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|  | We’ve talked a lot about the first big problem of all humanity – sin leads to death. Tonight, we’ll discover the second big problem that all people face. |
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|  | You would think that, by now, Pharaoh would have learned his lesson. But God still has another purpose for him. Pharaoh gathers his most powerful military machines and pursues the Israelites (Exodus 14:5-7). As the Israelite people see the mighty army approaching, it is clear that they still don’t trust God (vs.10,11). But Moses tells them to be quiet and still – watch what God does next (vs. 13,14).  The Israelites could not save themselves. The sea was in front of them, mountains were around them, and their enemies were behind them. The Israelites had seen all the great and mighty things the Lord had done in Egypt, but they still did not trust in the Lord. Even though the Israelites sinned and did not trust in the Lord, He was merciful and planned to deliver them. It is the same with us. We cannot make things right between us and God by things we do. Only God can save us from everlasting punishment.  God told Moses to stretch out his rod over the water. The water separated (vs.21-22) so there was dry ground, and the children of Israel walked through the sea. When they Egyptians saw this, they started to cross the sea on the path of dry ground (Exodus 14:26-29). This was a bad decision on their part, and reminds us of the Egyptian command to throw all of the Hebrew babies into the river. Once again, Moses (and the people) are safely taken out of the water by the grace of God (vs.29-31), leading them to fear the Lord and put their trust in Him. At least, for a while… |
|  | Our last lesson ended with the Israelite people starting their journey away from Egypt after 400 years of national growth and enslavement. Remember the promise that God made to Moses in **Exodus 3:12 (OT96)** – “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”    In **Exodus 19:1-2 (OT123**), we see that 3 months had passed since the Israelites left Egypt. God led them, by a pillar of cloud and fire, to the Desert of Sinai and told them to camp in front of Mount Sinai, the place where God originally met with Moses. God fulfilled his promise to Moses, but notice that confirmation sometimes comes later in our Journey than we expect.    Even though God had been guiding the destiny the nation of Israel, they had not yet had a personal experience with Him. That was about to change. In **Exodus 19:3-6**, God describes His covenant with the people of Israel. According to verse 5, what did they have to do in order to be His “treasured possession,” a holy kingdom of priests? In **verses 7,8**, how did they respond? What does a priest do? (a priest brings people to God)  Three days later, the people approach the burning, shaking mountain (**Exodus 19:16-19**). It is not surprising that the people were frightened when God spoke to them. The lightning, fire, thick cloud, and earthquake did not only show the Israelites that God is powerful and deserves respect, but that He hates and punishes all sin. Fear is a reasonable response to God, especially when we have a clear view of our sin (Hebrews 10:31 NT). |
|  | Here is an important reality: we are *much* worse than we think. To help the people see this, God gave them (and us) a sample of the “entrance exam” for heaven. They were about to stand before the mirror of God’s Word and see their guilt, “written on their faces.” He starts by proclaiming His authority over them (and all mankind) in ***Exodus 20:1-2.***  ***The First Commandment –*** God begins with the first commandment broken by men. In the garden, they abandoned Him and sought to be their own God. Ever since that day, we have all tried to take the place of God, determining our own purpose for life, defining our own rules of right/wrong, and trying to save ourselves by fulfilling our own dreams. Is there anyone who has kept this command, always recognizing that the true God is Lord of all (including us)?  ***The Second Commandment -*** The word “worship” comes from two words: “worth” and “ship.” We worship something when we assign a very high level of “worth” to it. Here is a fact of life: we all worship something – we all worship “smaller gods.” Here is the test – is there anything or anyone that is more important to me than the true God? Have I taken “good” things like career, material possessions, and family, and turned them into “ultimate” things, seeking significance, security, safety and fulfillment in them?    If you look carefully, you will find that our objects of worship are based on our greatest fears. If we fear failure, we worship success. If we fear loneliness, we worship relationships. If we fear poverty, we worship money. In fact, most of us have created a false “mental image” of God (a mental idol), a small, weak creature unworthy of fear.  ***The Third Commandment -*** Although this includes saying the name of God as a curse (e.g. “OMG”), it goes much further. God is our creator and provider, and when we complain against Him, we are speaking falsely about His great name. Conversely, when we do not speak His name with thanksgiving (**Colossians 3:17**), we break this command as well (even in our heart).  ***The Fourth Commandment -*** In our busy world, do we regularly set aside a significant amount of time to regularly seek and worship God? God made us and knows what’s best, so he gave us this structure for blessing and freedom. Yet, we spend our time working hard and burning out in pursuit of things that quickly fade away. |
|  | ***The Fifth Commandment -***Not just obey – honor them. Have you ever complained against your parents?    ***The Sixth Commandment -***  Maybe Moses shook when he heard this one (he was a murderer). You might be thinking, “Finally, here is one that I haven’t broken!” But Jesus reminds us of something important – God knows and cares about what is in your heart. It’s not just our actions: everyone who has ever been angry has broken this command (**Matthew 5:22**).    ***The Seventh Commandment -***God created sex for a wonderful purpose (in the context of marriage). It is a holy and beautiful thing, but we have turned it into an unholy way to satisfy our physical and mental lust (**Matt 5:28**).  ***The Eighth Commandment -***We are all thieves, starting from when we were small children taking toys from other children. We grow up and take bigger things, physical and virtual. We download pirated software and music, we steal time from others, and we copy the work of others and claim credit for ourselves. Why do we steal? Because we do not trust and believe God’s promise that He will provide for our needs (like the Israelites).    ***The Ninth Commandment -*** God hates lying (**Revelation 22:15)**. Whenever we lie, it reminds us who we are – children of “the father of lies” – Satan (**John 8:44**).  ***The Tenth Commandment -*** Have you ever thought something like this: “If only I had \_\_\_\_\_\_, I would be more successful and satisfied.” When we strongly desire something that someone else has and are not satisfied with what God has given to us, we are basically showing that we do not trust Him. This 10th commandment exposes the fruit of our failure to obey the 1st one. Our biggest problem is not only our bad behavior – it is our bad belief. |
|  | So, we just took God’s entrance exam for heaven. How did you do? By the way, the “passing score” is very high – 100% (Matthew 5:48). If you miss just one, you fail (**James 2:10).** And by the way, ignorance is no excuse (**Leviticus 5:17**).  If we are honest with ourselves, the Ten Commandments are like a mirror for our soul (James 1:23-24) When we look at them, they show us our sin (Romans 3:19,20). We cannot keep them – but they serve a very important role: showing us how desperately we need a Savior! |
|  | When we break the laws of China, the Chinese government has the authority to punish us. They don’t ask us if we like the law or approve of it – we are not granted that privilege. Similarly, when we break the laws of God, He has the authority to punish us. The response of the people showed that they understood the seriousness of their problem (**Exodus 20:18-20**).    Sin is the word used by the Bible to breaking the laws of God. As you can see from these Ten Commandments, we can sin when we do the things that God tells us to avoid, or when we fail to do the things that He requires. Here is a very big problem for all of us: God has clearly spelled out His law, we have clearly broken His law, and we all must suffer the punishment for our sin.  At the beginning of these lessons, we said that we would be studying the foundational issues and main themes of the Bible. This is one of the wonderful things about the Bible: these main themes are consistent all the way through the Bible. The fact that God is holy and righteous and demands a high price for sin (death) is one of the foundational themes. |
|  | Sometimes, when we talk about something important that cannot be changed; we say that it is “carved in stone.” This phrase comes from what God did next – He carved these commandments in tablets of stone **(Exodus 24:12 OT133)**. Moses spent 40 days on the mountain receiving further instruction from God. During this time, the people grew impatient and unfaithful (**Exodus 31:18-32:4 OT146**). When Moses came and saw them breaking the law of God, his anger burned and he broke the stone tablets (**vs. 19, 20**). God punished them (**v.35**), but He was faithful to His covenant, leading them onward. |
|  | By now, you should have noticed that the entire human race is in trouble. We have two kinds of trouble:  Adam’s sin resulted in death. Death for Adam and death for all humans.  We have all broken the Ten Commandments and are guilty before God, deserving severe punishment (judicially, even if not sensed emotionally).    We have a problem – a big problem. Is there any hope for humanity? Is there any hope for you? When we read the Bible, we certainly see that there is “bad news” for all people here! And since God is a God of justice, how could He possibly forgive such sinful people? This week, think about these two big problems we each face: death and judgment. |