

Been reading about the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are hard enough to understand and apply to ourselves. We're about to begin studying Leviticus, which expands on the various ways we can break the commandments, as well as giving more detail of what is expected of Israel.

History shows that Israel failed this covenant and turned away from God repeatedly.

Here's the Gospel in a nutshell:

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:17 - "*And when he came to himself*, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

Paul uses "beside myself" as another way of saying deranged, which some had accused him of being. (2 Corinthians 5:13)

Although the Prodigal's actions seemed prudent and rational to him at the time, he was deceived.

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

Conversion is simply the return of a soul to itself, to its true destiny.

To "come to yourself" is to see yourself as you truly are. The prodigal realizes his stupidity, his rebelliousness and his real longing for home. But before anything could happen, he had to say: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Repentance causes us to leave our natural state, which is like madness because we're deceived, and return to our true identity.

Luke 15:20 - "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Christ is the Mercy Seat

After Christ's death on the cross - He ascended and His blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat of the eternal Tabernacle in Heaven.

Faith in Him and his sacrifice introduces us to eternal life, a life of love and giving, openness and freedom.

Romans 8:1-2 - "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

But the Law remains inside the Ark, covered only by the mercy seat with His blood.

John described the picture of the Law - God's wrath - unleashed in Revelation in the seven plagues erupting from the eternal Holy of Holies in heaven, where God's original Law resides outside of time.

- **Revelation 11:19** - "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail."

You may remember the images from the movie Raiders of the Lost Ark.

- **Revelation 15:5-8** - "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple (naos - inner holy place) of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

When we turn back to ourselves, when our self-seeking causes us to lose sight of God and his grace and to dismiss our fellow believers, we are walking right into that plague-filled storm of wrath.

We can do it for the most sincere reasons. Maybe we've been hurt or offended by someone.

Maybe we don't feel like we deserve to have any joy.

Maybe we are self-righteous Pharisees, leaning on our self-image as a "good guy" and the good deeds we do.

Maybe we've just given up waiting on God.

Maybe we just see something we want and don't give a damn what the consequences are.

It can happen in the blink of an eye. Little by little we shift away from dwelling on the mercy seat with God and suddenly look up and we're miles away from the sheltering protection of the Tabernacle and the Ark and the mercy seat.

It just takes a moment of repentance to come back.

The Talmud says if you provide even an opening only as large as the head of a pin, God will charge back into your life, swinging wide the gates of Jerusalem to welcome you.

“My sons, Open the door of Repentance as the ‘eye of a needle,’ and I will open it for you so that wagons and carriages can pass through.” (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 24)

We are all the Prodigal Son at some point. We bring the plagues upon ourselves. Remember how his Father rushed out to embrace his son before he even came into view.

“A sinner is like to a son that runs away from his father, and turns his back upon him, who yet afterwards repents, and has a mind to return to his father's house:” (R. Chayim in Lib. Chayim, par. 4. c. 6. apud Maii Jud. Theolog. loc 15. p. 243.)

“Rabbi Abahu bar Zeira said, ‘Great is Teshuvah, for it preceded the Creation of the World, as it says, ‘Before the mountains were born,...You reduced Man to nothingness, and said ‘Repent ...’ (Tehilim/Psalms 90:2-3)” (Bereshit Rabbah, 1)

“Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘Great is Teshuvah, for it causes a person’s verdict to be torn up.’” (Rosh HaShanah 17b)

“Even if a man has sinned his whole life and repents on the day of his death, all his sins are forgiven him” (Maimonides, Yad, Teshuvah 2:1)

Sincere repentance is equivalent to the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of the altar, and the offering of all the sacrifices (Pesik., ed. Buber, xxv. 158; Lev. R. vii.; Sanh. 43b).

Like the Prodigal Son, we need to start heading back home now!