



Thanksgiving

November 2009

Reference: Nehemiah 9:1-37

On March 30, 1863, President Lincoln wrote the following words: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!”

Lincoln’s words proclaim a day when the nation would come together for remembrance. This preceded the proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving, which came a few months later. There’s a solid precedent for declaring special days to commemorate God’s faithfulness through repentance and thanksgiving. The Israelites were commanded to observe several annual feasts, all of which gave thanks for God’s faithful provision and protection.

The above referenced passage records Ezra’s reading of the Law and the celebration of the Feast of Booths (*Nehemiah 8:13-18*). This feast reminded the people of God’s protection for the nation as they wandered in the wilderness before their children entered the Promised Land. This prayer retraces Israel’s history, beginning with Abraham until Nehemiah’s time, when the exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. Don’t miss the focus on God’s utter faithfulness (vv. 5-15; 19-25) and the people’s forgetfulness and ingratitude. When the people stopped thanking God for His provision, they ended up forgetting God altogether. After confessing their ingratitude, Nehemiah (chapter 10) records the covenant renewal ceremony in which the people rededicated themselves to God.

There is a link between forgetting who God is, or what He has done for us, and ingratitude. God commanded annual feasts, such as Passover and the Feasts of Booths. Similarly, we celebrate Thanksgiving to remember God’s faithfulness. But there’s no need to limit ourselves to this holiday. Consider having monthly gatherings with friends or family to remember God’s faithfulness throughout the year. Make time during weekly Bible studies for offering thanks to God. Let us always remember who is Sovereign King over all creation - yet He takes care of us.



In remembrance of what He has done for us,

Dick & Gloria

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