

MOSES, THE LAW MAN WHO HEARD ABOUT GRACE
MOSES, THE LAW MAN WHO HEARD ABOUT GRACE

"And there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you" (Num. 9:6-8).

It is refreshing to discover that Solomon did not know everything, and even Moses realized there were things he needed to learn (see Prov. 30:18-19). The man who has no need of improvement has outlived his usefulness. The Passover, the most important feast in Israel, was solemnly observed on the fourteenth day of the first month. "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season; according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel" (Num. 9:1-5).

The Problem and the Prayer... Guilt Excluding

Attendance at the Passover was mandatory for all men. Every male was commanded to obey the commandment of God, and failure to do so was regarded as sinful. This was considered by the Hebrews to be a delight and a solemn duty. When these details were explained to the nation, certain men came to Moses to ask a very important question. People who were defiled were strictly forbidden to participate in the feast, and travelers who were unable to reach home in time for the celebrations were deprived of their greatest privilege. This appeared to be unjust, and the men who complained to Moses asked if an alternative could be found.

Their leader had no idea what to say. He had never been confronted by that problem and hesitated before giving an answer.

27

"And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you" (Num. 9:8). That situation was challenging. Four facts await investigation.

(1) Their Defilement— "We are defiled by the dead body of a man." This contact might not have been intentional. Additional details were never supplied by the ancient writer, but the uncleanness might have been caused accidentally or by some unknown humanitarian reason. The men asking the question might have been visiting a sick friend who died during their stay. Such a situation would have prohibited attendance at the feast. The same fact applies to all people who are unworthy to share fellowship with God. It is written, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The prophet Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Wise men do not argue with God; they believe His Word and pray as did the publican, "... God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

(2) Their Directions— "Wherefore are we kept back The Pharisee mentioned by Christ tried to justify himself before God by enumerating his virtuous deeds. Jesus said, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other

MOSES, THE LAW MAN WHO HEARD ABOUT GRACE

men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11-12). The men who questioned Moses did not deny their predicament; they recognized the authority of the Almighty and endeavored to discover what might be done to solve their problem. They were wise, and so are all people who learn from their example. If there were a way by which favor could be found, they wished to know about it, and for that purpose they came to Moses who could enquire on their behalf. They desired to worship at the feast and were willing to do anything to promote that possibility.

(3) Their Desire "An offering of the LORD in his appointed place." The questioners were sincere and anxious to know what God required. With intensity of purpose they desired to find means by which to share God's benediction and join other people in remembering the amazing deliverance from Egypt. They were anxious to give. Travelers prevented from returning in time for the festivities wished to know if their absence could be overlooked or remedied and wanted to know if Moses could solve their problem. They seemed to say, "We can purchase our lamb and are willing to observe all the commandments, but, Moses, how can we do this?"

28

Their leader became their intercessor, and God answered his prayer. David said, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Ps. 119:2).

(4) Their Decision "And those men said unto him Procrastination is considered to be the thief of time, but the ancient Hebrews were desperate and did not postpone action until a later date. They came to the servant of God and their effort was rewarded. It is never wise to put off until tomorrow something that needs attention today. The patriarch had never previously considered this problem. Many years later, Jesus was confronted by a similar situation.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62). People with doubts and problems should accept God's invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

The Provision and the Privilege ... God Explaining

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, if any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. . . . But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Num. 9:9-13).

The arrangement for a second passover was one of the most

MOSES, THE LAW MAN WHO HEARD ABOUT GRACE

gracious acts of the Almighty; it provided a thirty-day period of

29

grace in which men could prepare to enjoy the ordinance of which they had been deprived. It unified law and love and foreshadowed the link between Mount Sinai and Calvary.

(1) God's Desire. When Jehovah responded to the request of Moses, it became evident that He also wished to share the passover with His believing people. Uncleanness was not an excuse for avoiding the feast; there was always a way by which suppliants could be cleansed from defilement. Likewise, a man who was clean could not be pardoned for inexcusable neglect. The statement "that man shall bear his sin" was ominous. It was better to be unclean and know it than to be clean and indifferent. Since the beginning of time it has always been possible for sinful people to approach God and obtain forgiveness. Unfortunately, some people ignore God's commandments and do as they please.

(2) God's Delight. Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). Each commandment encouraged virtue and supplied a way of expressing love to God. The Israelites did not willingly make bricks in Egypt; they had no choice—they were slaves. The boy who offered his lunch to Jesus gave voluntarily and joyfully. It would be difficult to decide who was the happier, the lad who gave or the Lord who received. As a father delights in the obedience of his children, so God is pleased when men and women seek His fellowship.

(3) God's Disapproval. Jehovah always went the "extra mile" when offering mercy to undeserving sinners. The thirty days of grace indicated that He was anxious to assist believers in celebrating the passover. The same mercy was extended after Noah entered the ark. The vessel was ready to sail; the door had been closed and the final tasks completed. "And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth" (Gen. 7:10). Similarly, the Lord provided a month in which men could prepare to attend the second passover. If they did not avail themselves of this wonderful opportunity, their condemnation was justified. The New Testament writer expressed a similar thought when he said, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Heb. 2:3). Wise men obeyed the command of Moses, "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and

30

forbareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season—that man shall bear his sin" (Num. 9:13).

The Partnership and the Pleasure... . Guests Expected

"And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land" (Num. 9:14).

The new instructions given to Moses were surprising, for once again God extended His mercy. Normally, Jews were the only people permitted to observe the passover. "And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There

MOSES, THE LAW MAN WHO HEARD ABOUT GRACE

shall no stranger eat thereof. But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then he shall eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof' (Ex. 12:43-45). Probably at the time when God spoke to Moses, the children of Israel had no contact with people of other nations. As years passed, the influence of the Jews spread; "strangers" were attracted by God's chosen people, and at least some identified themselves with the chosen race. Many years later God saw the need of revising the former commandments and issued an edict which permitted strangers to keep the feast in fellowship with their Hebrew hosts. Circumcision was the only unchanging condition; it was the evidence that Israel was a separated nation. It was a thrilling moment when "those born in the land" sat together with "the strangers from afar," and masters and slaves became brethren. The wealth of the owner did not enhance his chance of finding favor with God, and slaves were not deprived of the divine benediction.

Many years later Paul expressed the same truth when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

31

It is reasonable to believe that when God issued His commandments to Moses, He was, so to speak, painting on human canvas a scene which He saw developing in the distant future. The slain lamb was a forerunner of the Lamb of God, and the passover feast was emblematic of the communion service in which believers gratefully remembered their redemption purchased by the blood of the Savior. Throughout the Old Testament dispensations the slain lamb was the center of all religious practice. During the present age everything of value revolves around the risen Christ; without His presence religion deteriorates into cold formality. No Jewish sacrifice was ever resurrected, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20).

32□

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.