

Camp Law

Last week Brother Alvarez alluded to a passage in Deut. that got me thinking about some things. The context of this passage is found in...

Deut 23:12-13

1

12 “You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, **13** and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement.

2

The Lord commanded cleanliness for His people while they were in the wilderness, literally; and this text is connected with a sanitary regulation that just makes sense. What I find so interesting is that God, the creator, would make laws about such things. But when you consider that this commandment was vital for health and even for life in the camp, then it really isn't too surprising at all. This brings into focus the next verse...

Deut 23:14

3

14 “Since the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

We should be able to see the logic and wisdom in God's commandments to the Israelites concerning their attention to even the daily things of life but this verse illustrates, I think, an even more important dynamic of what was occurring with the Israelites...

4

“God walks in the midst of your camp”

It is true that the instructions were for their benefit, but there is also the undeniable truth that God didn't want to be associated with a filthy, dirty camp or people.

There are some thoughts that we are going to look at from this passage.

5

- 1) A comparison
- 2) A privilege
- 3) A response

Our first point then is this idea of...

6

- 1) A comparison

The first thing that comes to mind is the obvious, Christian souls should not be lodged in filthy bodies, in the literal. We will expand on this point more in a minute, but the obvious is true. We can see from Deut. that the reason given for them to be clean is that God was among them. It is only in hindsight that we come to the conclusion that the reason for the commandment was because

of the sanitation and health issues. I guess, in this regard, our attitude should be that if the Lord cares for such things, we should also.

So, the obvious aside, there is an application, a comparison, if you will, that can be explored.

1 Cor 6:19 7

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

God commanded the Israelites to keep their camp clean because He was among them. How much more so do you think He wants His children today to keep his abode clean now. Paul writes here that our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit and even more to the point in...

2 Cor 6:16 8

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

Paul quotes the passage we looked at in Deut. to illustrate that while God was among the Israelites then, today He dwells in His children, Christians. John speaks of this in...

1 John 4:13 9

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

God dwells, or at should be, in His children, Christians, today. If God commanded the Israelites to stay clean because He was among them, doesn't it make sense that He wants His people today to keep where He dwells just as, if not more so, clean. In...

1 Cor 3:17 10

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. KJV

1 Cor 3:17

17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. NASV

The word here translated as "defile" in the KJV and "destroy" in the NASV, according to Strong's, comes from the Greek...

NT:5351 Phtheiro (fthi'-ro); 11

Probably strengthened from pthio (to pine or waste); properly, to shrivel or wither, i.e. to spoil (by any process) or (generally) to ruin (especially figuratively, by moral influences, to deprave):

KJV - corrupt (self), defile, destroy.

Paul is saying to the Corinthians that they were the Temple of God and as such were to consider it Holy, set apart for God, keeping it free from defilement which is the way of destruction.

1 John 5:4-5

12

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. **5** Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

John makes it very clear that to overcome the world one needs to be born of God, believing in Jesus as the Son of God. Does this sound familiar? This is exactly what Philip told the Eunuch when he asked to be baptized...

13

“If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God”

There is a comparison to be drawn from God walking in the camp of the Israelites and God dwelling in His faithful. There is a correlation to be seen in God’s commandments to them to keep the camp clean and the commandment He gives His children to be spotless from the world through faith in Him. This brings us to our next point...

14

2) A privilege

It is a privilege to be a part of the camp of God. God had chosen the descendants of Abraham to be His chosen people, Holy, set apart for His work.

2 Tim 1:8-9

15

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, **9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

Recognition of who called us, what He called us for, and unto what He has called us is of paramount importance in the life of a Christian. Paul writes to Timothy and tells him that is God who does the calling, to join in the work of the Lord in spreading the Gospel, and called all to be saved, if they will but listen to the calling. Christ says in...

Matt 7:13-14

16

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. **14** For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

To say that it is a privilege to be a child of God is a gross understatement of epic proportions, the worst of all time. There is no higher calling or status than to be considered by God to be one of His own. There was no other nation on earth that could make that claim then, other than the Jews, and there are no people on earth now that can make that claim except those who follow God through Christ. Now there is some truth in that the Israelites really didn’t have a choice in the matter in that God had promised Abraham that He would make a great people of his descendants, but let’s not

forget that the Jewish nation had to make the choice to agree to God's covenant in order to enjoy the blessings and promises He offered. That is no different than the decision that is made under the New Law.

John 3:16-17 17

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Here, in one of the most well-known passages from the scriptures, right up there with "Judge not that ye be not judged," Christ says that those that choose to believe will be the ones that are saved.

Acts 2:38 18

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In his response to the people's question of what must they do Peter tells them that they must choose to repent and be baptized to gain remission of sin. And notice what Philip's answer to the Eunuch is in the passage we referred to earlier...

Acts 8:36-37 19

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, Look! "Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" **37** And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

"IF" That is a statement of condition. If the Eunuch chose to be baptized based on his belief in Jesus, he could. But it was his choice. Just like it was the Israelites choice to accept the terms of God's covenant. God offered the covenant because they were the descendants of Abraham, but it was not in place until they accepted it. God offers forgiveness of sin because of His great love for His creation, but that forgiveness is not given until such time as His new covenant is accepted in faithful obedience. The point is simple. It is an honor, a privilege to be a child of God, but it is a privilege that must be freely chosen. That brings us to our last point...

20 3) A response

Remember the passage we looked at in...

Deut 23:14 21

14 "Since the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

The key here is what God sees. Not what we perceive or what we show to others, it is strictly what God sees. Nothing more and most assuredly nothing less.

Heb 4:12 22

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

This is a verse that is probably familiar to most of us. It is quoted often, but notice the very next verse that this leads into...

23 **13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

God knows all that we do. Everything we say, everything we do. Nothing is hidden from Him, and as is seen in verse 12, it is God's word, the New Law that will judge us based on our response to it. So the final question is...

24 ***Is OUR camp Holy?***

First, let's dispel a common thought. This is not a discussion of the Church. In this discussion the Church is only affected in as much as our actions as individual members might bring reproach upon it, ala 1 Cor. 5. No, this discussion concerns the individual. The camp here is not the Church, but each of us as Christians. So then...

25 ***What constitutes a Holy Camp?***

The Law of Moses was absolute in its demand that the Israelites observed it completely in all aspects. The Law that governs Christians today is just as absolute. It is to be observed completely in all aspects. That is what James talks about in...

James 2:10

26

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

For our camp to be Holy, our response to God's Word, the Law, must be as complete as theirs was to be. Nothing left out, nothing added to. That is the only response that can keep the camp Holy.

Now please don't misunderstand my statement or take it out of context. We are to strive diligently to keep the functions of our worship to God in our assembly as pure and as Holy as we see in the New Testament Church. We are not to bring in the devices of man, even if the intent is upright. Let's have an event for the purpose of drawing the community in so that we can then teach them. That is not keeping our assembly Holy. No, this discussion has been concerning each of us, in our own bodies, that Paul describes as the Holy Temple of the Spirit.

In closing, a thought from...

Ps 93:5

27

5 Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore.

What does my camp look like? Is it clean, is it set apart for the work of God. Or do I allow the filth of the world to spoil it? It is my choice.