

Sunday, April 23, 2017—I Corinthians 10:7-8: Learning From Israel's Example

Introduction

- Two weeks ago, before Easter, we looked at I Cor. 10:1-6.
- Verse 1—Paul informs the Corinthians that there are some things that he does not want them to be ignorant about. He then proceeds to mention the following aspects of Israel's Exodus experience from the Old Testament.
 - Verse 1—Israel was under the cloud & in the sea
 - Verse 2—baptized unto Moses in the cloud & in the sea.
 - Verse 3—ate the same spiritual meat i.e., manna.
 - Verse 4—drank the same spiritual drink. God supernaturally provided water from a rock which was a picture of Christ.
 - Verse 5—God was not “well pleased” with most of them and they were “overthrown” in the wilderness.
- Verse 6—all these things that happened to Israel in time past are to serve as “examples” to us as members of the body of Christ living in the dispensation of grace. These are the things that Paul does not want the Corinthians to be ignorant about.
 - Romans 15:4—we need to learn from Israel's example.
- Israel possessed all this supernatural provision and was still overthrown in the wilderness. They had supernatural protection and provision and it still wasn't enough for them. They were enticed and lusted after those things that they did not have.
- What did Israel fail to do? They failed to keep their bodies under subjection. All but two of them failed to finish the course and were denied the prize of the promised land.
 - “Miracles do not forego slipping, and privilege do not prevent becoming a castaway.” (Bultema, 81)
- Remember why Paul is bringing all this stuff up from Israel's history. He does not want the Corinthians to be ignorant of these things as they seek to run the race so as to obtain the prize. If Israel who experienced all the supernatural protection and provision could be sidetracked how much more possible is it for you and I who have not seen/experienced what Israel experienced.

- The morning we are going to see that Paul is still not done with using Israel’s Exodus experience in time past to instruct the Corinthians regarding their behavior during the dispensation of grace.

I Corinthians 10:7

- **Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.**
- In addition to not lusting after evil things in verse 5, Paul instructs the Corinthians to not be idolaters as were “some” of the Israelites were during the Exodus.
- *As it is written*—this expression is important to recognize when it comes to the Biblical promise of preservation. In our adult Sunday School class on the Bible I spent an entire Lesson talking about the importance of this expression (See [Lesson 37](#)).
- This morning, and in the interest of simplicity just note that Paul follows “it is written” with a quotation from Exodus 32:6.
 - What Moses wrote back Ex. 32:6 continues to be written unto the present time. We just went back and read the verse. The means that what Moses wrote down by inspiration was preserved so that you and I could have access to today during the dispensation of grace. As it turns out that verse written by Moses thousands of years ago has some instructional benefit for the body of Christ.
 - Psalm 12:6-7—God promised that he would preserve his word.
 - The expression “it is written” in the New Testament speaks to the fact that what God wrote down by inspiration in the Old Testament continues to be written down and available today.
- I Corinthians 10:7—Paul’s reason for quoting Ex. 32:2 is the exhort the Corinthians to not be idolaters as were some of the Israel during the Exodus. This is not the first time in I Corinthians that Paul has brought up the issue of idolatry.
 - I Corinthians 5:10-11
 - I Corinthians 6:9—see also Eph. 5:5
- Galatians 5:20—Paul lists idolatry as one of the works of the flesh.
- I Corinthians 12:2—idolatry was engrained into the thinking of the Corinthians. Therefore, resorting to idolatrous thinking and practice would come easy to the Corinthians in the absence of a renewed mind.

- I Corinthians 10:7—Paul does not want the Corinthians to “be” idolaters in the present. Once again, if those Israelites encamped at the foot of mount Saini, who had witnessed the miraculous provision and protection summarized in verses 1 through 5 rose up to play and engaged in idolatry; how much easier will it be for the Corinthians to do likewise. Not only did the Corinthians have a past in idolatry but they never witnessed/experienced the supernatural protection and provision that Israel had.

I Corinthians 10:8

- **Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.**
- In addition to not being idolaters in verse 7, Paul uses the example of Israel in time past to exhort the Corinthians to not commit fornication.
- Critics and Skeptics of God’s word like to point out numerical discrepancies between the Old and New Testaments as proof that the Bible is not inerrant. Paul explicitly connects the fornication of Israel with “one day” during which 23,000 people died. There are two potential options from the Pentateuch to which Paul could be referring.
- *Option 1*—Paul is referring to events recorded in Exodus 32:15-35 during which Israel is judged for operation Golden Calf. Those taking this position note that Paul just quoted from Ex. 32:6 one verse prior in I Cor. 10:7.
 - Exodus 32:28—3,000 die by the sword. That leaves us 20,000 short of the total from I Cor. 10:8.
 - Exodus 32:30—“on the morrow” would indicate that the events of verses 31-35 happened subsequently or occurred on the next day. In I Cor. 10:8 Paul is talking about something that happened in “one day.”
 - Exodus 32:34—note the future tense on the expression “I will visit their sin upon them” in verse 24. “On the morrow” or the day following the death of 3,000 men with the sword, God tells Moses that He “will visit their sin upon them.”
 - Exodus 32:35—does say that the “Lord plagued the people.” But we are not told how many died in this plague and it seems clear that this did not all happen in “one day.” Therefore, Option 1 falls short of being what Paul is referring to both in terms of the number of people who died and the duration in which the even occurred.
- *Option 2*—Paul is referring to events recorded in Numbers 25:1-9.
 - Numbers 25:1-2—Israel is committing fornication with the daughters of Moab and thereby meets the subject matter requirement of I Cor. 10:8 i.e., “fornication.”

- Numbers 25:9—those who died in the plague were 24,000 or 1,000 more than Paul mentions in I Cor. 10:8. So the math does not line up exactly in either option but the numerical gap of 1,000 is much smaller with *Option 2* than it was with 20,000 of *Option 1*.
 - The events of *Option 1* occurred over multiple days and leave us far short of total number of deaths mention by Paul in I Cor. 10:8.
 - The events of *Option 2* mean the subject matter requirements but give us a higher total in terms of the number of deaths.
- So what is the solution?
- I Corinthians 10:8—the solution is found in noting the details of all the revelation verses. Paul is speaking about how many died in “one day” whereas Num. 25:9 is giving you the total number of deaths from the entire plague. *Option 2* is the correct option. The word of God is not in error.
- We need to not lose sight of Paul’s reason for brining all this up. Paul does not want the Corinthians to “commit fornication.” How much of the book of I Corinthians has been taken up with a discussion fornication? Most Chapters 5 through 7 address this topic.
- Just as we saw with the idolatry issue in verse 7 the Corinthians were saved out of the cultural practice of using fornication in their worship of idols. Therefore, a return to that neural pathway will be essay for the saints at Corinth.
 - Galatians 5:19
- The Corinthians are not going to have the threat of supernatural punishment to keep them from committing fornication. That didn’t even work for Israel.
- Romans 12:1-2—the Corinthians and by extension us are going to have to renew our minds and create new pathways in our thinking that are wired to God’s word rightly divined.