

Exodus 23;14 Missionary Conf.

by J.M. Davies

J.M. Davies explores the significance of the feasts in Exodus 23, highlighting their commemorative, prophetic, and practical implications for believers today.

Duration: 48:58

Scripture: Leviticus 23:8-35, Deuteronomy 16:16-17, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Christ's Resurrection", "Obedience To God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the prophetic and commemorative nature of the death and resurrection of Christ. These events are foundational to Christian teaching and serve a practical purpose in educating and cultivating faith. The speaker emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commands, using examples from the Old Testament such as the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land and the Sabbath year. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God is the living God who sustains and provides for his people.

Transcript

Minor Hall, Mr. J. M. Griffiths. Traveling with me today to the book of Exodus, chapter twenty-three. Exodus twenty-three, verse fourteen.

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the earth. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread. Thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee.

In the time appointed of the month Abbid, for in it thou camest out from Egypt. And none shall appear before me empty. And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labors, which thou hast thrown in the field, and the feast of the ingathering, which is in the end of the year.

When thou hast gathered in thy labors, out of the field, three times in the year, all thy males shall appear before the Lord God. I shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread, neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.

Thou shalt not feed a kid in his mother's milk. Chapter thirty-four, verse eighteen. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.

Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee in the time of the month Abbid. For in the month Abbid thou camest out from Egypt. All that openeth the matrix is mine.

And every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is made. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb. And if thou shalt redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck.

All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem, and none shall appear before me empty. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest. In year, in time, and in harvest thou shalt rest.

And thou shalt observe the feast of wheat, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. Thrice in the year shall all your men, children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy border.

Neither shall any man desire thy lamb. And thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year. I shall return to Deuteronomy, chapter fifteen, verse nineteen.

All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock, thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep. Chapter sixteen and verse sixteen summarizes again for us these three.

Verse sixteen. Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose. In the feast of unleavened bread, in the feast of wheat, in the feast of tabernacles.

And they shall not appear before the Lord empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee. Now we'll not take time to read.

We may draw attention to later in Leviticus twenty-three. We'll not, we may refer to one verse or two in that portion. Maybe we should read verse, verse eight of Leviticus twenty-three.

He shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days. In the seventh day as well as the first day to be in holy convocation. And that is said in connection with the feast of wheat.

In verse twenty-one he shall proclaim in the seventh day that it may be in holy convocation. And again in verse thirty-five in the feast of tabernacles. On the first day shall be in holy convocation.

And on the eighth day shall be in holy convocation. On Monday evening we were looking a little at the Passover, making reference to the fact that in the Passover three things with regard to the person of Christ or the redemptive work of Christ are brought before us. We could consider it in relation to the Lamb as prefiguring Christ himself in his death.

But Monday we considered something of the way of salvation as illustrated in the way the Lamb is spoken of in that portion. But then there was the commemorative Passover, instructions regarding which are found in chapter twelve and especially in chapter thirteen. And it's these commemorative festivals, these commemorative gatherings, these commemorative convocations, these words are not merely said just to bring in a kind of a repetition.

They were spoken of as my set feast by the Lord. They were Jehovah's appointed times of meeting with his people. The late Idersheim, Dr. Idersheim, called them Jehovah's tricings.

They were the times when God wanted his people to meet with him. In that I take it is the meaning of the verse in Psalm fifty, gather my saints together unto me. And that was the foremost purpose of these feasts.

They were opportunities for the people to come to meet with God. They were Jehovah's gatherings. God's appointed gatherings.

God's appointed gatherings for the specific purpose of bringing his people into his own presence. But there were also festivals. There were also times of joy.

In Exodus chapter five, Moses says, Let my people go that they may keep up peace. Thus keep festivals, time of happiness and joy. These were intended to be times of joy in the hearts of the people of God.

But they were also times for holy convocation. Times of holy fellowship between the people of God. So they were his gatherings.

They were to be happy gatherings, if you like. But they were also to be holy gatherings. They were to be holy convocations.

Which meant that the people who came to observe them were to be in a fixed state to meet with God. They were to be holy gatherings. It is the practical aspect of these feasts that I want to specially draw attention to for a little while this afternoon.

We know that they were commemorated. The verses that we have read together makes that clear. The Passover was commemorated on the fact that God delivered them from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb.

In the month of Abbot, they commemorated their deliverance from the iron furnace, their deliverance from the house of bondage. And it was intended to keep alive in the memory of God's people the fact that they had been slaves and that God in grace had delivered them. God did not want them to forget that they had been slaves in the land of Egypt.

Neither does God want us to forget what we were by nature. They were to eat the unleavened bread because in Egypt they ate the bread of affliction. Whereas we speak typically of the unleavened bread in a typical way, it was to them the memory of the bread of affliction which they ate while they were slaves in Egypt.

The Feast of Pentecost, as it was later known, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of the Third Month, that commemorated the giving of the law. It was at the third month, in the third month that they came to the foot of Mount Sinai. It was while there that Moses ascended the mount and received the two tables of the law from the hand of God.

It was there they were brought into covenant relationship with Jehovah. They were a redeemed people before that. They were redeemed when they were brought out of Egypt.

And they were the heirs of the covenant God gave with Abraham, the covenant of grace. But now as a nation, they are brought into covenant relationship with Jehovah. In the language of Ezekiel, chapters 15 and 16, they are constituted the wife of Jehovah.

Those passages will be known to many of us, I expect. It's their failure and their unfaithfulness in this regard that the later prophets speak of and stigmatizes Israel with having become a harlot, having become

the unfaithful wife. They were brought into a marvelous relationship with Jehovah at the foot of Mount Sinai.

And the feast of the third month was intended to commemorate that great event, that great event when they heard the trumpet sounding loud and long. And when they heard God speak, when they heard God speak, when they said, let not God speak unto us, and they asked Moses to become a mediator. And God said that they did well in so doing.

But the feast of Pentecost was commemorative of that marvelous event when God manifested himself in fire and clouds on Mount Sinai. The feast of Tabernacles at the year's end celebrated the gathering in of the harvest. But it was commemorative of the first night they spent in tents after they left the brick kilns of Egypt.

They pitched their tents. They camped in a place called Sikoth. They lived in booths.

And the feast of Tabernacles was commemorative of that night when they were brought out. The first night. So that during those seven days at the year's end, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, they lived in booths.

And I've seen Jews today in parts trying to imitate that. I saw them in Toronto during that feast of Tabernacles putting up for very... something that... an imitation of that booth outside their synagogue. Just some faint... faint suggestion of connection with the feast of Tabernacles.

So these were commemorative in character. And as I said on Monday night, of course, these are prophetic in character as we all know. I would like to say a word in that connection and link it with Revelation 2 and 3 for a moment.

It's not likely that many in Israel knew the prophetic character of these feasts. It's not likely that Moses was on the Mount for forty days on more than one occasion without learning something more than the letter of the law. I think we would be safe in saying that Moses must have learned a great deal from God when he was on the Mount.

He made known his ways unto Moses. Moses must have learned far more than is recorded for us in the Scriptures in Deuteronomy and Leviticus with regard to these feasts. I think that Moses must have understood something of the prophetic character of these feasts.

His vision of faith had been enlightened, had been illuminated. And we are told in Hebrews chapter 11, he has seen the reproaches of the Messiah during the riches and the treasures of Egypt. The reproaches of the coming Messiah.

The reproaches of the Messiah who is going to come through that enslaved nation. He had his eye upon the far distant future. He believed the promise that the seed was going to come.

That the seed of Abraham was coming. He had his eye on the future. But the nation as a whole saw very little prophetically, I take it, in these feasts.

They didn't realize that the Passover was going to have its fulfillment in the death of Christ. That that land was a foreshadowing of the land of God. And that Moses going to the Mount, they little realized that that was a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, going into the glory of God.

Not bringing down the law, but sending the Holy Spirit. They didn't realize that. Neither did they realize what is yet to take place.

That the trumpet on the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles have a future and a fulfillment yet in the day to come. Isaiah speaks about it. But I'm referring to it in this way, to these matters, because of this.

There are people who say today, because the Church Fathers did not see anything prophetic in the two chapters, Revelation 2 and 3, therefore we shouldn't say that there's anything prophetic in them either. We might as well have said that because the majority in Israel did not recognize anything prophetic in the Feasts of Leviticus 23, we should say, neither should we think there was anything prophetic in them either. But it's very clear that what was not evident in the early days of Israel's history became clear as the days passed.

And what we've got in Revelation 2 and 3 clearly veiled to the eyes of those who lived in post-apostolic days, is today in the light of history, quite evident that what we have in those letters was intended to be prophetic of the cross, of the witness, the church that was born down through the centuries. We read it in the light of history and I believe there's a comparison may be drawn between these two portions in that way. But not only were they prophetic, as well as commemorative.

Prophetic of the death of Christ and His exaltation and His coming again. Prophetic of the great four great facts that we have been looking at in our Bible reading. Facts that were referred to on Monday night here from Acts chapter 1 and Acts chapter 2 and we have seen in 1 Peter.

Christ dying. Christ rose again. Christ died, that's the Passover.

Christ rose again, that's the Sheep of Pursuit. Christ is exalted to heaven, that's the feast of the fiftieth day. Christ is coming back again.

These are the great facts of human history. Christ Himself, the great tempter, are the purposes of God. And all the purposes of God revolve around the person of Christ.

They all radiate from the person and the redemptive work of Christ. Whether in grace or in government or in glory, all the purposes of God find their center in Christ and His redemptive work. And so the apostle made these the great subject of his preaching.

And so in the epistles he weaves them right into the very warp and woof of his teaching. Not only are they the basic facts of history, the central facts of history, not only are they the basic facts of Christian doctrine, Christian revelation and of Christianity, they are the basic facts upon which all Christian doctrine is based. Christian teaching is founded upon these four facts.

But what about the practical character of these? Was there any practical purpose? I believe there was some very definite practical purpose. First, they were intended to be an education, a course of study, if you like, or they were intended to inculcate faith. That may sound strange when you are speaking about the law.

But think for a moment about some of the things we read. The Sabbath day shall be a Sabbath of rest. In yearning and in harvest thou shalt keep it.

They were not to work on the Sabbath day, either in the time of sowing or in the time of harvesting. Doubtless many would have been tempted to do so on occasion. And then they are told that all the male children were to go up to Jerusalem, up to the place where God eventually chose to place His name.

That meant all men between the ages of twenty and fifty leaving nobody at home but the old men. The great majority in this meeting, as I look at you this afternoon, would have had to stay at home, I suppose, most of us. Thank God there are a large number of younger ones here too.

The mothers would have been at home. The children would have been at home. And all the men away from home.

And they were away for a week. A week for the piece of unleavened bread. And they didn't go by helicopter or by any bus.

They walked so that it meant between two and three weeks for many during that time of the year. Time to go up, time to return. Seven days when they got there.

And the Lord said to them, Now I will see to it that nobody will look after, none of the enemies will ever attack your land while you are up attending to that which pertains to My glory. Was that a matter, easy matter for them? I assure you, I don't think it was. Not only so, when you come to Leviticus 25, it says in the seventh year you are not to sow and you are not to reap that which grows of itself.

You are not to pluck the grapes from the vine undread. It's going to be a Sabbath of rest for you. And I'll give you enough in the sixth year to tide you over right up until the ninth year.

Enough for the tenth year and enough for the eighth year so that by the time you harvest the crop for the eighth year I will have everything. I'll have enough for you in the sixth year to tide you right over until then. I suggest to you that that was a tremendous lesson in the path of confidence in God.

Faith in God. Of course, missionaries are supposed to have faith in God and they need to. Oh yes, they need to very much.

And pity the man who goes if he hasn't got it. Pity the man who doesn't know something of confidence in God. Real confidence for they will be tested.

No servant of God has ever gone to any land independent upon himself without that faith being tested. Faith that is not tested is not genuine faith. A non-tested faith is not genuine.

God always tests faith. One tempted to give some experiences but I must. But every missionary, every servant of God, not only abroad but at home.

I remember the late brother John Hutchinson we shared experiences many years ago at London Dairy. I was telling him some of mine and he was beginning to tell me some of his. And he had to take his child, his daughter, into Belfast for the hospital.

That Saturday. And he didn't have anything. The Lord gave him a word.

The Almighty shall be thy reward and thou shalt have plenty of silver. And he wondered how this was going to take place. He went out.

Presently word was sent for him. And a farmer brother came in. He said, I hear you're going into Belfast today.

He said, yes. Would you please, here's an envelope. Will you please give it to brother so and so? Yes.

Here's another envelope. Will you see brother so and so? Would you try and see him? Yes. Be glad to.

Will you please give this to him? And three or four of them like that. And then he said, now here's a bag of silver that I've got. You can make use of that.

And very literally, God fulfilled it to him. And there are some portions of the word of God that will live in my memory, I trust. As long as I have it.

Portions that I never knew, hardly knew were in the word of God because God made them real in the time of testing and pain. When before God many, many years ago, the scripture came, God hangeth the earth upon nothing. God hangeth the earth upon nothing.

If he can fling a world out into space and keep it travelling in its orbit, he can fling his servant out and keep them going without any visible means of support. God is a living God. This is the lesson, the first lesson that God intended his people to learn.

God into their daily life. I was telling them over in Newcastle the other night about a brother. He and his brother were the grandsons of a very well-known Christian.

Very well-known servant of God. But their father had broken out to the family and said, no, he wasn't going to have anything with the things of God. And the boys were brought up totally ungodly.

No thought of God or anything else. No Sunday school. But God in his grace and mercy came in and saved those two young men about the same time.

If not the same time. The wife of one of them rebelled tremendously. The wife of one was very keen as a believer.

She was saved at the same time. The other wife, the younger brother's wife, she was rebellious. She would have nothing to do with this Christianity.

Absolutely nothing to do with it. And her husband in order to try to placate her and try to save the family from ruin and division and separation, he went part of the way with her. He compromised a little for a while.

But still things weren't happy. He thought he'd meet her halfway. But she was rebellious.

She said to her father-in-law one day, you know, mentioning her husband by name, he said, he's got this religion, I think I'll have to leave it. Expect him to get comfort from it. He said, you can't change him now, you know.

And I've got to get that before I die. I'm the most uncomfortable and the poorest, unhappy man in the world. And he's got the right things.

And that set her thinking. She thought he would stand by her. She began inquiring, but still the battle went on.

Oh, how she fought. One day I was called up to the house to try and bring them together. Try and persuade her not to do what she said she was going to do.

We sat there for an hour or two. She said to him, right in front of me, she said, he's dull before, he's duller now. He wasn't a bit dull.

She said the most unkind things about him. And there he sat quietly listening to it all. Then she left him that night.

And the next day she went to see the doctor. And the poor husband, he didn't know just what to do. He looked for help.

So he told me, he said, what shall I do, Mr. Davis? Well, I said, go and see the doctor. See what she told him. So off he goes to see the doctor.

The doctor was a Jew. He had brought the girl into the world. He knew them, knew her from childhood.

He knew them when they got married. And he said to this young man, he said, you're a very different young man to the day when you came to see me at the time of your marriage. Oh yes, doctor, he said.

There's only one way I can explain it. God does come into my life. God does come into my life.

Life now is changed. God's in it. Now that's what we've got in these.

God was in the daily life. The practical issues of these feasts, one of the first practical issues of the feasts was this, that God was brought into the daily life of the people of God. But will it matter just for some special occasions? I know these were on special occasions.

But there's a great danger with us lest we relegate God to some special times and seasons. Priestly ministry to the breaking of bread, for instance. And if we do that, there'll be no priestly ministry at the breaking of bread.

If we know little of priesthood during the week, we'll know less of it at the breaking of bread, for we'll have absolutely nothing to bring. Oh, do not let us relegate things to special times like that. It may be the opportunity, a special opportunity for the exercise of it.

But do not let us limit it to these occasions, please. When they came, they were not to come empty. They were to bring the first board of beasts.

They were to bring their, their, the bullock was to come there. And they were not to, they were not to do anything with it. They were not to shear the sheep.

They were not to appear before the Lord empty. And their, their firstborn, if there was a family who had had a, a firstborn male, then they had to redeem that male. And the truth of redemption was being retold year by year in the families of Israel.

A lamb was to be slain for the firstborn of every family. You see how God repeated this one message, that they were to learn that they were a redeemed people. And they were to bring of that which God gave them.

They were to bring, it, this, this leads us to the second great lesson that they had to learn. Not only that it was to be a lesson in faith, but to be a tremendous, tremendous lesson in faithfulness to God. Faithfulness to God.

They paid dearly for not being faithful. When you read Leviticus 26, and turn over to Jeremiah, there we find that for 490 years, they never kept the sabbatic year. 490 years, no sabbatic year.

Ah, they said, that's too much altogether. One year in seven not to do anything? Not to reap anything in the seventh year, not to sow anything? No, no, that's far too much. Too much to expect us to do a thing like that.

So at the end of 490 years, they go down to Babylon for 70 years to pay up their back debts. God keeps accounts. But he may be a long time in asking for settling the accounts.

God waited for 490 years before he asked Israel to settle that account. The land rested for 70 years while they were in Babylon because of the unfaithfulness of the people of God for 490 years. All those who have been unfaithful died and passed away.

But their posterity suffered. Their posterity, their families in the years to come, they suffered. But faithfulness to God has its reward.

Now. And unfaithfulness now may be something for which our families may have to pay dearly in the coming days. Faith.

Unfaithfulness. Faith. Trusting in God to meet those needs.

Of course, we have it in the Sermon on the Mount. Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Obviously, that's New Testament.

Yes, it's New Testament. But you have it inculcated. You have it absolutely engraved into the Old Testament teachings.

God wanted his people to be a trusting people. To be a people that trusted him for all things material things. Material things.

Oh, I trust that we know something of a path of faith. Path of faith. That you walk by faith.

And we know something of the path of faithfulness. They were not, as I've said, to use the oxen. Not to shear the sheep.

Not to make any profit for themselves on that which they were going to give to the Lord. That was to be entirely for the Lord. Absolutely for the Lord.

I wonder what about our giving to the Lord. I make no apology for speaking about these things. Don't need to.

I think we need to apologize for not speaking about them sometimes. A recognition of our responsibility as stewards. As we were reading in Peter chapter 4. As stewards of the magnificent grace of God.

Stewards of the magnificent grace of God. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth. And there is that keepeth and yet extendeth to poverty.

Spiritual poverty. Little realization of our responsibility to God and His work and His people. Any man minister, let him do it out of the ability that God giveth.

If God is constantly any of us stewards, and every one of us to some extent are stewards of material things. Whether we are missionaries or preachers or whatever we may be. We are stewards of whatever the Lord giveth.

The Levite in the Old Testament didn't have any land from which he was to bring anything. But he had to give a tithe of what he received. He was a steward.

Steward of that which God gaveth. A word with regard to the last. There were intended to be occasions of fellowship.

Well did the Lord know how division was going to come in among God's people. Very shortly in the days of Joshua, the people on the wrong side of the river built a great altar to Cetus. Of course they didn't intend to offer sacrifices on it.

But there was something of the speed of division even there. When you come down to Judges, there we've got the envy of Ephraim. Of course, Ephraim was the tribe from which Joshua came.

And Joshua was the leader. And now God raises Gideon from the tribe of Manasseh. Oh, says the tribe of Ephraim, that's not right.

Anyway, passing by Ephraim to the little tribe of Manasseh and raising up Gideon from the tribe of Manasseh passing by Ephraim. Oh, Ephraim couldn't stand that. That envy.

And that's at the root bottom of the division of the ten tribes. Envy. Later in the days of Jephthah, the tribe of Ephraim said, why don't you call us? And Gideon answered them very wisely.

Wise answer turned away wrong. But when he came to the second time, they didn't get such a wise answer. And there was strife then.

For envy will always breed strife. Where there is envy and strife has gained, there is every evil thing. One time in India, I had to go to a place where there was a new work which had had a little to do with its commencement.

And there was difficulty between brethren. And I read that verse in James on the way up somehow. And I got a shock as I read it.

I said, oh God, is this envy and strife? Is it in order to bring to light some darkness? Some hidden thing? Where there is envy and strife, there is every evil thing. That's only that which is on the surface. The envy of Ephraim, the strife of Ephraim.

Jeroboam was not an Ephrusite, he was an Ephraimite. Jeroboam, who was the king over the ten tribes, was an Ephraimite. And envy and strife led to division.

That's first Corinthians. Whereas there is among you envy and strife and division. The three generations, if you like.

I know the authority puts the three in the Revised Please One Us. But leave the three generations there. The old granny, envy.

And the mother, strife. And then the brood of division. Where did God know that this division would come in? And He intended that there should be a type of fellowship.

Something to keep God's people together. Something to encourage fellowship. God has intended His people to be in fellowship.

And fellowship with Himself. There was a basis for fellowship on each of these occasions. When they met together for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The one basis of their fellowship was that they all had a common redemption. They belonged to a people that had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. That was the initial basis of their holy convocation.

A redeemed people. There were other things, of course. I have no time to go into some of those in Exodus 13 and Numbers 9. With regard to detainment and what not.

But they are not the basis. They are the things which are, as it were, on the margin to deal with things later. The essential and absolute basis was this.

That they belonged to a redeemed people. When it comes to the Feast of Weeks, the essential basis of their holy convocation was this. They were all in covenant relationship with Jehovah.

They had all been the recipients of the law. Thank God we've got something more than that. There was their high and holy privilege.

Fellowship based upon the facts. That they were a people who had been brought into living fellowship with God when it comes to the Day of Atonement. Their fellowship was based upon the fact that they enjoyed a common reconciliation.

All enjoyed the value of the blood of the Day of Atonement when you come into the Feast of Harvest at the end. There is a special word there that says, O that are Israelite born! I love that word. O that are Israelite born! Born into the family of God.

Keeping the Feast, the holy convocation. God intends His people to enjoy fellowship. O, says Jeroboam, it's too much for you to go up into Jerusalem.

And he divided the people of God. O, may God in His grace and mercy teach us something of the practical value and purposes of these. Applying them to ourselves today.

If God in the days of shadows and sights taught His people the path of faith, how much more should we walk in a path of faith? If God taught His people then the necessity of faithfulness in material stewardship, how much more today should we, who have received such, received so bountifully from the hand of our great God. If God taught them the importance of fellowship, of holy convocation, God grant that we too may learn the value of Christian, true Christian fellowship. May God bless His work.

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