

Moving Outside the Camp in the New Covenant

"Let us go to Him *outside the camp*, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).

The sacrifices under the old agreement in Old Testament foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah like a shadow protruding from a corner on a sunny day portends the coming of a person. The Old Covenant practice of sacrificing lambs, goats, and bulls foretell in picture form the coming of "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) was the most important holiday on the Jewish calendar. It was called the Sabbath of Sabbaths by the Hebrews. **Two goats** were brought into the camp for the Yom Kippur sacrifice. The first goat brought into the camp on the Day of Atonement was killed. The blood of this goat was sprinkled seven times before the altar, and then a basin of its blood was taken through the curtain into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled seven times before the ark of the covenant (Leviticus 16). Peace with God is foreshadowed through this Yom Kippur ritual, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus Christ's blood "cleanses us from all sin" and through our faith in Christ we have peace with God (Romans 8:1). The body of this goat was taken by the priest *outside the camp* and burned.

The second goat, called the *scapegoat*, had a scarlet ribbon tied around its neck. The high priest would lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confess the sins of Israel. The scapegoat would then be taken by the priest *outside the camp* and lost in the desert. The scapegoat foreshadows how Christ would bear the sins of His people and separate their sins from them "as far as the east is from the west." The Messiah was named Jesus because "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). God sees no sin in His people because our Scapegoat has carried them away. They are taken *outside the camp* and lost forever.

Outside the camp. This is an Old Covenant principle. Sin and shame are *outside the camp* in the Old Covenant. Lepers and the outcasts of Israel lived outside the camp. Outside the camp was an unclean place for unclean people. The priest who carried the body of the goat to be burned *outside the camp* had to go through purification rituals before he was even allowed back *inside* the camp (Leviticus 16:28). **Nobody went *outside the camp* in the Old Covenant during Yom Kippur unless the Hebrews cast them out as unworthy, unwanted, and unwelcome.**

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law - "every jot and tittle" - and died for us *outside the camp*. It is a known historical fact that Jesus Christ was crucified, bearing our sin "outside the gate" of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12). **"So, let us go to Him *outside the camp*, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).**

Whereas the Hebrews in the Old Covenant were never to go outside the gate, the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews calls for us to "go to Him *outside the gate*."

The New Covenant turns the Old Covenant principle of "outside the camp" on its head. In the Old Covenant, sin and shame were outside the camp and no Hebrew dared go outside the camp. In the New Covenant, Christ died outside the gate and followers of Christ are called to "go to Him *outside the camp*, bearing His reproach."

What does the encouragement to go “outside the camp” mean to the New Covenant believer?

(1). A New Covenant believer is not afraid to call himself "the chief of sinners."

A church that does not understand the New Covenant and lives by Old Covenant principles points a finger at those "outside the camp" and considers them vile and horrible. Old Covenant churches have an "us vs. them" mentality. "Those people out there" are vile and wicked, but we who are "in the camp" are not. The truth is, whenever a believer in Christ goes outside the camp to embrace Christ and those who are outside the camp, he identifies himself as one of the least, the last, the little and the lost.

(2). A New Covenant believer is more concerned with relationships than religion.

"Let us go *to Him* outside the gate." Churches who have a *camp mentality* are designed to make life comfortable for those inside the camp. Songs are sung because those singing enjoy others praising them for their voices. Messages are preached because those preaching enjoy the accolades of hearers. Programs and ministries are funded and staffed because those involved feel good about themselves for what they are doing. Churches based on Old Covenant principles are more interested in people in the camp feeling good about themselves than they are identifying with the least, the last, the little and the lost *outside the camp* and taking them to Christ. I've said it before, but it's worth saying again, "The measure of greatness for any church is not how many it sits but how many it sends." Anything in a church that gives an "us vs. them" impression to the outside world is a church based on Old Covenant principles. The truth is, we ARE them; the only difference is we have come to Him.

(3). A New Covenant believer lives in freedom and pays little attention to what others think.

When a sinner comes to faith in Christ, the truth of what Christ has done sets the sinner free. The full forgiveness from God and the immeasurable love of God causes the believer to live life in an abundant fashion. Rather than living in bondage to expectations, perceptions, and demands of others, the New Covenant believer follows the Spirit and lives in real freedom.

In addition, for the sinner who meets Christ outside the camp, there is no longer any desire to put roots down in any city, organization or camp that will not last (Hebrews 13:14), for there is only a desire for "the city with foundations" whose Builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).

I am greatly encouraged from the Word of God to realize that my job is to not make people comfortable "in the camp" but to stretch us all to go "outside the camp" and identify with the least, the last, the little and the lost in order to lead them to the only One who takes away that which will truly destroy and gives to us that which we can eternally enjoy.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1). What are some things we do that give evidence of moving “outside the camp?”
- 2). What can we do to communicate to those outside the camp that we are no better than they?
- 3). Where do we go wrong in terms of creating a “camp mentality?”