

Exodus 4b:

Reading #165 The circumcision

Let's catch up with Moses as he and his family journey towards Egypt to commence his work.

***** (Begin Quote)

Exodus 4:

21 And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

²² And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is My son, even My firstborn: ²³ and I say to you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, even your firstborn’”.

***** (End Quote)

We can come back to the subject of hardening Pharaoh's heart next week. Right now we have a more important point to look at.

***** (Begin Quote)

Exodus 4:

²⁴ And it came to pass by the way in [near] the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him [Moses]. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son [he was a grown lad], and cast it at his feet, and said, “Surely a bloody husband are you to me”. ²⁶ So He let him go [stopped threatening him]: then she said [she repeated it], “A bloody husband [a husband of blood] you are, because of the circumcision”.

***** (End Quote)

On the way from Midian, Moses received a startling and terrible warning of the LORD's “anger”. The LORD appeared to him in a threatening manner, as if He would immediately destroy him.

No explanation was given. But Moses remembered that he had disregarded one of God's requirements. He had neglected to perform the rite of circumcision upon their youngest son. He had yielded to the persuasion of his wife who thought it was a strange and barbaric custom after watching it done to her first son and yet it had been an imperative from the Son of God for their own good!

This peculiar rite was based on the fact that Abram had sinned against God by having intercourse with Hagar in an attempt to produce a child for God. Genesis 16:1-4. From that time onward this ritual would serve as a regular warning to the Hebrew people against the danger of doing their own thing!

The word from God was:

Genesis 17:

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “You shall keep My covenant therefore, [My contract, on My terms] you, and your seed after you in their generations”.

¹⁰ “This is [the sign of] My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you. Every man child among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ And you [also] shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between Me and you”. [Abraham was 99 years old at the time!]

¹² “And [from now on] he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of your seed. ¹³ He that is born in your house, and he that is bought with your money, must needs be circumcised [because they are not slaves but part of your family]: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant”. [It is interesting that the only detailed records of circumcising in the Bible is of grownups.]

¹⁴ “And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; [for] he [through his parent’s failure] has broken My covenant [and lost my protection]” . . .

²³ And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said to him.

***** (End Quote)

This ritual was God’s way of showing that the “spirit” portion of our lives must be removed BEFORE we can be created as Christians. When this is done by the heavenly “Doctor”, then there is room for the life of Christ to be put in its place.

It is written:-

***** (Begin Quote)

Romans 2:

²⁸ For he is not a Jew [a son or daughter of God], which is one outwardly; neither is that [true] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ but he is a Jew [a member of the family of God], which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. [Deuteronomy 30:6.]

***** (End Quote)

But we need to be “sanctified”, or changed, thoroughly, as we are told below, and “circumcision of the heart” is only the beginning.

***** (Begin Quote)

1 Thessalonians 5:

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly [completely]; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. [Note the three parts of humanity and their order.]

***** (End Quote)

So, after that experience, which we call “conversion”, the mental part of our lives (the soul) will be trainable as we “see” the kingdom of God [John 3:3], and we will grow into His likeness in our minds and actions. This is the second part of redemption.

So it is written:

***** (Begin Quote)

Romans 12:

¹ I beseech [beg] you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice [not a dead one], holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [considering what He has just done for you]. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [put into practice] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God [we must “grow up” under His protection as “calves in the stall”, Malachi 4:2.]

Then, at the end of our time here on earth, we can receive a new body. This is the final part of personal redemption.

***** (Begin Quote)

1 Corinthians 15:

⁵¹ Behold, I show you a mystery [a previously unexplained truth, which is now being made clear]. We shall not all sleep [in the grave], but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living Christians] shall be changed [as Elijah was when he went up in the chariot].

⁵³ For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption [a new one], and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory”. [See Note 1.]

This is the covenant the Son of God has made with us!

Moses had failed to comply with one of the special conditions by which his child could be entitled to the blessings of the protection of God's agreement with Israel. And such a neglect on the part of their chosen leader would lessen the force of the divine precepts upon all the people who were expected to put their trust in His covenant.

Zipporah, realising under the influence of the Spirit what the problem was, and fearing that her husband would be killed by the Angel, performed the rite herself, but still considered it unnecessary as she showed by her words.

Why was this done? Would the Son of God have killed Moses if Zipporah had not intervened?

Of course not! Our God does not hurt, kill, or “cut off” at any time. He is “harmless”. Hebrews 7:26. His action was a warning! Those things come as a RESULT of our actions, or in this case, lack of them. Not being circumcised would have affected Eliezer all of his life while among the Hebrews, and he would have felt “cut off” and dangerously exposed to Satan’s temptations.

And Satan, who has the power of literal death (Hebrews 2:14), is only too anxious to accommodate us physically in this regard. It had not happened already to Moses because he was in a “grey” area of knowledge (not

seeing the importance of his error), and therefore his God could still partially protect him. The LORD's supper does this for us today.

*****[\(Begin Quote\)](#)

1 Corinthians 11:

²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. ²⁹ For he that eats and drinks unworthily [knowingly], eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the LORD's body. ³⁰ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [the sleep of death].

*****[\(End Quote\)](#)

How little we understand the LORD's way!

However, in his mission to Pharaoh, Moses was soon to be placed in a position of great peril while carrying out the commands of God. Satan would, in a more than normal way, attempt to prevent him from doing this, and the slightest deviation from God's protection at that time would be enough for Satan to have access to his life, or that of his family. In this situation the lives of Moses, his wife, and their children, could be preserved only through the protection of holy angels. But while living in neglect of a known duty, neither he nor they could be secure, for he could not be shielded by the angels of God while exercising his freedom of choice. That is the nature of the kingdom of heaven: jump, and you die; get pushed and God will save you. [See Note 2.](#)

This was such a serious situation that the Son of God Himself appeared with a drawn sword looking as though He would kill Moses. There was no better way to get the truth through to Moses and his wife than not only they, but also their children were in great danger. (The principle is shown in 1 Corinthians 7:14.)

After the experience and the act of repentance it was OK for them to continue. Before reaching Egypt, however, Moses thought it best for the safety of his wife and children to send them back to their home in Midian. Exodus 18:2. Zipporah had shown that she did not fully harmonise with his God's requirements so he went on alone from that point. She and the children were perfectly safe while she remained back in Midian. (Remember Jacob and his problem at the River Jabbok? He sent his wives and children away too. Genesis 32:22-23.)

Something we should recognise:

In the time of trouble just before the second coming of Christ, the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of heavenly angels; but there can be no security for the transgressor of God's law regardless of what they profess. Angels cannot then protect those who are disregarding (and therefore disbelieving) one of the divine precepts, no matter how unimportant it may seem to them. They will die and require resurrection.

***** (Begin Quote)

Exodus 4:

²⁷ And the LORD said to Aaron [back in Egypt], "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses". And he went, and met him in the mount of God (Mt. Sinai), and kissed him. ²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.

²⁹ And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: ³⁰ and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

³¹ And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped [in thanksgiving].

***** (End Quote)

Looking forward to next week?

Bye,

RonP

Note 1.

***** (Begin Quote)

Isaiah 25:

⁸ He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD has spoken it.

⁹ And it shall be said in that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation".

***** (End Quote)

Note 2.

***** (Begin Quote)

Matthew 4:

⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’.”

⁵ Then the devil takes Him up into the holy city, and sets Him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and says to Him, “If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down: for it is written, ‘He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone’.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God’.”

***** (End Quote)