

Monday, August 3, 2009

This summer, what is the most amazing place you have visited? If the “Tent of Meeting” still existed, would you want to see it at least once in your lifetime? We’ve spent several weeks reading Exodus, the story of God’s remarkable rescue of 2 million Hebrew slaves from 430 years of living in Egypt. The plagues, the Passover, the Red Sea crossing, manna every morning, water from a rock, Mount Sinai where they heard God’s voice speak ‘the 10 commandments’, Moses’ several trips up the mountain to meet with God, the stone tablets, the golden calf, Moses’ radiant face after meeting with God, and finally the construction of the Tabernacle (the Tent of Meeting). Wow, what a story! As you can imagine, Exodus remains one of the center-pillars of Judaism, both as a culture and a religion. No other people on earth have ever experienced such a significant and sustained work of God among them! (Ex. 34:10)

Turn back...take another look. Link Ex.31:12-18 & Ex. 35:1-3, do you notice the last thing God explained to Moses on the mountain and the first thing he told the people about was this remarkable “covenant concept” that God wanted His people to set aside time to “refresh” regularly...in fact every week! God called it “Sabbath”. They were slaves remember...slaves have no rights and no rest. God has designed humanity to REQUIRE refreshment. Thirst triggers in you a search for fluid refreshment, hunger triggers a search for food refreshment, weariness a search for rest refreshment...aren’t you glad? Those are essential elements of your God-given human design, and dysfunction begins when you disregard your design, right? *“Sabbath” was designed by God for refreshment of your mind by thinking of God, your heart by being with God’s people, and your soul by worshipping God (‘engaging with God’)...frequently (weekly). Get it?*

Notice Ex. 25:1-8 & Ex. 35:4,5,10,20-29; 36:1-7. God invited penniless slaves, who carried the “bounty of Egypt”, to search their hearts...those with willing hearts would give of Egypt’s bounty to build a Tent where God would “Tabernacle” (dwell among) His people. No people on earth had such a promise from God, nor such a privilege! Do you see the condition of the heart is the key to living life in fulfilled relationship with God?

Tuesday, August 4, 2009

Summer 2009 contains 105 days (Memorial Day to Labor Day). The Hebrew slaves spent almost 11 months camped at Mount Sinai, the place Moses first met with God (Ex. 3). Why? Consider...as a people they were the miracle descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his 12 sons. More than 500 years had passed since God covenanted with Abraham to bless him and his descendants with a land...Canaan, Israel. But...famine, food in Egypt, comfort in the ‘best of the land’...generations pass, Pharaohs come and go, 70 Hebrews become uncountable, ...bondage in Egypt. All they knew was Egypt...Egyptian language, religion, customs, and endless, hopeless slavery.

11 months at the mountain with God was intended to “*inform*” this people about Jehovah, the God of their ancestors. Awaken an “*interest*” in this people to know, worship and love Jehovah God, who would ‘dwell among’ them. “*Instruct*” this people how to live and worship completely differently from anything they’d seen in Egypt. And “*invite*” this people to leave bondage, traveling with God toward the land He had promised their ancestors centuries before! God’s presence with them in the journey was evidenced by the Cloud which hovered over the Tent of Meeting. When the cloud moved, they understood God was leading them on...so they moved! Consider Numbers 9:15-23; 10:11-28. Notice they moved in precise order, with the Tabernacle in the middle of the “parade”. To understand it more, consider Numbers 2. A nation with God at the center!

Numbers 13 & 14, of course, is their “crossroads of decision”, and they failed! After more than a year of being with God since they left Egypt, their faith failed when given the chance to cross into the ‘promised land’. Why? What more could God have done to prove His ability to protect them, provide for them, guide them...and be among them? Why do you and I stumble when we face big faith steps? 40 years of wandering in the desert till that whole skeptical generation died, then finally Joshua led their children to take possession of their land! From slavery to Egypt, they lived and died slaves to their fear, their doubts, their refusal to trust the God who freed them! What journey has God been leading you on this summer?

Wednesday, August 5, 2009

Sometimes a fresh look at something old brings new perspective. Ephesians, in the New Testament, is a letter written by Paul the Apostle to Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) in the mid first century AD, about 1400 years after Exodus occurred. In some ways, it’s a fresh look at the story of Exodus...only with a very different focus. Jesus Christ is the ‘Passover Lamb’ and the One who leads us out of our bondage under sin and Satan. Paul invites us to know Jesus just as Moses invited the people to know God at the mountain. We’re invited to understand what it means to be a Jesus delivered people of God, just as Moses explained ‘a chosen people’ to delivered slaves at Sinai.

Today, consider again Ephesians 2:11-22 as central to Christianity, for it unites Jewish followers of Jehovah God, with Gentile followers of Jehovah God into ‘one new man’.. followers of Jesus Christ! This was difficult for Jews to grasp, for they were confident the Old Testament was clear...God’s ‘covenants of promise’ applied ONLY to descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...Jews. They refused to hear of God’s love for all peoples and that His covenant relationship with Jews was intended to attract all other peoples to Him!

The ‘law’ Moses brought from God to the people at Sinai served several purposes: establish the proper functioning of a new society, Jews; distinguish Jewish lifestyle from all other peoples; help the people understand their sin and see their need for a Savior...it also built a huge “dividing wall” between Jews and Gentiles (all other peoples). Only God could bridge the gap and bring BOTH Jews and Gentiles to Himself...Eph. 2:14!

Jesus, God Incarnate, makes it reality for all Gentiles (non Jews) to experience the intimate love relationship God initially offered to Jews. Jesus became the living bridge, uniting all humanity into ‘one new man’ as we come to God through Him! In John 14:6 Jesus said it clearly...later they proclaimed it boldly in Acts 4:12. Slowly the Jewish Apostles came to understand Jesus really meant ALL peoples (Acts 10:34-47). Today Calvary reaches to Africa, Indonesia, Europe, Walworth County... anyone, anywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ, for “through Him we all have access to the Father by one Spirit”!!

Thursday, August 6, 2009

While today our summer Scripture reading is Hebrews 10, look closely at Hebrews 1:1-4. While the author is uncertain, the audience appears to be Jews who have given serious consideration to Jesus Christ yet are still uncertain about 'taking the leap' and turning from their dependence upon Moses' Law to fully trusting the life, truth, death and resurrection of Jesus for their full and complete salvation. "Fence riding" can be dangerous, especially when doing so with spiritual truth. In these last weeks of summer 2009, I challenge you to clarify the truth upon which you are depending for your eternity, and that by which you live your life. Remember, life for an audience of ONE!

Notice several key statements which clarify WHO Jesus Christ is and why it's important! (Hebrews 1:1-4)

- "in these last days He (God) has spoken to us by His Son (Jesus). While prophets and others were revered for speaking to the people on behalf of God, no one ever did so claiming to BE GOD! Jesus did! (John 10:30, 14:31) WHO is Jesus Christ to you?
- "whom He appointed heir of all things". Heir to a large estate is enviable, but God has entrusted to Jesus Lordship over 'all things'! Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18, and Revelation 5 all confirm that risen Jesus will REIGN over all. Does Jesus reign over you...by your invitation?
- "through whom He made the universe". Link this with John 1:3, Colossians 1:16 and we understand God the Father had the design, but it was God the Son who actually spoke the universe into existence! Thus when exercising His miraculous power over 'natural laws' (calming storms, healing sickness, raising the dead, walking on water, etc) Jesus was demonstrating His authority over His creation! How do you explain the origination of the universe? How important to you is it that 'God created' rather than 'it evolved'?

Friday, August 7, 2009

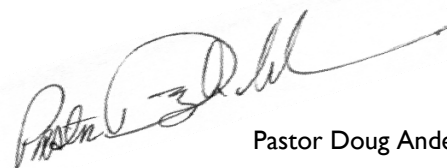
Today our summer Scripture reading is Hebrews 11, one of the 'all time great' chapters in the Bible! It's a Jewish 'hall of fame'. For centuries, Jewish parents have named their sons and daughters after these heroes. We'll dig deeply into this chapter in a few weeks...for today, dig with me again into Hebrews 1 and 2.

- "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being." That is a radical 'lay down the gauntlet' statement challenging all peoples, all religions, all faith systems to the ultimate test...who is your leader? Only Christianity claims our leader is the full expression of Holy, Almighty God...because He is God!
- "sustaining all things by His powerful word." Talk about an anchor for your soul, this statement is God's confirmation that all things happen in our universe under the watchful, Sovereign authority of Jesus Christ!

Chapter two of Hebrews has three powerful concepts I urge you to wrestle with. First, vs. 1-3. Note that care must be given to not "drift away" from Jesus and His truth. Do you find yourself drifting spiritually from time to time? Anchors have their purpose in keeping you from drifting, what are your anchors?

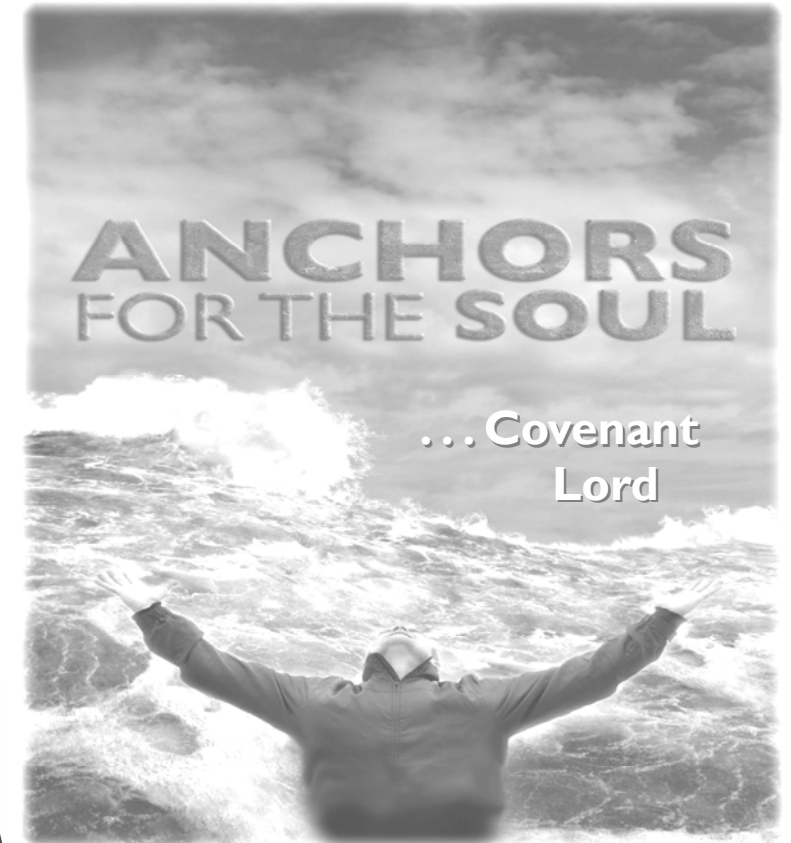
Notice in vs. 14 Jesus' death and resurrection were definitive defeats of the devil, the one who 'holds the power of death'. Colossians 2:15 declares Jesus' death on the cross 'made a public spectacle' of the demonic world and His resurrection proved His authority over death, the penalty of sin.

Finally, notice please Hebrews 2:18 gives us great hope that Jesus understands our pain, our struggle in temptation and He can anchor us in His strength because He was consistently victorious over all temptation. Link it with 1 Corinthians 10:13. Have you discovered the power of memorized Scripture in defeating temptation, discouragement, fear, guilt, shame, anger or any other emotion tactic trying to wound your soul?



Pastor Doug Anderson

August 3 - 7, 2009



Verse of the Week

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word." (Hebrews 1:3)



A Disciplemaking Tool
DIGGING
DEEPER



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