

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #21

God's Gifts of His Word and Spirit

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Hello and "Shalom" on this Sabbath day! Shalom is a Hebrew greeting of peace. I suspect that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, when He would assemble with family and friends at the local synagogue on the seventh day of the week, He would say, "Shabbat Shalom!" to all He would encounter on His holy day.

Of course, shalom, implies more than just "peace" in the sense of only a lack of war. And, when you have peace in the Lord of the Sabbath, it will be a peace that passes all the common human understanding of that term. I believe it will be our peaceful Sabbath rest with Him when He comes back for His 1,000 year reign as King over all the earth.

In John 14: 27 we find these comforting words of Jesus to His apostles as His time with them was growing short:

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, I am going away and coming back to you.

In my last program, I had counted the days from when Moses and the Israelites left Egypt to their arrival at Mt. Sinai. I verified that it appears they arrived in the Wilderness of Sinai on what seemed to be the first day of the third month. Then they set up their camp before Mt. Sinai. On our count, we reached 45 days before the start of the third month. So, the day they reached and camped at Mt. Sinai would be the 46th day.

The next day, the first day of the third month, and day 47 in our count, we find Moses going up to God to get the words to speak to the children of Israel. Then, in Ex. 19: 7, we find that Moses does come back to give the words of the LORD to the elders of Israel.

I wish the account made it clear whether it was the same day, or the next day, that Moses gave to Israel God's offer to be His special treasure above all people IF they would obey His voice and keep His covenant. When they accepted God's offer, we find Moses again returning to the LORD on the mountain to inform Him of their acceptance and promise to do all the LORD had spoken.

Once again, the LORD tells Moses to go back to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their clothes and be ready to see Him the third day and come near when they hear the trumpet sound a long note.

Why is this timing so important? Only if we wish to know whether it was the 50th day after Israel left Egypt that God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel at Mt. Sinai. For, if that is true, it is easy and to understand why God commanded Israel to remember and

keep the Day of Pentecost holy unto the LORD in all their generations. And, it makes the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit by God on the Day of Pentecost even more amazing!

Since scripture does not make these days absolutely clear numerically, or give the time required for the trips up and down the mountain, about all we can do is imagine the situation as it is revealed and pray for understanding by the Holy Spirit to reach a conviction.

Brother Tom, of Seneca, South Carolina, has shared some special knowledge with me that gives me comfort that the Jewish traditional understanding that God spoke the Ten Commandments on what we call “Pentecost” is indeed correct. Tom, who is also retired, has read each of the first twenty Lord of the Sabbath programs. He is also an avid hiker and mountain climber. He shared the following observations with me about the practicality of going up and down a mountain like Mt. Sinai as Moses did at least once while serving as the moderator between God and the children of Israel. Here is what Tom wrote, and I quote him:

“Ken, in re-reading your last Lord of the Sabbath and your speculation about how long it might have taken Moses to climb the mountain, I thought you might find useful the climbing standards normally used, which are two miles an hour plus ½ hour for each 1,000 feet of climbing. These are for backpacking (which Moses was not doing) but they are also for a cleared trail (which Moses did not have), so I would think these guidelines would be pretty good. Assuming a 7,500 elevation climb and 22,500 feet of “trail length” (4 miles), I would estimate that it would have taken Moses at least 6 hours to do each climb and probably 2-3 hours for each descent, plus time to eat his gorp (!!) and to talk with God. So, receiving the Ten Commandments on Day #50 sounds plausible. By the way, this old body has rarely climbed as fast as this standard!!”

I don’t know whether Tom has seen a picture of what is believed to be the Mt. Sinai of the Bible where the Ten Commandments were given by God to the children of Israel. If you do a Google search you will find a very nice picture of it. The mountain is rugged granite and devoid of vegetation. I don’t suppose that Moses had a pair of hiking boots to put on his eighty-year-old feet either. I can’t help but wonder what it would be like ascending or descending barefoot, or in sandals, for even a young man.

As a side point, the Monastery of Saint Catherine stands at the foot of the mountain today and is operated by Byzantine monks. It is a tourist attraction bringing about a hundred pilgrims to the site each day from Cairo by taxi or bus. Should you ever visit Egypt to see the Great Pyramid, you might want to also take a day trip visit to Jebel Musa (the mountain of Moses) as well.

The assumed identification of Jebel Musa with the Biblical Mt. Sinai was a powerful attraction to hermits and pilgrims of the early Christian era. Certainly the most famous of these pilgrims was Helena, a 4th century Byzantine empress, who confirmed her belief in the authenticity of Jebel Musa by constructing the first church in the area. Traditionally called the Chapel of the Burning Bush, it was constructed at the exact site where grew a

rare specimen of *Rubus sanctus*, the still-living shrub which the monks believe is the original Burning Bush. A monastic community soon developed around this chapel and, to protect both the monks and the chapel from the attacks of roving Bedouin marauders, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I built a fortress-like basilica around the chapel in 542 AD.

After the Empress Helena, the next famous pilgrim to the Jebel Musa and the monastery was the Prophet Mohammed. Being well treated by the Orthodox Christian monks, Mohammed gave his personal pledge of protection, which then became incumbent on all Muslims, thereby ensuring the continued existence of the monastery.

If the trip by Moses up and down the mountain, plus the time it took for God to convey the extensive series of laws in Exodus 20-23, consumed one extra day before Moses returned to consecrate Israel, the “today” would be day 48 in the count, the “tomorrow” would be day 49, and the third day would indeed be day 50.

While it can’t be proved from scripture, I see nothing in scripture that disproves this important link between the 50th day of Pentecost and the giving of the Ten Commandments. It looks feasible from every aspect that I have considered.

Now, understand that it was in the MORNING of the third day, the 50th day in the count, when God spoke the Ten Commandments of His Covenant with Israel. Could it have been about the third hour of the day or 9:00 AM? Yes. And, at what time on the 50th Day of Pentecost when Peter addressed the assembly was the Holy Spirit manifested? Let’s check our scripture in Acts 2: 14-15:

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

Isn’t this amazing brethren? On the fiftieth day of the count, when the Day of Pentecost had fully come after Jesus had risen to heaven, at what seems to be the very same hour of the day, the Apostles spoke in unknown tongues by the power of the Holy Spirit to those assembled before them just as God had spoken the words of the Covenant in the hearing of the Israelites assembled before Him!

Those gathered in Jerusalem for the pilgrim Feast of Weeks from every nation under heaven had miraculously heard the message of the Galilean apostles in their own varied languages. They were all amazed and perplexed by the sound of a great wind and by seeing the tongues of fire settle upon the apostles. Some there mocked the apostles accusing them of being drunk...full of new wine! And, Peter rebuked them. I can’t help but wonder if Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul to the Gentiles, was one of them?

The Israelites gathered before Mt. Sinai were not only amazed, they were frightened by the supernatural things they observed, including the mountain on fire and smoking, when

God spoke directly to them within their own hearing. Our God is an awesome God, one whom we need to hold in awe. We should still have a healthy fear of His might and power if we dare to disobey His commands.

As I write this, and think about it, I too am in awe of this God and how He worked miracles before Israel and had them preserve all the written words of God by the hand of Moses. It was an example for us. It was a shadow of things to come in Christ. God knew how in the future He would also give the power of His Holy Spirit to all those who would accept His Son as Savior, believe in Him, and follow Him as their Lord; the Lord of the Sabbath. God also used the Apostles, not only as witnesses of the One He had sent to save them, but to write down for us the miracle He did AGAIN on the Day of Pentecost!

There is another link between God giving His Word and God giving His Holy Spirit on the same day at the exact same hour that seems to be too coincidental to be ignored as unrelated. As you may know, it was not very long after the children of Israel heard God speak to them from heaven that they broke one of His first specific commands in Ex. 20: 23 for them not to make for themselves any god's of gold for their altar of worship.

However, while Moses went back up on the mountain for forty days to get ALL the instructions from the LORD, the people grew impatient. They asked Aaron to make them gods to go on before them. Aaron had them gather the gold jewelry they had plundered from the Egyptians and he molded them a golden calf. Aaron then built an altar and declared a feast to the LORD.

It was not wise to disobey God and for Aaron, the older brother of Moses and a prophet and priest of God, to declare his own feast with an idol. Not only did the LORD burn with wrath against the Israelites, he threatened to consume them. But, Moses pleaded with the LORD and He relented. However, when Moses came back to their camp, with the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments carved with the very finger of God, and saw the golden calf and the people celebrating and dancing before it, Moses became so angry himself that he broke the tablets. Moses even melted the golden calf, made powder from it, scattered the powder on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

Moses then asked those on the LORD'S side to come to him. The sons of Levi, of the same tribe of Israel as Moses was, came to him. And, Moses ordered them to put on their swords and go throughout the camp to kill a brother, a companion or neighbor. This was not murder because the killing was not of innocent men. After they did this, Moses asked them to consecrate themselves to the LORD.

We see this amazing event described in Ex. 32: 28-29:

So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."

Obviously, to be a priest of God, one had to put the law of God above even the life of their own family members. God must come first, as other New Testament scriptures plainly show. But, the coincidence that is hard to ignore is what happened on the Day of Pentecost after Peter addressed the crowd of people before him concerning the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and crucified. Notice these gut-wrenching words of testimony by Peter found in Acts 2: 32-33:

This Jesus God raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Can you imagine being there that Day of Pentecost and seeing this miracle of the giving of the Holy Spirit from God? Can you contemplate what it would have meant to you that the man you had denied and killed as a criminal had been resurrected from the dead and rose to sit with God on the throne of heaven? And, that King David, whom you had so revered, did NOT ascend into the heavens after he died but remained in his grave?

We see what the assembled men did after listening to what Peter said in Acts 2: 36-41:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Then Peter said to them, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

There it is! Did you catch the coincidence? After God gave the Ten Commandments to His people on the 50th day, on what became the Day of Pentecost, and the subsequent willful disobedience of Israel some 40 days later, about three thousand men fell by the sword and were killed by the order of Moses. God was inclined to kill them all, but had relented in mercy based upon the pleading of Moses.

Now, on the Day of Pentecost after God gave the Holy Spirit, about 3,000 men were added to the believers in Christ. And, we know from Acts that the apostles continued to show wonders and signs as witnesses for Jesus. They were all in one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house as they ate in gladness praising God and having favor with all the people. We too should rejoice in this way for we see in Acts 2: 47:

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The Lord continues even to this day to add people to His church. He added me. And, I hope He also added you. We, brethren, need to continue in fellowship with the doctrine of the apostles breaking bread with the lost sheep who God calls to His Son by the power of His Holy Spirit to be saved from the law of sin and death.

Why is it so important to understand and praise God for the link between His Ten Commandments, His only begotten Son, and His Holy Spirit in the LORD'S Feast of Weeks? Well, it seems to me that God wants us to understand the role of the Ten Commandments that He gave to Israel for us. Yes, these were the very Words of God written in stone which His people had to obey for Him to be their God and provide for their needs and take them to the promised land flowing with milk and honey. Yes, they were the basis of the Old Covenant made by God with Israel, His wife. And, yes, they also foreshadowed the coming of the living Word of God, Jesus, made flesh.

We must understand that the basis of what we need to do to be saved because of the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sins is still the same today as what Peter told the men assembled for the Feast of Weeks some two thousand years ago. We must repent and be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, I ask you, of what did those men who were there on the Day of Pentecost need to repent. Didn't they need to repent of their sinful ways? And, how did they know what sins they were committing? They needed to know the Word of God, the law given by God at Mt. Sinai for the people of God. This was specifically the Ten Commandments and, more generally, the Two Great Commandments spoken of by Jesus Himself. That was the only law of the conditional covenant given by God.

So, where in the mainline Church holy days will you find a focus on the Ten Commandments as our marriage covenant with God to also keep? In fact, many Christian Churches teach the Ten Commandments were done away, and nailed to the cross of Christ, including the Sabbath command even though they put their trust in Jesus, who said He was the Lord of the Sabbath day.

Clearly, when we celebrate the Lord's Feast of Weeks, we need to be aware of more than God giving His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He gave it only to those who would repent and be baptized. God made it clear that Jesus died for us and did what we could not do for ourselves, even with the Holy Spirit, and that is to save us from our sins.

It is through the knowledge of the Law of God, the Ten Commandments and the other laws, including the Feasts of the Lord mentioned specifically in Ex. 23: 14, that we can understand the right way to live with one another and with God; including the worship that He seeks.

My friends, this was the way that Jesus lived. He wanted us to follow Him, not start our

own ways of worship that seem right to us. Jesus not only kept and fulfilled the Law of God perfectly, being sinless before His Father, He made it clear He did not come to change one jot or a tittle of that Law.

His words in Mat. 5: 17-20 should keep us focused on Him, His ways, God's commandments, and the Kingdom of God to come:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

I know that the heaven and earth that existed when Jesus spoke these words have not passed away. And, all things prophesied to come to pass have not yet been fulfilled. So, while I wait for the kingdom of heaven to come, and the King of kings to return, I will try to teach and keep the commandments of God by the power of His Holy Spirit who will write them on my softened heart of flesh, as they once were on the hard and lifeless tablets of stone.

I surely cannot say that anyone not keeping the Feasts of the Lord of the Sabbath will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Many have no knowledge of them and yet are probably more righteous than the Pharisees who were meticulous about keeping the physical, letter of the Law of God but missed its weightier matters. It was these matters that Jesus, the living Word, showed to us by example to do while keeping the letter of the Law as well.

Only God and Jesus can judge whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. But, it surely seems to me that those whom the Holy Spirit leads to teach and keep these Feasts of the Lord will have a greater reward in the kingdom of heaven. For God is still seeking worshippers who will worship Him at His appointed times in spirit and truth. No, we don't have to, and can't, keep them by attending the Feasts of the Lord in Jerusalem as Jesus did. Jesus prophesied to the woman at the well that the time was coming when this worship of the true God, including the commanded animal sacrifices by the Levite priests at the temple of God, would end.

But, not having a temple in Jerusalem in no way prevents us from keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread with Jesus as our Passover Lamb. And, this in no ways stops us from keeping the Feast of Weeks by meditating on the whole word of God day and night, including His Ten Commandments, and allowing His Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth of what Jesus taught and did that we might follow Him when we too are resurrected back to life and are caught up to meet Him in the air and go with Him to the place in heaven that He has prepared for us.

As we celebrate the Feast of Weeks, let us acknowledge what Paul taught the Gentiles about the Law of God, the Old Covenant and the Promise of God to those who love Him and obey Him. In Rom. 7: 12 Paul says:

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

However, by the law came death for us since carnal men can not fulfill the law like Jesus did. We sin. And our penalty for sin and the transgression of the Law of God is eternal death. That is why we need Jesus as our Savior. And, we need the Law of God written on our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit that we may strive for perfection in obedience to the Law of God just like Jesus did.

In Hebrews 8, we find Jesus is our heavenly High Priest, not any man or ordained priest. We find that we, by faith in Jesus as our Savior and our Lord, is a mediator of a better covenant than the one made with Israel through Moses. And this new covenant through Jesus was established on better promises than what was offered to the children of Israel even if they had they kept their marriage covenant with God. All Israel will make a renewed covenant with God, a new covenant, to become the bride of the Messiah of Israel, and to be saved unto eternal life. Praise the LORD, our God!

In some future programs, I will go through the old and new marriage covenants and how you can qualify as the bride of Christ even though Israel became a divorced wife. But, next week, I will tickle the touchy subject of just when the Day of Pentecost is to be kept. There are over 20 different possibilities being used by various believers. We will try to understand these differences and hope we can find a like-mind for group worship of God in spirit and in truth on His commanded Holy Day.