

Question: Why are we here? Why do we do what we do? We gather every Sunday. We follow a similar routine. We sing praises. We pray. We give our offerings. And we listen while Pastor Bill unfolds a passage of Scripture for us.

Anywhere from 50% - 60 % of the service can be dedicated to the explanation of a biblical passage.

Jesus gives us a hint...

Luke 4:14 *And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*

15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

What was the first thing on the "To-Do" list that Jesus kept in His back pocket? Teaching! Proclaiming the Good News. He didn't start by healing the sick – walking on water – raising the dead. Teaching truth was first. The miracles authenticated who He was and what He said.

For each of the next 3 weeks, I want to look at a passage that shows something about the significance of God's Word in the life of His people. In each passage we will see God at work. In each passage we will see the impact that the Word has on God's people. I propose that God still works in the same way. The question is: How do we, as believers, respond today?

Text: Exodus 19:1-8

1. The Moment

A. It was a real, historical moment.

How do we know? The details are there.

The exact day... "In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt". Every commentary that I checked agrees that this was the first day of the month.

The exact sequence of events... "they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai".

They walked 8 miles that day from Rephidim to the plain before Mt Sinai.

The exact place... "they camped in the wilderness... in front of the mountain".

What Moses did... "And Moses went up to God".

And what God did... "and the Lord called to him from the mountain"

I did some research as I prepared. The "experts" suggest 2 possible locations for the Mt Sinai. Both face an open plain wide enough and big enough to hold a very large group of people. So, there is no reason to think that the historical description is anything less than accurate.

These events are recorded with such precise detail, we can confidently believe that they are true.

Can we really trust the Bible?

NY Times 06-29-84 Obituary Page – an article about a famous, Jewish archeologist

Yigael Yadin, military hero of Israel's war of independence and archeologist of Masada and the Dead Sea Scrolls, died yesterday of a heart attack in Hadera, Israel. He was 67.

Born March 21, 1917 in Jerusalem, to a famed archeologist, Eliezer Sukenik, Mr. Yadin intertwined a life of archeology, military affairs and politics. In 1947, shortly after obtaining his M.A. degree in archeology from Hebrew University, he became chief of operations for the Haganah, the clandestine forerunner of the Israeli Army. At the time he Hebraicized his name to Yadin, which means "he will judge."

On Nov. 29, 1947, the eve of Israel's war of Independence, Mr Sukenik had made a dangerous trip to Bethlehem where, for 50 British pounds, he bought three of the seven scrolls, which were written almost 2,000 years ago. But war enveloped Palestine and the trail of the other fragile scrolls was lost.

In 1954, on a visit to the United States, Mr. Yadin purchased the four other scrolls for \$250,000. He continued his archeological activities in the Holy Land, working as he once put it, **"with a Bible in one hand and trowel in the other."**

He was basically saying, "The Bible is always right".

Why do I make a big deal about this ? Why is it important to emphasize the historical record of biblical events?

Because many read the Bible as if the events are nothing more than old fables or made-up stories.

I grew up on a farm in PA. We lived in the country. We attended church in a small town several miles away. In 1962, I was 8 years old. One a fateful Sunday morning , the pastor proclaimed from the pulpit that if you wanted to believe the stories of Noah and Jonah, that would be fine. But, if you prefer, you could see them as allegories that simply teach important truths.

That was the last Sunday that we ever attended that church. I was 8 years old. I didn't understand the decision. I didn't like the decision. But that decision lead to my salvation. My parents found another congregation. The pastor believed in the inerrancy of Scripture. He believed every word of the Bible. He preached the Gospel. And when I was 9 years old, at the conclusion of a Sunday evening service, I gave my heart to Jesus. (I'm saved today because of an apostate preacher).

If we do not accept the entire Bible as the Word of God, then what are we doing here? Let's say that someone rejects Adam & Eve. Suppose one rejects the story of Noah. Another rejects the virgin birth. Still another rejects the miracles of Jesus. And still one more rejects the story of Paul's conversion and his life story.

Adam & Eve - Then we deny Creation and the unique place man holds in the Creation.

Noah - We deny sin and God's utter disdain for sin.

Virgin Birth - We reject the divinity of Jesus and make the work of the Cross impossible, because only a perfect man, a man born without original sin could die for the sins of the world.

The miracles – We reject the unique character and power of Jesus.

Paul - We reject any possibility that God could save the most utterly lost person alive.

What basis do we have for fellowship if we do not hold to the historical accuracy of the Bible? Love is not what unites us. Our conviction that God's Word is true unites us. Love is the expression of unity. Truth is the foundation of unity.

B. It was a moment that shadowed what was to come

I don't want to spend a lot of time on this point. It is more interesting than it is essential. But I do find it interesting that God's plan was perfect. Just as the Passover lamb foreshadowed the coming of the Lamb of God, just as Jonah foreshadowed the Tomb, many commentators hold that this moment in history foreshadowed something else that was to come.

Israel celebrated the Passover in Egypt. 50 days later, as they stood before the mountain – God revealed Himself in a new way.

Exodus 19: 16,17 *So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were¹thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.*

Why did God come down ?

God's design and desire has always been to enjoy fellowship with man.

1- God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden

2- While Moses was on the mountain, The Lord provided the blueprint for the Tabernacle. When completed, God descended from heaven in the Shekinah glory and God lived among the people. (You might remember that in a previous message I showed how the lay-out of the camp resembled the shape of a cross).

3- Almost 1,500 years later, the Lamb of God came down to earth in the form of a man.

According to John 1:14... *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The phrase "dwelt among us" can actually be translated that He "tabernacled" among us. From the time that the Lord walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden, God's desire has always been to fellowship with man.

4. And the day that we look forward to is described in Revelation 21: ³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

But.. let's get back to the idea of 50 days after the Passover. Jesus celebrated the Last Supper (Passover) with His disciples. Up to that point, it was meant to look back – to remember God's deliverance from Egypt. Jesus changed it. Now, we look back at the Cross and we look forward to His coming.

50 days after Passover, the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. God revealed Himself in a new way, again. This time, God did not come to live among His people. God came as the Holy Spirit to live in His people.

One showed the awesome power of God on a mountain. The other, shows the power of God in us.

II . The Message

A. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians – God’s Power

B. and how I bore you on eagles' wings – God’s Protection

C. and brought you to Myself - God’s Purpose & Plan

D. Conditions -

If...

you will indeed obey My voice

“Obey” (shama)... “to hear intelligently” (implied – attention, obedience)

2. you keep my covenant

“Keep” – (shamar)... to hedge about (with thorns), guard, protect, be circumspect, take heed like a watchman

Then...

C. you shall be My own possession among all the peoples (for all the earth is mine)
Sovereign choice

D. you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests –(mediate between man and God)

E. a holy nation –

Ex 19: 7,8

So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

One commentator calls this the “Preamble of the Law”. Just as the preamble of the Constitution sets the course for the Constitution, this message from God to Israel indicated that something very unique was about to be announced.

“All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!” - They couldn’t do it. We can’t do it. Their response was not based on “intelligent hearing”. If they had any idea what the Law would be, they would have answered, “We can’t! No one can”. They mistook the Law as rules to be followed instead of seeing them as a standard that could never be reached and one that would drive them to their knees before God.

III. The Mess-

You know what happened.

Exodus 24:18

Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights

Exodus 32: *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."*² *Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."*³ *Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.*⁴ *He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; ...*

There is an obvious question: How could they do this?

The Plagues, the Red Sea, The cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, water, manna, quail...

1. 400 years of Egypt was hard to get out of their system. The first generation after Joseph may have remembered the promise. But with each generation, God, the Promised Land, and the promise were farther away. Life in Egypt became the norm.

Is this important today? You bet. My mother died when she was 79. My father died when he was 79. I'm 63. I often think, "I may only have 16 years left".

When all the old people are gone, who is going to run the Church? We can't allow the next generation to slowly drift away into the world.

This is important to me. My parents raised 5 of us to follow the Lord. The next generation – my parents' grandchildren, are beginning to fall away. Just 2 generations and some are living lifestyles that would make my parents very sad. One expressed an opinion on FaceBook last week that made me cringe. The world's philosophy is slowly replacing "truth" and the younger generation is buying it hook line and sinker.

2. False religion is easier than faith. You can go on the internet and find a list of the gods of Egypt. Each plague was intended to demonstrate that the one true God is greater than all the false gods of Egypt combined.

But false religion is easy. You invent your god. You create a list of rules. And all you have to do is convince yourself that you have done enough to make the gods happy.

Romans 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith to faith**; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall **live by faith**." (The just shall live by faith)*

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

John 8:31 ³¹ *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Look at the connection between 3 things: the Word, truth, and freedom.

1. Continue in My Word
God's Word is supreme. I will trust in the supremacy of God's Word.
2. Truth – Truth is found in God's Word. The Gathers --“God said it. I believe it. That settles it for me”
3. Freedom – Freedom from our past, freedom from guilt, freedom from legalism – freedom to live in faith and walk by faith.

“All that the Lord has spoken, we will do” – Not unless we hold up one another against the world.