



*"...The heart of the sons of men
is full of evil,
and madness is in their heart
while they live..."
(Ecclesiastes 9:3)*

*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before the high God?
He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God?
(Micah 6:6,8)*

homily series

the righteousness of being woke:
resisting the un-biblical anti-woke heresy

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the righteousness of being woke: resisting the un-biblical anti-woke heresy
part 1

deuteronomy 4.⁹

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life...

This homily serves as introduction to this series of homilies entitled, “The Righteousness of being Woke: Resisting the Un-biblical Anti-woke Heresy.”¹

These days, it is fashionable on America’s political and cultural right to complain about and rage against what it calls “wokeness,” or “woke culture” —as if sleeping and slumbering are somehow preferable to being awake! It is bizarre. And this is really saying something about a political and cultural movement that is increasing drunken with and addicted to the most bizarre and easily refuted conspiracy theories in America’s long history of infatuation with conspiracy theories.

Challenged by and fearful of ideas and individuals that they cannot understand and will not countenance, those on America’s political and cultural right use “woke” as its latest catch-all pejorative for the political left and its defense of those very ideas and individuals that the right finds so challenging and fear-inducing. Nevertheless, those on the right seem often to struggle to clearly define, explain, or articulate the meaning of the political and cultural phenomena that they so fear and loath.

But the word, “woke,” as used in a political and cultural setting is easy to understand and explain. “Woke,” as a political and cultural phenomenon has a nearly hundred-year history. For

¹ The other homilies examine the subject in light of Exodus 13.³⁻¹⁰, Deuteronomy 6.²⁰⁻²³, and Luke 22.¹⁹⁻²⁰.

most of that history it existed in obscurity. For most of its long and rather silent history, “woke” indicated the awareness and acknowledgement of the oppressive racism, with its injustices and violence, that America has practiced against African Americans from its inception. This oppressive racism is an established and irrefutable fact. Indeed, it is “truth,” for “truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come,”² or, “things as they *really* are, and... *really* will be.”³ Truth suffers no delusion, no matter how good it *feels*—feelings being the new American standard for identifying truth.

Anyway, the Black Lives Matter movement resurrected the term from its obscurity and expanded the meaning to include not only awareness and acknowledgement of racist oppression, but resistance to it as well. More recently “woke” awareness has expanded to include past and present injustices and wrongs committed against other vulnerable groups such as women and the LBGTQ community.

To be “woke,” then, is to remember, first, then to resist, and finally to call for reform and repentance of social injustices and wrongs committed against individuals or groups—in America’s case, African Americans, women, and LBGTQ, past and present, have been particularly vulnerable to injustice and oppression. Therefore, in using the term in a pejorative manner, America’s political and cultural right confesses, unbeknownst to itself, its preference for forgetfulness, ignorance, and sin. To be anti-woke represents the rejection of truth and the refusal to engage in the process of repentance, reform, and renewal. It calls for spiritual sleepiness and slumber. It is nocturnal, a creature of the night, an inhabitant of dark places. In willfully avoiding the light of day, its slumber is the sleep of hell.

One of the foundational tenets of this right-wing anti-woke heresy involves America’s history with slavery and racism. There is an attempt on the part of the slumbering right to deny this history; to deny the wrongs African Americans have and do endure; and to deny that much of America’s “greatness” was built on the back of those who were immorally enslaved to serve as free and forced labor. More, the sleep walking right wishes to forget and deny present racism and

² DC 93.²⁴

³ Jacob 4.¹³

its deleterious, and sometimes murderous effects upon its targets. The movement wishes to remove such truths from school curriculums and public discourse. It wishes to keep our children asleep, forgetful, ignorant, wicked.

All of this, one suspects, it does in order to maintain an unjust system in service to the delusion of ungodly white supremacy or to maintain America's race-based caste system that has dominated America from its inception. In so doing, it becomes the defender of injustice, violence, and oppression—not only of African Americans, but of all vulnerable groups. America's anti-woke mob seeks to continue oppression. It is an oppressor.

While most of those who complain loudly of “wokeness” are undisciplined in their rage, tragically, there are some, like Florida's DeSantis, who, more wickedly crafty than most, cynically seek personal and political gain by further enflaming and manipulating the frenzied and fearful anti-woke or slumbering mind—often making appeal to those deemed more reasonable by dressing up the hateful anti-woke heresy in the language of “parental rights” and other pleasant sounding lies.

Whether wielded in an undisciplined or in a cynical and crafty way, the anti-woke heresy is dangerous to society and the soul of its people. It must be challenged, resisted, and overcome. In this series of homilies, we resist the aspect of the anti-woke heresy that challenges the remembrance of America's historical and systemic oppression of African Americans—though its message applies to all forms of injustice, violence, and oppression. We resist the anti-woke heresy with the Bible—a Book that so many anti-woke heretics claim to know and love. It is yet one more of many sad commentaries on American Christianity that so many who claim the title, “Christian” have passionately adopted the hateful anti-woke heresy that is so incompatible with the Bible.

For, make no mistake about it. The anti-woke heresy that seeks to forget America's past wrongs and ignore America's present injustices against African Americans is decidedly at odds with the Bible. It is, in fact, about as unbiblical as unbiblical can get. To forget and ignore social injustice is antithetical to every Biblical and Christian principle. It is utterly un-Christian. If it is un-

American to remember our own or any oppressive past or ignore our own or any oppressive present, then to be American is to be unbiblical and un-Christian.

We will begin this series of homilies and our resistance of the anti-woke movement's slumbering denial and forgetfulness of America's oppressive history toward African Americans with a story that is familiar to all of us: the story of Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage. The story is a staple of western culture. It is the central story of the Hebrew Bible. The story's point is central to not only the Hebrew Bible, but the Christian Bible as well. It is the central point of Christian doctrine. To wit:

God is a Savior, a Redeemer, a Rescuer, a Liberator, an Emancipator. This reality is more than central to the Biblical witness, it is central to the Divine Character. But, for every Savior, Redeemer, Rescuer, Liberator, and Emancipator, there is an enslaver, an oppressor that must be humbled, resisted, defeated, halted and, where necessary due to the continued and obstinate hardness of heart, annihilated. The two messages—liberator and oppressor—go together, hand in glove, one the context for the other. One cannot remember one without remembering the other. Nor should one. The remembrance of salvation and liberation without a thorough understanding and remembrance of what it is one is saved and liberated from is meaningless and nonsensical on its face.

Here, I recall something that the great Colonial era preacher, Solomon Stoddard, observed.

“Men must be led into the Understanding of the badness of their Hearts and the strictness of the Law, before they will be convinced of the Preciousness of Christ.”⁴

The battle over wakefulness or slumber in matters related to social justice has a very long history, pre-dating, even, America's existence. Israel's God and King knew of the existence and insistence of forgetfulness. So, in his wisdom, and while Israel was still little more than a rag-tag collection of Bedouin preparing to enter a more populated region later to be called Israel, God warned those whom he had brought out of oppression,

⁴ *Seasons of Refreshing*, Keith J. Hardman, p. 45.

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life...”

America’s re-branded dalliance with forgetfulness and ignorance, then, is not new or unanticipated. Forgetfulness and ignorance are exactly what one expects of and gets from every oppressor. In its wish to oppress and keep oppression from coming to light, America’s right imitates the great oppressors of the Hebrew Bible, especially Egypt, as we will see in the following homilies.

But Israel, the victim of Egyptian oppression with its attendant injustices and violence was called out of its oppression to stand against all forms of injustice. The first step of this resistance was the remembrance, awareness, and acknowledgement of injustice, violence, and oppression. Israel was never to forget, sleep, or slumber in relation to its own oppression. It was to remain awake to the possibility of newer occurrences of oppression of yet newer vulnerable groups. It was always to remember. It was never to forget. Israel was, then, to be and remain “woke.” The laws and ordinances that God gave to Israel were intended as a safeguard against falling asleep to oppression and thus becoming the next in history’s long line of oppressors.

Like ancient Israel, African-Americans are called to woke remembrance of their oppression. Their remembrance is righteous. Their call to America to woke remembrance of its own wrongs against African-Americans is righteous. Americans are called away from forgetfulness. They are called to wokeness. They are called to woke remembrance. This series of homilies lends but one more voice to that call.

It should be understood that this call to woke remembrance is not simply a matter of reviewing history. It is not even simply a matter of righting past wrongs. Rather, America’s call to woke remembrance is a call to imagine, initiate, and maintain a more just society in the present and in the future. America’s future depends on woke remembrance of and repentance for injustice, violence, and oppression, past and present.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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Exodus 13.³⁻¹⁰

³“And Moses said unto the people, “Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. ⁴This day came ye out in the month Abib.

⁵“And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

⁶Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord.

⁷Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

⁸“And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. ⁹And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. ¹⁰Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.””

Introduction

In our introductory homily on this series entitled, “The Righteousness of Being Woke: Resisting the Un-biblical Anti-woke Heresy,” we strongly asserted that the American Right’s anti-woke heresy is un-biblical and contrary to biblical and Christian principles and virtues. This is so when it comes to the Right’s rejection of America’s past and present unjust actions and policies—especially its institutional racist past and present and its demand that this past and present racism be suppressed in our national shared memory and in the education of our nation’s citizenry, especially our children, the nation’s future citizenry.

In this second homily in the series, we have a look at a biblical example of extreme and

unrelenting wokeness.¹

Woke remembrance: a godly, foundational, and eternal principle

The first thing we note in today's passage is that the woke remembrance of Israel's oppression at the hands of the Egyptian superpower and of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from that oppression was one that Yahweh commanded.

“Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage...”

The Bible envisions the woke remembrance of oppression and emancipation as a righteous and essential element of worship and morality. It is of God. It is godly. As we will see, this necessity for woke remembrance is less about the historical past and more about a just and ethical future freed from the past's oppressive errors.

The second thing we note is that the command for woke remembrance of Israel's oppression at the hands of the Egyptian superpower and of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from that oppression was issued even before Israel experienced emancipation from the oppression. Surely, this is indicative of the priority God placed on woke remembrance of Israel's oppression and Yahweh's deliverance.

Third, we note that woke remembrance of oppression and emancipation was incumbent upon Israel long after the events.

“Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.”

Even when things were later going well and Israel was happily dwelling in and enjoying “a land flowing with milk and honey,” the nation was to engage in woke remembrance of past

¹ The other homilies examine the subject in light of Deuteronomy 4.⁹; Deuteronomy 6.²⁰⁻²³, and Luke 22.¹⁹⁻²⁰.

oppression and emancipation. The stipulation that Israel was to engage in woke remembrance of past oppression and emancipation as an ordinance conducted “from year to year” is repeated elsewhere.

“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night... seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.”²

Indeed, the inspired record stipulates that this woke remembrance, observed “from year to year” and “all the days of thy life,” was to extend to perpetuity.

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; *ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.*”³

So, woke remembrance of past oppression and emancipation was a commandment of God. It was foundational to the establishment of Israel as either religion or state. Woke remembrance was to extend to perpetuity. Woke remembrance *is* eternal.

The object of woke remembrance

We have spoken repeatedly of woke remembrance in relation to Israel’s oppression in Egypt and God’s emancipation of the nation from that oppression. But what, exactly, was to be remembered? Some might want to claim that the remembrance was of Yahweh’s emancipation, not the oppression from which Israel was emancipated. But this is *prima facie* nonsensical.

² Deuteronomy 16.^{1,3}

³ Exodus 12.¹⁴

“Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, *out of the house of bondage*; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place.”

One cannot rip emancipation from its context of oppression. And so, along with the woke remembrance of Yahweh’s “strength of hand,” Israel remembered “the house of bondage” itself. Indeed, the sacred texts keeps Israel’s experiences in “the house of bondage” alive in its national memory.

“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, ‘Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply,⁴ and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.’

Therefore *they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens*. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses⁵... And *the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage*, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein *they made them serve, was with rigour.*”⁶

“From year to year” and “all the days of thy life” Israel has for some three thousand years kept the memory of its oppression alive, nowhere more so than during Passover. During this “ordinance” the people remember their oppression and God’s response to it.

“And the Lord said, *I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows...* Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and *I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.*”⁷

⁴ Here we hear the Egyptian version of “replacement theory,” and see the word of God reveal it as evil; justification for evil perpetrated against “foreign” influences.

⁵ Here we see the use of free and forced labor and the increased profits they are meant to achieve.

⁶ Exodus 1.^{8-11, 13-14}

⁷ Exodus 3.^{7,9}

“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and *the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage*, and they cried, and *their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage*. And *God heard their groaning*, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”⁸

This is some major, radical, concentrated, and unrelenting wokeness. America’s woke remembrance of African American oppression, humble as that remembrance is, seems pathetic by comparison. We can have little doubt that Egyptians, like America’s anti-woke heretics, complained about this “unholy wokeness”: “Oh come on! It’s been three thousand years already. Give it up! Stop talking about it. Forget the past. Live in the present.”

But, we maintain, a God woke to injustice, violence, and oppression, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, demands of His people woke remembrance of injustice, violence, and oppression. So it was. So it has been. So it always will be.

Conclusion

In calling Israel to carry the message of Himself, His character, and His values to the world, God called Israel to woke remembrance of its oppression at the hands of Egypt and His emancipation from that oppression. Israel was commanded to engage in woke remembrance of *both* oppression and the emancipation. There could be no disconnecting the latter from the former. God extended this call to woke remembrance even as the oppression continued and before the emancipation was accomplished. Work remembrance was foundational to the fledgling nation’s constitution. Israelites were to remain in woke remembrance in their private lives and in their public lives through ordinances such as Passover. This woke remembrance was to be “from year to year,” “all the days of thy life;” “an ordinance for ever.”

⁸ Exodus 2.²³⁻²⁴

But, as we have suggested, this woke remembrance of oppression and emancipation was and is not a matter of historical antiquarianism. Rather, it is about the present and the future, as we will see in the next homily. A present and future devoid of injustice, violence, and oppression requires the woke memories of past injustice, violence, and oppression. Without the woke memory, injustice, violence, and oppression continues, often, unrecognized, and unimpeded. Such ignorance and immorality can only lead to the same tragic consequences that the ancient superpower, Egypt, experienced.

Let American, then, take heed. Let the skeptics of woke remembrance repent of their hard-heartedness and unbiblical disbelief, lest a worse thing come unto [them].”⁹

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

⁹ See John. 5.¹⁴

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deuteronomy 6.²⁰⁻²³

²⁰And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, “What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you?” ²¹Then thou shalt say unto thy son, “We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: ²²and the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: ²³and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.

Introduction

In our first two homilies in this series entitled, “The Righteousness of Being Woke: Resisting the Un-biblical Anti-woke Heresy,” we have strongly asserted and attempted to demonstrate that in calling Israel as His servant to the world, God called Israel to woke remembrance of the oppression it suffered at the hands of the Egyptians and of the emancipation from that oppression Yahweh accomplished.¹ God issued this call to woke remembrance even before He had accomplished his emancipation. In the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Israel was to every year dedicate several weeks to woke remembrance of its oppression and emancipation. As part of this feast, Israel was to celebrate the ordinance of Passover. This feast and ordinance, along with their remembrances, were to extend into perpetuity—“for ever.”

On its very face, it would be nonsensical to maintain that Israel was to make remembrance of God’s emancipation, not the Egyptian oppression from which Israel was emancipated. To remember one without the other would be like discussing one’s rescue from a burning house without ever remembering or mentioning the fact that the house was in flames. If one is

¹ The two proceeding homilies examined the subject in light of Deuteronomy 4.⁹ and Exodus 13.³⁻¹⁰. The final homily will examine it in light of Luke 22.¹⁹⁻²⁰.

rescued, they are rescued *from* something. That something from which one is rescued is an integral part of the story and is remembered and discussed right alongside any remembrance and discussion of the rescue. The two—Israel’s oppression under Egyptian tyranny and its emancipation through the outstretched arm of God—go together, hand in glove.

But we need not rely alone on simple, *prima facie* logic to understand that God demanded that Israel remember its oppression along with its emancipation. Nearly everything that God asked of Israel, nearly every commandment that he gave them, had as its acknowledged preamble the injustice, the violence, and the oppression that the nation had experienced in Egypt. Here, we offer a few examples of the woke remembrance that was at the very heart of Israel’s relationship with God and, indeed, influenced every human relationship.

Before doing so, however, we wish to remind the reader that in exploring Israel’s call to woke remembrance, we do more than examine history or explore ancient Israelite religion and modern Bible theology. We are attempting to address real and present issues facing America as it contemplates its future and what kind of nation it will be. America has always prided itself as a “city on a hill,” an example to the world, a nation beloved of God. If America truly wishes to be a nation that God honors and sustains, it must follow Israel’s example of woke remembrance. It was the apostle Paul who, reviewing the history of ancient Israel, reminded early Christians of scripture’s value and pertinence to life.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”²

America must accept the divine call to the same woke remembrance of injustice, violence, and oppression that Israel received. America’s called to woke remembrance, however, is not that of a past nation and the oppression it suffered, but of the injustices, violence, and oppression that it, itself, has committed against vulnerable populations (we are focusing on this series of homilies on America’s oppression of African-Americans, but remembrance and its attendant repentance of oppression toward other populations are also needed and

² 1 Corinthians 10.¹¹

necessary if our national future is to be secure and enduring).

Woke remembrance: foundational to divine stipulations—debt cancellation

We have discussed elsewhere in both meditation and homily the remarkable demand God made of Israel to engage in compassionate and dedicated service to the poor, including the use of periodic debt relief and debt cancellation measures utilized to address poverty and check aristocratic abuse, influence, and power (the fact that loans were to be granted interest free has been taken up elsewhere as well).

“At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord’s release.”³

God is not stupid. He knows the heart of humankind and how difficult this could be. Indeed, my own conversations with economist and non-economist friends alike have served as proof of the difficulty of this stipulation and the hollowness of arguments against such policies. So, having given the stipulation, God issued this warning.

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand;’ and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord

³Deuteronomy 15.¹⁻². We will gladly stipulate that debt was likely not utilized and viewed the same in ancient Israelite society as it is in today’s modern western society. Nevertheless, we maintain that principles can be drawn from the ancient stipulations that can be applied to modern society. We have discussed these principles elsewhere.

thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.’”⁴

In the same breath that God issued this stipulation concerning the willing and periodic cancellation of debt, he issued a stipulation concerning the cancellation/ release of slavery. Putting the two together in such tight literary association demonstrates, it seems to me, how closely God associates debt with slavery.

“And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.”⁵

Having issued these two stipulations back-to-back, God then issued this reminder.

“And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee...” (Dt. 15.¹⁵).

Then, we have this important conclusion: “*therefore* I command thee this thing to day.”⁶

We must note that “this thing” refers to the two related stipulations concerning the cancellation of debt and slavery that were to take place every seven years. The conjunction, “therefore,” identifies the reason or purpose for the stipulations. “For this reason, because of this, I command thee this thing.” Israel was commanded to cancel debt and slavery because of their experience of servitude in Egypt. They knew what it was like to be under the thumb of an oppressor. They knew how painful and gulling and stressful injustice, violence, and

⁴ Deuteronomy 15.⁵⁻¹¹

⁵ Deuteronomy 15:¹²⁻¹⁴

⁶ Deuteronomy 15.¹⁵

oppression was. They were to remember their oppression and never, ever, do anything that might cause another human being to feel under their power what Israel felt under Egyptian power.

Thus, we see, as we have repeated several times in these homilies, that Israel's call to woke remembrance was less about the past, less about history, and more about the present and the future. Israel's woke remembrance served to end the errors of the past and create a happier, freer, more just present and future.⁷ The Lord's stipulations served to keep Israel from becoming Egyptian-like in its actions and impact on others—citizens and noncitizens alike.

Woke remembrance: foundational to divine stipulations—treatment of resident aliens

We find another example of woke remembrance as a means of controlling and directing private behavior and public policy in its stipulation concerning the treatment of resident aliens.

“And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”⁸

Israel knew what it was like to be a resident alien in a foreign country. The oppressiveness of its sojourn in Egypt remained at the heart of their national memory. Israel knew from personal and national experience how vulnerable such individuals and populations were. Indeed, the Psalmist spoke eloquently of the challenge of being made to feel unwelcomed and unwanted and of not belonging in a foreign land.

⁷ One can hope that those who today spout anti-woke heresies do not, themselves understand this present and future-looking aspect of “woke” remembrance. For, if they do understand it, then we must conclude that they use their anti-woke heresy to slyly justify and maintain in the present and into the future forms of oppression—similar to or even worse than those of the past.

⁸ Leviticus 19.³³⁻³⁴

I was in despair because I lived, an alien, in Mešek;
I lived a transient life in Qêdâr.
Many a year did I live
among them who distained peaceful coexistence—
though I spoke up for camaraderie,
they remained antagonistic.”⁹

Israel was to remember such feelings and the wrongs suffered as they lived as resident aliens in Egypt. The nation’s woke remembrance of their own vulnerabilities in Egypt (and elsewhere) were intended to keep them from doing to resident aliens living among them as they had had done to them in Egypt. Once more, we see the importance of woke remembrance. We see that woke remembrance was as much about the present and the future as it was about the past. It was a mechanism God used to keep the nation moral and ethical in its treatment of others.

Woke remembrance: foundational to divine stipulations—the sabbath

Many might see Israel’s over three thousand years of sabbath day observance and find in it the ultimate sign of the nation’s intense and enduring faithfulness to God. Here is the well-known stipulation as found in Deuteronomy.

“Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.”¹⁰

⁹ Psalm 120.⁵⁻⁷

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 5.¹²⁻¹⁴

And then this (unfortunately) lesser-known follow-up.

“And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”¹¹

We have highlighted two very important phrases. First, in keeping the sabbath day, Israel was to remember its servitude in Egypt. Why? What was the relationship between their past Egyptian oppression and their present and persistent observance of the sabbath? Second, it is precisely because of Israel’s servitude in Egypt and the Lord’s emancipation from that servitude, that “the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”¹²

The command to keep the sabbath day was, therefore, one of the Lord’s ways of putting a stop to injustice, violence, and oppression. Israel knew what it felt like to be a slave, a laborer who was required to work, and work, and work without respite—“the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage.”¹³ Israelites were never to treat those who worked in their midst the same. Those who served and worked for and among them—children, servants, even animals!—were, unlike them when they were in Egypt, to always be treated humanely. Those who labored were to be given time off to rest—a benefit the Egyptians never afforded Israel in its servitude. While the commandment to keep the sabbath day holy served many private and public purposes, one of its most important purposes was to keep Israel from becoming Egypt in its treatment of those who labor.

“But,” one might complain, “you have said nothing about keeping the sabbath day out of gratitude to God for his emancipation, for his having “brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. That too was part of the remembrance.”

¹¹ Deuteronomy 5.¹⁵

¹² While exodus can lead us to think of the sabbath rest in terms of God’s rest after creation, Deuteronomy suggests that the stipulation is much more earthy and far more influential.

¹³ Exodus 1.¹³⁻¹⁴

Indeed. We should say a word or two about this part of Israel’s woke remembrance. The remembrance of God’s emancipation was, again, about more than remembering a past event and the grace found in it. This remembrance was God’s attempt, again, to shape the present and the future. What should happen when one remembered “that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm”? Thankfulness toward God, certainly. But that was but the beginning of what the Lord hoped would flow from the remembrance.

God hoped that in remembering his emancipation, the one remembering would remember how good it felt to be emancipated. They would remember the freedom and joy and comfort that accompany emancipation. And they would wish everyone to experience the same thing. This was Alma the younger’s response to his own emancipation from the pain of sin.

“Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing... that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste.”¹⁴

So too, was it Enos’s response to his emancipation from sin.

“When I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren...”¹⁵

Now, this, truly, is the spirit of sabbath rest! Everyone wishes and deserves to feel God’s emancipation—whether it is from personal sin or national oppression. The sabbath day observer, then, will wish to conduct his or her life in such a manner as to contribute to the emancipation of all those within his or her power to influence and effect. The greatest expression of appreciation for God’s emancipation are the prayers we offer and the labor we perform to help others experience God’s emancipation in their own lives. Yes, the stipulation to keep the sabbath day holy is a call to become an emancipator. Its goal is a more just society.

¹⁴ Alma 36.²⁴

¹⁵ Enos 1.⁹

It is with deep sadness that we observe how many think of the sabbath purely in terms of the (spiritual) benefits that accrue to themselves for their observance. This self-centeredness is, itself, contrary to the spirit of the Divine stipulation—a stipulation that puts the needs and desires of the less fortunate at the forefront of one’s sabbath day observances.

What mean the testimonies? ...we were pharaoh’s bondmen

There are many other examples that highlight the tight connection that exists between God’s stipulations and Israel’s experience of oppression in Egypt. Israel’s experience of oppression in Egypt was to be remembered and was to influence nearly every human relationship. God gave stipulations concerning how a lender was to use the “pledge” that the poor offered as collateral for a loan.¹⁶ He gave stipulations about the pay of “hired servants. “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy... Thou shalt give him his hire.”¹⁷ God stipulated that his people not “pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless,” and not “take a widow’s raiment to pledge.”¹⁸ All these and many others came with the reminder,

“But thou shalt remember that thou was a bondman in Egypt and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence; therefore I command thee to do this thing.”¹⁹

Each of these stipulations might occasion their own homily or meditation—both about the behavior itself and its application to modern society. But, we will conclude this homily with the passage that heads it.

“And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, “What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you?” Then

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 24.¹⁰⁻¹³

¹⁷ See Deuteronomy 24.¹⁴⁻¹⁵

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 24.¹⁷

¹⁹ See Deuteronomy 24.¹⁸

thou shalt say unto thy son, “We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.

The Israelite—ancient and modern—is asked to consider his child’s question, “What are all God’s commandments, ordinances, and stipulation about? Why do we observe them?” The caring and inspired parent is to answer, first, “We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt.”

Yes, the parent goes on to remind the child of the wonders God performed in emancipating Israel from the injustice and violence of its oppressive slavery. This is certainly part of the remembrance that God desires and commands. But the preamble to the emancipation is the oppression, and this must be remembered, no matter how much the remembrance gulls the mighty oppressor who prefers the slumber of forgetfulness to the wakefulness of remembrance or the liveliness of repentance and reform. It is the woke remembrance of past and present injustice, violence, and oppression and God’s emancipation from such wrongs that drives the desire and increases the ability to live as God directs, thus creating more just individuals and a more just society.

Conclusion

God called Israel to woke remembrance of its oppression in Egypt and God’s powerful outreach to it in the form of emancipation from that very oppression. The remembrance was the foundation upon which its loyalty and discipleship to God was based—both individual and societal. It was foundational to the sort of individuals and society the future would produce. The woke remembrance was to be continual and ongoing, even eternal.

If America has any hope of being what its mythology claims it to be, then Americans, and most especially Americans who think of themselves as biblical and Christian, must apply and accept for themselves the call to woke remembrance of oppression. They must call upon

others to join them. Sadly, all too often, America has acted the part of oppressor. This is particularly so in regard to its treatment of African-Americans. But like Egypt that hardened its heart against acknowledgement and remembrance and repentance, millions of Americans refuse to remember themselves or countenance those who follow God's call to woke remembrance and its attending meaningful repentance.

It is a great irony, and tragedy, that too many of those millions who rail most against the woke remembrance of America's oppression of African Americans often claim the name "Christian." They often think of themselves as some kind of new Israel. Supposedly, then, they know their Bible and the calls that God issued to his people in it. Their call for slumber rather than wakefulness, then, is unbiblical. Their slumber of forgetfulness is an act of heresy and apostasy against God's call to woke remembrance and repentance and advancement. Their damning slumber is, as we have pronounced before, the very sleep of hell.

"O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. Awake!"²⁰

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²⁰ 2 Nephi 1.¹³⁻¹⁴

the righteousness of being woke: resisting the un-biblical anti-woke heresy
part 4

Luke 22.¹⁹⁻²⁰

¹⁹And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”

²⁰Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

Introduction

In our previous homilies in this series,¹ we observed God’s call that Israel remain in woke remembrance of its experiences under Egyptian oppression and of God’s intervention in emancipation from that oppression. The remembrance of oppression and emancipation went together. One could not remember and commemorate the latter without remembering and commemorating the former.

God did not extend Israel the call to woke remembrance out of antiquarian interests. The call to woke remembrance of oppression and emancipation sought to accomplish more than maintain an appropriate reverence for and appreciation of God. God’s call to woke remembrance sought, primarily, to produce in Israel a more just nation, devoid of all forms of injustice, violence, and oppression—personal or institutional. Therefore, the woke remembrance of the nation’s past oppression was foundational for much of Israel’s law code.

“And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, ‘What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you?’ Then

¹ The proceeding homilies examined the subject in light of Deuteronomy 4.⁹, Exodus 13.³⁻¹⁰, and Deuteronomy 6.²⁰⁻²³.

thou shalt say unto thy son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...’”²

Stipulations were issued with the reminder of past oppression in hopes of eliminating present and future injustice. Sleepy, and stubborn, forgetfulness is tantamount to apostasy. It is tantamount to turning one’s back on God. Forgetfulness leads to individual behavior and national policies that can only be immoral, unethical, and serve to expand ungodly injustice, violence, and oppression.

For thousands of years, Jews have remained in woke remembrance of millennia old oppression and under obligation to observe the Law’s stipulations meant, primarily, to produce healthy human relationships and avoid social injustice. This inspired woke remembrance is not, however, exclusively Jewish. Christianity, Judaism’s stepchild, is also called to woke remembrance. In this homily, we consider Jesus, how he suffered injustice and violence, the call he extends to disciples for woke remembrance of his violent death, and Christianity’s continued woke remembrance of him, his suffering, and his death—a remembrance that is institutionalized, especially, in the ordinance of communion/ sacrament.

The woke remembrance of the sacrament/communion

All three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) report that one of Jesus’ final ministerial acts was to conduct a Passover meal with his disciples.³ During this Passover feast, and consistent with its standard traditions, Jesus served his disciples bread and wine. In doing so, he transformed these traditional emblems into something new: a “New Testament,”⁴ or “New Witness.” Whereas the “Old Witness,” celebrated especially in the Passover Feast, remembered Israel’s oppression at the hands of Egypt and its emancipation through the outstretched arm of God, the “New Witness,” celebrated especially in the Christian ordinance of sacrament/ communion, remembered Jesus’ violent murder at the

² Deuteronomy 6.²⁰⁻²¹

³ Matthew 26.²⁶⁻²⁹, Mark 14.²²⁻²⁵, and Luke 22.¹⁹⁻²⁰.

⁴ See Mark 14.²⁴

hands of Rome, the western world's great superpower, and the emancipation from sin that his death revealed.

Consistent with its too-common disparaging views about “the cross” and Jesus’ death on the cross, my LDS culture does its very best to tame and domesticate the sacrament and turn it into something, anything other than a remembrance of the injustice and violence perpetrated against Jesus. To be sure, much is happening in that most ubiquitous of all LDS ordinances—a celebration of our renewed and energized life, for one. But make no mistake about it, among the many things it is, it is most certainly a woke remembrance of Jesus’ oppression, or the unjust and violent death that Jesus suffered at the hands of wicked men.

So, let’s just be clear, folks. Upon that table/ altar at the front of every LDS chapel and under that white covering/ shroud draped over every sacrament table is a body. If one lets one’s eyes pass slowly from one end of the draped table to the other, they will see, if they are discerning, the indications of the veiled body that lies below the shroud—head, chest, ribs, hips, knees, and toes. There is no movement below the veil because the body found there is dead. It has been violently brutalized. It is broken and bleeding. The priests who officiate at the altar will pick the body apart and offer it as food to the congregation. They will prepare the blood so that the congregation may drink.

If you are offended or repulsed at such thoughts, language, and imagery you are not alone. “Verily, verily,” said Jesus,

“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”⁵

⁵ John 6.⁵³⁻⁵⁸

Then, we read,

“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, ‘This is an hard saying; who can hear it?’

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, ‘Doth this offend you?’ ...

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”⁶

Yes, that most taken-for-granted of ordinances represents some intense and radical woke remembrance—one that the Romans, to be sure, would not have appreciated. As with all woke remembrance, the undiscerning are offended. But, the commemoration of the sacrament, with its woke remembrance of Jesus’ violent death and brutalized body, was the second commandment—after baptism—given to the Church newly formed in 1830.

“It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine *in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus...*”⁷

The revealed prayers confirm that we “eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son,” and “drink of it... in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them”⁸—and, again, that remembered shrouded body is not a living but a dead body. It is simply impossible to discerningly partake of the sacrament without a woke remembrance of Jesus’ violent death. The apostle Paul confirmed this in his instruction to the Corinthian church.

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, ‘Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.’ After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped,

⁶ John 6.^{60-61, 66}

⁷ DC 20.⁷⁵

⁸ DC 20.^{77, 79}

saying, ‘This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*”⁹

Sacrament/ communion and its relation to injustice, violence, and oppression

Christians have been participating in woke remembrance of the injustice and violence perpetrated against Jesus for 2000 years. They are to continue to the end of time as we reckon it—“till he come.” But one would be very dense, indeed, if they remembered his death without the remembrance of how he died; dense if they refused to remember the violence of ancient Rome that it perpetrated against the innocent Son of God.

Yes, Jesus died for the remission of sins. The sacrament embraces that reality. But the sacrament is also a reminder of injustice, violence, and oppression, just as it is a reminder of Jesus himself. Indeed, Jesus’ very death was meant to reveal sin—especially in the many forms sin takes in injustice, violence, and oppression. Jesus submitted to injustice and violence and hung on that cross, in part, to force us to look. To bring us face to face with the injustice, violence, and oppression we perpetrate, especially against the vulnerable and innocent, and repent.

Just as Israel’s oppression and emancipation are inexplicably linked, each necessary to the other, the emancipation from sin that Jesus accomplished is inexplicably linked to the injustice and violence he suffered and the revelation of injustice and violence that his death on the cross represents.

Jesus sent his disciples out into the world to proclaim his violent death, revelation not only of his own power to emancipate, but of the world’s injustice, violence, and oppression. This proclamation was not only intended to remind hearers of Jesus’ redemptive past acts, but to change and reform hearers enslaved in an unjust, violent, and oppressive present. The

⁹ 1 Corinthians 11.²³⁻²⁶

proclamation was intended to put an end to all such injustice, violence, and oppression. Through him, we can be forgiven of sin. But through him also we can identify the sin of violence and, together, find strength to resist and reject it.

So, embedded in our woke remembrance of Jesus' violent death and our communal commemoration of it through ordinance is a revelation of the world's injustices and violence, especially its violence against the vulnerable and innocent. They are most dense who, having "viewed his death"¹⁰ on the cross and commemorated it nearly every week of their life in sacramental communion, continue themselves to engage in the violent oppression of others or support institutions that maintain themselves through injustice, violence, and oppression.

Whether "New" or "Old" the testament of God has always been founded on woke remembrance—first on woke remembrance of injustice, violence, and oppression, and second, on woke remembrance of God's direct and merciful response to such sin. It has always had as one of its primary objectives the end to injustice, violence, and oppression.

Conclusion

There was a time when, at this point, I would conclude with a brief testimony, offer a word or two of encouragement, and trust the reader to apply the message to their own life. But those days are gone. The days of speaking in parables or with a still small voice are over. We live in a new era when subtle, soft, tactful speech will not do. We live in an age of the scream. Too many, having lost their hearing, require the scream. So, now, in this new era, I make my meaning and intended application unmistakable.

Ancient Israel's woke remembrance of the violence perpetrated against it, and Christianity's woke remembrance of the violence perpetrated against Jesus serve as calls to personally reject and actively resist injustice, violence, and oppression against any new victim. The long history of violent abuse of African Americans is a betrayal of both these revelations of

¹⁰ See Jacob 1.⁸

injustice, violence, and oppression. The current demands that America's history of injustice, violence, and oppression be forgotten is a betrayal of both these revelations. The violent abuse itself and the demand that it be forgotten is in direct opposition to Jesus, his revelation from the cross, and his call to forsake sin, especially the sins associated with injustice, violence, and oppression. The hundreds of bills that various local, state, and federal legislative bodies have passed in just the first four months of 2023 against the LGBTQ community—transsexuals being the favorite and prime target at the moment—is but one of many examples of America's direct rejection of the biblical witness and is a vile and violent affront to all that Jesus lived and died for.

When "Christians" make common cause with the anti-woke heretics who demean and attack those who follow God's call to remember and resist such acts of violence and oppression as our nation has perpetrated, they show themselves to be in apostasy. They show themselves to be enemies of "truth," or that which really has been.

Let such beware. For, when individuals refuse to repent, refuse to remain in woke remembrance of injustice, violence, and oppression, attack others who remain woke and resistant to injustice, violence and oppression, participate in continued injustice, violence, and oppression of the vulnerable and innocent—when such individuals then take the sacramental emblems of Jesus' violated body and spilt blood into their mouths they become guilty of partaking of the sacrament unworthily. In so doing, they deny Jesus and crucify the Son of God anew.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!