

As we talked about last time, it's important we understand Jesus was a newly created human, because it's what gives Jesus the power and authority

He has as a human on this earth. Jesus was not another human hopelessly trapped in the sin-filled cycle the rest of us are in. Jesus was God The Son in a spotless human form; which gave Him, as a human, unfettered access to God The Father. Since the fall, sin has kept the seed of Adam from having that. To understand this point better, we need to consider Matthew chapter 16 verse 19. There Jesus says, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." It is human decisions which control what happens here in our created space. What hurt us so deeply when we fell into sin was that we no longer could stand before God in purity. When we were in innocence, God was simply there by our side; but when we chose to walk our own way, God's ability to be close to us became limited. When we do wrong, God is forced to judge us. The closer His presence is to our lives, the more quickly the judgment must come, because the Holiness of God demands the development of holiness in our lives. (Matt. 5:48, I Pet. 4:12-19) You can't have your cake and eat it too - so to speak. You can be in an ever developing walk with God or you can walk away. Those are the only two choices. However, in this flesh, even our desire to be holy can only get us so close. Moses was only allowed to see the back of God, and he came down from the mountain glowing. (Ex. 33:17-23) Priests who ministered before God in the temple, who did not follow the instructions of the law, were consumed by fire. (Lev. 10:1-7) We needed a human who could stand before God making intercession for the rest of us, directly before the presence of God.

Genesis 6:3 tells us, God said His Spirit would not always strive with man because man was flesh. As flesh, individual men may give up sin, but this world still vexes us. Men like Enoch, Elijah, and

DECODING THE TRUTH

PART IV

Moses are great examples of men who desired God's ways so much that God took them from this world before their bodies were overcome by

death; and the story of Moses is directly tied to what God was telling us in Genesis 6. God's Holiness cannot tolerate sin, because just the grief which sin can bring into the life of one who desires holiness can lead them to stumble! This truth is why Paul said in Ephesians 4:26-27, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: Neither give place to the devil." The more we try to follow in God's Holiness, the more we find ourselves unable to tolerate sin, as well. One of the very reasons we choose to follow God in the first place is that we want to leave sin behind. This means a true believer comes to the state of not wanting to tolerate sin long before we know much about how to confront it. This simple truth is one of the reasons Paul instructs in I Timothy 3:6 that a minister should not be a novice. From the very start we can be exuberant about serving God, and this is good, but we should understand we have much to learn. We need to turn our exuberance toward learning, instead of trying to lead so much. Many good intentioned bad ideas have come from young Christians who simply have not had the time to understand some of the most basic dynamics of living for God. Far too many of these ideas have become fully accepted norms in our churches, and people end up never growing out of them.

You see, it's difficult to confront sin without falling into sin yourself. This is why we have to remind our children, and ourselves, that two wrongs don't make a right. It's hard to have righteousness in judgment. So, God tells us not to judge. (Matt. 7:1-2) This is not a command to stop teaching the Word; it's a warning against us trying to execute justice even when others are doing things we know are wrong. (Ezek. 3:20-21) We are obligated to teach what the Bible tells us; but when it comes to judgment, we need to stay hands-off. That is why God also tells us that vengeance is His. (Rom. 12:19) We have enough trouble handling our

own actions; so don't allow any man to stop you from teaching the truth, but leave the judgment of others solely in God's hands!

This problem of sin vexing the righteous was something Moses faced. God had told Moses to speak to the rock, and water would come out to quench Israel's thirst. However, Moses was so tired of the disbelief and sinfulness of the people that he was slipping on a personal level. (Num. 20:1-13) This was, by far, not the first time Moses and/or God had been murmured against when the people wanted water and/or food. God had provided every time, once even bringing water from a rock when Moses struck it. (Ex. 17:4-7) Now, early on, at Mount Sinai, Moses had begged God to spare the people, even when they had done something so contrary to what God was trying to accomplish through them that they had almost voided their usefulness. Again, the closer God is to people the more swift the judgment must come, (I Pet. 4:16-19) but Moses acted as their intercessor. He pleaded with God to spare Israel. "The effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16 So, God moved away from the people and Moses went back down the mountain to join the people. When Moses got there, he became so angry with them that he threw the tablets of stone God had given him, breaking them to pieces - and there it is!

The people had made themselves an idol of gold to worship, because they did not think Moses was coming back. God can not work through a people who are going to break their commitment with Him every time they think some little thing has gone wrong. God was going to purge the sin by destroying the people and starting over with Moses. Moses had begged God to spare the people, and because Moses was a righteous man, God spared them. Moses' righteousness is why God was willing to start over using just Moses. However, even Moses, being the one who had begged God to spare the people, was very wroth with them the minute he saw what they were doing. This was a righteous anger so strong Moses failed to handle it properly, and he ends up smashing to bits the very thing the people needed the most.

You see, those stone tablets Moses had received from God, contained the instructions which would take the people from being caught up in the traditions of men and show them what a life lived for God should look like. Being caught up on the traditions of men is exactly what the people were doing. They had formed an idol and said this is the god who brought us up out of Egypt. (Ex. 32:1-6) They were not necessarily trying to deny the existence of God; they were simply trying to make God according to their own thoughts. (Rom. 1:23) What they needed were instructions, precisely like the second commandment, which tells us not to make unto ourselves any graven images. (Ex. 20) Moses had gotten the people a second chance from God, but in trying to deal with them himself, he had destroyed the very thing they needed. This meant Moses would have to go back up the mountain and receive the laws again. Being up on the mountain for so long the first time was the thing which caused the people to stray in the first place!

This is why the Holiness of God was going to destroy the people. God knew the burden Moses was asking to take on, and the fact it was going to be a long struggle. God was not going to ask Moses to do this, but Moses, by his own choice, took it on. Now, Moses probably did not fully understand what he was getting himself into, but this is where we must understand Matthew 16:19. What is bound and what is loosed is up to us! When we pray, we must be careful what we pray for. When Jesus was asked how we should pray, He said we should start our prayer by acknowledging God is God. "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Then we should ask, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." From there, we can go on to ask for our daily needs; but good prayer is asking God that His will be done, not ours! (Luke 11:1-4, 22:39-43)

Moses had taken to himself a great burden, and to emphasize the change, God did not give Moses the law in the same way He did the first time. The first time, God told Moses to come up into the mount, and God gave Moses tablets of stone which God had hewn and on which God had written. The second time, God instructs Moses to hew the tablets

himself; and so Moses had to do the physical labor of cutting stone. Then Moses had to carry those stone tablets all the way back up the mountain. God's law was what the people needed. Moses had taken responsibility for them, and if he was going to get the law back, he was going to have to work for it. My grandmother used to say, "You never appreciate anything that's given to you." We don't know how much Moses valued those first stone tablets in the first place, but you can rest assured he valued the second set a lot more. With every hit of the chisel, Moses probably regretted breaking those first ones. We like to say, prayer changes things, but what we fail to understand is that sin changes things as well. We are in a constant fight with the changes sin makes, even on a very personal level.

Now, much further down the road, as God was going to, once again, bring water from a rock, Moses was asked to speak to the rock, not strike it. However, by this time Moses was so tired of striving with the people that he went out and struck the rock anyway. (Num. 20:1-12) Now, Moses was, by far, not a novice; but God asked Moses to speak instead of strike, because God wanted to remind Moses of the truth we are talking about. It's hard to continually strive for righteousness in a sin-filled world which beats at you daily, and even Moses had become so tired and stressed that he found himself disobeying God's instructions. Now, the water came, even though Moses struck the rock, because this was more of a personal issue between God and Moses. God was not going to allow Moses to totally go down into burnout, no matter what Moses asked. Moses was precious in God's sight, and this gave God the chance to show both Aaron and Moses that they would not be able to lead the children of Israel into the promised land!

Moses' life shows how much we need a direct link to God; but it also proved, no man from the seed of Adam was going to fill our need for a direct link. It's just outside of our abilities to make the right choices and continually stand in the gap. However, Jesus coming in human flesh could create that direct and permanent link with God we so desperately need! (I John 2:1-2) Jesus can be everything Moses - bless his heart - could not be! This is

what confused the religious leaders when Jesus told the man sick of the palsy that his sins had been forgiven. The religious leaders frowned greatly on this; but Jesus simply pointed out, it's just as easy to say thy sins be forgiven as it is to say rise up and walk. He had used the forgiveness words so they would know He had "...power on earth to forgive sins,.." Matthew 9:1-8 Remember what Jesus told those who were going to stone the adulterous woman in John chapter 8? Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Jesus was the only one who fit that description. So, once the people walked away from the woman, Jesus asked her where her accusers had gone, and "hath no man condemned thee?" She responded, "No man, Lord." Then He told her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." This story confuses many people, because they see Jesus as condemning the people for wanting to stone her, but that's not true. Jesus was doing them as much, or more a service as the woman, by taking the responsibility to Himself.

God had shown Israel, in the law, that they should take actions to clean out sinfulness from Israel. However, Israel had never done a very consistent job at this, and that serves as an example of how hard it is for sinful men to police themselves. What Jesus was simply trying to show us is that He was going to be the one in charge of such matters from then on. We may not understand why God judges in the way He does, but it's no longer our distress. Jesus (being God in the flesh) has taken on the complete authority to judge man directly among men! His ability to be above the sinful problems we face of simply keeping our own lives pure, is a uniqueness which sets Jesus apart from every other human born. We can truly, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you." I Peter 5:6-7

Until next time, may The God of grace and mercy guide you into all truth as you study His Word!

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