

"Is God at the Center of Our Lives?"

Numbers 28-29

As I've said many times, when we come to passages of Scripture that, at first, seem to be repetitive or irrelevant, we always have to remind ourselves of 2 Tim. 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the [child] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Numbers 28-29 describes the sacrifices God would require from His people when they would get into the land of Canaan. While we are not required to follow the sacrificial system since Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic covenant (but not the complete Old Testament yet) by becoming the perfect sacrifice, there are many principles through the sacrifices that God was showing Israel (and us today) how to worship Him. If we think a passage is irrelevant, correct yourself with 2 Tim. 3:16-17, reassuring yourself that through the Holy Spirit, God's Word is profitable and will train us spiritually.

Another good passage to go to as well is Is. 55:10-11

¹⁰ *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Num. 28-29 are God's Words. He is sending it to us this morning to achieve His purposes of edification, correction and training if we open our eyes to see. Which is how we should pray for difficult passages. Ps. 119:18 helps us,

¹⁸ *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law*

God was preparing Israel before they go into the land. Here He goes over the daily, weekly, and monthly sacrificial system as well as the holy day schedule for the year. Much of this was given to the first generation in Lev. 23. All these sacrifices on regular days and special days were God's way of saying your life should revolve around Me. And that principle shines through here for all God's people:

Our Life Should Revolve Around God's Schedule **(28-29)**

Under the Mosaic Covenant, God instituted a system of daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices and gatherings that Israel was to follow. What this communicated was that

God wants to meet with His people consistently (28:1-15)

When God gave Moses the instructions for the Tabernacle, He explained to Moses its purpose in Ex. 29:42

"For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. There I will meet you and speak to you; 43 there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.

44 "So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. 45 Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. 46 They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

The phrase Tent of Meeting occurs over 120 times while the word Tabernacle occurs less than 90 times in Ex through Deut. God communicated through it He wants to meet with His people regularly. The priests offered two lambs every morning and evening as burnt offerings. Burnt offerings were completely burnt to God as a symbol of one's whole self being dedicated to God. This was God's way of reminding His people all the time (because it would take most of the day for the offering to burn) that He desired to meet with them and remind them He wants their 100% devotion.

Then there was the weekly Sabbath offering and the command to rest from work. Double up the lambs for the weekly Sabbath, when the people gathered for worship and instruction. And then the monthly sacrifices when the moon completely disappeared and then reappeared on its revolution around the earth. In the monthly offering the priests presented two bulls with 3/10 of an ephah (10-12 lbs.) of flour for each bull, one ram with 7lbs of flour and 7 lbs. of flour mixed with olive oil for each 7 lambs 3.5 lbs. of flour with oil, all to make sweet aroma to the Lord.

The Israelite's life was scheduled around God's instructions reminding them that He wants to meet with His people. And He still wants this from us too. To meet with God daily, God weekly and monthly for something extra. Whether we realize it or not, we kind of do this. We meet with Him daily on our own, weekly as a community and we add to our worship communion monthly.

This was God's way of reminding His people I want to meet with you regularly. Does that describe our routine? Do we schedule our week making sure we listen to God's Word daily and talk to Him in prayer? Do we look forward to and make sure we come together weekly as well as communion or other occasional times of fellowship that come up? Didn't these people work? Of course they did, six days a week. How do you think they raised livestock and grew grain and olives to get oil? There's always work. It never stops. That's why God commands us to stop and meet with Him before our day begins and even at the end of the day. To stop working once a week to meet with Him and His people. To take advantage of those extra gatherings as well.

Then there are holidays, which come from the phrase Holy Days. From 28:16 to 29:38 we read in order Israel's holiday schedule: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles. So God was saying I want to meet with you regularly and

He wants to meet with us for extended times (28:16-29:38)

The word holiday originates from Holy Days. Some of our holidays are rooted in Holy Days. We have Good Friday, Easter and Christmas; all days having to do with Jesus' birth, death and resurrection. Holy days were established by God to help God's people give extended time to meet with Him. The main point again is God desires to meet with His people. He arranges time to see that life is to be centered around Him, His people and His purposes. Daily, weekly, monthly and even extended times. What kind of extended times can we have with God?

You may go on a one day seminar, a weekend retreat, or a week-long conference, all extended times where we focus our attention on the Lord and His people. You might fast for a day or a weekend. Maybe there is a mini-retreat where you go for a hike in the woods to pray and read.

Maybe even visit historical biblical sites. Have we ever taken any kind of extended time to be with the Lord? This is what the holy days call God's people to. But the Holy Days were also a planned schedule by the Lord arranged around their agricultural season yet with spiritual reasons.

God's Calendar Teaches Us About God's Goodness **(28:16-29:40)**

God tells Moses to remind the people about the annual Holy days and feasts that were teaching tools to remind Israel who God is and what He had done for them and what He will do for them. Starting with the Passover in the spring (v. 16) with the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (17-25). Together these two holy days remind God's people of His

Salvation (28:16-24)

Passover was instituted at the 10th plague against Egypt in Ex. 12. The Passover celebration was a reminder of how God saved Israel from slavery. It was when He sent the angel of death to visit every Hebrew and Egyptian home. Only those homes who believed and obeyed God's Word to sacrifice a lamb and sprinkle its blood over the doorposts, would be spared the death of their firstborn child. God passed over those homes. At this point the Pharaoh told Israel to leave. God said don't wait for your bread to rise – go now! So they went hastily and by His ongoing presence (fire by night, cloud by day) He miraculously split the Red Sea and got them through on dry ground.

He saved them through the wilderness journey by feeding them manna each day and providing water (sometimes miraculously as needed). When they celebrated the Passover each year, they reviewed how God saved them.

The Israelites were then to count 50 days from the Day of First fruits which fell in Unleavened Bread. The Day of First fruits (not mentioned here) was when the first of your barley harvest began to come up. As a sign of trusting God for His

Provision (28:25-31)

You gave to the priests the first of your harvest, by faith, trusting God would provide the rest of the harvest. Which, 50 days later, you would come to the tabernacle/ temple and celebrate that God provided for your family.

Then in the fall, God commanded three feasts. First the Day of Trumpets, announcing that another year had passed and a new one begins. It was a celebration of God's

Faithfulness (29:1-6)

Who watched out for and provided for your family and met your needs for another year and you look forward to Him in faith doing it again. The Holy Days reminded Israel regularly about God's saving them, providing for them and faithfulness to them. He asked in return through sacrifices and observance of His holy days, to follow His ways and they will understand Him more.

The Day of Atonement is mentioned in 29:7-11 reminding His people's need for

Forgiveness (29:7-11)

⁷ “ ‘On the tenth day of this seventh month hold a sacred assembly. You must deny yourselves and do no work.

They denied themselves food by fasting and repenting of their sins. God instituted a day of forgiveness for the nation to cover all the sins committed over the course of the year. One male goat was offered as a sin offering while another goat (not mentioned here but in Lev. 16) was sent alive into the wilderness where it symbolically took away Israel's sins.

The last holy day was an 8-day-long celebration, thanking God for the end of the harvest season. It was the end of the agricultural season. It was a celebration that all their hard work was complete, they could rest and thank God. Not surprising, these 8 days were the most celebratory and required the most sacrifices as a big thank you to God. It symbolically taught them of our

Future Hope with God (29:12-38)

When God answered your prayers every year, as fall arrived, He would have supplied all your needs for the winter and now that He has you can rest from your labour.

These holidays were a spiritual teaching tool for future generations too as we see Jesus becomes the Passover lamb providing salvation. He is the unleavened bread of life who sacrifices Himself for us. He rises from the dead, becoming the first fruits of the resurrection. 50 days later a harvest of believers gets saved at Pentecost. The spring feasts foreshadow Jesus' first coming while the fall feasts foreshadow Israel's complete forgiveness and entering their land in peace and rest when Jesus returns.

This is what the apostle Paul pointed out in ...

Col. 2:16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The author of Hebrews explains that the first covenant which refers to the Mosaic Covenant – the Law – with all its sacrifices, foreshadowed Jesus as well.

Heb. 9:8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. ¹¹ When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! ¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

The apostles and NT writers affirm the purpose of the Law was to point us to Christ. So then, what principles do these laws in Num. 28-29 have for us today to live for Christ?

Worship and Rest Help Us Grow Spiritually

When God's people center their lives around God's schedule of worship and rest we will grow closer to God and become more like Him. The holy days, sacrifices and commands all teach us about how God wants to watch over our life and meet our needs. And we learn that through walking in fellowship with Him and each other daily, monthly, yearly. This is all about worshipping God. What is worship?

Worship is honouring God and dying to self

Every time you came to honour God, you came with a sacrifice. Every time you came to God, something died in your place. It reminded you of sin's cost. God's schedule reminds us that life doesn't revolve around our work schedule, our children's schedule or our entertainment schedule. Our life should revolve around daily, weekly and monthly meetings with God. To honour Him for giving us life, providing us with families, thanking Him for saving us through Jesus and teaching us that choosing Him over ourselves will result in a better life. Eleven times we read that following God's sacrificial schedule resulted in an aroma pleasing to Him. It's a word picture. God wanted animals without defect, the finest flour, specific measurements of grain and oil. When you follow God's recipe properly, He senses this and is pleased. That includes us doing it from the heart. Because God is not fooled if we do it worship Him heartlessly. Listen to what He said in Amos' day

²¹ "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

God communicates satisfaction and dissatisfaction through the imagery of our senses. When we go through the motions and our hearts are not in it, He smells that something is off. We haven't put Him first; we haven't humbled ourselves and therefore we haven't really honoured Him.

Giving is trusting God with our income

One commentator added up all these sacrifices. 113 bulls, 32 rams and 1086 lambs were offered as sacrifices. More than a ton of flour and the equivalent of 1000 bottles of oil. Their income was primarily measured in livestock, grain and olive oil. When they gave away animals, grain and oil, it cost them. It meant trusting God to provide for their needs as they sacrificed to Him. A great principle for us too.

In Philippians 4 the apostle Paul commends the church for supplying what he needed with sacrificial language

^{4:18} I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

When we give it is an act of faith to trust God to provide for our needs as we provide for the needs of people & ministry

Whenever the Holy days came, it also meant resting from work. As exciting as that sounds, many of us struggle to rest. 'I have to work Sundays, ' we sometimes tell ourselves; otherwise I won't get ahead. Remember, the result of the fall in the Garden of Eden is that work would become toilsome. So God put in His schedule for us, a day of rest, to remind us we can't get ahead. We can't

get ahead because of sin's consequences. To ignore God's command to rest is to live as if sin's consequences don't exist for you.

Resting = believing God's promises

To meet our needs for tomorrow. When we keep working we think we alone have to provide for our needs. Jesus said in Matt. 6:31-34

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

When we worry about what shall we eat, drink or wear, we're worrying about tomorrow. We work when we're not supposed to so we can get to the tomorrow we're worrying about. But God tells us in Lam. 3:22-27

²² Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." ²⁵ The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; ²⁶ it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

When we rest when God says to rest, we believe by faith that tomorrow's needs will be met. That the mercies I need for tomorrow will not come today; they'll come tomorrow when I will need them. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord – here, salvation refers to the deliverance from your present difficulties.

God gave Israel a schedule to run their lives on. It centered around Him because it taught them that God saves you by His grace, He sustains you and provides for you today and tomorrow and our future hope is secure in Him. Worship Him daily in a way that smells good to Him. Honour Him, thank Him, rest in Him and enjoy the life He's given you.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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