

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 04/05/2013

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By Joseph F. Dumond

We continue this weekend with our regular Triennial Torah reading which can be found at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Deut 16	1 Chron 17-18		1 Thes 1-3
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Deut 16

Here, some of God’s seven annual festivals are listed and reviewed. The sacrifices that God later added to accompany these feasts are no longer in effect. The festivals themselves, however, are still to be observed. Following the Passover, God commanded that the Israelites were not to eat leavened bread for seven days, but were to instead eat unleavened bread during that time (verses 3, 8). No leaven was to be seen among them in all their territory for those seven days (verse 4)—the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Seven weeks later, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, was to be kept (verse 9). Next would be the Feast of Trumpets followed by the Day of Atonement, but neither are mentioned here—nor is the Last Great Day.

However, the Feast of Tabernacles is specifically reviewed (verses 13-15). This does not mean that Trumpets, Atonement and the Last Great Day are no longer holy. Rather, God is listing here only the three seasons of His annual festivals, as can be seen in verse 16. The first season, early spring, includes Passover and Unleavened Bread; the next season, late spring approaching summer, refers to Pentecost, and the third season, late summer and fall, includes Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day (these feasts are all to be kept within a period of less than a month).

As part of the instructions for keeping His festivals, God also commanded that we come before Him with an offering during each of the three festival seasons (verse 16). Generally, the Israelites made three trips in order to worship together in the three festival seasons. Many of the offerings were produce or animals, so it may have been practical for families to turn over their offerings as soon as they arrived at the place of worship. However, since offerings today are usually in the form of money (checks, cash, etc.), and since God does command that we are not to “appear before Him” empty-handed, the Church in modern times has instituted a tradition of taking up offerings on each Holy Day, the days on which God specifically commands us to appear before Him in assembly for worship services.

Why did God specify only the males? It was assumed that each family was headed by a man, and the man presented the family’s offering. Even today, there is often just one offering from each family—though many parents encourage their children to each give a small amount in order to teach them the habit of giving to God. Finally, it should be mentioned that God does not set any amount for us to give except that it be “according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you” (verse 17). Of course, this cannot

mean that we are to put a “price tag” on all that God has given us and try to pay Him that—for we could never in a million lifetimes pay that much. Rather, it must refer to the clause in the first part of the same verse, that we are to give as we are able— or, more to the point, as God has enabled us.

Each of these three feasts show us part of the plan of Salvation that Yehovah has set in motion for us. It is in studying each of these three seasons that we learn so much about His plan and discarding those false teachings we had in our former assemblies.

1 Chronicles 17 2 Samuel 7

These chapters tell of David’s desire to build a house for God—a temple, a more permanent structure than the tabernacle. God’s answer, through the prophet Nathan, is No. David later sheds additional light on this pronouncement. Notice that the material in these chapters is “according to all” that Nathan told David (1 Chronicles 17:15; 2 Samuel 7:17)—i.e., they don’t contain everything Nathan said. We can find more elsewhere. David explains in 1 Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3 that God told him that he is not permitted to build Him a permanent dwelling because he has been a warrior who has shed blood. Indeed, his entire reign is virtually one battle after another. This would not be fitting symbolism. The transfer of the ark from a tabernacle to the more permanent temple is to represent the Lord moving to this earth as an enduring dwelling—which will commence with the coming reign of Jesus Christ over all nations. This future reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be over a peaceful world (see Isaiah 9:6-7). So, instead of David, God will have the temple built by David’s son Solomon, his name meaning “Peaceful,” who will, appropriately, reign over a period of peace. This is not to say that Solomon would not fight under certain circumstances. Rather, it will not be necessary because, by the end of David’s reign, God will at last give the Israelites rest from their enemies—which, again, is representative of God’s coming Kingdom.

God then speaks through Nathan of His plan to establish David’s house. David’s “house,” his royal dynasty, will be established forever. How will God go about this? In 2 Samuel 7, God tells David what will happen after his death: “I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom” (verse 12). This, of course, refers to Solomon. Notice verse 13: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” We must be careful here, however, as the Hebrew word translated “forever,” *olam*, does not always carry the same meaning as “forever” does in the English language. Occasionally it means unending as long as certain conditions apply (compare Exodus 21:6; Jonah 2:6). Recorded elsewhere, there are definite conditions attached to the endurance of Solomon’s throne. Looking at 1 Chronicles 28 again, David expresses the condition God gives: “Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day” (verse 7). This condition is later reiterated by God to Solomon himself (2 Chronicles 7:17-18, compare verses 19-22). So if Solomon lives in disobedience to God, his dynasty will not go on without end. Sadly, this will come to pass, as Solomon will eventually have his heart turned to following other gods (see 1 Kings 11:4).

So what is meant by 2 Samuel 7:14-15, where God says he will not remove his mercy from Solomon as he did with Saul, who disobeyed? As we’ve seen, it cannot mean that Solomon’s dynasty would never be cut off. Rather, it must mean that, in the event Solomon disobeys, he will not be killed by God as Saul was. Instead, he will be allowed to live out his life. Furthermore, though the kingdom will be torn from him and given to a neighbor as Saul’s was—this will not happen to Solomon himself. As God later tells Solomon: “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David” (1 Kings 11:12).

Though Solomon's dynasty is not prophesied to continue forever, that of David himself is. God says, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations'" (Psalm 89:3-4). In 2 Chronicles 13:5, we are told that "the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt." Salt is a preservative against corruption and decay. It was required in offerings (Leviticus 2:13), which were often part of covenants. In using the phrase "covenant of salt," then, God is denoting a permanent alliance, an inviolable covenant, established for "all generations."

What this tells us is that this throne must be in existence in our generation. Some might suggest that Christ sits upon it now. After all, He is of the line of David—not through Solomon but through David's son Nathan. Furthermore, Jesus is actually prophesied to sit on David's throne. An angel tells Mary: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33; compare Isaiah 9:6-7). But Christ never took over a throne in his human life. And since His death and resurrection, He has been in heaven, sharing His Father's throne (compare Revelation 3:21). Yet He is coming back to rule Israel and all nations, as the book of Revelation goes on to show. It is at that time that He will fulfill the prophecy of at last assuming the throne of David.

So where is that throne, which must exist in "all generations," in our day? Fascinatingly, we can trace the line of

David through Solomon beyond ancient Israel and Judah all the way to the British monarchy today (see "The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future" at www.ucg.org/brp/materials). When Christ returns, the rule of the Solomonic line will finally cease, and Christ, of the line of Nathan (another of David's sons), will take over the throne.

1 Chronicles 18 2 Samuel 8-9

Here we see David extending the dominion of Israel. God's covenant with him included the promise that he would be victor over his enemies. Furthermore, in conjunction with his movement north, his purpose is directly stated: "to establish his power by the River Euphrates" (1 Chronicles 18:3). All of this expansion was, no doubt, carried out with God's promise to Abraham firmly in mind—that the land God was giving him would extend "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). Perhaps he also had direct instructions from God that Scripture does not reveal.

Of defeated nations, the accounts explain that they became David's "servants," bringing tribute—that is, vassal states indirectly ruled by David. The conquest of one of these, Moab, may have been undertaken with mixed feelings—David's great-grandmother Ruth having come from there (Ruth 4:13-17) and him having sent his own parents there to Moab's king for protection while he hid from Saul (1 Samuel 22:3-4). Perhaps Moab had a new ruler at this time. Nevertheless, Moab was a pagan nation that had posed a serious danger to Israel in the past (see Numbers 25:1-3; Judges 3:12-30) and would do so repeatedly throughout Israel's history.

In 2 Samuel 9, we read of David wanting to show the "kindness of God" (verse 3) to a son of Saul's son Jonathan in fulfillment of David and Jonathan's covenant of friendship (compare 1 Samuel 20:14-15). In learning of Jonathan's crippled son (2 Samuel 4:4), David sends for him immediately. Mephibosheth has good reason to be afraid at this point, as the founders of new dynasties in ancient times often killed the children of

former rulers to eliminate contenders for the throne. But David reassures him, promising to restore his family estate and that he will be like an adopted son, eating at the king's table for the rest of his life.

Perhaps we can see in the story of Mephibosheth an illustration of our lives under God's grace—going from nothing, undeserving of blessing, living under threat of danger, to complete security with royal treatment at the table of the King of the universe.

1 Thessalonians 1-3

The letters (called epistles) from Paul to Thessalonica, which included I Thessalonians and II Thessalonians were probably two of the earliest letters Paul had written which was around A.D. 50 or 51. Paul wrote these letters in response to Timothy's report that the Thessalonians' church was prospering despite intense persecution from factions. Unscrupulous men from the Jewish community had sent men to stir up animosity toward the Christians who they identified as straying from Judaism. These Jews stirred up a riot in which Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to flee for their lives during the middle of the night.

The residents and recipients of Thessalonica resided in a huge city with estimates of 200,000 citizens. Immorality abounded as the norm in the pagan Greek religions there. Today it might have been called "sin city." Sitting in a prime spot of wealth and influence as the chief port of the Roman province of Macedonia, this city was one of the crown jewels of the Roman shipping and receiving centers and Roman citizens had many freedoms there because it had the status of a "free city." That meant that Thessalonica citizens had self-rule. Thessalonica had many great influential citizens of Rome dwelling there since it was the provincial capital of Macedonia.

The purpose behind I Thessalonians is multifaceted. Part of Paul's letter was to expose the false teachers in the church there. They were obviously in it for money and prestige. He was also disputing the false charge that he had left in a hurry because of a charge of hypocrisy that the false teachers had accused him of.

Paul was also interested in encouraging the Thessalonians in their persecutions and to strengthen their resolve for Jesus Christ and the gospel's sake. He wants the Thessalonians to understand that persecution was to be expected as part of the cost of their faith.

Paul's practical instructions and exhortations are universally applicable throughout the church's history even up to today. One of these were for the reasons of having godly conduct. They are to live to please God and not men and their conduct is to be motivated by a love for God. Pleasing God is also living a chaste life and avoiding sexual immorality as they are called to be holy just as God is holy. This was exceedingly more difficult in Thessalonica. Paul reinforced the idea that knowing God is an important way to avoid immorality and having godly conduct. Believers are called to holiness and that living a holy life glorifies God which is His will. Living a holy life is not possible by human effort but only by the power of an indwelling Holy Spirit.