reading this genre. Simply go around the group and discuss different thoughts and learning points you gained from the sermon.**

Sermon Notes ("Read" ONLY, does not contain "Reflect and Respond")

- 1. Identify which of the three relationships the law is giving the Israelites guidance on.**
 - A. Relationship with God
 - B. Relationship with fellow Israelites
 - C. Relationship with Gentiles
- 2. Identify which of the three categories of the law is being taught.**
 - A. Religious Rituals
 - B. Ethical
 - C. Civil

Discovery: Ask what attitude or behavior the laws were teaching the Israelites to be loyal to? Keep in mind, they were required to be loyal to the letter and Spirit of the law (The letter of the law is the 'word for word' application. The Spirit of the Law represents the 'heart of God' behind the law).

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – Exodus 23:10-19

Read Exodus 23:10-19:

This portion of the Law deals with Sabbath rules in the sowing of all of the land. Not only did Sabbath Law's apply individually, but it was also to be applied nationally. Much like the reason behind the Sabbath rest for believers as stated in Ex. 16:22-30, the national Sabbath was designed by God for a few specific reasons:

The Sabbath and Land (23:10-13)

- ▶ To show what a plentiful land that God was bringing them to.
- ▶ To remind them of their dependence upon God their great landlord.
- ▶ We later see that their disobedience resulted in a forfeiture of the promises he had for Israel (cf. 2 Ch. 36:21).
- ▶ To teach them to have confidence in His divine providence.
- ▶ Even in the midst of the Sabbath year, the Sabbath day was still to be observed (v. 12). God requires us to constantly remember Him and His divine providence constantly, but specifically on the Sabbath.
- ▶ There was heavy emphasis on the denial of false gods. The profession of false gods should never even enter their lips (v. 13).

The Lord also put strong emphasis on the observance of three national feasts: (1) The Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 15), (2) The Feast of the Harvest (v. 16a), and (3) The Feast of the Ingathering (v. 16b). The notes below highlight the reasons for these observances:

Three National Feasts (23:14-19)

- ▶ The month of **Abib** (our March-April) is the beginning of the religious year for Israel. This is when the observances are to begin (v. 15). However, after their captivity the month was later changed to **Nisan** (cf. Neh. 2:1; Esth. 3:7).
- ▶ It was made the first month because of their Exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:1).
- ▶ They are to bring an offering, probably a freewill offering, to the meeting (v. 15).
- ▶ (1) Feast of Unleavened Bread is the largest part of the celebration of the Passover, in the remembrance of how God removed Israel from the slavery of the Egyptians (cf. Ex. 13:3; Lev. 23:6-8).
- ▶ Only unleavened bread was to be eaten during this feast. This commemorated how quickly Israel departed Egypt.
- ▶ They were to perform strict observance, including the removal of all work related activities.
- ▶ (2) Feast of the Harvest, or Feast of Weeks, was performed fifty days after the offering of the barley sheaf at The Feast of Unleavened Bread. This also restricted manual labor.

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – Exodus 23:10-19

(continued)

- ▶ This is the feast when the early Christians experienced Pentecost (Greek word for “fifty”), in which the Holy Spirit was poured out on them in a miraculous way (cf. Acts 2:1-4).
- ▶ (3) Feast of the Ingathering, or Feast of Tabernacles, was performed on the 15th day of the seventh month to celebrate the completion of the autumn harvest.

- ▶ Read Exodus 23:10-19 as a group.

Reflect Exodus 23:10-19:

- 1.** Why were there such strict rules for Israel to observe when partaking of these feasts and observing the Sabbath Law?
 - ▶ The idea of the Sabbath was not merely for religious duty as the Pharisee’s and religious leaders turned it into. It was a time of complete submission to God as sovereign provider. Remembering and worshipping Him for bringing them out of Egypt, and providing for them as they entered into the Promise Land.

- 2.** Read Lev. 23:3, 32; Ex. 20:10; Jer. 17:21-22; Ezek. 46:3 together as a group. Discuss what you observe in these verses about the things that Israel was to do and not to do on the Sabbath.

Respond Exodus 23:10-19:

- 1.** How do you typically respond to the Sabbath? Do you observe the Sabbath? Why or why not? If so, do you observe it as stated in the verses above?

- 2.** Read Heb. 4:3-13 as a group. What does the author of Hebrews tell us about the correct meaning of the Sabbath, specifically concerning Christians under the new covenant?
 - ▶ Of course we always want to be disciplined to look at everything biblically, to allow the text to speak for itself, rather than build a theology off of opinions and traditions. This topic usually produces great discussion!

 - ▶ It is always suggested to take a day of rest in the form of worship to the Lord. And of course this looks different for different people. But the author is extremely concerned if we are trusting on Jesus as our “eternal rest”. This means in Christ we should be resting in Him 24/7.

Part 2: Read, Reflect, Respond – Exodus 23:10-19

(continued)

- ▶ Other verse to consider for discussion pertaining to the Sabbath rest are: Mk. 2:23-27; Matt. 12:10-13; Acts 16:11-13.

Part 3: Weekly Challenge

- ▶ **Scripture Reading Guide:** Go through the devotions that correspond with each day. These are given to everyone in their lesson plan every week. (July 12-July 18)
- ▶ **Scripture Memory:** “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.” **Hebrews 4:9-10 (NASB)**
- ▶ **Bible Study Tool:** Navigate through www.biblegateway.com and discover the great resources available for free for your personal gain.
- ▶ **Spiritual Formation Practice:** Each week we will introduce a “spiritual discipline” that each person can try to adapt to their personal devotion. This week is the **Discipline of Humility.**

The idea of humility is a foreign term in Western culture, even amongst many evangelical Christians. The truth is that it requires humility to properly submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus constantly practiced and taught humility all throughout the Scriptures. One example of Jesus practicing it, was by washing the feet of the disciples (cf. John 13:14-16), then commanding the disciples to do likewise to one another. One of the most profound ways in which He taught humility was after rebuking the disciples from hindering the children to come to Him, He told them that whoever doesn't receive the kingdom God like a child, will not enter it at all (cf. Luke 18:15-17).

The challenge this week is to recognize areas in your life where you may be struggling with pride and not practicing humility. This does not mean being passive to injustice, but simply means submitting to authority, and loving those around you, even in the midst of turmoil and confusion. This is NOT something that will be accomplished in a week, and should hopefully be practiced the rest of your life. But hopefully, if the concept of humility is a new concept, it will start to be implemented immediately.