

Biblical Forensics ©

“Deliverance before Judgment” Part 18

The focus on the Exodus in understanding “Deliverance before Judgment” is confusing for many, especially so for the Jewish people. It is written in the Torah, ***“And the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, the men being about six hundred thousand men on foot, apart from little ones.”*** -(Exodus 12:37). Since the verse only includes the number of men who were 20 years of age and over, we can extrapolate the total population by including the women and children as well. According to Rabbi Yonasan ben Uziel (circa 1st century C.E., author of an Aramaic translation of the Five Books of Moses), there were three million Jews who witnessed the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. It is probable that a comparable number of Jews left Egypt. The Talmud says that 80 percent of the Jews never even left Egypt. That said, it should be noted that the Talmud is disputed as being a reliable source of truth among many theologians and scholars. They were **so steeped in Egyptian culture that they were unwilling to join the Exodus**. As such, they were lost to the Jewish nation forever. ⁽¹⁾

After the greatest national revelation experience in human history when the whole nation heard God, Moses went up the mountain and came down 40 days later to find people dancing around an idol. Were all three million Jews dancing around a golden calf? Not likely. The Torah in Exodus 32:28 says it was about three thousand people, mostly the mixed multitude of individuals who left with the Jews.

That means that only about .001% of the Jews (one in a thousand) participated in worshipping the golden calf and 99.9% of the Jews did nothing wrong, (although the majority failed to stop the minority from worshipping the golden calf and this was considered a serious mistake). Yet God's reaction made it clear that he held the whole nation accountable. This is an important Biblical truth that should not be forgotten by the Gentile and Christian community as well.

God held the Jews to a very high standard because they had a unique responsibility in human history. The world wouldn't get perfected without the Jews and if the Jews blew it, all of humanity, not just the Jewish people, would be doomed. Therefore, the Bible uses critical language to bring home two important principles:

1. **According to your level of knowledge is your level of responsibility**. Even the small mistakes of people in positions of power have huge consequences.
2. **According to your level of responsibility is your level of accountability**. The greater you are, the bigger the impact of your

decisions, therefore you must be held to an extremely high standard of accountability.

The Jewish people had been given the ultimate responsibility for the world at Mount Sinai, and these principles explain the criticism that God levels against Jews and why it was so over-stated.

We learn here another fundamental idea of the Torah -- that every Jew was a guarantor for every other Jew. The nation of Israel is a "body" and the individual Jews are like cells in this body. **If part of the body does something wrong, the whole body is held accountable.** ⁽²⁾

There were two distinct expectations prevailing among the Jews when John the Baptizer began to proclaim: ***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”***. -(Matthew 3:2). John’s preaching was not only the warning of impending judgment, it was a call to action. John called upon men to repent and to be baptized. What does John mean by the term “repent”? It means to **have a change of mind, to turn around.** By repentance John means much more than just a change of one’s thinking. There is an element of sorrow or remorse. Repentance is a change of heart and mind that results in a change of course, a change in lifestyle. ⁽³⁾

There were those who shared similar sentiments like the prophet Daniel did: ***“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and at the people of this land”*** -(Daniel 9:5-6). To those who could see the same pattern of religious hypocrisy, compromise, and corruption that prevailed before the destruction of the first Temple, the Day of the LORD was looming - a day of darkness and not light in which God would lay the land desolate and destroy the sinner as had happened before. Whatever the messianic expectation of these people might have been at the time, it would have been **couched in the fear of judgment.**

Instead to these came glad tidings of great joy, that there was born to them in David’s city from the line of David, One who would be the Savior and Redeemer of His people. ***“And she shall bring forth a son, and you must call His name Jesus (Yeshua) for He shall save His people from their sins”***. -(Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus (Aramaic Yeshūa, Greek Iēsous) means “God is salvation” in Hebrew. Parents often intended the names they gave children to have some meaning, but if God gave the name, it had special significance. The Old Testament taught that God’s people would be saved in the time of the Messiah -(Jeremiah 23:5-6), and Jewish readers in the first century would have understood this salvation to mean much more than just personal forgiveness. They prayed for the day when God would deliver His people from the consequences of their sins—from subjugation beneath their enemies; many believed that this deliverance would occur when their people as a whole

reformed and turned wholeheartedly to God. Jesus came to deliver His people from personal sin and thus to deliver them from its judgment as well.^(a)

John the Baptizer met Jesus with these words: ***“Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”*** -(John 1:29). The title “Lamb of God” would be associated in the minds of the Jews with the Passover lamb - (Exodus 12) and the lambs used in the daily sacrifices for the sin offerings -(see Leviticus 14:12; Lev 14:21; Lev 14:24; Numbers 6:12). Every morning and evening, a lamb was sacrificed in the Temple for the sins of the people -(Exo 29:38-42). Isaiah 53:7 prophesied that the Messiah, God’s servant, would be led to the slaughter like a lamb. **To pay the penalty for sin, a life had to be given** - God chose to provide the sacrifice Himself. When Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice, **He removed the sin of the world and destroyed the power of sin itself.** Thus God forgives our sin -(1st Corinthians 5:7). In calling Jesus the Lamb of God, **John pointed to Jesus as the substitutionary sacrifice provided by God.** For He would become the Passover sacrifice and by His shed blood, the faithful remnant would escape the judgment which was about to befall the nation of Israel.

Thus, ***“In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel”.*** -(Isaiah 4:2). ***“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, declares the LORD”.*** -(Isaiah 59:20).

John baptized across the Jordan River -(John 10:40) - probably at the site where the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land with Joshua and Caleb.

According to the terms of the Law of Moses, the Lord was promised as an inheritance for as long as the Israelites would remain obedient to the covenant -(Leviticus 20:22-24). By withdrawing across the Jordan, the penitent ones of Israel were acknowledging that they had forfeited their promised inheritance through disobedience, placing themselves at God’s mercy in anticipation of the coming Redeemer. ***“All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John”.*** -(Luke 7:29-30). The obvious contrast here cannot be missed. The words are simple but their significance is profound. All the people, referring to the crowds, and even the tax collectors had come to understand an important truth. When these common, ordinary people, and these evil, self-serving tax collectors heard Jesus’ words, they agreed that God’s plan was right. Certainly John had done his job—these people were ready to accept Jesus because they had been prepared. They had listened to John’s preaching -(Luke 3:7-18) and had been baptized by him.

But the group who should have been most ready and most accepting had refused John's baptism. They had refused the repentance and confession that John had required (probably because they felt themselves already righteous and did not need to do so). The Pharisees and experts in religious law had rejected the forerunner of Jesus; the obvious result was that they also had rejected their own Messiah. Luke explained that **in so doing, they had rejected God's plan for them. While they may have understood God's law, they had missed His purpose.**

On the other hand, there was an expectation of a Messiah who would vindicate Israel before its enemies and elevate the Jews to the foremost position amongst the nations of the world. In fact, this view is still held by many within Israel today.

The Pharisees and others who shared their sentiment could not foresee that **they themselves had fallen under God's wrath and judgment.** Meticulous in their religious observances - and thoroughly convinced of their own righteousness - they were awaiting their just reward for their disciplined life. Salvation from sin was not part of their messianic expectation.

The Pharisees would not recognize that they had made an idol out of the Torah and had adopted the **pursuit of moral perfection in exchange for a relationship with the living God.** Nor did they understand their need of an internal transformation. Observance to an external code could not possibly be achieved in this manner. ***"You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"*** -(Matthew 5:27-28). ***"For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"*** -(Jeremiah 2:13). To forsake this Fountain is the first evil; this is done when the people of God neglect His word and ordinances. They hewed them out broken cisterns that could hold no water. Such are the world, and the things in it; such are the inventions of men when followed and depended on.^(b)

This Pharisaic mindset is pervasive throughout the Talmud. Other rabbinical writings are problematic among Jews today around the world. Variations of this endure in the messianic hopes of Jews today, and just as building an ark would be of little interest to those not expecting a Messiah, so the gospel of Jesus our Messiah finds no rapport amongst those awaiting their glorious restoration. This disastrous flaw will be a contributing factor to the reason why the Jews will become receptive to the Antichrist, rather than to their true Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Many within the Christian community hold the view that the Church will have to go through part or all of the Tribulation. This is primarily because they cannot understand or accept their own redemption. It is as if they believe they have to do something to merit that redemption. They overlook the fact that the

Lord's redeeming action at the Cross has already taken on all the costs involved. For some, saying thank you seems too insufficient in exchange for such a tremendous gift.

Likewise, the trap and snare of religious and ethnic pride for those who share the same sentiment as the Pharisees, continues even today to be a problem as spoken of by Isaiah. ***"The LORD has pronounced His verdict over those that say, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." For these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all the day," says the LORD"*** -(Isaiah 65:5). In 2015, almost 10,000 Jews returned to Israel (9,880 to be precise). They come largely in unbelief, ingrained with the belief that they need only rely solely on themselves. This "sin of unbelief" will weigh heavily in the coming weeks, months and years just ahead. I will deal with this near the end of this series, but make no mistake about it, the "sin of unbelief" is far more problematic among Gentiles as it is among the Jews.

Much of the New Testament and the prophetic outworking of Jesus' teaching will be completely misunderstood **unless we see that those who, to hold off the promise of salvation, were expecting imminent destruction.** Not only did Jesus fail to live up to the expectation of the Pharisees, namely that they were to be showcased before all mankind as the paragon of religious virtue, but He also failed at the outset to come in judgment in accordance with the prophetic warnings. Thus, the question that John the Baptizer sent to Jesus from King Herod's prison, ***"Are you the One who was to come, or should we look for another?"*** -(Luke 7:19). But it was in accordance with God's great mercy that the Gospel of salvation would first reach its entire population, before Israel would be condemned, consequential to Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks -(Daniel 9:24-27). As the rabbis like to teach: God always sends the cure before the disease. **The Pharisees of Jesus' day are comparable to the folks today who attack the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.**

When Jesus prophesied in accordance with all that the prophets had spoken in centuries past that ***"men will faint with fear and apprehension because of the things that are to come ... they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud ... (and) this generation will not pass away until it is fulfilled"*** -(Luke 21:26-32). He was not referring to His Second Coming that He would soon come in judgment against Israel and Jerusalem. There are three main views of the meaning of this generation will not pass:

1. It refers only to those alive at the time Jesus spoke and who still would be alive at the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. It refers only to those who would experience the end times.
3. It refers both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end times—the destruction of Jerusalem contains within itself the elements of the final end times and thus serves as a precursor. The Greek word for "generation" is

genea; it refers both to those living at a given time as well as to race or lineage (therefore, **Jesus would have been speaking of the Jewish race**). This makes the third view most likely being referred to.^(c)

The proud and the arrogant will always be blind to their impending doom. **Only the fear of God can keep us from the snare, and the dread of His righteous judgment.** We have this as our assurance that ***“mercy triumphs over judgment”***. -(James 2:13). Mercy triumphs over judgment may mean that God would rather show mercy to us than discipline us -(Micah 7:18). It may mean we can rejoice in the face of judgment if we have shown mercy to others, but if we have not shown mercy to those whom we might justly condemn, we will not be shown mercy. Or it may mean that mercy triumphs over judgment in the sense that it is always greater than judgment. The general idea seems to be that if we show mercy to others, the judgment which might otherwise fall on us will be replaced by mercy.

Let us test ourselves then on this important subject of partiality. Do we show more kindness to those of our own race than those of other races? Are we more kindly disposed to the young than to the old? Are we more outgoing to good-looking people than to those who are plain or homely? Are we more anxious to befriend prominent people than those who are comparatively unknown? Do we avoid people with physical infirmities and seek the companionship of the strong and healthy? Do we favor the rich over the poor? Do we give the “cold shoulder” to “foreigners,” those who speak our language with a foreign accent?

As we answer these questions, let us remember that the way we treat the least lovable believer is the way we treat the Savior (Mat 25:40).^(d)

Paul’s words in Romans 1:18-21 are going to be key: ***“For God’s wrath is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of those who suppress the truth in their wickedness. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God Himself has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes - His eternal power and divine nature - have been understood and observed by what He made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. Instead, their thoughts turned to worthless things, and their ignorant hearts were darkened.”***

The truth about God has been clearly revealed by God. The clues to God’s existence and character have traditionally been called “general revelation”. God could have kept humans in ignorance about himself. But he chose to reveal Himself, generally in nature and specifically through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. Because God has made certain facts about Himself known instinctively, people will someday have to give an account before God concerning why they chose to ignore His existence and His character.

But how could a loving God send anyone to hell, especially someone who has never heard the Good News of Jesus? In fact, says Paul, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made—therefore, they can clearly see his invisible qualities. Also, **everyone has an inner sense of what God requires, but they choose not to live up to it.** Put another way, people’s moral standards are always better than their behavior. **If people suppress God’s truth in order to live their own way, they have no excuse.** They know the truth, and they will have to endure the consequences of ignoring it.

The paradox can’t be missed—all people can “clearly see” God’s “invisible qualities.” How? God created the world with natural processes, with cause and effect. In the same way that observing a painting leads a person to conclude that there is an artist, so to observe the tremendous creation is to conclude that there is a supreme Creator, one with eternal power and divinity. This is part of the truth that unsaved people are suppressing from the public at large.^(c)

The Exodus event pictures God’s original, and unchanging plan for “Deliverance before Judgment”. **The consequences for their belief or unbelief in Jesus Christ and likewise of our own will determine individual destiny** as we approach the coming Seven-year Great Tribulation.

Pastor Bob

Notes:

1. http://www.aish.com/atr/Number_of_Jews_at_Exodus.html
2. <http://www.aish.com/jl/h/cc/48932377.html>
3. <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-john-baptist-and-jesus-matthew-31-17>

Commentaries:

- a. IVP Bible Background Commentary
- b. Mathew Henry’s Concise Commentary
- c. Life Application New Testament Commentary
- d. Believer’s Bible Commentary