



GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

HOUSTON

COMMUNITY GROUP
EXODUS

WELCOME TO COMMUNITY GROUP AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Whether you've been worshiping at Grace Bible Church (GBC) for years or just finished a Growth Group, you have likely heard or read GBC's purpose statement:

WE EXIST TO GLORIFY GOD BY MAKING DISCIPLES WHO TRANSFORM THE WORLD.

It's a short sentence, but it defines and focuses our ministry efforts at GBC. We believe that God uses discipleship to equip His people for His kingdom work and for His glory. In other words, God gets the glory, and we get the privilege of participating in His plan of redemption. It's for this reason that we are excited to welcome you to Community Group.

The purpose of our small groups is to equip people with biblical knowledge and ministry skills that will help them worship God more fully with minds, hearts, and lives devoted to His service. There are two principle components of a Community Group that we believe God uses to transform and equip our congregation.

The first is the **curriculum**. For over two thousand years, the Church has followed the model of Jesus' disciples. Just as they "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42), we do today as well. This is because we must know about God and ourselves in order to follow Him.

The second component of a Community Group is **community**. In the same way that those in the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, they also were committed to "fellowship" (Acts 2:42). By discussing and practicing the glorious truths of the gospel in community, we find that God uses other people to shape and strengthen our individual faith.

LIFE STORY

A Life Story is a clear, concise overview of the most formative moments of your life. We include this as part of our time together in Community Groups to help people get to know one another. It also presents you with an opportunity to reflect on your life and consider how God has moved and worked over the years. We hope you will find the following exercise edifying!

HINGE POINTS

A hinge point is something that has had a significant impact on the trajectory of your life. While these moments can be positive or negative, they've helped shape or influence who you are today. Choose 7-10 high AND low hinge points and list them in the chart below.

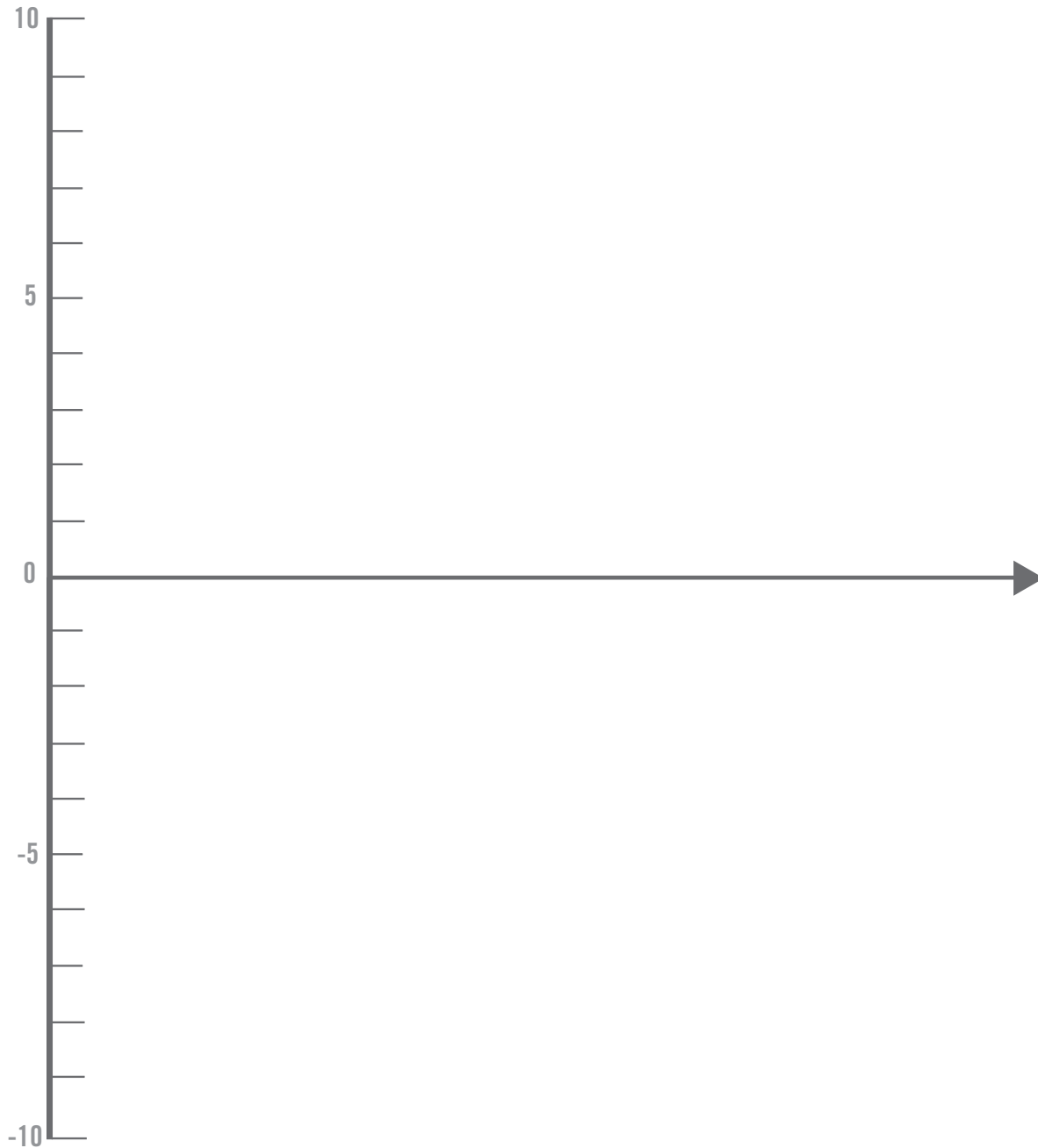
HIGH POINTS	LOW POINTS
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

Next, determine the 7-10 most impactful events from your high and low hinge points by circling them. Then, rate each event, positively or negatively, by giving a -10 to +10 rating. Place the numerical score next to the corresponding event.

LIFE STORY

TIMELINE

Chronologically chart your 7-10 most significant high and low hinge points on the graph below. This will serve to visually depict the most formative moments of your life on a timeline.



On the following page, select 5 of your most significant hinge points to consider more deeply. As you do this, we'll ask you not only what happened and why it was significant, but also how it shaped or influenced your life.

LIFE STORY

Spending time reflecting on your most significant hinge points is the critical part of this exercise. The goal is to put your thoughts to paper to explain what happened and why it was significant. Please note that one of your hinge points must be when you became a Christian.

HINGE POINT 1:

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT 2:

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT 3:

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT 4:

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT 5:

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

LIFE STORY

The last step of this exercise is to organize your thoughts to share with your group. Start by providing basic background information. Then, share your most significant hinge points with the group. After, conclude by giving a snapshot of where you are right now. We've provided an outline to help you do this.

BACKGROUND / BIOGRAPHY (1-2 MINUTES)

Briefly provide general background and biographical information.

HINGE POINT (1-2 MINUTES)

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT (1-2 MINUTES)

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT (1-2 MINUTES)

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT (1-2 MINUTES)

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

HINGE POINT (1-2 MINUTES)

What happened? Why was it significant? How did it shape or influence you?

CONCLUSION (1-2 MINUTES)

How would you describe your current relationship with God?

Are you actively engaged in discipleship? If so, how? If not, why not?

You should make every effort to share your Life Story in 10 minutes. This will require extended preparation in advance of your meeting. After you have shared, allow time for the group to ask questions. In total, this portion of your meeting should not exceed 15 minutes.

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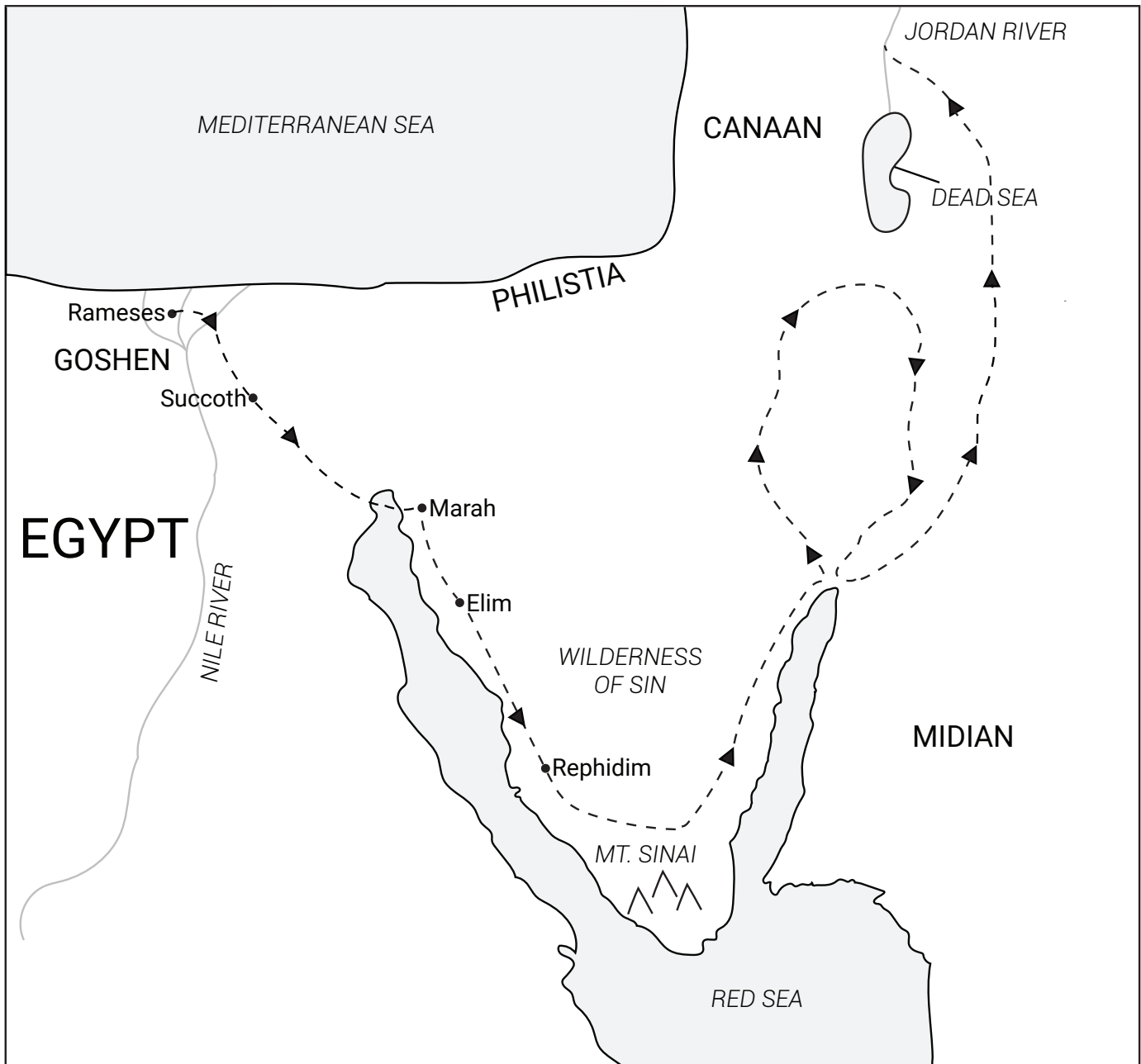
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MAP OF THE EXODUS

The map below offers a plausible reconstruction of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Because there is scant archaeological evidence from the region and because the names of ancient places rarely correspond to modern ones, this route is pieced together from the best available clues in the Bible. Several key locations have been marked to be referenced as you study, especially in Weeks 7-10.



WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

EXODUS 20:2

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery.

EXODUS 1:1-40:38

BACKGROUND / HISTORY

The events leading to Exodus begin in Genesis with Joseph, one of Jacob's twelve sons (Gen. 37:3). Betrayed by his brothers out of jealousy, Joseph was sold into slavery and ended up in Egypt (Gen. 37:28).

Despite his hardships, Joseph rose to prominence as Pharaoh's trusted advisor after interpreting dreams foretelling a famine (Gen. 41:14-30). During the famine, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt for food (Gen. 42:1-3), and Joseph later revealed himself, inviting his family to settle in Egypt (Gen. 45:9-11). Pharaoh welcomed them and gave them the land of Goshen (Gen. 47:11-12).

After Joseph's death, a new Pharaoh rose to power who did not know him (Ex. 1:8). Fearing Israel's growing strength, Pharaoh enslaved God's people, setting the stage for the events of Exodus (Ex. 1:9-14). In the end, Israel remained in Egypt for over "430 years" (Ex. 12:41).

1. HOW DOES JOSEPH'S STORY DISPLAY GOD'S PROTECTION AND PROVISION? WHY WOULD THIS MATTER WHEN ISRAEL BECAME ENSLAVED YEARS LATER?

"In Israel's slavery, they could trust the unseen hand of God's providence that guided Joseph's story."
– Charles Spurgeon

DIGGING DEEPER

God intentionally used Israel's extended time in Egypt to shape them into a dependent and distinct nation set apart for His purposes (Deut. 7:6-8).

During their time in Egypt, Israel lived separate from the Egyptians, shielded from assimilation by Egypt's disdain for shepherds (Gen. 46:28-47:6). At the same time, their isolation kept Israel from the moral corruption of the Canaanites, whose debased practices threatened to defile God's people (Lev. 18:21-24). Moreover, Israel's suffering under harsh slavery taught them to rely on God and not earthly power or political alliances (Ex. 1:14).

2. WHY WOULD GOD SHAPE HIS PEOPLE THROUGH HARDSHIP? WHAT DID THEY LEARN IN EGYPT THAT THEY COULDN'T IN ISRAEL?

"Egypt was the classroom where Israel learned that God Himself was their life and hope."
– JI Packer

GENRE / AUTHOR

Exodus is the second book of the Torah, which means "teaching" or "law" in Hebrew. Also called the Pentateuch, the Torah comprises the first five books of the Old Testament and is foundational for understanding the formation of God's people. While it includes elements of law and poetry, Exodus is primarily a historical narrative. Its goal is to inform readers about God's great acts of salvation, with a focus on revealing His character and nature.

Though the Torah doesn't name an author, several details support Moses as its source. Internally, there are references to Moses recording events (e.g. Ex. 17:14) and providing eyewitness perspective (e.g. Ex. 15:27; 16:31). Externally, both the Old and New Testaments affirm Moses as the author (Josh. 1:7-8; Matt. 19:8), and Jesus confirms that Moses' writings foretold His coming (Jn. 5:46).

3. HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING EXODUS AS BOTH A HISTORY AND A REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER INFLUENCE HOW WE READ AND APPLY IT?

"In Exodus, the facts themselves are a divine self-disclosure, inviting faith and obedience from every generation."
– Herman Bavinck

EGYPT

At the time of Exodus, Egypt had been a prosperous nation for over a thousand years. The Nile River produced fertile soil, and the land surrounding its banks was full of valuable resources. Culturally, Egypt was advanced in literature and arts, as well as science and mathematics. Additionally, Egypt's natural geography gave it unparalleled security.

The Egyptian worldview was deeply religious, with a strong belief that the gods controlled every aspect of life. The Pharaoh, which was a royal title, was seen as the living embodiment of the gods on earth. Because of this, the Pharaoh's authority was absolute, and his power was believed to be divinely granted. He was responsible for ensuring the prosperity and protection of Egypt.

All things considered, Egypt was one of the most formidable and powerful civilizations at its peak of stability and strength.

4. HOW DOES EGYPT'S POWER AND WORLDVIEW PROVIDE GOD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVEAL HIS AUTHORITY AND SOVEREIGNTY?

"God was pleased to choose Egypt as the stage for His glory that His supremacy might be more conspicuously displayed."
– John Calvin

OVERVIEW

Exodus has two major sections, which we will refer to as Part I (Ex. 1-18) and Part II (Ex. 19-40). Part I focuses on Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, and Part II covers God's establishing His covenant at Mount Sinai (see map on page 9).

Though the setting and subject change slightly between sections, the unified purpose of Exodus is to explain how God's presence came to dwell among His people. Put together, Exodus 1-40 weaves together the themes of redemption and relationship, demonstrating God's powerful intervention in history to both rescue His people and establish an abiding presence with them.

READ EXODUS 1:1-18:27

Part I begins with the Israelites' oppression under Pharaoh (Ex. 1-2) and follows God's call to Moses as their deliverer (Ex. 3-4). It unfolds through the ten plagues and culminates in the exodus itself (Ex. 7-12). As Israel is freed, they journey through the wilderness toward Mount Sinai, experiencing God's guidance and protection (Ex. 13-18). God's faithfulness and sovereignty are central to this section, showcasing His unwavering commitment to His covenant people.

5. WHY DOES THE PHARAOH FEAR ISRAEL (EX. 1:8-10)? HOW DOES HE TRY TO CONTROL THEM (EX. 1:11-16, 22)?

6. WHY DOES MOSES OBJECT TO BEING CALLED (EX. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13)? HOW DOES GOD RESPOND (EX. 3:12, 14-15; 4:2-9, 11-12, 14-16)?

7. WHAT DOES PHARAOH ASK MOSES (EX. 5:2)? HOW DO THE TEN PLAGUES ANSWER HIS QUESTION (EX. 7:14-11:10)?

"The call of God is never grounded in the ability of the one called."

– Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Ex. 2:23 – The Pharaoh who began Israel's oppression (Ex. 1:8) was not in power during the exodus. In fact, historians conservatively estimate at least 80 years passed between the start of slavery and the plagues.

Ex. 3:14 – As we will cover in Week 3, God's self-revelation as "I AM WHO I AM" emphasizes His eternal, self-existent, and unchanging nature.

DIGGING DEEPER

When Moses first confronts Pharaoh with God's command, Pharaoh replies, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice?" (Ex. 5:2). His question is a defiant challenge to God's sovereignty and sets the stage for God's response through the ten plagues.

Over the course of Exodus 7-12, God provides Pharaoh with an answer, sending plagues as a deliberate, escalating demonstration of His supremacy over Egypt's so-called gods and Pharaoh's false authority. As we will cover in Week 5, each plague is not a random disaster meant to change Pharaoh's mind, but a targeted judgment on Pharaoh and Egypt, revealing God's unrivaled power.

In the end, the plagues fulfill God's promise to make Himself known to both Israel and Egypt (Ex. 7:5, 17; 9:14). After God is done, Pharaoh is forced to admit the truth. "There is none like the LORD" (Ex. 8:10).

8. HOW DOES PHARAOH RESPOND AFTER THE TENTH PLAGUE (EX. 12:30-32)? WHAT DO THE EGYPTIANS GIVE TO ISRAEL AS THEY LEAVE (EX. 12:35-36)?

"In the sudden change of Egypt's posture, from oppressing to enriching Israel, we see the absolute rule of God over the hearts of men."
– Jonathan Edwards

9. WHAT DOES GOD DO TO ULTIMATELY DELIVER ISRAEL (EX. 14:21-31)? HOW DO THE PEOPLE REACT TO GOD'S SALVATION (EX. 15:1-2)?

10. HOW DOES GOD PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE DESERT (EX. 16:4-15; 17:1-7)? WHAT DOES HE DO TO PROTECT THEM (EX. 17:8-16)?

"God's care for Israel in the desert shows that He is the God of means and of miracles, using both to feed and defend His people."
– Thomas Watson

11. WHAT CONCERN DOES JETHRO RAISE ABOUT MOSES' LEADERSHIP (EX. 18:13-18)? HOW DOES MOSES IMPLEMENT HIS ADVICE (EX. 18:24-26)?

READ EXODUS 19:1-40:38

Part II centers on the establishment of God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. In this section, God defines Israel's identity as His chosen people and gives His Law (Ex. 19-24). After, God details instructions for the tabernacle (Ex. 25-31), which is later constructed to His exact specifications (Ex. 35-40). In between these sections, God demonstrates His steadfast commitment to Israel, despite their proclivity for idolatry and rebellion (Ex. 32-34). To conclude, Exodus ends with God fulfilling His promise to dwell with His people (Ex. 40).

12. HOW DOES GOD DESCRIBE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL (EX. 19:4)? WHAT BLESSINGS DOES HE PROMISE IN RETURN FOR OBEDIENCE (EX. 19:5-6)?

13. HOW IS GOD DEPICTED ON MOUNT SINAI (EX. 19:16-20; 24:15-18)? WHAT ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN THESE DESCRIPTIONS?

14. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT GOD SAVES ISRAEL BEFORE GIVING THEM THE LAW (EX. 20-24)? WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US ABOUT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?

"In the smoke and fire of Sinai, we see the transcendent majesty of God condescending to speak with man."
– BB Warfield

DIGGING DEEPER

In Exodus, God saves His people before giving them the Law, highlighting His initiative in the covenant relationship. In other words, God does not offer the Law as a condition for deliverance. Instead, He sovereignly intervenes to rescue Israel from slavery (Ex. 7-15) and then enumerates His commands to His people (Ex. 20-24). In this way, He establishes the means by which His people can enjoy and maintain the relationship that He already secured for them (Ex. 19:5-6).

This pattern is noteworthy for us because it shapes how we understand our relationship with God. Just as in Exodus, the New Testament reminds us that salvation is solely by grace through faith, not by our obedience or works (Eph. 2:8-9). In light of this, we are called to obey not in order to earn God's favor, but as an expression of gratitude for the grace He has freely given us (Rom. 6:17-18). This understanding empowers us to live out our faith with humility and joy, motivated by the love of God (1 Jn. 4:19).

15. WHY DOES GOD PROVIDE SUCH DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TABERNACLE'S DESIGN AND THE PRIESTS' CLOTHING (EX. 25:1-31:11; 35:4-39:43)?

"The minute details were not empty formalities, but shadows of Christ's person and work, divinely ordained to prepare Israel for the gospel."
— AW Pink

DIGGING DEEPER

The tabernacle was designed to reflect the holiness of God and the need for proper reverence in approaching Him. The structure itself highlighted a key theme of limited access. Only certain individuals were allowed to enter specific areas of the tabernacle, and only under strict regulations.

This would serve as a constant reminder to the people of the need for atonement and purification. To that end, the sacrificial system, with its offerings and rituals, was designed to make temporary payment for sin, allowing a broken relationship with God to be restored, though only partially. In the end, the people could approach God through sacrifice, but they could not do so freely or without mediation.

In the New Testament, this concept is eradicated through the work of Jesus. When He was crucified, the veil of the temple was torn in two (Matt. 27:51), signifying that the barrier between humanity and God had been removed. Now, all believers have direct access to God through Jesus, who serves as our great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).

16. HOW DOES ISRAEL PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE (EX. 31:1-11; 35:4-35; 36:1-7)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

17. WHAT DO THE PEOPLE DO WHILE MOSES IS GONE (EX. 32:1-6)? HOW DO GOD AND MOSES RESPOND (EX. 32:7-14, 33-35, 19-20, 25-28)?

18. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THE END OF EXODUS (EX. 40:34-38)?

"God's glory descending into the tabernacle was the climactic affirmation that He is not distant but dwells with His people."
— RC Sproul

*"The more we labor in
God's Word, the more
we are able to grasp
the depth of His
wisdom and the
richness of His grace."
— John Owen*

*"Our love of God is
measured by our
everyday fellowship
with others and the
love it displays."
— Andrew Murray*

CONCLUSION

The story of Exodus is a profound foreshadowing of the gospel. God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb points directly to the salvation we receive through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Just as God brought Israel into the Promised Land, He leads us into the eternal inheritance of His kingdom. Exodus shows us that God's deliverance and mercy are central to the gospel, and that the work of Jesus on the cross is the ultimate fulfillment of what began in the redemption of Israel.

19. WHAT PASSAGES IN EXODUS SEEM ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT OR RELEVANT TO YOU? WHY?

20. WHAT PASSAGES IN EXODUS DO YOU HOPE TO COMPREHEND OR UNDERSTAND MORE COMPLETELY? WHY?

While we believe your study through Exodus will be edifying, we also think that time spent in community is equally important. Our prayer is that your group would serve as a place where you are encouraged and challenged to live out God's Word.

21. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO CULTIVATE OR DEVELOP AS A RESULT OF BEING IN COMMUNITY THIS YEAR? WHY?

22. WHAT ABOUT YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES OR PERSONALITY MIGHT INHIBIT YOU FROM FULL INVESTMENT AND OWNERSHIP IN YOUR GROUP? EXPLAIN.

WEEKS 1-9

EXODUS PART I

WEEK 2

GOD SEES AND HEARS

EXODUS 2:24

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

EXODUS 1:1-2:25

INTRODUCTION

Exodus opens with Israel prospering in Egypt. However, a new Pharaoh, “who did not know Joseph” (Ex. 1:8), became fearful of their size and strength and responded by ruthlessly enslaving them. Still, God “[remembers] His covenant” (Ex. 2:24) and raises a deliverer from within Egypt.

READ EXODUS 1:1-22

Over the course of 400 years, the Israelites multiplied from a family of “seventy” (v. 5) to a multitude of around two million. This growth attracted the attention of the “new king” (v. 8), who decided to “deal shrewdly with [Israel]” (v. 10).

“The family of Jacob entered Egypt as sojourners but grew into a great multitude.”
– AW Pink

1. WHAT IS ISRAEL'S INITIAL CONDITION IN EGYPT (V. 7)? WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR FALL FROM FAVOR (VV. 6, 8)?

2. WHAT IS PHARAOH'S VIEW OF THE ISRAELITES (VV. 9-10)? HOW DOES HE TRY TO BURDEN AND OPPRESS THEM (VV. 11-14, 15-16)?

3. HOW DO THE MIDWIVES RESPOND TO PHARAOH'S COMMAND (VV. 17-19)? HOW DOES THEIR ACTION DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY “FEARED GOD” (VV. 17, 21)?

4. HOW DOES GOD RESPOND TO THE MIDWIVES' OBEDIENCE (VV. 20, 21)? WHAT DOES PHARAOH COMMAND IN RESPONSE (V. 22)?

“The fear of God is the secret of Christian courage and boldness.”
– Sinclair Ferguson

Ex. 1:15 – It's notable that Moses never names the pharaohs (Ex. 1:8; 2:23) but honors the brave Hebrew midwives who chose to obey God at great risk.

5. HOW DID PHARAOH'S ATTEMPTS TO “DEAL SHREWDLY” (V. 10) WITH THE ISRAELITES END (VV. 12, 20)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

*“The more tyrants rage,
the more does the
providence of God
shine forth.”
– John Calvin*

2

DIGGING DEEPER

The Hebrew midwives’ desire and willingness to obey God over Pharaoh provide a clear contrast between the fear of God and the fear of man.

Fearing God is the way the Old Testament describes righteous and upright character (Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7). It entails seeking God’s approval above anyone else, regardless of the cost (Acts 5:29). The fear of man is the exact opposite. It refers to the sinful longing for the admiration and affirmation of people (Jn. 12:42-43; Gal. 1:10). While it can manifest in various ways, it almost always leads to compromise or conformity (Prov. 29:25; Rom. 12:2).

Like Shiphrah and Puah, we must be resolute in choosing to fear God over man, remembering that God promises to honor our obedience (1 Sam. 2:30; Ps. 147:11). While this doesn’t guarantee material or physical blessing (v. 21), it does produce incomparable joy and satisfaction (Ps. 16:11). Additionally, it enables us to live with confidence and freedom (Prov. 14:26) as opposed to insecurity and instability (Is. 2:20-22).

6. WHAT IS THE FEAR OF MAN? WHAT DOES IT PRODUCE OR PROVIDE? WHY?

7. WHAT IS THE FEAR OF GOD? WHAT DOES IT PRODUCE OR PROVIDE? WHY?

8. WHERE DO YOU NEED TO FEAR GOD OVER MAN? WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE IN THAT CIRCUMSTANCE OR SITUATION?

*“When the fear of
God fills the soul,
it strengthens the
hands to obey,
whatever the cost.”
– John Owen*

Ex. 1:17, 21 – The book of Proverbs defines the fear of God as continual (Prov. 23:17), humble (Prov. 15:33), and faithful (Prov. 14:27) submission to God. It is an attitude of reverent awe that compels us to turn from evil (Prov. 16:6) and walk in wholehearted obedience (Prov. 3:5-6).

"Observe the wonderful workings of providence, putting those in motion to serve the interests of God's church who had no intention of doing so."
– Matthew Henry

"Providence is that continuous agency of God by which He makes all the events of the universe work out the purpose of His grace."
– BB Warfield

READ EXODUS 2:1-10

Soon after Pharaoh's decree to "cast [every son] into the Nile" (Ex. 1:22), Moses is born. Though his Levitical heritage is briefly mentioned, it carries theological and narrative significance, hinting at Moses' future intercessory role and God's pattern of raising deliverance from unexpected places (Gen. 34:25-31).

9. WHAT STEPS DOES MOSES' MOTHER TAKE TO PROTECT HIM (VV. 1-3)?

10. HOW IS MOSES SAVED (VV. 4-6)? WHERE IS HE TAKEN (VV. 7-9, 10)?

DIGGING DEEPER

Throughout the story of Moses' birth, rescue, and adoption, God is never mentioned by name. Despite this, His providential hand was unmistakably at work (Est. 4:14).

Providence is not random coincidence, luck, or happenstance. It is God's purposeful and wise guidance of all things (Prov. 16:9; Is. 46:10). Though we may not always see Him, God is sovereignly directing all things to accomplish His redemptive plan (Gen. 50:20). In this case, God carefully orchestrates a string of events – a mother's desperation, a sister's persistence, and a stranger's kindness – to preserve the future deliverer of His people.

This reminds us that God is never absent or silent (Ps. 139:7-12). When circumstances seem dire, the path is unclear, or prayers seem unanswered, we can trust that God's providence is always at work (Ps. 33:11). Believing this enables us to walk with confidence and hope, recognizing that the same God who guided a basket through the Nile is still superintending every detail of our lives (Matt. 10:29-31; Phil. 1:6).

11. HOW DOES MOSES' BIRTH AND UPBRINGING POINT TO GOD'S PROVIDENCE?

Ex. 2:3 – The "basket" that carried Moses is the same Hebrew word as Noah's "ark" (Gen. 6:14). Both vessels symbolize God's mercy amidst chaos.

Ex. 2:5 – Pharaoh's "daughter" was likely the child of a concubine, making her a member of the royal household but not a princess of full dynastic status.

12. WHEN HAVE YOU ATTRIBUTED GOD'S PROVIDENCE TO COINCIDENCE? WHERE DO YOU SEE HIS DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE IN THAT SITUATION NOW?

*"Happy is the man who
sees God's hand
in everything. To him
there is no such thing
as an accident."
– Charles Spurgeon*

13. HOW CAN YOU MORE READILY RECOGNIZE GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN YOUR LIFE? HOW WOULD THAT AFFECT YOUR DISPOSITION OR SHIFT YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

READ EXODUS 2:11-22

"When Moses had grown up" (v. 11), he was about "forty years old" (Acts 7:23). Up to this point in his life, Moses lived as an Egyptian noble and was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). Because of this, it's likely that Moses appeared more Egyptian than Israelite, even as his awareness of his true identity was growing. This tension would soon erupt into action, setting the stage for God to begin reshaping him into the future deliverer of God's people.

14. WHAT DOES MOSES WITNESS WHEN "HE WENT OUT TO HIS PEOPLE" (V. 11)? HOW DID HE REACT (V. 12)?

*"Zeal without
submission to God
often leads to failure."
– RC Sproul*

15. WHAT DOES MOSES' INTERACTION WITH THE HEBREW MAN SUGGEST ABOUT ISRAEL'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT HIS LEADERSHIP (VV. 13-14)?

16. WHY WAS MOSES "AFRAID" (V. 14)? WHO FINDS OUT ABOUT HIS RECKLESSNESS (V. 15)? WHAT DOES THIS LEAD MOSES TO DO (V. 15)?

"True religion teaches us to renounce self-trust and to cast ourselves entirely on the mercy of God."

– Jonathan Edwards

"Moses was forty years in Egypt learning something and forty years in the desert learning to be nothing."

– James Boice

DIGGING DEEPER

Acts 7:25 reveals that Moses presumed that he could save "his people" (v. 11) through his own power and privilege. However, instead of bringing deliverance, his recklessness resulted in murder (v. 12) and, eventually, rejection (v. 14) and exile (v. 15).

Moses' failure exposes the danger of self-reliance. It not only leads to sin, but also sabotages what was originally intended (Prov. 14:12). To avoid this mistake, we must fight the desire to take matters into our own hands when our plans seem delayed or detoured, choosing instead to trust in God's timing and wisdom (Is. 55:8-9).

17. WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF SELF-RELIANCE? WHAT COULD OR DID YOU LEARN FROM THAT EXPERIENCE?

18. WHAT CURRENT PLANS HAVE BEEN DELAYED OR DETOURED? HOW CAN YOU REJECT SELF-RELIANCE IN THAT SITUATION?

After fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses arrives in Midian, a remote region east of Egypt. What first appears to be a place of exile becomes a place of preparation. Over the course of nearly "forty years" (Acts 7:30), God sanctifies Moses for his future role in delivering His people.

19. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MOSES ARRIVES IN MIDIAN (VV. 16-17)? HOW DOES THIS EVENT SHAPE MOSES' FUTURE (VV. 18-22)?

20. HOW WOULD TIME IN MIDIAN HAVE PREPARED MOSES FOR HIS EVENTUAL ROLE? WHAT COULD HE LEARN IN MIDIAN THAT HE COULDN'T IN EGYPT?

READ EXODUS 2:23-25

Even though God sovereignly allowed His people to suffer, He was not distant from them or unable to help them. Instead, He was attentively watching over them, ready to act in faithful fulfillment of His covenant promises.

21. WHAT DO THE ISRAELITES DO IN RESPONSE TO THEIR SUFFERING (V. 23)? HOW IS THAT INSTRUCTIVE FOR US?

22. HOW DOES GOD RESPOND TO HIS PEOPLE (VV. 24-25)? WHAT DOES HIS RESPONSE REVEAL ABOUT HIS CARE AND CONCERN FOR THEM?

23. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT GOD REMEMBERED “HIS COVENANT” (V. 24)? WHAT DOES THIS PROVE ABOUT HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE?

2

“The prayer of the people of God is the beginning of their deliverance.”
– JA Motyer

DIGGING DEEPER

In the Bible, a “covenant” (v. 24) is a solemn, binding agreement initiated by God that establishes and secures relationship with His people.

That said, when we’re told that God “remembered His covenant” (v. 24), we shouldn’t think that God had forgotten or neglected His commitment to Israel. Instead, to “remember” (v. 24) means to act in faithful accordance with a promise. It indicates that God is about to intervene on His people’s behalf.

God’s covenant fidelity reorients how we interpret hardship and suffering. What may feel like distance or silence is often the concealed work of God, preparing redemption according to His unchanging word. As we wait for His plan to unfold, we are called not to rest in our circumstances, but in the unwavering faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God.

Regardless of the adversity or pain we may endure, God’s covenant is the anchor of our hope and the foundation of our confidence. It assures us that He hears, sees, remembers, and knows us (vv. 24-25), especially as we “cry for rescue” (v. 23).

*"God is never more near
than when we cry out
for deliverance."*

– Thomas Watson

*"God does not leave His
soldiers alone on the
battlefield. His eye is
always on them,
and His care is active
every moment."*

– William Gurnall

24. WHERE DO YOU NEED TO "[CRY] OUT FOR HELP" (V. 23)? HOW DO THESE VERSES GIVE YOU CONFIDENCE CONCERNING GOD'S CARE FOR YOU IN THAT SITUATION?

CONCLUSION

Exodus 1:1-2:25 clearly portrays Israel's deep need for deliverance and God's attentive care for His people. Before Israel's cries even "came up to God" (Ex. 2:23), He was already at work, preserving a baby in a basket, shaping a deliverer in exile, and unfolding His covenant promises behind the scenes.

25. WHAT IS A CURRENT CHALLENGE OR IMPENDING DECISION WHERE YOU CAN PRACTICE TRUSTING GOD'S PROVIDENCE? HOW WILL YOU DO IT?

26. WHAT SPECIFIC HABIT OR PRACTICE CAN YOU IMPLEMENT TO REMEMBER GOD'S ATTENTIVE CARE? WHY WOULD IT HELP?

WEEK 3

GOD CALLS MOSES

EXODUS 3:14

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."

EXODUS 3:1-4:31

INTRODUCTION

After fleeing Egypt, Moses spent forty years in Midian, tending sheep and living in obscurity (Ex. 2:15-22). In Exodus 3:1-4:31, God interrupts Moses' life with a call to leadership. Despite Moses' doubts and objections, God promises to equip him to deliver Israel out of slavery.

READ EXODUS 3:1-10

The burning "bush" (vv. 2, 3, 4) represents what theologians refer to as a theophany. A theophany is when God reveals His nature in a tangible form (cf. Josh. 5:13-15; Dan. 3:24-25). This encounter not only marked the beginning of Moses' prophetic ministry, but also inaugurated a pivotal moment in Israel's redemptive history.

*"The burning bush was God's way of engaging Moses' curiosity so that He might speak to his conscience."
— Matthew Henry*

*"The self-sufficient God, who depends on nothing and no one, reveals Himself not in overwhelming terror, but in a majestic and yet approachable flame."
— BB Warfield*

1. WHY DOES THE "BUSH" (VV. 2, 3, 4) CAUSE MOSES TO "TURN ASIDE" (V. 3)? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HE GOES TO INSPECT THE "GREAT SIGHT" (V. 3)?

2. WHAT DOES GOD COMMAND MOSES TO DO (V. 5)? HOW DOES HE IDENTIFY HIMSELF TO MOSES (V. 6)? HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND (V. 6)?

3. WHICH OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES OR CHARACTERISTICS ARE REVEALED IN THE "BUSH" (VV. 2, 3, 4)? LIST AS MANY AS YOU CAN.

4. HOW DOES GOD DESCRIBE HIS AWARENESS OF ISRAEL'S SUFFERING (VV. 7-9)? WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE (VV. 8, 10)? HOW WILL HE ACCOMPLISH IT (V. 10)?

DIGGING DEEPER

Among other things, Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush provides us with a glimpse of God's holiness. This attribute is foundational to God's nature, encompassing both His virtue and transcendence.

God is without fault or flaw (Hab. 1:13). He is the standard of goodness, justice, and righteousness (Ps. 89:14). As a result, everything He does is right and true (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 145:17). At the same time, God's holiness does not only refer to His moral perfection, but also His being completely set apart. God is entirely in a category of His own (Is. 40:25). He is infinite (Ps. 147:5), eternal (Ps. 90:2), unchanging (Mal. 3:6), and self-existent (Acts 17:24-25), totally beyond the limits of His creation.

God's holiness demands that we respond with humility and reverence (Is. 6:5; Heb. 12:28). Assuming this posture appropriately acknowledges our unworthiness and guards us from approaching Him casually or flippantly (Eccl. 5:1-2). At the same time, our response is not passive. True reverence necessarily overflows into obedience, as we attempt to reflect God's purity in how we live (1 Pet. 1:16).

5. HOW SHOULD UNDERSTANDING GOD'S HOLINESS DIRECT OR INFORM THE WAY YOU WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS?

"A right view of God's holiness guards us from casual familiarity and lifts our hearts in joyful adoration."
– Sinclair Ferguson

6. WHERE CAN YOU BETTER REFLECT GOD'S PURITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN YOUR LIFE? WHAT CHANGES OR COMMITMENTS DO YOU NEED TO MAKE TO DO THIS?

READ EXODUS 3:11-4:17

When God commissions Moses to lead His people, Moses responds with reluctance instead of readiness, issuing a series of objections. However, rather than rebuking him, God answers each concern with patience and provision.

7. WHAT IS MOSES' INITIAL REACTION TO GOD'S PLAN (EX. 3:11)? HOW DOES GOD RESPOND (EX. 3:12)?

"The call to serve is never about our worthiness, but God's nearness."
– John Owen

"In this name is included a declaration of God's eternity, immutability, and constancy. He is what He was and will be what He is."

– Stephen Charnock

8. WHY DOES MOSES ASK FOR GOD'S NAME (EX. 3:13)? WHAT DOES "I AM WHO I AM" (EX. 3:14) INDICATE OR SIGNIFY ABOUT GOD (EX. 3:14-15)?

9. WHAT DOES GOD PROMISE REGARDING ISRAEL AND PHARAOH (EX. 3:16-22)? WHAT DOES THIS ADD TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HIS BEING CALLED "I AM" (EX. 3:14)?

DIGGING DEEPER

When God tells Moses that His name is "I AM" (Ex. 3:14), He declares His transcendence. He is not bound by past, present, or future (Rev. 1:8). He simply exists, independent of anything or anyone (Rom. 11:36). At the same time, "I AM" (Ex. 3:14) isn't just about who God is in the abstract. Instead, it asserts His immanence, carrying the promise of His presence (Ex. 3:12).

For us, the name "I AM" (Ex. 3:14) is a reminder that God is unchanging in a world that constantly shifts (Heb. 13:8). Additionally, He is not only the God who was and will be, but also the God who is right now (Ps. 46:1). This should comfort and reassure us as we walk through the inevitable hardships and trials that come our way (Is. 43:2). Though we may be uncertain of the future, we can move forward with confidence, knowing the ever-present God walks beside us (Deut. 31:6).

10. HOW DOES THE NAME "I AM" (EX. 3:14) SPEAK TO BOTH GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE? HOW SHOULD THIS SHAPE THE WAY WE RELATE TO HIM?

11. WHERE DO YOU NEED TO APPLY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD IS "I AM" (EX. 3:14)? WHAT WOULD REMEMBERING THIS TRUTH BRING TO THAT SITUATION?

"In the whirlwind of our doubts and trials, we find our anchor in the One who simply is."

– RC Sproul

Ex. 3:14 – The divine name "I AM" is rendered in most English Bibles as "the LORD" (e.g., Ex. 3:15, 16, 18), printed in all capital letters to mark its uniqueness. In Hebrew, it comes from the verb "to be" and is transliterated YHWH. Theologians refer to this title as the tetragrammaton.

Though God fully revealed His plan, Moses continued to wrestle with doubt. In response, God graciously addresses Moses' uncertainty, reminding him that he will not be alone or unequipped.

12. WHAT FEAR DOES MOSES EXPRESS (EX. 4:1)? HOW DO THE SIGNS GOD PROVIDES ADDRESS IT (EX. 4:2-9, 17)?

13. WHAT IS MOSES' NEXT OBJECTION (EX. 4:10)? HOW DOES GOD REPLY (EX. 4:11-12)? WHY SHOULD THIS REASSURE MOSES?

14. WHAT IS MOSES' FINAL PLEA (EX. 4:13)? HOW DOES GOD REACT (EX. 4:14)? WHAT SOLUTION DOES GOD OFFER (EX. 4:14-16)?

15. WHAT DOES THE ENTIRE DIALOGUE DEMONSTRATE ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER (EX. 3:11-4:17)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

DIGGING DEEPER

Despite having received a commission directly from God (Ex. 3:10), Moses immediately focuses on his own limitations. He questions his identity (Ex. 3:11), calling (Ex. 3:13), authority (Ex. 4:1), and ability (Ex. 4:10), eventually begging God to "send someone else" (Ex. 4:13). However, with each protest, God patiently responds, repeatedly reassuring Moses of His presence (Ex. 3:12), power (Ex. 4:2-9), and provision (Ex. 4:14-16).

This moment reveals how God works. He doesn't call the equipped. Instead, He equips the called (2 Cor. 3:5-6). This is still true today. Whether it's serving in the church, sharing the gospel at work, or stepping into discipleship, we often feel insufficient and unqualified. Thankfully, just like with Moses, God answers our insecurities with grace and kindness (Ps. 103:13-14), promising to meet our needs (Phil. 4:19) and remain by our side (Matt. 28:20).

"God's signs to Moses were acts of covenantal assurance, showing that He equips those He sends with power to fulfill His will."
— Joel Beeke

"God's covenantal promises are grounded in His own character, assuring His people that He will not fail to accomplish His saving purposes."
— Geerhardus Vos

"True spiritual maturity is marked not by a lack of doubt, but by the willingness to obey God despite our doubts."

– Tim Keller

"Readiness for God's work includes holiness and obedience."

– Thomas Manton

16. WHAT MINISTRY OR RELATIONSHIP IS GOD CALLING YOU TO? WHAT INSECURITIES POTENTIALLY HINDER OR PREVENT YOUR FULL INVESTMENT?

17. HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME YOUR DOUBTS OR EXCUSES? HOW DOES GOD'S PRESENCE, POWER, AND PROVISION EMPOWER AND ENABLE YOU?

READ EXODUS 4:18-31

After 40 years in Midian, Moses receives Jethro's blessing to return to Egypt. God reassures him that those who sought his life are now gone, and Moses sets out with his wife and sons, ready to obey God's call.

18. WHAT WARNING DOES GOD GIVE MOSES ABOUT PHARAOH (V. 21)? HOW DOES HE COMMAND MOSES TO RESPOND (VV. 22-23)?

19. WHY DOES GOD "[SEEK] TO PUT [MOSES] TO DEATH" (V. 24)? WHAT LEADS TO HIS "[LETTING] HIM ALONE" (V. 26)?

20. WHAT DOES THIS SCENE TEACH US ABOUT GOD'S EXPECTATION FOR HIS PEOPLE (VV. 24-26)? WHY WOULD GOD TEACH MOSES THIS LESSON NOW?

Ex. 4:18 – Jethro is also called "Reuel" (Ex. 2:18). Most commentators believe Reuel is his personal name, and Jethro, which can be translated "his excellence," is a title.

Ex. 4:20 – The change in description from "your staff" (v. 2) to "the staff of God" shows that God takes ordinary tools and uses them for extraordinary purposes.

Ex. 4:24 – Though it may seem uncertain in English, the original Hebrew is clear that it is Moses, the covenant head, who was to die, not his son.

DIGGING DEEPER

On the way back to Egypt, Moses' journey is abruptly interrupted by a sobering episode. Because he had failed to circumcise his son, God "sought to put [Moses] to death" (v. 24). While this might seem extreme, circumcision was the sign of God's covenant people (Gen. 17:10-14), and Moses' negligence was a serious violation.

In response, Zipporah circumcised their son, ultimately halting God's judgment (v. 26). After, she touched the foreskin to Moses' feet to symbolically acknowledge her husband's guilt. When she subsequently refers to Moses as a "bridegroom of blood" (v. 25), she's either expressing frustration with the ritual or relief that Moses was spared. Regardless, she clearly understood that this act of obedience turned aside God's anger.

Though this moment may seem bizarre and random, it serves as a reminder of God's desire for obedience from His people. God's earlier promises didn't entail that Moses was free to disregard God's commands. It also shows us that He is not endlessly accommodating or mindlessly forgiving. He is holy and requires obedience from those who desire to follow Him.

21. WHERE ARE YOU DELAYING OR NEGLECTING OBEDIENCE? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE MOTIVATE YOU TO RESPOND MORE IMMEDIATELY TO GOD'S COMMANDS?

"True obedience is swift obedience."
– Jonathan Edwards

Just as Moses approaches Egypt, God takes deliberate steps to ensure His plan moves forward. In Exodus 4:27-31, key figures, including Aaron, respond to His call, setting the stage for the mission ahead.

22. WHERE DOES AARON "MEET MOSES" (V. 27)? WHAT DOES MOSES SHARE WITH AARON DURING THEIR MEETING (V. 28)?

23. WHO "GATHERED TOGETHER" (V. 29) TO LISTEN TO "AARON [SPEAK]" (V. 30)? HOW DO THEY RESPOND (VV. 30-31)? WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

"The Israelites' response reveals a collective recognition of God's intervention, marking a pivotal moment of corporate faith and covenant renewal."
– Bruce Waltke

Ex. 4:27 – The "mountain of God" refers to Mount Horeb, which is also known as Mount Sinai (e.g. Deut. 5:2; 1 Kings 19:8). God would later give the Ten Commandments here (Ex. 19-20).

"God's calling is a gracious summons that breaks the chains of earthly security, inviting us into a holy adventure that demands faith and trust beyond our own abilities."
— John Calvin

CONCLUSION

Exodus 3:1-4:31 visibly depicts the way God works in our lives. Just like with Moses, He calls us out of comfort (Ex. 3:1-10), gently encourages when we doubt (Ex. 3:11-4:17), lovingly corrects when we stray (Ex. 4:24-26), and remains faithful as we obey (Ex. 4:18-23, 27-31).

24. WHAT ASPECT OF GOD'S WORK DESCRIBED ABOVE SEEMS MOST CHALLENGING OR ENCOURAGING TO YOU RIGHT NOW? WHY?

25. HOW CAN YOU RESPOND TO GOD IN THAT AREA? BE SPECIFIC.

WEEK 4

FROM BAD TO WORSE

EXODUS 6:6

Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."

EXODUS 5:1-7:13

INTRODUCTION

Having been commissioned by God to deliver His people, Moses returns to Egypt to confront Pharaoh. However, instead of freeing the Hebrew slaves, Pharaoh increases their burden, prompting discouragement and doubt. In response, God reaffirms His covenant and declares that He will redeem His people with a “strong hand” (Ex. 6:1) despite Pharaoh's increasingly “hardened” (Ex. 7:13) heart.

READ EXODUS 5:1-23

Moses and Aaron likely met with Pharaoh a few days after gathering with “the elders... of Israel” (Ex. 4:29). Though their initial request is modest, Pharaoh responds harshly, displaying his defiance of God's authority.

1. WHAT DO MOSES AND AARON ASK PHARAOH TO ALLOW ISRAEL TO DO (VV. 1, 3)? WHY DOES PHARAOH REFUSE (VV. 2, 4-5)?

2. HOW DOES PHARAOH INCREASE ISRAEL'S SUFFERING (VV. 6-9, 10-14)?

“Ignorance and contempt of God are at the bottom of all the wickedness that is in the world.”
– Matthew Henry

DIGGING DEEPER

When Pharaoh asks, “Who is the LORD” (v. 2), he arrogantly implies that no authority stands above himself. His conceit exposes a misplaced confidence in Egypt's power and sets the stage for a dramatic display of God's superiority (Ex. 7:14-12:32).

Pharaoh's pride isn't confined to ancient Egypt. Our culture reflects his defiance whenever it dismisses God's Word as burdensome, irrelevant, or worthless (Rom. 1:21-23; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Like with Pharaoh, this attitude reveals a desire for self-rule and invites a hopeless confrontation with a God who will not be ignored or mocked (Gal. 6:7).

As Christians, we are called instead to “obey [God's] voice” (v. 2), recognizing that submission leads to flourishing (Ps. 1:1-3) and resistance leads to ruin (Prov. 14:12). This type of obedience is not burdensome, but the pathway to abundant and true life (Jn. 10:10; 1 Jn. 5:3).

3. HOW IS PHARAOH'S ATTITUDE REFLECTED IN THE PRIORITIES AND VALUES OF OUR CULTURE? HOW HAS IT LED TO RUIN?

4. WHERE ARE YOU TEMPTED TO IGNORE OR DISMISS GOD'S COMMANDS? WHY? HOW CAN YOU "OBEY HIS VOICE" (V. 2) INSTEAD?

*"Genuine love for
God manifests itself
in obedience to
His commandments."
– RC Sproul*

4

Though the Bible doesn't specify the exact quota, ancient Egyptian records suggest each Hebrew slave was responsible for making roughly 200-300 bricks over a full workday. With the added burden of sourcing their own material from all over Egypt, Pharaoh's new mandate became impossible to complete. This shows his goal wasn't productivity but cruelty. It was a calculated effort to crush the spirit of God's people and force them into submission.

5. WHAT COMPLAINT DO THE ISRAELITE FOREMEN BRING TO PHARAOH (VV. 15-16)? HOW DOES PHARAOH RESPOND (VV. 17, 18)?

6. WHY DO THE FOREMEN BLAME MOSES AND AARON (VV. 20-21)?

*"The foremen's blame
arises from despair and
doubt rather than from
reasoned reflection
on God's promises."
– Jonathan Edwards*

7. HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND TO ISRAEL'S DETERIORATING CONDITIONS (VV. 22-23)? WHAT DO HIS ACCUSATIONS OF GOD REVEAL ABOUT HIS OUTLOOK?

Ex. 5:6 – The "foremen" were Hebrew supervisors appointed by the Egyptians to enforce labor quotas. When production lagged, they were beaten, revealing Egypt's tactic of controlling Israel through internal division.

Ex. 5:7 – "Straw" was essential in the brick-making process because it provided structural integrity. Without it, mud bricks would crack when drying.

*"Obedience is the
proving ground of faith."
– AW Pink*

*"The repetition in these
verses is like the echo
of a mighty trumpet,
declaring that God's
salvation is both sure
and unstoppable."
– Charles Spurgeon*

DIGGING DEEPER

After being confronted by the Israelite foremen, Moses complained that his obedience had led not to deliverance, but instead to deeper suffering (v. 23). Even worse, he accused God of "[doing] evil to [His] people" (v. 22). Moses' response shows that he expected his faithfulness to God to be rewarded with immediate ease and success.

We often carry this same assumption, believing that doing the right thing should lead to blessing or resolution. However, the Bible repeatedly shows us that this isn't always the case (Job 1:20-22; Ps. 73:12-14). Like with Moses, obedience may lead to greater hardship or opposition (2 Tim. 3:12).

In light of this, we must strive to base our obedience not in our preferred outcomes, but in love for God (Jn. 14:15). This ensures that our submission to His commands will endure even when life feels unfair, prayers seem unanswered, or faithfulness appears to make things worse (Hab. 1:2-4; 2 Cor. 12:7-9; Jer. 20:7-9).

8. WHEN HAS FAITHFULNESS TO GOD LED TO HARDSHIP IN YOUR LIFE? HOW DID THAT EXPERIENCE SHAPE THE WAY YOU VIEW THE PURPOSE OF OBEDIENCE?

9. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP A LOVE FOR GOD THAT IS INDEPENDENT OF THE PREFERRED OUTCOMES WE MIGHT HOPE FOR? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

READ EXODUS 6:1-27

Instead of responding to Moses' accusation and doubt with anger, God patiently reaffirms His covenant and reiterates His plan. In doing so, He provides more profound meaning to His name, "the LORD" (vv. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8), by tying it to decisive, redemptive action.

10. HOW WILL GOD "DELIVER... AND... REDEEM" (V. 6) HIS PEOPLE (VV. 1, 6-8)? WHAT DOES THE REPETITION OF "I WILL" (VV. 6, 7, 8) EMPHASIZE?

11. HOW DOES GOD IDENTIFY HIMSELF TO MOSES (VV. 2-3)? WHAT PROMISE DOES GOD REMIND HIM OF (VV. 4-5)?

12. WHY DO THE ISRAELITES “NOT LISTEN TO MOSES” (V. 9)? WHAT DOES THIS INDICATE ABOUT THEIR FAITH IN GOD (CF. EX. 4:31)?

13. WHY DOES GOD REPEAT HIS COMMAND DESPITE MOSES’ RESISTANCE (VV. 10-13)? WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT GOD’S RESOLVE?

DIGGING DEEPER

Once hopeful and worshipful (Ex. 4:31), the Israelites now have a “broken spirit” (v. 9) and are unwilling to “listen to Moses” (v. 9). This sudden shift occurs because their experience of “harsh slavery” (v. 9) overshadowed the truth that God had seen their affliction and had come to intervene (Ex. 2:24-25; 4:31). In other words, their immediate reality of suffering blinded them to the promises and presence of God, causing discouragement and doubt.

We often fall into a similar way of thinking. When setbacks or suffering come, we’re tempted to let what we see determine what we believe (Ps. 42:3). Though this may seem natural, this pattern must actively be reversed (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1). Instead of letting circumstances dictate our faith, our theology – what God has revealed about His character and promises – must inform how we interpret our reality (Is. 40:8). As we do this, we will gain the ability to view life through the lens of God’s unchanging truth (Heb. 13:8), allowing us to remain anchored in certainty rather than being tossed and overwhelmed by shifting circumstances (Jas. 1:2-4).

14. WHAT BIBLICAL TRUTH DO YOU NEGLECT OR QUESTION WHEN HARDSHIP COMES? WHY? HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IT REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCE?

“God’s self-identification highlights His eternal and unchanging nature, grounding Moses’ mission in the certainty of His covenantal promises.”
– John MacArthur

“Hardship challenges our faith but also offers the opportunity to affirm the sufficiency and faithfulness of God’s Word.”
– John Stott

*"When life presses in,
Scripture must
press harder."
– John Piper*

*"Moses and Aaron stand
as God's appointed
servants – one as
prophet to declare His
will, the other as priest to
represent His people."
– Herman Bavinck*

15. WHERE IS YOUR LIFE BEING SHAPED MORE BY CIRCUMSTANCE THAN BY SCRIPTURE? HOW CAN YOU REVERSE YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN THAT SITUATION?

Though it may seem like an interruption, the genealogy in Exodus 6:14-27 roots Moses and Aaron in Israel's history, affirming their legitimacy as God's chosen leaders. At the same time, given that the tribe of "Levi" (v. 16) received no land inheritance (Gen. 49:5-8) and Moses was not the firstborn in his family, it subtly emphasizes that leadership arises from God's grace rather than human pedigree.

16. WHAT DOES THE GENEALOGY AFFIRM ABOUT MOSES AND AARON (VV. 26-27)? WHY IS IT INCLUDED AT THIS POINT IN THE NARRATIVE?

READ EXODUS 6:28-7:13

Though Moses repeats his hesitancy and insecurity, God again responds by affirming His plan and empowering Moses and Aaron. These verses mark a turning point in the narrative from Moses' internal struggle to God's external intervention, initiating God's confrontation with Pharaoh.

17. WHAT ROLES DOES GOD ASSIGN TO MOSES AND AARON (EX. 6:28-7:2)? WHY IS THIS DIVISION NOTEWORTHY?

18. HOW WILL GOD BRING HIS PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT (EX. 7:3-4)? WHAT DOES GOD SAY IS HIS PURPOSE IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS PLAN THIS WAY (EX. 7:5)?

Ex. 6:14-16 – This genealogy lists Reuben and Simeon by birth order but then focuses on Levi's descendants, including Moses and Aaron, since only their lineage is relevant.

Ex. 6:28-30 – These verses repeat the same event from Exodus 6:10-13. This type of narrative repetition was a common ancient Near Eastern literary technique used to emphasize a pivotal moment.

Ex. 7:11-12 – The magicians' ability to turn their staffs into snakes reveals Egypt's real but limited occult power, permitted by God to display His supreme authority.

19. WHAT HAPPENS WITH AARON'S STAFF (EX. 7:10-12)? WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT AARON'S STAFF "SWALLOWED UP [THE MAGICIANS']" (EX. 7:12)?

20. WHY DOES PHARAOH'S HEART REMAIN "HARDENED" (EX. 7:13) DESPITE BEING PROVIDED WITH THE "MIRACLE" (EX. 7:9) HE DEMANDED?

*"This sign establishes the foundational truth that God's revelation and power cannot be counterfeited or overcome by human trickery."
— John Frame*

DIGGING DEEPER

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is one of the most challenging concepts in Exodus. Simultaneously, the Bible affirms that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34) and that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17).

Because both of these realities are concurrently asserted, two things are made clear. First, Pharaoh was not a neutral figure passively overtaken by God's will, but a morally responsible agent who willfully resisted God. Second, God was not reacting randomly to Pharaoh's whims. Instead, God was accomplishing His will through Pharaoh's rebellion in order to reveal His power and proclaim His name (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17).

This tension has historically raised a difficult question. If God had any role in hardening Pharaoh's heart, was it unjust for Him to judge Pharaoh? While that concern is understandable, it misinterprets both the nature of Pharaoh's sin and the character of God.

To start, God was not arbitrary or impulsive (Ps. 89:14; Hab. 1:12). In fact, His action was the measured response of a holy and just God to oppression and wickedness (Ps. 7:11; Rom. 12:19). Additionally, in judging Pharaoh, God upheld the moral order of the world He created (Gen. 1:31; Rom. 1:18) and vindicated the suffering of His people (Ex. 3:7-8). If He were to allow such rampant evil to go unpunished, it would be a denial of His character (Nah.1:2).

Ultimately, God's "judgment" (Ex. 7:4) of Pharaoh and Egypt stands as a testament to His justice and wrath (Rom. 2:5). While these aspects of His character should cause us to fear Him (Prov. 1:7), they should also serve as a comfort, reminding us that God will not allow evil to go unpunished (2 Thess. 1:6-9). Regardless of how entrenched the arrogant and wicked are in the world, they cannot stand before a righteous God, whose zeal to avenge His people will not be thwarted (Ps. 94:23).

Ex. 4:21 – God announces in advance that He will harden Pharaoh's heart.

Ex. 7:13 – The first statement that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, occurring before the plagues escalate.

Ex. 9:12 – The first time God is attributed with hardening Pharaoh's heart happens after his repeated refusals.

"God's hardening is the righteous reinforcement of a will that has already rejected Him."
 – DA Carson

21. HOW DOES THE CONCEPT OF PHARAOH'S HARDENED HEART AFFIRM GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY WITHOUT VIOLATING HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY?

22. WHY ARE GOD'S JUSTICE AND WRATH A COMFORT TO US? HOW SHOULD THIS AFFECT THE WAY WE VIEW EVIL IN THE WORLD TODAY?

CONCLUSION

In Exodus 5:1-7:13, God patiently and powerfully presses forward with His redemptive plan, despite Moses' continued insecurity, Pharaoh's stubborn resistance, and Israel's despairing spirit. This section reminds us that God's faithfulness is not conditioned on our strength or wisdom, but actually secured in His unchanging character and covenant promises.

23. HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PATIENCE AND POWER ENCOURAGE YOU IN TIMES OF INSECURITY OR DOUBT? WHERE DO YOU NEED TO APPLY THIS TODAY?

24. HOW CAN YOU ALLOW GOD'S CHARACTER AND PROMISES TO RESHAPE YOUR PERSPECTIVE? WHY IS HE WORTHY OF YOUR TRUST?

"The Christian is a man who can be certain about the ultimate even when he is most uncertain about the immediate."
 – Martyn Lloyd-Jones

WEEK 5

GOD GOES TO WAR

EXODUS 7:16

And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews,
sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go ..."'

EXODUS 7:14-11:10

INTRODUCTION

From the very first clash between Moses and Pharaoh, Exodus presents the plagues as far more than acts of retribution (Ex. 12:12; Num. 33:4; 2 Sam. 7:23). When Pharaoh initially scoffed, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?” (Ex. 5:2), the stage was set for a theological war in which each plague would become a public verdict against one of Egypt’s supposed protectors.

To ensure the plagues are read and understood as a singular unit, we’ll depart slightly from our standard format, taking a broad look at the entire section before examining a few other key themes. This approach will help us understand the plagues not simply as isolated punishments aimed at pressuring Pharaoh, but as a deliberate, unified campaign of divine warfare designed to demonstrate God’s supreme authority.

THE TEN PLAGUES

Though the exact timeline isn’t specified in the biblical account, the plagues likely unfolded over the course of about six months. During this time, they affected every part of Egyptian life, crippling its economy, destroying its religion, and unraveling its social order.

Though easy to overlook, most commentators agree that the plagues are structured in three cycles of three, with the first two in each series preceded by warnings and the third arriving unannounced. This pattern emphasizes God’s escalating wrath and highlights Pharaoh’s growing resistance. The tenth and final plague stands alone, bringing decisive judgment and final deliverance.

1. DESCRIBE AND EXPLAIN EACH OF THE PLAGUES. NOTE ANY UNIQUE DETAILS.

EXODUS 7:14-25

EXODUS 8:1-15

As you work through each plague, pay special attention to who is impacted, how God warns Egypt, and what Pharaoh does in response.

Ex. 7:14-11:10 – The plagues represent a reversal of creation. In Genesis 1, God brings order from chaos, separating light from darkness, water from land, etc. Here, creation descends into disorder, as darkness returns, waters bring death, and animals and insects assert dominion.

Ex. 7:14-11:10 – Several plagues are repeated in Revelation (e.g. Rev. 16:4, 10, 13, 21), suggesting a paradigm of God’s final judgment and salvation.

EXODUS 8:16-19

EXODUS 8:20-32

EXODUS 9:1-7

EXODUS 9:8-12

EXODUS 9:13-35

EXODUS 10:1-20

EXODUS 10:21-29

EXODUS 11:1-10

*"With just His finger,
God confounds the wise,
dissolves the proud,
and makes His enemies
unwilling witnesses
to His glory."
– Thomas Watson*

5

*"The darkness was
not only physical but a
parable of judgment. It
exhibits what is to be
without God."
– Charles Spurgeon*

**2. WHAT REPEATED PHRASES OR WORDS DO YOU NOTICE IN THE PLAGUE NARRATIVE?
WHAT DOES THE REPETITION EMPHASIZE OR HIGHLIGHT?**

"The exodus was not simply a rescue mission. It was also a war, and every plague was a targeted missile aimed at Egypt's false deities."
– RC Sproul

"Recognizing God's superiority is the foundation of all worship."
– Tim Keller

Egypt prided itself on being the epitome of prosperity and sophistication. Every sphere of life, including water, soil, sky, and livestock, among others, was believed to be governed by a deity who, with Pharaoh, sustained the cosmic order.

Because of this, the plagues function as a carefully calibrated polemic in which God exposed the impotence of Egypt's pantheon and dismantled the cultural confidence that rested on them. In the end, God not only freed Israel, but decisively struck the world's foremost power.

3. HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING EGYPT'S WORLDVIEW HELP US BETTER GRASP GOD'S INTENTION IN SENDING THE PLAGUES?

4. WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE THROUGH A PROLONGED PROCESS INSTEAD OF AN IMMEDIATE RESCUE (EX. 7:17; 9:14-16; 10:1-2; 11:9)?

DIGGING DEEPER

God's judgment of Egypt challenges us to examine our own lives. While we may not invoke the names of ancient deities, we are no less tempted to trust in false gods to provide approval, comfort, control, and power (Ezek. 14:3). However, like Egypt's false gods, these substitutes will ultimately prove powerless in the presence of the living God (Is. 2:18-21; Hab. 2:18-20).

The plagues remind us that God is not only mighty to judge, but also merciful to save (Ps. 106:8). He alone commands creation (Ps. 135:6-7), directs history (Dan. 4:35), and provides satisfaction (Ps. 16:11), making Him worthy of our full allegiance and wholehearted worship (Deut. 6:5).

5. HOW DOES SEEING GOD'S SUPERIORITY OVER THE FALSE GODS OF EGYPT ENCOURAGE YOU TO GIVE HIM YOUR ALLEGIANCE AND WORSHIP?

Ex. 7:14-11:10 – For a fuller exploration of how the plagues function as acts of divine warfare against Egypt's gods, see Appendix A on page 54.

Ex. 7:14-11:10 – Though Egypt's official records are unsurprisingly silent on the plagues, the Ipuwer Papyrus, discovered in the early 1800s, describes a time of bloodied rivers, failed crops, and widespread death.

GOD'S MERCY AND PHARAOH'S PRIDE

Throughout the plagues, God's righteous judgment against sin is contrasted with His astonishing patience and mercy toward the sinner. This tension highlights God's desire for repentance, as well as His compassionate restraint, even while He brings justice.

6. HOW DO GOD'S WARNINGS TO PHARAOH AND EGYPT REFLECT HIS PATIENCE (EX. 7:15; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:1)?

7. WHAT DO MOSES' INTERCESSIONS FOR EGYPT AND GOD'S CONCESSIONS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT GOD'S MERCY (EX. 8:8-13, 28-31; 9:27-33; 10:16-19)?

8. WHAT DO THESE MOMENTS TEACH US ABOUT GOD'S DESIRE FOR REPENTANCE AND WILLINGNESS TO EXTEND MERCY?

*"God's judgments serve
as calls to repentance,
inviting sinners back into
covenant fellowship."
– Herman Bavinck*

DIGGING DEEPER

Despite the way it initially seems, God's judgment in the plagues is neither cruel or impulsive. Instead, it's deliberate and restrained, consistently aimed at producing repentance. However, with the passing of each plague, Pharaoh increasingly chooses to "[harden] his heart" (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34), resisting the patience and mercy of God.

His example stands as a warning to us. While it comes in many forms and often intensifies over time, God's discipline functions as His means of prompting us to repent (Rev. 3:19). Just as Pharaoh ignored God's warnings and suffered greater consequences, we also risk escalating discipline when we disregard His early calls to repentance.

If we want to avoid the more destructive and painful effects of sin, we must develop an awareness of God's initial means of getting our attention. This often occurs when we feel convicted after listening to a sermon (Acts 2:37), challenged through Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17), or corrected by a godly friend (Gal. 6:1). If we respond humbly and quickly to these seemingly insignificant promptings, we can be spared from the downward spiral that's so often associated with unchecked sin (Jas. 5:20).

*"God's wounds cure,
but sin's kisses kill."
— William Gurnall*

9. HOW DOES GOD'S PATIENCE AND MERCY ENCOURAGE YOU WHEN FACING DISCIPLINE OR CORRECTION?

10. WHERE MIGHT GOD BE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION? HOW CAN YOU RESPOND HUMBLY AND QUICKLY TO HIS DISCIPLINE?

Pharaoh's responses to the plagues reveal more than stubbornness. Even more, they expose a heart that is unwilling to submit to God. Though he sometimes uses the language of repentance, his remorse proves to be short-lived and self-serving.

11. HOW DOES PHARAOH RESPOND ONCE GOD PROVIDES RELIEF FROM THE FROGS AND FLIES (EX. 8:12-15, 29-32)? WHAT PATTERN BEGINS TO EMERGE?

12. HOW DOES PHARAOH RESPOND TO THE HAIL AND LOCUSTS (EX. 9:27-28; 10:16-17)? HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO HIS EVENTUAL ACTION (EX. 9:34-35; 10:19-20)?

*"Pharaoh's actions
demonstrate how the
heart can be deceived
by temporary relief,
mistaking it for
true change."
— John Owen*

DIGGING DEEPER

Pharaoh's tragic pattern of temporary remorse and hardened rebellion underscores a vital spiritual truth for us to take note of. It's possible to feel sorry for sin's consequences without ever truly repenting of the sin itself or turning to God in faith.

Paul refers to this as a distinction between "godly grief... [and]... worldly grief" (2 Cor. 7:10). Worldly grief is often reactive. It arises in crisis, seeks to manage consequences, and fades when given relief, eventually "[producing] death" (2 Cor. 7:10). In contrast, godly grief flows from conviction. It humbly acknowledges guilt, turns to God for mercy, and produces obedience, ultimately "[leading] to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).

13. HOW CAN YOU DISCERN WHETHER YOUR RESPONSE TO SIN IS “GODLY GRIEF... [OR]... WORLDLY GRIEF” (2 COR. 7:10)?

“The tears of godly sorrow are the seed of lasting holiness and reconciliation with God.”
– Stephen Charnock

COUNTERFEIT POWER

The Egyptian “magicians” (Ex. 7:22; 8:7, 18, 19; 9:11) served as advisors to Pharaoh, protectors of tradition, and defenders of Egypt’s gods. The “secret arts” (Ex. 7:22; 8:18) they used involved a mix of crafty illusions and demonic sorcery. Their presence reflects how deeply intertwined religion and politics were in Egypt.

14. WHAT DOES THE MAGICIANS’ REPLICATION OF THE FIRST TWO PLAGUES REVEAL ABOUT THEIR POWER (EX. 7:22; 8:7)?

15. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT THE MAGICIANS CAN IMITATE BUT NOT REVERSE THE PLAGUES? WHAT DOES THIS SUGGEST ABOUT THEIR ABILITY?

“The magicians’ powers are imitative and limited, while God’s judgments are sovereign and irreversible.”
– Ligon Duncan

16. WHAT DO THE MAGICIANS CONFESS FOLLOWING THEIR FAILURE TO PRODUCE GNATS (EX. 8:18-19)? WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

17. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MAGICIANS DURING THE PLAGUE OF BOILS (EX. 9:11)? HOW DOES THEIR END EXEMPLIFY THE LIMITATION OF THEIR POWER?

Ex. 7:14-11:10 – As the plagues intensified, Pharaoh became increasingly isolated. Not only do the magicians recognize God’s unassailable power (Ex. 8:19), but his own officials recognize the futility of resistance (Ex. 10:7). By the seventh plague, several Egyptians feared God and heeded His warnings (Ex. 9:20). In the end, a “mixed multitude” (Ex. 12:38) would depart with Israel.

*"False gods attract because they never demand surrender."
– John MacArthur*

*"God's providential care reveals His wisdom and love, assuring believers that He governs all things for their good."
– Charles Hodge*

DIGGING DEEPER

While the Egyptian magicians initially appear able to match Moses and Aaron, their "secret arts" (Ex. 7:22; 8:18) quickly reach a limit. By the third plague, they fail to replicate what they reluctantly acknowledge as the "finger of God" (Ex. 8:19). Eventually, they are struck with boils and are unable to "stand before Moses" (Ex. 9:11). Once arrogant opponents of God, they are ultimately rendered sidelined and silent.

The magicians' progressive decline offers a clear warning. Counterfeit powers can imitate truth but never equal or rival God's authority (Deut. 13:1-4). Though many things in life may appear powerful, persuasive, or even spiritual, we must recognize that they hold no true significance or value apart from God (Jer. 10:5). As Christians, we must be discerning and vigilant, being careful not to rely or rest on anything but God (Prov. 3:5-6). As we do, we will find that He is not only unmatched, but also trustworthy (Is. 40:25-26).

18. WHAT COUNTERFEIT POWERS EXIST TODAY? WHY DO THEY APPEAL TO OUR CULTURE? HOW CAN YOU DISCERN AND REJECT THESE INFLUENCES?

ISRAEL SET APART

"Goshen" (Ex. 8:22; 9:26) was a fertile region in northeastern Egypt where the Israelites settled in the time of Joseph (Gen. 45:10; 47:6). It provided a distinct space that allowed God's people to remain somewhat separate from the Egyptians. As the plagues increased in severity, God made a visible distinction between those living in this area and those who opposed Him.

19. WHY DOES GOD CHOOSE TO MAKE A VISIBLE DISTINCTION BETWEEN EGYPT AND GOSHEN (EX. 8:22-23; 9:4-7, 26; 10:23)?

20. WHAT DOES GOD'S SPECIAL CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE ABOUT HIS CHARACTER? WHY IS THIS A COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT?

Ex. 8:22 – God tells Pharaoh His protection of Israel wasn't just for His people. It would serve as a public sign of God's sovereign presence to Egypt.

DIGGING DEEPER

God's active distinction between Egypt and Israel is never portrayed as a response to His people's merit. In fact, they were last seen broken-spirited and unwilling to listen to Moses (Ex. 6:9). Instead, God's special care is rooted in His own covenant love (Deut. 7:7-8). This offers an important reminder that God's grace is given, not earned (Eph. 2:8-9). In other words, God's favor comes from His promises, not from our performance (2 Tim. 1:9).

This truth becomes especially vital when we're tempted to doubt God's presence or provision. Even when the world around us feels marked by confusion, loss, and turmoil, we can rest in the assurance that God remains faithful and true (Lam. 3:22-23). This is because what we see in Egypt is ultimately fulfilled in the gospel. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God decisively proves that His faithfulness is not fragile, and His care is not conditional (Rom. 8:38-39).

21. WHAT DOES GOD'S COVENANT LOVE PROVIDE US WITH? HOW CAN YOU MORE READILY CLING TO THESE DURING TIMES OF DISTRESS AND HARDSHIP?

CONCLUSION

Exodus 7:14-11:10 reveals that God is unmatched in power, unrivaled in authority, and unwavering in His covenant love. Every blow against Egypt was a decisive strike against false gods, false power, and false hope. In the end, God is exalted as the sovereign over all creation, whose word cannot be resisted and whose purposes will stand.

22. WHAT ASPECTS OF GOD'S CHARACTER ARE REVEALED IN THE PLAGUES? WHICH SEEMS MOST SIGNIFICANT TO YOU? WHY?

23. WHERE DO YOU NEED TO APPLY OR EMBRACE THAT ATTRIBUTE RIGHT NOW? HOW?

*"The believer has solid ground for hope not in fluctuating feelings, but in the unchanging covenant love of the Lord."
— JC Ryle*

*"God's righteousness and mercy are intertwined in the plagues, demonstrating His commitment to justice and salvation."
— John Stott*

APPENDIX A

DIVINE WARFARE

The ten plagues serve as powerful judgment that systematically dismantles Egypt's religious worldview by targeting the gods associated with each aspect of Egyptian nature and society.

The opening blow struck at the nation's heart. A source of commerce, irrigation, and transportation, the Nile was personified by Hapi. Turning the river to blood (Ex. 7:20-21) did more than spoil drinking water. It proclaimed that Hapi's life-giving sway had been revoked by a power he could neither anticipate or resist. The second plague weaponizes the frog, a creature associated with Heket, the midwife goddess of fertility. What had symbolized blessing is multiplied into a curse and forced the same priests who once protected the frogs' sanctity to shovel putrefying heaps of them outside the city (Ex. 8:1-6, 13-14).

When the dust of the land became gnats and the air swarmed with flies (Ex. 8:16-24), Geb, the earth-god, and Khepri, the god of revival, are humiliated. The death of livestock (Ex. 9:1-7) crippled Hathor and Apis, bovine emblems of maternal care and royal strength. As a result of these plagues, Egypt's wealth and food supply were decimated. Further, boils on magicians and nobles (Ex. 9:8-11) revealed that even Imhotep, patron of medicine and healing, could offer no remedy.

Next, God turns heaven itself against the empire. Hail mixed with fire (Ex. 9:18-26) hammered crops in the fields, mocking Nut, goddess of the sky, and Osiris, lord of grain and fertility. When any greenery that survived is devoured by clouds of locusts (Ex. 10:14-15), the land resembled a battlefield stripped by an occupying force. Then, for three interminable days, palpable darkness smothered the kingdom (Ex. 10:21-23). In a culture where Ra, the sun god, daily ascended as proof of cosmic reliability, the sun's sudden retreat is nothing less than the collapse of Egypt's metaphysical roof. Finally, the death of the firstborn (Ex. 11:1-10) struck the palace itself. Pharaoh, hailed as god incarnate and guarantor of life, is powerless to save his own heir.

Together, these acts were judgments "on all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12) and represented a deliberate unmasking of every rival to God. Because of this, the plagues read like a liturgy of warfare. Domain by domain, God seized the levers of creation and bent them against the very deities that claimed custodianship over them. What remained was a stunned empire and a liberated people, bearing witness to the fact that "the LORD is greater than all gods" (Ex. 18:11).

WEEK 6

PASSOVER

EXODUS 12:13

The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are.
And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will
befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

*"Just as creation
ordered time in Genesis,
so redemption reorders
it in Exodus."
– Herman Bavinck*

*"The blood on the
doorposts was not a
symbol of the Israelites'
morality or merit,
but of their trust in
God's provision."
– Tim Keller*

EXODUS 12:1-13:16

INTRODUCTION

For over 400 years, the Israelites lived under the heavy hand of Egyptian slavery and oppression. However, that dramatically changed in a single, decisive night. Redeemed by the "blood" (vv. 7, 13, 22, 23) of a lamb, God's people are delivered from God's wrath, by God's power, and for God's glory.

READ EXODUS 12:1-13

Having threatened a final plague (Ex. 11:4-6), God now turns His warning into action. However, before judgment falls on Egypt, God provides specific instructions for how His people can be spared. This demonstrates that even though God's justice is severe, His mercy is simultaneously abundant.

- 1. WHEN WERE THE ISRAELITES INSTRUCTED TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER (VV. 2-3, 6)? HOW DOES GOD DESCRIBE THE TIMING (V. 2)?**

- 2. WHAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS DID GOD GIVE FOR SELECTING THE LAMB (VV. 3-5)? WHY ARE THESE DETAILS NOTEWORTHY?**

- 3. WHAT ARE THE ISRAELITES REQUIRED TO EAT AND WEAR DURING THE PASSOVER (VV. 8-11)? WHAT DO THESE INSTRUCTIONS SYMBOLIZE?**

- 4. WHAT PREPARATIONS DID GOD COMMAND FOR THE HOME WHERE THE FEAST WAS HELD (V. 7)? WHY DID HE REQUIRE THIS (VV. 12-13)?**

5. HOW WOULD THE BLOOD SERVE AS A “SIGN” (V. 13) NOT JUST FOR GOD BUT FOR THE ISRAELITES? WHAT WOULD THIS EXERCISE TEACH THEM?

“This exercise instilled in Israel the necessity of obedience and the assurance that God honors the faith of His people.”
— Matthew Henry

6. WHAT IS GOD’S ROLE (VV. 12, 13)? WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

DIGGING DEEPER

Hebrew is an incredibly pictorial language. Because of this, we should expect to see word pictures in the Old Testament that carry deeper meaning than may be obvious at first. One example is the word translated “pass over” (v. 13). Elsewhere, this word is used to describe the hovering or fluttering that a mother bird makes as she protects her nest from predators (Is. 31:5).

Understanding this, when God “[passes] over” (v. 13) the blood-marked houses in Egypt, the wonder lies less in His movement and more in His protection. The image is of God placing Himself between the Israelites and the “destroyer” (v. 23), who, strikingly, is identified as God Himself (v. 12), in order to shield His people from judgment. In other words, God both executes justice and personally guards those who trust in His provision.

That paradox finds its fullest clarity at the cross. There, the Son stands between sinners and the Father’s righteous wrath, absorbing the judgment we deserved (Is. 53:4-6). Because of His substitutionary death, everyone sheltered by His blood is saved and brought into fellowship with the Father (Rom. 5:9-10). In this way, the gospel reveals the perfect harmony of God’s justice and mercy, as divine wrath is satisfied and grace is extended.

7. HOW DOES THE PARALLEL PRESENCE OF GOD’S JUSTICE AND MERCY DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHO HE IS?

“God’s justice and mercy are not in competition. They are harmonized in His being.”
— Joel Beeke

8. HOW CAN YOU RESPOND TO GOD’S PROTECTIVE PRESENCE IN SALVATION?

READ EXODUS 12:29-42

Though each of the previous plagues destroyed and disrupted the culture, economy, and religion of the Egyptian people, none of them came close to the devastation produced by the killing of the “firstborn” (v. 29). Passover shows us that God’s deliverance is a double-edged sword. While God showed incredible grace and mercy to the Israelites by allowing an innocent lamb to die in their place, He also dealt severely with the sins of Egypt.

9. WHAT SPECIFIC ACTION DOES GOD TAKE AT “MIDNIGHT” (V. 29)? WHO IS AFFECTED (VV. 29-30)? HOW DO THEY RESPOND (V. 30)?

10. HOW DOES PHARAOH REACT (VV. 31-32)? WHAT IS HIS FINAL REQUEST TO MOSES AND AARON (V. 32)?

6

“Pharaoh’s reluctant concession illustrates the power of God’s judgment to bring outward compliance even where repentance is absent.”

– Jonathan Edwards

DIGGING DEEPER

The tenth plague confronts us with the sobering reality of God’s judgment, forcing us to wrestle with how His goodness can coexist with such severity. While this tension cannot be fully erased, the broader witness of Scripture offers clarity and perspective.

To start, we must remember that Egypt and Pharaoh were not innocent. For centuries, they had ruthlessly oppressed and brutally enslaved Israel (Ex. 1:8-14), even committing heinous infanticide (Ex. 1:16). More recently, Pharaoh resisted God’s commands and hardened his heart (Ex. 7:13-14; 8:15, 32; 9:34). Despite this, God showed remarkable patience and mercy by giving Egypt multiple warnings, opportunities to repent, and relief when Pharaoh pleaded for it (Ex. 9:27-29). Judgment only came after prolonged resistance and repeated rejections of His mercy.

In response, we must allow humility to lead to trust. While our understanding is often limited, God’s wisdom is perfect (Is. 40:28). Though we may never fully understand His purposes, we must trust that His plans are always good (Deut. 32:4). Because He is sovereign and just, we can entrust even the weightiest matters to Him, knowing they are ultimately in the hands of a faithful and righteous God (Ps. 89:14).

Ex. 12:29 – The death of the “firstborn” happening exactly at “midnight” is highly significant both theologically and symbolically. In the ancient Near East, midnight often marked a pivotal moment of divine intervention or narrative transition.

11. WHY WAS GOD JUSTIFIED IN TAKING SUCH HARSH ACTION AGAINST EGYPT?

12. WHAT TRUTHS ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER CAN ROOT OR STABILIZE YOU WHEN HIS ACTIONS ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND?

13. HOW SHOULD HUMILITY AND TRUST IMPACT OUR VIEW OF SUFFERING AND DEATH? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE GROUNDED IN THESE CHARACTERISTICS?

Just as God declared (Ex. 11:1), Pharaoh urgently begs Moses and Aaron to leave Egypt immediately. After “430 years” (v. 41) of hardship and waiting, God proves Himself faithful, delivering His people with power and precision.

14. WHAT IMPACT DOES THE TENTH PLAGUE HAVE ON THE EGYPTIANS (VV. 33, 35-36)? HOW DOES THIS FULFILL GOD'S EARLIER PROMISE (CF. EX. 3:21-22)?

15. WHO AND WHAT LEAVE EGYPT (VV. 37-38)? WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THEIR DEPARTURE (VV. 34, 39)?

16. WHY IS THE PRESENCE OF A “MIXED MULTITUDE” (V. 38) SIGNIFICANT? HOW DOES IT FULFILL GOD'S STATED PURPOSE FOR THE PLAGUES (CF. EX. 7:5)?

“God's unchanging wisdom and goodness assure us that His actions, however mysterious, serve our ultimate good.”
— John Calvin

“The mixed multitude illustrates God's grace extending to outsiders.”
— JI Packer

*"Commemoration of
God's mighty deeds
anchors faith in
historical reality."
– John Stott*

READ EXODUS 12:14-28, 43-51; 13:1-16

In addition to rescuing His people, God also provides instruction for two feasts, meant to be remembered by future generations "forever" (Ex. 12:14). Though these feasts are intimately connected and eventually celebrated together (Lk. 22:1), they each highlight a different, but inseparable aspect of God's work.

"Passover" (Ex. 12:11, 27, 43, 48) focuses on God's act of deliverance through the blood of the lamb, and "Unleavened Bread" (Ex. 12:17) points to the holy, purified life that should follow salvation. Together, they form a complete picture of redemption and response.

17. WHY DID GOD COMMAND THE ISRAELITES TO MEMORIALIZE PASSOVER (EX. 12:24-27)? WHAT WOULD IT ENSURE IN FUTURE GENERATIONS?

18. WHAT FURTHER REGULATIONS DOES GOD PROVIDE FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF PASSOVER (EX. 12:43-49)? WHY WOULD GOD ADD THESE STIPULATIONS?

DIGGING DEEPER

Just as God instituted Passover so that Israel would always remember their redemption from Egypt (Ex. 12:14, 25-27), Jesus inaugurated the Lord's Supper so that we would regularly commemorate His sacrificial, substitutionary death (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Practically, GBC holds a Reformed view of communion that emphasizes remembrance and participation, as well as shared fellowship among believers. While there are no instructions provided in Scripture for the frequency with which churches should administer communion, we've chosen to celebrate on the second Sunday of each month. Our hope is that this allows us to consistently celebrate the giving of Jesus' body and blood without letting the practice become mechanical or routine.

Regardless, whenever we come to the table, we should do so with gratitude and reverence, remembering Jesus as the ultimate spotless Lamb. As often as we eat the new Passover meal, we remember a greater exodus, as God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13-14).

Ex. 12:44, 48 – The requirement of circumcision highlighted the importance of covenant faithfulness as the basis for inclusion. This maintained the Passover's holiness, while extending God's invitation beyond ethnic Israel.

19. HOW DOES COMMUNION PROVIDE A PHYSICAL EXPRESSION OF THE GOSPEL? HOW CAN YOU PROPERLY PARTAKE WITH GRATITUDE AND REVERENCE?

The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed immediately after Passover and lasted seven days. This feast not only commemorated the haste with which the Israelites fled Egypt, but also came to symbolize God's call to holiness.

20. WHAT INSTRUCTIONS DOES GOD PROVIDE FOR THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (EX. 12:15-16, 18-20; 13:3-10)? WHY (EX. 12:17; 13:14-16)?

DIGGING DEEPER

Throughout Scripture, leaven is often used as a symbol of sin and its pervasive power to corrupt (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Though small, leaven has disproportionate influence. Once introduced, it quietly spreads until the entire loaf is affected. Paul uses this imagery in Galatians 5:9 to warn that even a small compromise in attitude, behavior, or doctrine can impact both individuals and entire communities.

This is why the Feast of Unleavened Bread remains relevant today. Just as Israel was commanded to remove all leaven from their homes, believers are called to regularly examine their hearts, confess sin, and turn from it (Lam. 3:40). This practice of repentance is meant to be ongoing (Acts 3:19). Additionally, we are called to deal seriously and swiftly with all sin, including obvious or public transgressions (1 Cor. 5:1-5), as well as unseen evil rooted in our affections, motives, and thoughts (Jer. 17:9).

By continually cleansing ourselves from sin, we will not only grow in holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16), but also strengthen our fellowship with God and one another (1 Jn. 1:7). Even more, we become able to walk in the freedom Jesus has secured for us with His blood (Rom. 6:22), living as people truly set free from the power of sin (Gal. 5:1).

21. HOW CAN YOU CULTIVATE A HABIT OF REGULAR CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE? WHAT WILL THIS HELP YOU AVOID?

"Communion serves as a tangible reminder of the covenant of grace, engaging the senses to affirm gospel truths."
— BB Warfield

"Regular confession is the sword that cuts sin down before it takes root and grows."
— John Owen

"The demand for the firstborn is part of God's redemptive pedagogy, teaching that deliverance binds the people to Him in covenant loyalty."
 – Geerhardus Vos

"Our redemption is not an abstraction. It lays claim to our entire being and obligates us to live in newness of life."
 – John Murray

In addition to annual observance of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, God also commands Israel to "consecrate... the firstborn" (Ex 13:2). The word "consecrate" (Ex. 13:2) means to set apart and fully devote to God's purposes.

22. WHAT DOES GOD COMMAND REGARDING THE FIRSTBORN OF BOTH HUMANS AND ANIMALS (EX. 13:1-2, 11-13)? WHY (EX. 13:14-16)?

23. WHAT DOES GOD'S CLAIM TO EVERY "FIRSTBORN" (EX. 13:2) REVEAL ABOUT HIS AUTHORITY? HOW WOULD IT SHAPE ISRAEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR IDENTITY?

DIGGING DEEPER

Because God redeemed Israel, He rightfully commanded that every firstborn be consecrated to Him (Ex. 13:2). This establishes a pattern seen throughout Scripture. Redemption establishes ownership. In other words, when God saves someone, they're no longer their own. They belong to Him (1 Cor. 6:20).

Just as Israel was marked by God's deliverance, we are also identified by the redeeming work of Jesus (Eph. 1:7). Because of this, our lives are not autonomous (Rom. 14:7-9). Instead, they are to be offered back to God as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). This means that every aspect of our existence, including decisions, desires, priorities, and relationships, belongs under His lordship (2 Cor. 10:5).

That said, God's claim over us is not a burden (1 Jn. 5:3). Through the gospel, we are no longer slaves to sin, but are now invited to live under the gracious rule of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). As we strive to obey God, we are free from fear and guilt, motivated instead by gratitude and love (Col. 3:12-14). In the end, His authority doesn't confine us. It frees us to become who we were made to be (Gal. 5:1; Jn. 10:10).

24. HOW DOES REMEMBERING THAT YOU ARE "BOUGHT WITH A PRICE" (1 COR. 6:20) SHAPE THE WAY YOU VIEW YOUR DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES?

Ex. 13:2 – In Luke 2:22-23, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple to fulfill the Law's requirements (Num. 18:15-16) for the consecration of the "firstborn," signifying that Jesus belonged to God.

CONCLUSION

Typology refers to how God uses people, events, and institutions in the Old Testament to point to greater realities fulfilled in Jesus. Though these earlier types are real and meaningful in their own context, they also were designed by God to prepare His people to receive and recognize the Messiah (Col. 2:17).

Passover stands as a powerful type that foreshadows how God would ultimately deliver His people from spiritual slavery to sin through the blood of His Son. While we've already explored some of these connections, we'll conclude by examining how Passover profoundly illuminates key aspects of Jesus' person and work.

25. HOW DO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW JESUS FULFILLS AND SURPASSES THE ROLE OF THE PASSOVER LAMB?

EXODUS 12:5 / 1 PETER 1:18-19

EXODUS 12:7, 12-13 / ROMANS 3:23-25

EXODUS 12:46 / JOHN 19:33-36

EXODUS 13:14 / REVELATION 5:9-10

26. HOW DOES JESUS' FULFILLMENT OF THE PASSOVER CLARIFY THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH?

27. HOW SHOULD SEEING JESUS AS THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB SHAPE YOUR WORSHIP AND DAILY RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL?

"The shadows of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the substance of Christ.

Every type carries a divine purpose."

– AW Pink

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"To behold Christ crucified as the Passover Lamb is to be drawn into a worship that transforms the heart and life."

– William Gurnall

WEEK 7

EXODUS

ACCOMPLISHED

EXODUS 15:2-3

The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name.

EXODUS 13:17-15:21

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 13:17-15:21 marks the final step in Israel's escape from Egypt. Despite Israel's fear, God proves faithful to His promises, miraculously parting the Red Sea and conclusively defeating Pharaoh. In response, the people stand in awe and break into worship, celebrating God as their "strength and... salvation" (Ex. 15:2).

READ EXODUS 13:17-22

Having left Egypt behind, the Israelites begin their trek home under God's guidance. However, instead of taking the direct coastal route through Philistine territory, God led the Israelites southeast through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

1. WHY DOES GOD NOT LEAD HIS PEOPLE "BY WAY OF THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES" (V. 17)? WHERE DOES HE TAKE THEM INSTEAD (VV. 18, 20)?

2. WHAT DO THE ISRAELITES DO WITH JOSEPH'S "BONES" (V. 19)? WHY IS THIS DETAIL INCLUDED (CF. GEN. 50:24-25)?

"God chose not the shortest or safest route for Israel's journey, but one that would teach them dependence and obedience."

— John Calvin

DIGGING DEEPER

Though Israel had "six hundred thousand men" (Ex. 12:37) who were "equipped for battle" (v. 18), God chose not to lead them through the "land of the Philistines" (v. 17). He knew that His people were not ready to face the pressures of war and might be tempted to "return to Egypt" (v. 17).

However, God's decision to take them on the slower path was more than just a practical military move. It was part of a greater redemptive purpose. This route, along with the subsequent time spent wandering in the wilderness, allowed God to shape His people by deepening their dependence, exposing their fears, and teaching them to trust (Deut. 8:2-5). Had they reached their destination easily and quickly, they would've missed the transforming work needed to live as His covenant people in the Promised Land (Num. 14:22-23).

Like Israel, we may not always understand what God is doing during delayed or difficult seasons. While these periods often last longer than we desire or expect, we can always trust that God is leading us with purpose, working all things according to His pleasure and for our good (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:6).

3. WHERE ARE YOU SEEKING A QUICK, EASY SOLUTION? HOW MIGHT YOUR PLAN CONFLICT WITH WHAT GOD IS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH IN YOU?

4. WHAT DESIRES OR EXPECTATIONS KEEP YOU FROM FULLY TRUSTING GOD'S PURPOSES? HOW CAN YOU SURRENDER THESE TO HIM?

In Exodus 3:12, God promised Moses that He would be with the Israelites. While He has already shown His power in sending the plagues to Egypt, God continues to reveal His faithful presence to His people. In fact, throughout the events of Exodus, the “cloud... and... fire” (vv. 21, 22) accompany and signify God’s presence (Ex. 3:2; 16:10; 19:18; 40:38).

5. HOW ARE THE “PILLAR OF CLOUD... AND THE PILLAR OF FIRE” (V. 22) DESCRIBED? WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE (V. 21)?

6. WHAT DOES GOD'S CONTINUED PRESENCE WITH THE ISRAELITES REVEAL ABOUT HIS CHARACTER AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE?

7. WHAT WOULD GOD'S VISIBLE PRESENCE PROVIDE HIS PEOPLE? HOW WOULD THIS HELP THEM AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY TOWARD THE PROMISED LAND?

“We must let go of our grip on what we think is best to grasp firmly the hand of God leading us into unknown paths.”

– Charles Spurgeon

Ex. 13:19 – This fulfills Joseph's request to have his bones carried back to the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24-25). They serve as a symbol of continuity between the Israelites' arrival in and departure from Egypt.

Ex. 13:20 – “Etham” was not simply a geographical landmark but a spiritual threshold. It marked the boundary between Egypt's familiarity and the wilderness' uncertainty. From this point on, Israel would be sustained not by what they could plan or see, but by trusting in the presence and promises of God.

“God's omnipresence is a terror to His enemies, but a delight to His children.”

– Stephen Charnock

"Awareness of God's presence is the antidote to anxiety, fear, and self-reliance. It lifts us beyond our moment to God's eternal purposes."
 – Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"Pharaoh's pursuit becomes a testimony to the self-destructive power of unrepentant pride."
 – Herman Bavinck

DIGGING DEEPER

When we consider God's presence with us, we often wrongly picture Him offering a kind but unhelpful pat-on-the-back. This is the exact opposite of the image we're presented with in Exodus 13:21-22.

Though they had been supernaturally delivered, the Israelites are likely afraid and uncertain, surrounded by enemies and threatened by "war" (v. 17). Despite this, God does not hesitate or withdraw. Instead, He goes "before them" (v. 21) and promises to "not depart from" (v. 22) them, taking the form of a "pillar of cloud by day and... pillar of fire by night" (v. 22). To the Israelites, these physical, visible manifestations are not a passive consolation, but the very manifestation of God's protection and power (Ps. 121:5-8).

The same God who led the Israelites out of Egypt is leading us today (Rom. 15:4). Knowing that God is always going ahead of us changes everything. It means we're never walking into the unknown alone or hopeless (Deut. 31:8). Even when life feels confusing or uncertain, God's presence before us is a steady assurance that He has already prepared the way (Is. 45:2). This encourages us to surrender our anxieties (1 Pet. 5:7) and follow where He leads (Prov. 3:5-6).

8. HOW SHOULD GOD'S CONSTANT PRESENCE AFFECT OUR DAILY ATTITUDE AND OUTLOOK? WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE MORE AWARE OF IT?

9. WHEN ARE YOU MOST TEMPTED TO CONTROL THE FUTURE INSTEAD OF TRUSTING GOD? WHAT HABITS OR TRUTHS CAN REORIENT YOU IN THESE SITUATIONS?

READ EXODUS 14:1-31

God not only leads Israel along a slower route but also puts them in a vulnerable position. However, this maneuver is carefully orchestrated by God to showcase His power and to strengthen His people.

10. HOW DOES PHARAOH RESPOND TO THE ISRAELITES' FLEEING EGYPT (V. 5)? WHAT DOES HE DECIDE TO DO (VV. 6-9)?

11. WHAT IS THE ISRAELITES' REACTION WHEN THEY SEE "THE EGYPTIANS... MARCHING AFTER THEM" (V. 10)? WHY DO THEY BLAME MOSES (VV. 11-12)?

*"Panic causes spiritual amnesia. When faith flees, accusations rise."
— John Owen*

12. HOW DOES MOSES REACT TO THE PEOPLE'S FEAR (VV. 13-14)? WHAT DOES HIS CERTAINTY AND CONFIDENCE REVEAL ABOUT HIS TRUST IN GOD?

DIGGING DEEPER

Despite all that God had previously done, Israel's instinct was dread and panic as Pharaoh's army approached. In response, God reassured His people that He would "fight for [them]" (v. 14).

The idea that God fights for His people still holds weight today. To be clear, it doesn't mean we're spared hardship or guaranteed resolution. At times, His intervention looks less like escape and more like endurance. In others, His defense may come through sustaining grace, unexpected provision, or surprising strength. Regardless, while God's involvement in any situation may not be immediate or obvious, it is never absent.

In light of this, our response to fearful and overwhelming circumstances must be to remain steadfast, remembering that God calls us "to be silent" (v. 14). This is not a call to passivity, but an invitation to stop striving, resisting the urge to fix, flee, or force. It requires active dependence, which entails praying, remembering, submitting, and waiting. Though not easy, this is how we entrust ourselves to God, even when the way forward remains unclear.

13. HOW DOES KNOWING GOD "WILL FIGHT FOR YOU" (V. 14) ENCOURAGE YOU TO "STAND FIRM" (V. 13)? WHERE CAN YOU APPLY THIS TODAY?

*"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace so certain that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it."
— Martin Luther*

14. HOW CAN WE ACTIVELY TRUST GOD WHILE "[BEING] SILENT" (V. 14)? WHAT WILL DEPENDENCE AND SUBMISSION DEMAND? WHY IS IT WORTH IT?

"God's preservation of Israel demonstrates His power to save, compelling even the Egyptians to acknowledge His sovereignty."
 – BB Warfield

"Moses' song displays God as the mighty Savior who rescues His people with mercy and power."
 – JC Ryle

The Hebrew word used for "wall" (vv. 22, 29) typically refers to a fortified structure like those surrounding a large city. This imagery makes clear that God carved a path through a vast and deep body of water.

15. WHAT DOES GOD INSTRUCT MOSES TO DO (VV. 15-16)? HOW IS THAT COMMAND FULFILLED (VV. 21-22)?

16. WHAT DOES GOD SAY HE WILL DO TO THE EGYPTIANS (V. 17)? WHY DOES HE ACT IN THIS WAY (V. 18)?

17. HOW DOES GOD PROTECT ISRAEL (VV. 19-20, 23-25)? WHAT DID THE EGYPTIANS EVENTUALLY RECOGNIZE (V. 25)?

18. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE EGYPTIANS AS THEY PURSUE ISRAEL (VV. 26-28, 30)? HOW DO GOD'S PEOPLE REACT (V. 31)?

READ EXODUS 15:1-21

Following their miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea, the Israelites respond with a song of thanksgiving and worship to honor God for who He is and all He did for them.

19. WHAT ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN MOSES' SONG (VV. 1-18)? WHICH SEEMS MOST SIGNIFICANT OR RELEVANT TO YOU? WHY?

20. HOW DOES MIRIAM'S SONG CONNECT TO THE THEMES OF MOSES' SONG (VV. 20-21)? WHY IS THE FINAL REFRAIN INCLUDED?

"Miriam's song reinforces that God's salvation is meant to be shared and celebrated actively and collectively."
– Tim Keller

DIGGING DEEPER

When God delivered Israel through the Red Sea, the response was not individual but communal. Moses "and the people of Israel" (v. 1) sang together, lifting their voices in unified admiration and gratitude. Later, Miriam led "all the women" (v. 20) in song and celebration, joining the chorus with "tambourines and dancing" (v. 20). This scene underscores the corporate nature of worship. It wasn't just the leaders who responded. It was all of God's people who expressed awe, gratitude, and trust.

In the same way, we have the opportunity to praise God together every Sunday through song (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 10:24-25). Music uniquely helps us reflect on and remember God's "greatness" (Ex. 15:7) and "glorious deeds" (Ex. 15:11). Additionally, it gives us a shared vocabulary and voice to express the honor God is due (Ps. 100:1-2). As we sing week after week, these truths begin to take deeper root in each of our hearts and minds (Ps. 119:11).

Because of this, our highest goal in musical worship at GBC is the heartfelt and vigorous participation of the congregation. We believe the most important instrument in the room is the collective voice of God's people (Ps. 149:1). For that reason, we should all sing with sincerity and joy, not only to glorify God, but also to encourage one another and strengthen our unity (Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 14:26).

21. WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF CORPORATE WORSHIP? HOW DOES SINGING HELP US INTERNALIZE TRUTHS ABOUT GOD?

"Worship songs shape our theology as much as sermons."
– DA Carson

22. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT HINDER YOUR FULL PARTICIPATION IN MUSICAL WORSHIP? HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME OR REMOVE THOSE DISTRACTIONS?

Ex. 15:1-18 – Moses' song is widely recognized as the first recorded song in Scripture. Often called the "Song of the Sea," it sets a precedent for worship through music as a fitting response to God's salvation.

Ex. 15:1-18 – The themes from Moses' song are repeated in Revelation 15:3-4. This connection highlights God's power and salvation, linking His original rescue of Israel with His final victory over evil.

23. WHAT CAN MOTIVATE YOU TO ENGAGE IN MUSICAL WORSHIP EVEN WHEN THE SONGS OR STYLE DON'T MATCH YOUR PREFERENCES? WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

"Worship is not merely an expression of our feelings but an act of obedience. It trains our hearts to delight in God beyond emotion."
– John Piper

24. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO JOIN IN MUSICAL WORSHIP WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT? WHAT IMPACT CAN PARTICIPATION HAVE ON YOUR DISPOSITION OR OUTLOOK?

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Old Testament, the deliverance from Egypt is repeatedly cited as the moment God changed Israel from a people group into a distinct nation (e.g. Lev. 19:36; Josh. 24:6; Ps. 81:10; Ezek. 20:10). This foundational act of redemption foreshadows the greater transformation the Church receives in the gospel. Like Israel, Christians are also given a new corporate identity (1 Pet. 2:9-10), which calls us to mutual commitment and intentional participation and unites us in the collective pursuit of God's glory.

25. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE BELONG TO THE CHURCH? HOW DOES THIS ENRICH OUR FAITH BEYOND WHAT WE EXPERIENCE AS INDIVIDUALS?

"The church is where believers find their true identity and call to live out the gospel together."
– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

26. WHERE CAN YOUR LIFE BETTER REFLECT YOUR BELONGING TO THE CHURCH? BE SPECIFIC.

WEEK 8

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

EXODUS 16:11-12

And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

EXODUS 15:22-17:7

INTRODUCTION

Though freed from Egypt, God's people are not yet formed. Because of this, in Exodus 15:22-17:7, God brings them into places of need to teach them. These moments of hunger, thirst, and testing reveal that deliverance is not the end of God's work, but the beginning of a life of ongoing dependence.

READ EXODUS 15:22-27

As Israel moves inland from the Red Sea, the coastal terrain fades into the dry expanse of the wilderness of Shur. For three days, the Israelites traveled and "found no water" (v. 22), until they arrived at a place called "Marah" (v. 23).

1. WHAT IS THE ISRAELITES' REACTION WHEN THEY REACH MARAH (VV. 23-24)? HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND (V. 25)?

2. HOW DOES GOD PROVIDE FOR THE PEOPLE (V. 25)? WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT HIS CHARACTER AND CARE?

3. WHAT "STATUTE AND... RULE" (V. 25) DOES GOD ESTABLISH (V. 26)?

4. WHAT CONDITIONS DO THE PEOPLE FIND AT "ELIM" (V. 27)? HOW DOES THAT CONTRAST WITH "MARAH" (V. 23)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

Ex. 15:27 – The "twelve springs," one for each tribe, and the "seventy palm trees," a number symbolizing fullness and completion, highlight the abundance, precision, and intentionality of God's care.

*"The God who parts seas and topples empires is the same God who gives drink to the thirsty. His glory is shown in the grand and the small."
– Albert Mohler*

DIGGING DEEPER

Following their miraculous victory over Egypt, God deliberately “tested” (v. 25) His people by leading them into a place of need. This test was not designed to be deceptive or punitive (Deut. 8:2-3). Instead, God’s intention was for it to be formative, cultivating greater dependence and trust (Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-4). Additionally, as the accompanying “statute” (v. 25) makes clear, it was meant to highlight the importance of submitting to God, regardless of the circumstances (Deut. 11:1).

This passage helps clarify the distinction between testing and temptation. While temptation aims to lure us away from God (Matt. 4:1-3; Jas. 1:13-15), testing is intended to draw us nearer to Him (Heb. 12:10-11; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). Because of this, we should interpret bitter or dry seasons as opportunities to seek God more earnestly (Hos. 6:1-3).

Like Moses, the faithful response in these situations is to “[cry] to the LORD” (v. 25), even when His provision seems lacking or delayed (Ps. 34:17). This mentality reorients our focus from immediate discomfort to God, ensuring we benefit from His work of formation (Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

5. HOW CAN WE DISCERN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TESTING AND TEMPTATION? WHY DOES MAKING THAT DISTINCTION MATTER FOR HOW WE REACT?

“God tests us to draw out what lies hidden in our hearts, not to entice us to evil.”
— John Calvin

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6. WHERE IS GOD “[TESTING]” (V. 25) YOU RIGHT NOW? WHAT IS HE TRYING TO FORM IN YOU? HOW CAN YOU RESPOND?

READ EXODUS 16:1-36

As Israel continues to travel through the barren and inhospitable “wilderness” (v. 1), the people’s physical lack exposes deeper spiritual need. Though only a month passed since Israel crossed the Red Sea, the memory of God’s power began to fade in the face of “hunger” (v. 3).

7. WHAT DO THE ISRAELITES COMPLAIN ABOUT (VV. 2-3)? WHO ARE THEY ULTIMATELY GRUMBLING “AGAINST” (VV. 7, 8)?

“By their grumbling, Israel revealed a heart that trusted Egypt more than the God who had set them free.”
— JI Packer

8. HOW DOES GOD PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE (VV. 4, 12-15, 17-18, 21-22, 31)? WHY DOES HE ACT IN THIS WAY (VV. 6, 9-10, 12)?

*"God's regulations on manna were not mere rules, but spiritual checkpoints for Israel's trust."
– Sinclair Ferguson*

9. WHAT INSTRUCTIONS DOES GOD GIVE TO HIS PEOPLE (VV. 4-5, 16, 19, 23, 25-26)? HOW DO THESE DIRECTIVES SERVE AS A "TEST" (V. 4)?

10. HOW DO THE PEOPLE VIOLATE GOD'S ORDERS (VV. 20, 27-28)? WHAT DOES THEIR DISOBEDIENCE REVEAL?

DIGGING DEEPER

As Moses pointed out, the Israelites' "[grumbling]" (v. 2) was not simply an expression of frustration with circumstances, but a veiled accusation "against the LORD" (vv. 7, 8). This inward unrest soon led to outward disobedience, as some hoarded more than they were allowed (v. 20), while others refused to rest when instructed (v. 27). In the end, their actions revealed a refusal to trust that God's daily supply was both sufficient and wise.

This is instructive for us. Our complaints often signal a more dangerous spiritual condition. When we "[grumble]" (v. 2), we reveal an internal disposition that doubts God's goodness and questions His care. As a result, just like the Israelites, we inevitably disregard God's commands, take control for ourselves, and seek satisfaction outside His will (Prov. 14:12).

The antidote to this is contentment and gratitude. Contentment comes from trust in God's character and confidence that He has not overlooked or shortchanged us (Ps. 23:1; 1 Tim. 6:6-8). At the same time, gratitude reshapes our perspective, reminding us that, though we deserve nothing, all we have is a good gift from God (Jas. 1:17).

In a culture marked by entitlement and excess, these virtues are not optional. They are indispensable spiritual disciplines that guard us from impatience and ingratitude and cultivate a lasting joy that is rooted not in changing circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13), but in the unchanging sufficiency of Jesus, who satisfies all our deepest longings (Ps. 107:9; Jn. 6:35).

11. WHERE ARE YOU MOST TEMPTED TO SEEK SATISFACTION OUTSIDE GOD’S WILL? WHY? HOW DOES JESUS SERVE AS THE ACTUAL FULFILLMENT OF THAT DESIRE?

12. WHAT DO YOU MOST OFTEN “[GRUMBLE]” (V. 2) ABOUT? HOW CAN CONTENTMENT SERVE AS A SAFEGUARD IN THAT AREA?

13. HOW DOES GRATITUDE HELP RESHAPE OUR PERSPECTIVE? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEVELOP GREATER AWARENESS OF GOD’S PROVISION IN YOUR LIFE?

14. WHAT IMPACT DOES CONTENTMENT AND GRATITUDE HAVE ON THE WAY OTHERS PERCEIVE YOUR FAITH? WHY IS THIS COMPELLING IN OUR CULTURE?

The final verses of Exodus 16 shift from daily provision to lasting remembrance. After weeks of gathering the mysterious bread from heaven, which the people called “manna” (v. 31), God gives Moses and Aaron one final command.

15. WHAT DOES GOD COMMAND CONCERNING THE MANNA (VV. 32-34)? WHY?

16. WHAT DOES GOD’S CONTINUED PROVISION OF “MANNA” (V. 31) SUGGEST ABOUT HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE? WHY SHOULD THIS ENCOURAGE US?

*“A heart that seldom complains reflects one that has learned to rest in God's goodness.”
– RC Sproul*

*“All God's giants have been weak men and women who have gotten hold of God's faithfulness.”
– Hudson Taylor*

READ EXODUS 17:1-7

After traveling through the wilderness of Sin, the Israelites “camped at Rephidim” (v. 1), where they “quarreled... [and] grumbled” (vv. 2, 3). Despite their recent provision of manna and quail, their lack of water leads them to “test the LORD” (v. 2) and doubt His presence with them.

17. HOW DO THE ISRAELITES REACT TO THERE BEING “NO WATER... TO DRINK” (V. 1)? WHAT DOES THIS CONTINUE TO REVEAL ABOUT THEIR FAITH?

18. WHAT REPEATED ACCUSATION DO THE PEOPLE LEVEL AGAINST MOSES (V. 3)? WHAT NEW COMPLAINT DO THEY MAKE OF GOD (V. 7)?

19. HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND TO THE PEOPLE’S “[QUARRELING]” (V. 2)? WHAT SOLUTION DOES GOD PROVIDE (VV. 5-6)?

“To doubt God’s care in hardship is to sin grievously.”
— John Owen

DIGGING DEEPER

As the Israelites continued to move through “the wilderness” (v. 1), a stunning reversal takes place. The God who had been “[testing]” (Ex. 15:25; 16:4) His people to build their trust is now “tested” (v. 7) Himself. This exchange reveals a complete failure by Israel. Instead of being shaped by God’s attempts at spiritual formation, the people turn accusatory, placing God on trial.

Despite this, God responds with undeserved grace once again. Instead of striking the people, He instructs Moses to “strike the rock” (v. 6). In this way, the rock becomes a powerful symbol of substitution that Paul later identifies with Jesus (1 Cor. 10:4). However, where the water at “Massah and Meribah” (v. 7) temporarily satisfied physical thirst, Jesus offers “living water” (Jn. 4:10) that eternally quenches the soul.

In both the wilderness account and the gospel, God meets grumbling sinners not with condemnation, but with compassion (Ps. 103:8; Lk. 15:20-24). This kind of grace demands a response (Rom. 12:1). When faced with hardship or trial, we must look to Jesus, the true and better Rock, as our exclusive source of refreshment and satisfaction.

20. WHEN HAS GOD SHOWN YOU UNDESERVED GRACE? HOW CAN REMEMBERING HIS PAST FAITHFULNESS HELP YOU NAVIGATE FUTURE TRIALS?

*"The remembrance
of past mercies is the
sweetest balm for a
wounded spirit."
– Charles Spurgeon*

21. HOW CAN YOU PRACTICALLY TURN TO JESUS AS YOUR SOURCE OF "LIVING WATER" (JN. 4:10) DURING HARDSHIP? WHAT WILL THIS HELP YOU AVOID?

CONCLUSION

In Exodus 15:22-17:7, God was teaching Israel to depend on Him by providing for their hunger and thirst. While His repeated patience shows His mercy, it also warns us against complacency. To avoid acting like the Israelites, we must remain attentive and responsive to God's work in our lives, embracing His sanctifying purpose without delay.

22. HOW DOES GOD'S PATIENCE WITH ISRAEL TEACH US TO RESPOND TO SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY IN OTHERS? WHERE CAN YOU APPLY THIS INSIGHT?

23. WHEN ARE YOU MOST TEMPTED TO IGNORE OR OPPOSE GOD'S SANCTIFYING PURPOSES IN YOUR OWN LIFE? WHAT LIES BENEATH YOUR RESISTANCE?

24. HOW CAN YOU BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE TO GOD'S INSTRUCTION? WHO CAN YOU INVOLVE TO HELP YOU RESPOND WITH GREATER FAITHFULNESS?

*"The most effective
means of growing in
holiness is not isolation
but engagement with
those who know and live
by God's Word."
– JC Ryle*

WEEK 9

COVENANT COMMUNITY

EXODUS 18:10

Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

EXODUS 17:8-18:27

INTRODUCTION

The Israelites' journey through the wilderness revealed just how unprepared they were for the challenges ahead. In Exodus 17:8-18:27, new threats expose their ongoing dependence on God. However, unlike past chapters, God's provision will now come primarily through the community itself.

READ EXODUS 17:8-16

The Amalekites were a hostile and nomadic people who were known to prey on the defenseless and weak. Israel's "fight with Amalek" (v. 9) at "Rephidim" (v. 8) marks their first experience of warfare and introduces Joshua, who steps forward as a military leader.

1. WHAT ROLES DO JOSHUA, MOSES, AND AARON AND HUR PLAY IN THE BATTLE (VV. 10-12)? WHAT IS THE OUTCOME FOR THE AMALEKITES (V. 13)?

2. WHY DOES GOD ALLOW ISRAEL'S FIRST BATTLE TO UNFOLD IN THIS WAY? WHAT LESSONS WAS HE TEACHING HIS PEOPLE?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Israelites' battle against Amalek clearly demonstrates the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Though God could have defeated Israel's enemies instantly and unilaterally, He chose to use Joshua's courage (v. 10), Moses' intercession (v. 11), and Aaron and Hur's support (v. 12). Victory was won by fighting on two fronts simultaneously, both on the hill and on the ground (v. 13).

As we strive to live in this tension, we are protected from two dangerous tendencies. The first is autonomy, where we think everything relies on us (Deut. 8:17-18). The second is presumption, where we expect God to move without any personal effort (Jas. 2:17). Against both errors, the Bible demands that we balance dependence and diligence, believing that faith is not passive, and obedience is not independent (Col. 1:29; 2 Pet. 1:5-7). In the end, we must both trust as we act, and act as we trust (Neh. 4:9; Ps. 127:1).

3. DO YOU TEND TOWARD AUTONOMY OR PRESUMPTION? WHAT IS THE DANGER OF THAT ERROR?

4. WHAT CHALLENGE ARE YOU CURRENTLY FACING? HOW CAN YOU BE EQUALLY DEPENDENT ON GOD AND DILIGENT IN ACTION AS YOU NAVIGATE IT?

5. WHO CAN COME ALONGSIDE YOU IF YOU GROW “WEARY” (V. 12) IN THIS SITUATION? HOW CAN THEY HELP? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE THEM?

Deuteronomy 25:17 informs us that the Amalekites “fought with Israel” (v. 8) when they were “weary and worn out” and specifically targeted “all who were lagging behind,” likely the most vulnerable Israelites. Additionally, it notes that their aggression was partly rooted in the fact that “they had no fear of God.” These added details help explain why God makes an oath to “have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (v. 16) and “utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (v. 14).

6. WHAT WAS MOSES TOLD TO “WRITE... AND RECITE” (V. 14)? WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR ISRAEL TO REMEMBER (CF. DEUT. 25:17-18)?

7. WHY DOES MOSES BUILD AN “ALTAR” (V. 15) AFTER THE BATTLE? HOW DOES ITS NAME POINT TO GOD’S VICTORY AGAINST AMALEK?

Ex. 17:11 – Moses’ intercessory role serves as a type, pointing forward to Jesus. Just as Moses stood between God and Israel, Jesus stands as the ultimate mediator who intercedes for Christians before the Father (Heb. 7:25).

“Christian living is a matter of dependent responsibility. Trust God and then get going!”
– JI Packer

“In the Old Testament, to build an altar was not merely religious duty. It was an act of surrender, a declaration of trust, and a memorial of grace.”
– Sinclair Ferguson

"A man full of God will not go unnoticed. His presence speaks and his prayers preach."
 –Thomas Watson

"Christian fellowship must be a union of hearts knit in Christ, sharing burdens and joys alike."
 – Jonathan Edwards

DIGGING DEEPER

A banner was a signal pole around which an army could rally and regroup in the chaos of war. By naming the altar "The LORD Is My Banner" (v. 15), Moses was declaring that God Himself was who Israel could look to for direction, help, and strength.

Like the Israelites, we also need tangible reminders that God is with us. While we don't construct altars or raise banners, our prayers and presence often serve that purpose in one another's lives (1 Thess. 5:11; Gal. 6:2). In fact, that's one of the key reasons GBC gathers in small groups.

Throughout the year, we don't only come together to study the Bible, though that's extremely valuable (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Beyond this, we attempt to consistently and faithfully live life together, striving to be authentic and vulnerable with each other during and outside our weekly meetings (Rom. 12:9-16; Jas. 5:16). As we do this, every burden carried, encouragement offered, meal shared, or prayer spoken becomes a visible signpost (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:24-25) that points us back to the true and greater "Banner" (v. 15).

8. WHEN HAS SOMEONE'S PRAYER OR PRESENCE HELPED YOU IN HARDSHIP? EXPLAIN.

9. HOW DO OUR PRAYERS AND PRESENCE HELP POINT OTHERS TO GOD? WHICH DO YOU WANT TO GROW IN RIGHT NOW? WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO DO SO?

10. HOW CAN YOU BE MORE CONSISTENT OR FAITHFUL WITH YOUR GROUP? WHY ARE YOUR INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS SIGNIFICANT TO THE WHOLE?

11. WHAT INHIBITS YOU FROM BEING AUTHENTIC AND VULNERABLE WITH YOUR GROUP? HOW WOULD OVERCOMING THIS STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY?

READ EXODUS 18:1-12

Though Moses' family began the journey to Egypt with him (Ex. 4:20), Moses apparently sent them back to their home in Midian at some point (vv. 2-4). Now that Israel was encamped securely near Sinai, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, judged it safe and right to reunite the family (vv. 5-7).

12. WHAT DOES MOSES SHARE WITH JETHRO (V. 8)? HOW DOES JETHRO RESPOND TO "ALL THE GOOD THAT THE LORD HAD DONE" (V. 9)?

13. WHAT DOES JETHRO PROCLAIM ABOUT GOD (VV. 10-11)? HOW DOES HE HONOR AND WORSHIP HIM (V. 12)?

"We are called not simply to communicate the gospel to nonbelievers. We must also intentionally celebrate the gospel before them."
— Tim Keller

DIGGING DEEPER

Though Jethro had already "heard of all that God had done" (v. 1), it was not until Moses personally communicated "how the LORD had delivered [Israel]" (v. 8) that he worshiped God.

Jethro's response to Moses' account challenges us to consider how our testimonies might serve as a tool in evangelism, prompting even outsiders to open their hearts and minds to the gospel. In fact, this is why we spend time in our small groups developing our life stories. It provides us with an opportunity to practice telling others how God has moved and worked in our lives.

Beyond this, it enables our church to collectively "[rejoice]" (v. 9) in God's faithfulness and deepen our relationships with one another. Just like Moses, we should eagerly be willing to recount "all the good that the LORD [has] done" (v. 9) in our lives to each other. Though sometimes difficult, sharing our stories entails including "hardship" (v. 8) that God has helped us overcome. In fact, this is often one of the most effective and encouraging aspects of a life story, as it ministers to others who have faced or are facing similar struggles.

By sharing enthusiastically and honestly, we not only honor God's redemption of our lives, but also build a community rooted in grace and encouragement. Even more, as we witness God's faithfulness together, our testimonies become living proof of His power to transform and sustain a world in desperate need of recognizing Him as "greater than all gods" (v. 11).

"The God who makes Himself known will be known among the nations by saving His people."
– Kevin DeYoung

14. WHAT SPECIFIC PART OF YOUR LIFE STORY DO YOU THINK WOULD RESONATE MOST WITH SOMEONE SEARCHING FOR HOPE OR MEANING? WHY?

15. WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN MINISTERED TO BY SOMEONE SHARING THEIR LIFE STORY? WHICH ASPECT WAS MOST ENCOURAGING? WHY?

READ EXODUS 18:13-27

The narrative shifts to highlight a critical moment in Moses' leadership, as Jethro notices that his duty is "too heavy" (v. 18). The interaction that follows lays a foundation for a governance model that has influenced God's people for millennia.

16. WHAT WAS MOSES' INITIAL PROCESS FOR "[JUDGING] THE PEOPLE" (V. 13)? WHY DO THE PEOPLE COME TO HIM (VV. 15, 16)?

17. WHAT CONCERNS DOES JETHRO EXPRESS ABOUT THIS METHOD (VV. 14, 17-18)? WHAT SOLUTION DOES HE PROPOSE (VV. 19-23)?

18. HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND TO JETHRO'S ADVICE (VV. 24, 25-26)? WHAT DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT MOSES' CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP?

Ex. 18:20 – Moses' delegation of judicial duties enables him to instruct the people concerning God's "statutes and the laws." This parallels the apostles' motivation in Acts when they appoint deacons in order to not neglect "preaching the word" (Acts 6:2).

Ex. 18:21 – The qualifications Jethro gives Moses for leaders align closely with the qualities required for deacons in the New Testament (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; Tit. 1:6-9). Both emphasize integrity and wisdom.

"No single mortal can be sufficient to do everything, however many and various may be the endowments wherein he excels."
– John Calvin

DIGGING DEEPER

After watching Moses “judge the people” (v. 13) day after day, Jethro recognized that Moses’ approach was unsustainable. Not only would it “wear [everyone] out” (v. 18), but it also deprived “able men” (v. 21) the opportunity to use their gifts. In light of this, Jethro’s “advice” (v. 19) wasn’t simply a matter of efficiency. It was a call to shared leadership that would strengthen the entire community and more clearly glorify God.

This passage points to a broader biblical principle. God designed the church to function as a unified body where every member matters (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Each believer is given different gifts (Rom. 12:6) intended “for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7) and “to serve one another” (1 Pet. 4:10). When ministry is left to a select few, both leaders and congregants suffer. However, when all believers are engaged in the “work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12), the whole body is built up in maturity and unity.

At GBC, our expectation is that everyone would wholeheartedly affirm these truths and actively embrace their part in the “priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9) of all believers. We firmly believe that when you move beyond passive attendance at church to meaningful engagement in service, you will experience greater joy and gain meaningful purpose. Even more, as we labor together, we become more effective in fulfilling God’s mission to “[make] disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

19. WHY DOES GOD DESIRE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FROM ALL PARTS OF THE BODY? HOW DOES THIS LEAD TO MATURITY AND UNITY?

20. WHAT CAN MOTIVATE YOUR ONGOING PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH EVEN AS/IF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND SCHEDULE CHANGE?

21. WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS? HOW ARE YOU CURRENTLY USING THEM TO SERVE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE GBC?

“Each believer must feel himself bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and welfare of other members.”
– The Heidelberg Catechism

“The church is not a spectator sport. God gives spiritual gifts so that every believer may be an active participant in the life of the body.”
– RC Sproul

Ex. 18:20 – Just as Jethro emphasized and elevated Moses’ duty in teaching God’s “laws,” Paul highlights that pastors and elders are charged to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). Both passages highlight that spiritual leadership centers on teaching God’s Word to empower the church to serve.

CONCLUSION

Throughout Exodus 17:8-18:27, we see a shift in how God helps His people. Instead of supernaturally providing for their needs, He now gives them each other. In this way, the community itself becomes a means of God's grace. While that's a profound insight into Israel's development, it also serves as a model for us today.

22. HOW DO THESE CHAPTERS DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE? WHAT SEEMS MOST SIGNIFICANT? WHY?

23. WHAT DO THESE CHAPTERS TEACH US ABOUT GOD'S DESIRE FOR THE CHURCH? WHAT ROLE(S) CAN/DO YOU PLAY IN HELPING IT FUNCTION?

"The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion. We are meant to be together, to learn together, to serve together as one body in Christ."

— Martyn Lloyd-Jones

WEEKS 10-17

EXODUS PART II

WEEK 10

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

EXODUS 19:5-6

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

EXODUS 19:1-20:21

INTRODUCTION

In the remaining chapters, God will formalize His relationship with Israel, caring for them as His “treasured possession” (Ex. 19:5) and shaping them into a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).

This begins in Exodus 19:1-20:21. After rescuing His people from Egypt and sustaining them through trials in the wilderness, God now brings Israel to “Mount Sinai” (Ex. 19:11), where He reveals the Law to Moses.

READ EXODUS 19:1-25

Since leaving Egypt nearly seven weeks before, Israel has been on the move. However, the people will “[encamp]” (v. 2) for over a year at Mount Sinai (Num. 10:11). In fact, the rest of Exodus occurs in this location “in the wilderness” (v. 2).

1. WHAT DOES GOD COMMAND THE ISRAELITES TO DO (V. 5)? ON WHAT BASIS DOES HE MAKE THIS APPEAL (V. 4)? WHAT WILL THEY BECOME (V. 5)?

2. WHAT NEW IDENTITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE ISRAELITES (V. 6)? HOW DO THEY RESPOND (VV. 7-8)?

God promises to come to Israel at Mount Sinai in a “thick cloud” (v. 9). However, before giving the Law, God needed to prepare the people. To do that, God gave instructions for a three-day period of ceremonial “[consecration]” (v. 10) and “set limits for the people” (v. 12).

3. WHAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS DOES GOD GIVE MOSES REGARDING THE PEOPLE’S CONSECRATION AND THE MOUNTAIN’S BOUNDARIES (VV. 10-15)?

“God’s covenant at Sinai is not a condition of grace but a consequence of grace.”
— Edmund Clowney

“The preparation days taught Israel that an encounter with God demands inward cleansing marked by outward discipline.”
— Kevin DeYoung

4. WHAT HAPPENS ON THE “THIRD DAY” (V. 16) WHEN GOD “DESCENDED” (V. 18) ON THE MOUNTAIN (VV. 16-20)?

“The thunder, lightning, and trumpet sound serve to show the majesty and holiness of God coming down to dwell among His people.”
– John Calvin

5. WHO IS ALLOWED TO ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN (V. 20)? WHAT HAPPENS IF OTHERS ATTEMPT TO “BREAK THROUGH” (VV. 21, 24)?

DIGGING DEEPER

The scene at Mount Sinai is incredibly descriptive. Thunder cracks, lightning flashes, trumpet blasts, fire engulfs, smoke billows, and ground trembles (vv. 16-19). The message is unmistakable. God is holy and powerful, completely unapproachable on human terms.

This image reminds us of two things. First, we cannot approach God casually or presumptuously (Eccl. 5:1-2; Heb. 12:28-29). Just as the Israelites were commanded to “consecrate” (v. 10) themselves, we must also be sure to come before God with hearts that are humble and reverent (Ps. 24:3-4; Is. 66:2). Second, this scene emphasizes our desperate need for a mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). Thankfully, Jesus does what Moses could only anticipate. Through the gospel, He brings us into the presence of God without fear of judgment (Rom. 5:1-2; Heb. 4:14-16).

6. HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT OUR ACCESS TO THE FATHER THROUGH JESUS DOESN'T DIMINISH OUR REVERENCE FOR HIM?

“True reverence balances confidence and fear.”
– RC Sproul

7. HOW CAN YOU GROW IN DRAWING NEAR TO GOD WITH CONFIDENCE AND JOY?

Ex. 19:12 – The “mountain” serves as a temporary temple, complete with divisions according to access. This anticipates the tabernacle layout, which is also separated into zones of increasing holiness.

Ex. 19:13 – The “trumpet” was both a warning and a summons, signaling both fear and invitation. It becomes a theophanic signal throughout Scripture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16).

"The first commandment teaches us that no other object of worship can satisfy the human heart like God can."
 – Tim Keller

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments reveal how God's people were to live in faithful relationship with Him and with one another. Spoken directly by God to the people (v. 1), these commands begin with a reminder of His saving work (v. 2) and then unfold in two parts. The first four focus on our relationship with God (vv. 3-11), and the last six address our relationship with others (vv. 12-17). This structure demonstrates that right worship is the foundation of right living.

As we examine each commandment, we'll ask the same three questions in an attempt to consider the deeper values each command upholds, what it reveals about God's character, and how we can live it out today.

READ EXODUS 20:1-11

The First Table of the Law (vv. 1-11) focuses on Israel's relationship with God. They remind us that true worship is not self-defined but God-directed.

8. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (V. 3)

This command establishes God's exclusive claim on our loyalty. It sets the foundation for the entire Law by demanding undivided devotion to the one true God, rejecting any competing "gods" (v. 3) that vie for our attention or worship.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

9. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (VV. 4-6)

God calls His people to worship Him as He truly is, warning against reducing the infinite God to man-made representations.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

DIGGING DEEPER

On first reading, the first and second commandments (vv. 3-6) may seem to repeat the same idea. However, though both concern idolatry, a closer look reveals a crucial distinction.

The first commandment defines who we are to worship, prohibiting devotion to false gods. For Israel, this meant to avoid contemporary pagan deities like Baal (Judg. 2:11-13) and Molech (Lev. 18:21). On the other hand, the second commandment focuses on how we are to worship, forbidding the attempt to represent God through physical objects or symbols. The Israelites will later violate this command by constructing the golden calf (Ex. 32:4-5).

While the first protects God's exclusivity (Is. 45:5), the second defends His transcendence (Acts 17:29). Together, they guard both the object and the manner of worship, calling us to honor the true God in the true way.

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

10. THE THIRD COMMANDMENT (V. 7)

As we saw in Exodus 3:14, the name of God represents His character and essence. This command demands reverence for God's identity, warning against "vain" (v. 7) speech that diminishes or disrespects Him in any way.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

"The second commandment proclaims God's invisibility and incomparability, emphasizing that He is the living God who transcends any physical representation."
– Herman Bavinck

"The misuse of God's name is a sign of a heart that fails to fear and love Him properly."
– Jonathan Edwards

Ex. 20:7 – The third commandment is the only one of the Ten explicitly tied to a warning of judgment, underscoring its seriousness.

"The Sabbath refreshes the heart and mind, breaking the tyranny of worldly cares and re-centering us on eternal realities."
– Richard Baxter

"The Sabbath provides a temporal sign of spiritual realities."
– Geerhardus Vos

11. THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (VV. 8-11)

The command to remember the Sabbath wasn't new to Israel. In fact, God had already introduced the principle in Exodus 16. There, He provided manna for six days but withheld it on the seventh, calling His people to rest and trust Him to provide. Now, the command is formalized as part of the covenant.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

DIGGING DEEPER

Rooted in creation (Gen. 2:1-3) and codified in the Ten Commandments (vv. 8-11), the Sabbath was established as a day set apart for joyful dependence on God. While Jesus has fulfilled the substance to which the Sabbath pointed (Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:9-10) and Christians are no longer bound to its Old Testament ceremonial regulation (Col. 2:16-17), the moral pattern of setting aside one day in seven remains.

To that end, the Sabbath doesn't just concern recreation or rest, though there is value in pursuing hobbies and leisure (Eccl. 3:12-13). Instead, our adherence to the Sabbath should be primarily centered on and expressed in worship on Sunday. Each week, we have the opportunity to gather together to delight in God through His Word, prayer, and fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25). This time reorients our hearts and minds around what is most lasting and true (Col. 3:1-2) and strengthens us to walk faithfully in the week ahead (Is. 40:31).

Honoring this time takes intentionality and preparation. If we allow Sundays to revolve around things like chores, entertainment, errands, sports, or travel, we risk reshaping the day in our image instead of keeping it centered on God. To avoid this, we must proactively order our week so that Sunday remains open and uncluttered, ultimately defined not by what we subtract, but by what we prioritize (Eph. 5:15-16).

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

Ex. 20:8-11 – As the Bible progresses, the fourth command is most frequently directed to weekly, gathered worship. In Leviticus, the Israelites are told that the Sabbath is meant to be a time for "a holy convocation" (Lev. 23:3). Through the prophet Isaiah, God specifically says that the Sabbath represents an opportunity for "all flesh... to worship before Me" (Is. 66:23). In the New Testament, Jesus makes it His "custom" (Lk. 4:16) to congregate with others in the synagogue on the Sabbath (e.g. Mk. 1:21; 6:2; Lk. 6:6), and His disciples follow His example throughout Acts (e.g. Acts 13:14, 42; 18:4).

READ EXODUS 20:12-17

The Second Table of the Law (vv. 12-17) governs how God's people are to relate to one another. Rooted in the truth that every person is made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), these commands uphold the inherent dignity and worth of humanity. Together, they show that obedience is not simply vertical, but horizontal.

12. THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT (V. 12)

This command promotes respect within the family unit. Notably, in Ephesians 6:2, Paul highlights the fifth commandment, emphasizing that it is the first to carry an explicit promise. This blessing underscores the vital importance God places on honoring parents.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

"Respect for parents reflects our recognition of God's sovereignty and His providential care through family."

– DA Carson

DIGGING DEEPER

The command to "honor [our] father[s] and mother[s]" (Ex. 20:12) is not conditional on our parents' worthiness, but rooted in God's prescription of authority within the home (Eph. 6:1-3).

For those from broken homes or in fractured relationships, obedience to this command remains possible, though it may take a different form. God does not require us to excuse sin (Ezek. 18:20), enable dysfunction (Prov. 13:24), or endure abuse (Prov. 22:3). Instead, we are called to respect the position He has given parents (Lev. 19:3), speak truth without malice (Eph. 4:15, 31), and refuse to repay evil with evil (Rom. 12:17), pursuing forgiveness and peace as far as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18; Col. 3:13).

Another relevant application of the fifth commandment is the care of aging or sick parents. Honoring them in this season goes beyond meeting physical needs. It calls for compassionate service (Phil. 2:3-4), patient listening (Prov. 23:22), and steadfast respect (Lev. 19:32), even when such care is costly or inconvenient (1 Tim. 5:4, 8).

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

"To honor parents is to acknowledge the debt we owe them under God and to express that in respect, obedience, and care."

– JI Packer

"The law against murder shows that God values every life, and that Christians must uphold the dignity of all people, even enemies."
– JC Ryle

"God forbids sexual immorality because it leads to brokenness, sadness, emptiness, death, and hell."
– Heath Lambert

13. THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT (V. 13)

Life is sacred because every person bears God's image. This command prohibits taking innocent life and calls us to protect and value human dignity. Additionally, Jesus intensifies the sixth commandment by addressing not only the outward act, but also the inward attitudes that lead to it. In the Sermon on the Mount, He teaches that anger, hatred, and insults carry the same weight as murder in God's eyes (Matt. 5:21-22).

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

14. THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT (V. 14)

Marriage is a sacred covenant designed by God to reflect His faithful, unbreakable love for His people (Eph. 5:25-32). By uniting one man and one woman in a lifelong bond, it displays the covenant relationship between Christ and His church.

This command protects the sanctity and exclusivity of marriage. It calls husbands and wives to mutual trust and wholehearted devotion, demonstrating the steadfast love and holiness of God to the world.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

DIGGING DEEPER

At first glance, the seventh commandment appears to prohibit only marital unfaithfulness. However, like the sixth commandment, Jesus expands its meaning, teaching that even looking at someone with lustful intent constitutes adultery of the heart (Matt. 5:27-28). In this light, viewing sexually explicit material, including in movies, television, and other media, is a legitimate and serious violation of this command (Job 31:1; Phil. 4:8).

Specifically, pornography is particularly dangerous (1 Thess. 4:3-5). It turns sexuality inward, reducing people to objects of consumption (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Further, it desensitizes the conscience and promotes selfishness (Eph. 4:19). While our culture minimizes or normalizes this practice, Jesus presses the urgency of fighting against it by calling His followers to take radical steps against lust (Matt. 5:29-30).

Though this sin is serious, it's not beyond the reach of God's grace. In the gospel, there is not just forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9) and freedom (Rom. 6:14), but also the power to walk in holiness (1 Thess. 4:3-5; 1 Jn. 1:9). If you struggle in this area, don't allow your sin to remain in the dark. Confess to a trusted friend or mentor and begin the process of repentance today (Jas. 5:16).

15. THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT (V. 15)

Scripture consistently upholds the legitimacy of personal ownership, recognizing that what we possess is both a gift from God and the fruit of our labor. The eighth commandment safeguards that reality by affirming the moral boundary around what belongs to another.

While the eighth commandment clearly forbids stealing, its application goes far beyond larceny or theft. At its core, it confronts a heart that takes rather than gives, seeking personal gain at the expense of others. Ultimately, obedience to this commandment requires us to value integrity over convenience (Prov. 21:3).

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

"This commandment extends beyond theft to include any attempt to gain unfair advantage over others."
– Charles Hodge

*"Truth is essential to life
as God intended it."*

– Martyn Lloyd-Jones

16. THE NINTH COMMANDMENT (V. 16)

Truthfulness is essential for justice and healthy relationships. This command forbids deceit, lying, and slander, calling us to speak honestly and uphold integrity.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

DIGGING DEEPER

While the ninth commandment originally applied to giving truthful testimony in legal settings, its implications reach far beyond the courtroom. At its core, this commandment calls for integrity in speech (Prov. 12:22), a deep commitment to the truth (Jn. 8:32), and a resolve to protect the reputation of others (Jas. 4:11).

We obey this command not only by speaking honestly, but also by refusing to exaggerate, gossip, manipulate, or slander (Prov. 6:16-19). It also includes a charitable posture toward others (1 Cor. 13:7), giving them the benefit of the doubt, avoiding misrepresentation (Prov. 21:28), and resisting the temptation to weaponize words (Matt. 12:36-37).

In a culture shaped by sarcasm and spin, this commandment calls us to something far greater. As Christians, we should strive to speak with clarity, charity, and conviction (Col. 4:6), using our words as a means of building others up rather than tearing them down (Eph. 4:29).

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

17. THE TENTH COMMANDMENT (V. 17)

The desire for what belongs to others reveals discontent and a failure to trust God's provision. This command addresses the heart's posture, calling us to be grateful and satisfied with all that God has given to us.

A. WHAT VICE IS PROHIBITED? WHAT VALUE IS UPHELD?

*"Covetousness is never
satisfied. The more it has,
the more it wants."*

– Martin Luther

B. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER OR PRIORITIES?

C. HOW CAN YOU OBEY THIS COMMAND TODAY?

READ EXODUS 20:18-21

After God finished giving the Ten Commandments, the people “trembled” (v. 18), even saying that they were fearful of “[dying]” (v. 19). As a result, they request Moses to mediate. This marks a critical turning point in the narrative. From now on, God will speak to Israel exclusively through Moses.

18. WHAT TWO WAYS DOES MOSES USE THE WORD “FEAR” (V. 20)? HOW DOES THIS VERSE HIGHLIGHT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TERROR AND REVERENCE?

19. HOW DOES THE “FEAR OF [GOD]” (V. 20) PRODUCE OBEDIENCE?

“The fear of God is the soul of godliness.”
– John Murray

CONCLUSION

Before issuing demands to Israel on how they were to live (Ex. 20:3-17), God started by stating what He had already done for them (Ex. 19:4; 20:2). This establishes an extremely important principle that’s reiterated throughout the Bible. God’s commands come after His deliverance. In other words, obedience is not the basis of relationship with God, but rather its response (Deut. 6:20-25; Eph. 2:8-10).

20. WHY IS IT IMPERATIVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT GOD’S COMMANDS COME AFTER HIS DELIVERANCE? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT OUR MOTIVATION IN OBEDIENCE?

“Before God calls Israel to obedience, He reminds them of His mighty deliverance. Their new identity is the fruit, not the root, of their calling.”
– Michael Horton

WEEK 11

THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT

EXODUS 21:1

Now, these are the rules that you shall set before them.

EXODUS 20:22-23:19

INTRODUCTION

After giving Israel the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-21), God provided Moses with a body of laws known as the Book of the Covenant.

This collection expands on the Ten Commandments by applying their timeless standards to everyday situations. Though they don't neatly categorize infractions like a modern legal code, they do train God's people to see every part of life as under His reign. Because of this, they read like wisdom literature, inviting meditation rather than memorization.

Though Israel's ceremonial and civil laws are no longer binding, the truths that undergird these laws stand. Theologians use the term "general equity" to refer to this concept. This week, our goal is to help you understand and apply this idea faithfully. To do that, we'll follow a similar approach to Week 10. For three broad categories – worship, justice, and mercy – we'll look at a few laws and ask the same set of questions. These questions are designed to help you identify the lasting principles behind each law and thoughtfully apply them to life today. As you go through this exercise, be as specific as possible when making application.

Our hope is that you'll come away with a renewed confidence that all of God's Word has abiding relevance and value. We also pray that we would collectively grow in living out God's character and priorities in every arena of life.

READ EXODUS 20:22-26; 22:28-31; 23:10-19

These laws teach Israel that life with God begins and ends with worship. Whether through the simplicity of altars, the offering of firstfruits, the rhythms of Sabbath, or the annual festivals of remembrance, God forms His people by centering their lives on His grace. As you consider how they apply today, think not just as an individual, but also as part of a local church.

1. WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN THIS LAW? WHAT'S THE ENDURING PRINCIPLE? HOW CAN YOU/WE APPLY IT TODAY?

A. EXODUS 20:22-25

"God's instructions for simple altars reveal a timeless concern. Worship must not reflect human pride or ostentation."

– Vern Poythress

The word "general" conveys the idea of not being limited to Israel. The word "equity" refers to a just and moral principle. Together, "general equity" helps us discern what part of the Law still applies to us today. While the phrase was formalized in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), the idea was present as far back as the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

DIGGING DEEPER

In Exodus 20:22-25, God calls His people to build simple “[altars] of earth” (Ex. 20:24) and unhewn “stone” (Ex. 20:25) as the proper setting for “sacrifice” (Ex. 20:24). These details communicate that attention in worship should be exclusively directed to God and avoid elevating aspects of human creativity or production. Ultimately, this command highlights God’s sufficiency. He doesn’t need “silver... [or]... gold” (Ex. 20:23) to be glorious and magnificent.

In a culture often drawn to spectacle, this regulation invites us back to simplicity and sincerity in worship. At GBC, we apply this principle by attempting to execute Sunday services with undistracting excellence. Each week, our goal is not to entertain outsiders or manufacture emotion, but to help the congregation focus on God. Practically, this has led us to use black-and-white slides, keep the lights on, and calibrate the volume appropriately. If the music, prayers, or sermon ever become performative or ostentatious, we risk shifting our church’s focus in an unhelpful and wrong direction.

B. EXODUS 22:28

C. EXODUS 22:29-30

D. EXODUS 23:14-17

*“In every dispensation,
the first and best
were given to God
as a testimony
of dependence
and gratitude.”
– Charles Hodge*

DIGGING DEEPER

Israel’s calendar was punctuated by feasts that reminded them of God’s deliverance. These weren’t just cultural traditions. They were acts of worship commanded by God to train His people to remember and rejoice.

Today, we still need intentional reminders to celebrate redemption and foster gratitude. At GBC, we do this in several ways. Most significantly, baptism and communion carry forward the theological logic of Israel’s feasts, serving as visible signs of invisible grace. These ordinances and other special services, including Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, help shape us into people identified by God’s saving work.

"Nothing polluted must be mingled with the service of God."
— Peter Martyr Vermigli

E. EXODUS 23:18

2. WHICH OTHER LAW CONCERNING WORSHIP STANDS OUT TO YOU? WHY? HOW WOULD YOU USE THE PRINCIPLE OF GENERAL EQUITY TO APPLY IT TODAY?

READ EXODUS 21:12-36; 22:1-15; 23:1-8

These laws concerning justice reveal that God expects His people to reflect His righteousness in all relationships, whether in courtrooms, fields, homes, or businesses. In each of these places, God demonstrates a desire for His people to be trustworthy, honest, and impartial.

3. WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN THIS LAW? WHAT'S THE ENDURING PRINCIPLE? HOW CAN YOU/WE APPLY IT TODAY?

A. EXODUS 21:12-14

B. EXODUS 21:28-29

DIGGING DEEPER

The application of God's justice is never shallow or surface, reaching to both motive and responsibility.

In Exodus 21:12-14, God demonstrates that intent matters by distinguishing between murder and manslaughter. Additionally, in Exodus 21:28-29, God asserts that someone who is negligent in preventing foreseeable harm bears moral guilt, even if they didn't act with malice. Together, these laws examine not only actions, but also intentions, promoting a more extensive view of righteousness in everyday life.

"Neglecting the care of one's property, when it endangers others, is itself a breach of justice deserving of punishment."
— Francis Turretin

C. EXODUS 22:1-4

D. EXODUS 22:14-15

E. EXODUS 23:1-2

F. EXODUS 23:6

"This law shows the just principle that one must bear the cost of damage done by what they control or have in their charge."
– John Calvin

"True justice is blind to status, wealth, or influence and aims only at righteousness."
– Matthew Henry

DIGGING DEEPER

In Exodus 23:1-8, Israel is commanded to resist false reports, mob influence, and biased testimony. With each of these commands, God called Israel to possess an unwavering commitment to equality and objectivity, whether in the community or courtroom.

This theme runs throughout Scripture, demonstrating that God consistently condemns "[being] partial" (Ex. 23:3) in any form (Prov. 24:23; Jas. 2:1-9). While modern personifications of justice often show her blindfolded to represent impartiality, the biblical vision is even deeper. Justice must be rooted in the unchanging character of God, who sees perfectly and shows no favoritism (Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34). Any attempt to "pervert... justice" (Ex. 23:6) obscures His character and weakens our credibility. As followers of the God who is Truth (Deut. 32:4; Jn. 14:6), we are called to uphold integrity, even when it costs us admiration, power, or reward.

For us, this means guarding our words, seeking facts before forming judgments, and refusing to let popularity, politics, or pressure distort what is right. Wherever God has placed us – in the workplace, at home, or within the church – we are called to reflect His justice with courage and decency.

Ex. 23:19 – The command to "not boil a young goat in its mother's milk" likely forbade a pagan Canaanite ritual and reflects God's concern for resisting cultural compromise. It reminds Israel to maintain moral distinctiveness, even in everyday practices.

4. WHICH OTHER LAW CONCERNING JUSTICE STANDS OUT TO YOU? WHY? HOW WOULD YOU USE THE PRINCIPLE OF GENERAL EQUITY TO APPLY IT TODAY?

READ EXODUS 21:1-11; 22:16-27; 23:4-5, 9

These laws concerning mercy reveal God's deep concern for the marginalized and vulnerable. Israel was to remember their own suffering in Egypt and let that memory produce mercy.

5. WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN THIS LAW? WHAT'S THE ENDURING PRINCIPLE? HOW CAN YOU/WE APPLY IT TODAY?

A. EXODUS 21:2-11

*"God's regulation of servitude teaches us that Christian ethics must govern all social relations, insisting on fairness and restraint."
— John Owen*

DIGGING DEEPER

When we hear the word slavery, we naturally think of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. However, the form of slavery described in Exodus 21:2-11 is significantly different and must be understood in its ancient Near Eastern context.

Slavery in Israel was intended to be temporary (Ex. 21:2), could be entered voluntarily (Ex. 21:5), and included legal protections against abuse (Ex. 21:20). It was not race-based and did not involve the kidnapping and selling of people, which was explicitly condemned and punishable by death (Ex. 21:16). In many respects, it functioned more like indentured servitude or bond-service, which both served as a means of debt repayment or social survival in a world without bankruptcy laws or welfare systems.

These limitations reveal God's concern for the protection of the weak. By granting legal rights to slaves, God distinguished Israel from other ancient nations and reflected His own compassion and mercy. Even still, this subject raises hard questions. Critics often point to passages like this as evidence that the Bible is morally flawed and ethically outdated, but Scripture does not present slavery as an ideal. It addresses a broken reality in a broken world. Rather than endorsing it, God regulated the institution to protect and uphold human worth. To ignore its existence would have been to leave people unprotected and subject to greater harm.

While we rightly reject all forms of slavery today, these laws challenge us to consider how God's people are called to protect and dignify the vulnerable, no matter their economic or social status.

B. EXODUS 22:21-24

DIGGING DEEPER

In the ancient Near East, “sojourners” (Ex. 22:21), “[widows]” (Ex. 22:22), and “fatherless [children]” (Ex. 22:22) occupied some of the most vulnerable positions within society. Lacking the economic stability, legal standing, and social networks necessary for protection and provision, they were frequently marginalized or exploited. It is precisely for this reason that God identifies them as the particular recipients of His care and concern.

Today, we should strive to minister not only to foreigners, widows, and orphans, but also to others who are vulnerable – such as the disabled, imprisoned, oppressed, poor, and sick – providing relief and support wherever needed. While God defends, protects, and sustains these groups, His provision often comes through His people, giving the Church the opportunity to extend His compassion through tangible acts of kindness and mercy.

To that end, GBC has strategically partnered with several organizations around Houston that offer both material and spiritual resources to people who need them. We wholeheartedly encourage everyone to serve these ministries by giving or volunteering. To learn more about our partners and how to get involved, visit our website.

C. EXODUS 22:25-27

D. EXODUS 23:4-5

6. WHICH OTHER LAW CONCERNING MERCY STANDS OUT TO YOU? WHY? HOW WOULD YOU USE THE PRINCIPLE OF GENERAL EQUITY TO APPLY IT TODAY?

“This commandment exposes the heart of biblical justice as not merely legal fairness, but an active, sacrificial defense of society’s most vulnerable.”

– RC Sproul

“Caring for the property of one’s enemies reflects a sanctified heart that pursues peace and mercy over retaliation.”

– Joel Beeke

CONCLUSION

The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:22-23:19) broadly upholds the principles of worship, justice, and mercy through a series of case laws. Though we don't live under Israel's civil code, the general equity of these regulations still instructs us today, calling us to worship humbly, live honestly, and care compassionately. As we observe these principles, we will not only enjoy a fruitful and fulfilled life, but we will also point the world to the magnificence, righteousness, and mercy of God.

7. HOW DOES THE PRINCIPLE OF GENERAL EQUITY DEEPEN YOUR APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF OLD TESTAMENT LAWS?

"General equity is a theological key. It means we do not pick and choose arbitrarily, but apply the enduring justice, mercy, and holiness behind the laws."

— Kevin DeYoung

DIGGING DEEPER

One of the most common objections to using Old Testament law today is the charge of inconsistency. This concern often surfaces around more controversial or counter-cultural laws, especially those concerning sexual ethics or social justice.

To discern whether a law should be applied directly or by general equity, we should consider the following questions:

Is it reaffirmed in the New Testament? If a law is repeated by Jesus or one of the apostles in the New Testament, we apply it directly (e.g. Ex. 20:15/Eph. 4:28; Lev. 18:22/1 Tim. 1:10).

Is it fulfilled in the New Testament? Ceremonial laws, such as the rules governing diet and the sacrificial system, pointed to greater realities in the New Testament and are no longer binding (e.g. Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:12).

Was it tied to Israel's civic identity? Civil laws, such as land regulations and restitution statutes, were designed to govern Israel as a unique, theocratic nation. While they no longer apply, they still reflect God's concern for justice and order.

What does it reveal about God? As we saw in Week 10, every law reflects something about God's character or priorities. Even time-bound commands can teach us timeless truths (e.g. Ex. 22:21-24).

Utilizing the thoughtful, nuanced approach described in the questions above shows that there is a clear, coherent system for determining which laws in the Old Testament continue to apply today. Despite the modern criticism, this process is neither haphazard or subjective and is guided by careful biblical interpretation.

More importantly, rightly applying God's Law protects us from both lawlessness and legalism. It also respects Jesus' teaching that the smallest detail of the Law will never become obsolete or lose its authority (Lk. 16:17), emphasizing that God's standards remain firmly in place forever.

**8. WHY DOES ADHERING TO THE PRINCIPLES UPHELD IN THE LAW LEAD TO
FLOURISHING? HOW CAN THAT MOTIVATE YOUR PURSUIT OF HOLINESS?**

**9. WHY DOES ADHERING TO THE PRINCIPLES UPHELD IN THE LAW GLORIFY GOD?
WHAT DOES AN OBEDIENT LIFE COMMUNICATE TO THE WORLD AROUND US?**

*"An obedient life is a
powerful testimony.
It communicates
that God's standards
are good and that His
grace transforms hearts
and societies."
– Tim Keller*

WEEK 12

CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT

EXODUS 24:8

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said,
“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with
you in accordance with all these words.”

EXODUS 23:20-24:18

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 19-24 forms the foundation of the Mosaic Covenant. In this final section, God concludes His covenantal instruction, ratifying the relationship He has established with Israel through a solemn ceremony and covenant meal.

READ EXODUS 23:20-33

Because he bears God's name and speaks with authority, the "angel" (v. 20) God sends is no ordinary messenger. In fact, many theologians understand him as a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, who leads (Jn. 14:2) and guards (Jn. 17:12) God's people on their way to the Promised Land.

1. WHAT ROLE WILL THE "ANGEL" (V. 20) PLAY? HOW DOES GOD CALL HIS PEOPLE TO RESPOND (VV. 21-22)?

2. WHAT IS ISRAEL COMMANDED TO DO REGARDING ITS ENEMIES (VV. 24, 32-33)? WHY DOES GOD REQUIRE THIS (VV. 24, 33)?

3. WHAT DOES GOD PROMISE IN RETURN FOR OBEDIENCE (VV. 22-23, 25-26)?

4. HOW DOES GOD SAY HE WILL "DRIVE OUT" (V. 28) THE CANAANITES (VV. 27-31)? WHY WILL HE DO THIS GRADUALLY (VV. 29-30)?

"In Canaan, worship meant bloodshed and perversion. To allow such worship to coexist with the worship of God would have been to invite apostasy and moral decay."
– Derek Kidner

Ex. 23:25-26 – While these promises were temporal and national, they are repeated throughout Scripture (e.g. Is. 65:17-25; Ezek. 36:25-30) and ultimately point toward the fuller, spiritual blessings of the New Covenant.
Ex. 23:28 – "Hornets" may be literal insects or a metaphor for confusion and panic (e.g. Josh. 2:9-11).

DIGGING DEEPER

In Exodus 23:25-26, God promises to “bless” (v. 25) His people’s obedience with abundant provision, good health, large families, and long life. While these blessings were real, they were also covenantal, given to a specific people, at a specific time, for a specific purpose. In other words, this passage is not a guarantee that those who “obey” (v. 22) God will never suffer (Job 1:1-22).

In the Beatitudes, Jesus reorients our expectations, showing that blessing is not ultimately defined by abundance or success, but by the joy of drawing near to God (Matt. 5:1-11). When seen through this lens, even hardships like infertility, loneliness, persecution, sickness, singleness, or unemployment can be considered blessings if God uses them to deepen our dependence on Him and display His grace to others through us (Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-4).

Ultimately, the promises given to Israel point forward to something greater (Heb. 8:6). Through Jesus, we have been brought into a better covenant and given a greater inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-4). God Himself is our reward now and forever (Gen. 15:1; Rev. 22:3-4). As we anticipate the day when “the dwelling place of God is with man” (Rev. 21:3), we should pursue obedience not to gain comfort, but to enjoy deeper communion with Him (1 Jn. 2:3-5).

5. HOW DOES THE COVENANT CONTEXT OF GOD’S OLD TESTAMENT PROMISES HELP US AVOID MISUNDERSTANDING BLESSING AND OBEDIENCE TODAY?

6. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLESSED? HOW CAN YOU LEARN TO RECOGNIZE AND RECEIVE GOD’S BLESSINGS IN DIFFICULT OR HARD TIMES?

“When God sends a storm, it is to drive us to the Rock of Ages. There we find the sweetest comforts.”
– Charles Spurgeon

READ EXODUS 24:1-11

In Exodus 24:1-4, God calls Moses, along with other select leaders, to ascend Mount Sinai (v. 1). There, they would participate in a ceremony that would formally ratify the covenant first proposed in Exodus 19 and detailed in Exodus 20-23.

7. WHO INITIATES THE COVENANT CEREMONY (V. 1)? WHO PARTICIPATES (VV. 1-2)? WHAT DOES MOSES DO TO PREPARE (VV. 4-6)?

“The covenant’s very nature highlights that God takes the lead. He speaks, He promises, He binds, and He fulfills.”
– O. Palmer Robertson

8. WHAT DOES MOSES “READ” (V. 7)? HOW DO THE PEOPLE RESPOND (V. 7)? WHY DOES MOSES THROW “BLOOD” (V. 8) ON THE PEOPLE?

“Here the covenant assumes its richest form. God reveals Himself not in terror, but in fellowship.”
– Herman Bavinck

9. WHAT DO ALL THOSE WHO “WENT UP” (V. 9) DO IN GOD’S PRESENCE (V. 11)? HOW IS THE SCENE DESCRIBED (V. 10)?

DIGGING DEEPER

The covenant ratification ceremony in Exodus 24:1-11 contains the foundational elements of Christian worship. In examining it more closely, we can gain insight into elements of our gathered worship today.

Call to Worship (vv. 1-3): God starts the ceremony by calling Israel’s leaders to approach Him on the mountain, reflecting that worship begins with God’s initiation. Regardless of the form, the weekly call to worship reminds us of God’s gracious invitation into His presence (Heb. 10:19-22).

Offer of Sacrifice (vv. 4-6): Moses constructs an “altar” (v. 4) to consecrate the people and make atonement. The shedding of blood points to the need for purification before God (Lev. 17:11). Today, we come not with animal sacrifices, but with confidence in the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:12).

Read God’s Word (vv. 7-8): Moses reads “the Book of the Covenant” (v. 7) to the people, giving public voice to God’s revealed will. This element highlights the centrality of Scripture in worship and underscores how God governs and instructs His people through His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Respond to God’s Word (v. 7): The people respond in unison, pledging to “be obedient” (v. 7) to all that God has spoken. This shows us that worship must be participative, calling the congregation to respond with faith, praise, and obedience (Heb. 13:15).

Share a Fellowship Meal (vv. 9-11): Israel’s leaders ascend to eat and drink in God’s presence. This covenant meal anticipates communion, where the giving of Jesus’ body and the shedding of His blood are remembered and celebrated by the congregation (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

Every week, we have the remarkable privilege of “[coming] up to the LORD” (v. 1) together to “[behold] God” (v. 11). In worship, God graciously retells us who He is, what He has done, as well as who we are and what we’re called to do in response. We need this regular reminder because our affections easily fade and our hearts are prone to wander (Hos. 11:7). In this way, worship is a service of covenant renewal, restoring our vision of God and reorienting our lives around Him (2 Cor. 3:18).

Ex. 24:10 – The only detail recorded is the “pavement” beneath God’s feet, implying that those present were so overwhelmed by His glory that they could not raise their eyes above His footstool.

10. HOW CAN YOU PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR WORSHIP? WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD THAT MAKE IN YOUR ABILITY OR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE?

11. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE BIBLE TO BE READ AND TAUGHT EVERY SUNDAY? WHAT DO WE MISS IF WE DON'T CENTER OUR SERVICES ON GOD'S WORD?

12. HOW DOES KNOWING THAT SINGING IS A FORM OF RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD AFFECT YOUR PARTICIPATION IN CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP?

*"Singing is the
expression of the heart
moved by truth."
– Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

13. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO GO TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY? IS THIS A PRIORITY IN YOUR LIFE? IF SO, WHY? IF NOT, HOW CAN YOU ADJUST OR CHANGE?

READ EXODUS 24:12-18

Though not stated directly, the text implies a pause between Exodus 24:11 and Exodus 24:12. Evidently, Moses had descended down the mountain and is now called by God to "come up" (v. 12). This narrative gap reflects a deliberate transition in function and focus, as Moses moves from a shared experience of covenant grace to a solitary reception of covenant obligation.

14. WHAT INSTRUCTIONS DOES GOD GIVE MOSES (V. 12)? HOW DO THESE COMMANDS REVEAL THE ATTITUDE MOSES MUST HAVE IN APPROACHING GOD?

*"Moses is told to come
up and wait because
in God's presence
one must not rush
but revere."
– RC Sproul*

Ex. 24:18 – This extended time echoes significant biblical periods of testing and preparation (e.g. Num. 14:33-34; 1 Kings 19:8; Matt. 4:1-2), symbolizing an intense season of instruction and revelation.

"The glory of God teaches us that boldness without humility is spiritual blindness."
– Thomas Watson

15. WHAT IS EMPHASIZED ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE "TABLETS" (V. 12)? HOW DOES THIS SHAPE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE?

16. HOW IS GOD'S "GLORY" (VV. 16, 17) DEPICTED? WHAT DOES THIS EMPHASIZE ABOUT THE WAY HE MUST BE APPROACHED?

17. WHAT DOES THE PROLONGED DURATION OF MOSES' STAY ON THE MOUNTAIN INDICATE ABOUT THE GRAVITY AND SCOPE OF GOD'S REVELATION (VV. 16, 18)?

DIGGING DEEPER

Moses' "six days" (v. 16) of waiting and "forty [night]" (v. 18) stay on the mountain teach us how God shapes His people.

To start, the initial period of delay in "the cloud" (v. 16) reminds us that God's revelation cannot be accessed through spiritual shortcuts or impulsive action (Prov. 19:2; Eccl. 5:1-2). Instead, God requires humility and patience and calls us to assume a posture of submission (Is. 66:2). Likewise, Moses' extended time in communion with God reveals that genuine fellowship with Him is not brief or superficial, but intimate and sustained (Ps. 27:4; Jn. 15:4-5).

Put together, this passage reminds us that maturity requires consistency and time (Gal. 6:9; 2 Cor. 3:18). Instead of rushing through Scripture for quick insights or spiritual boosts, we should take time to read slowly, reflect truthfully, and return frequently (Ps. 1:2-3; 119:15-16). This kind of unhurried engagement allows God's Word to take root and progressively form our thoughts and desires according to His will (Heb. 4:12).

18. WHY DOES SPIRITUAL MATURITY REQUIRE CONSISTENCY AND TIME? HOW DOES THIS CHALLENGE AND ENCOURAGE YOU?

"Growth in grace is gradual, and every new step forward must be fought for."
– JC Ryle

19. WHAT MOST FREQUENTLY INHIBITS OR PREVENTS YOU FROM SUSTAINED TIME WITH GOD? HOW CAN YOU ADDRESS OR OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES?

CONCLUSION

Throughout Scripture, God relates to His people through a series of covenants. As we discussed in Week 2, a covenant is a binding relationship in which God commits Himself to His people with clear promises and attendant expectations.

Exodus 19-24 records what is known as the Mosaic Covenant, a particular expression of what is referred to as the Old Covenant. Through it, God ruled His people by laws inscribed on “tablets of stone” (Ex. 24:12) and related to them through the mediation of Moses. Though good and just, it was only able to expose human sinfulness and left Israel externally bound and internally unchanged.

20. HOW DO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES DEMONSTRATE THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT OVER THE OLD COVENANT?

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

EZEKIEL 36:25-27

ROMANS 8:1-4

HEBREWS 7:22-28

21. WHAT PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE DOES LIVING UNDER THE NEW COVENANT MAKE IN OUR LIVES? WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

*“Many a believer is hindered from communion with God by the carelessness and lukewarmness of the heart.”
– John Owen*

*“The New Covenant’s superiority is seen in its promise of an intimate, personal relationship with God made possible by Christ’s work and the Spirit’s presence.”
– DA Carson*

WEEK 13

THE TABERNACLE PART I

EXODUS 25:8-9

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.
Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle,
and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

EXODUS 25:1-31:18

INTRODUCTION

Israel's relationship with God was not only about obedience, but also fellowship. This week, we'll study God's initial instructions for building the tabernacle. In Week 14, we'll focus on the priests who served God in the tabernacle. In both lessons, we'll highlight God's desire for communion with His people and His commitment to their holiness.

READ EXODUS 25:1-9; 31:1-18

Before the tabernacle could be built, God commanded Moses to collect an offering from the people. Notably, the materials were sourced from the wealth taken from Egypt (Ex. 12:33-36). Later, God also appointed and empowered craftsmen to ensure that every detail would reflect His design (Ex. 31:1-11).

"The offerings were not to be taken or borrowed but freely given from that which God had prospered His people."
— Martyn Lloyd-Jones

1. WHAT KIND OF "CONTRIBUTION" (EX. 25:2, 3) DID GOD COMMAND? WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT IT CAME FROM RESOURCES HE HAD ALREADY GIVEN?

2. HOW DOES GOD ENABLE THE CRAFTSMEN (EX. 31:1-6)? WHAT DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THEIR WORK?

3. WHY DOES GOD REQUIRE THE SABBATH DURING CONSTRUCTION (EX. 31:12-15)? WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT HIS PRIORITIES (EX. 31:16-17)?

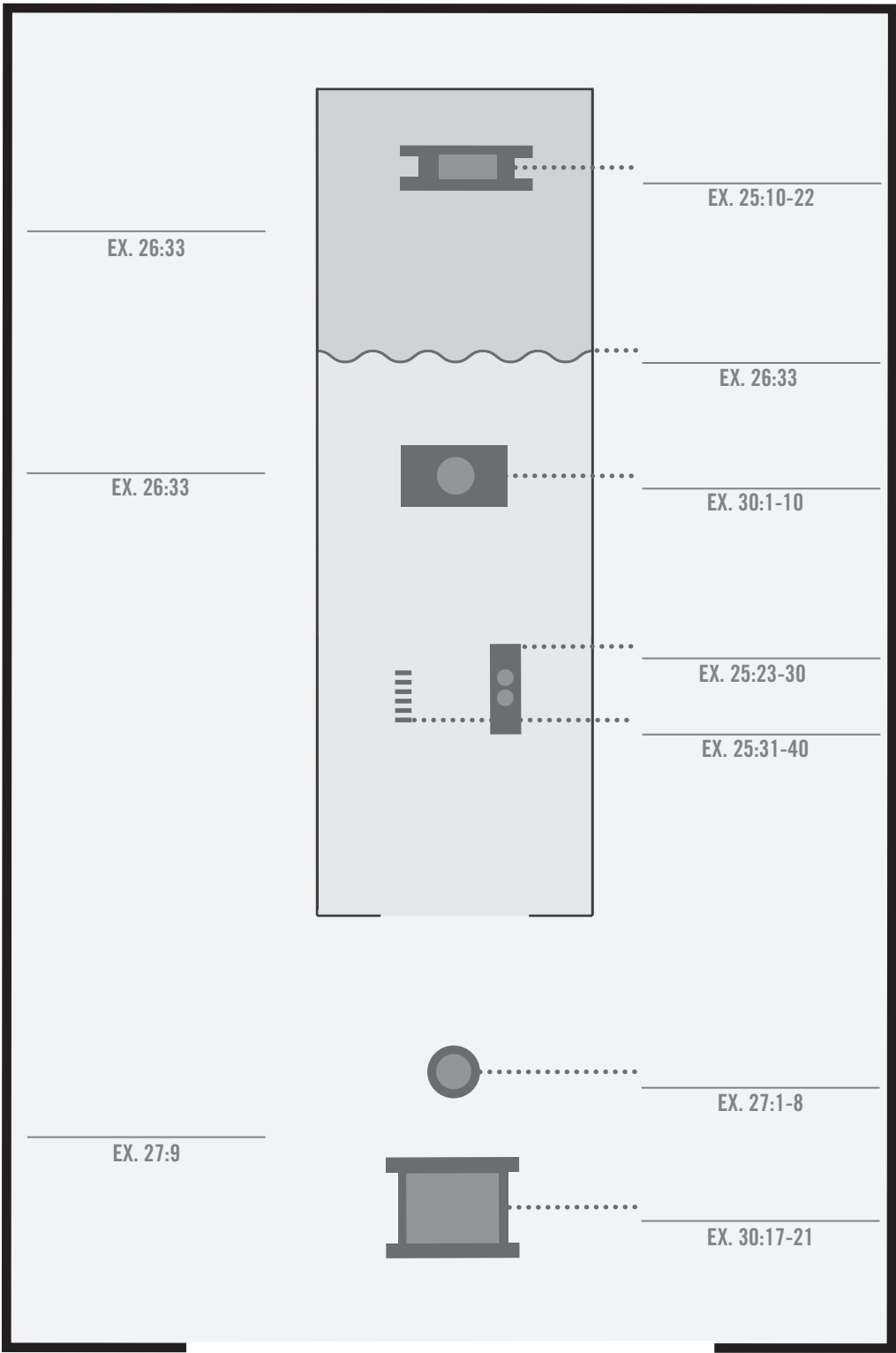
4. WHAT DOES GOD'S EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING HIS PEOPLE TEACH US ABOUT MINISTRY? WHY IS THIS SIGNIFICANT?

"God makes every faithful servant a mighty instrument in His hands."
— Charles Spurgeon

THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle was a temporary “sanctuary” (Ex. 25:8) that enabled God to “dwell” (Ex. 25:8) with His people. Over the course of Exodus 25:10-30:38, God provided specific instructions to ensure it was constructed according to His design.

5. USE THE DIAGRAM BELOW TO LABEL THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS AND ELEMENTS OF THE TABERNACLE COMPLEX.



"The tabernacle was God's visible presence among His people, a sacred meeting place where heaven and earth touched."
— John Calvin

*"The mercy seat represented the place of divine forgiveness, covered with cherubim that signify God's majestic presence and protection."
— RC Sproul*

Having familiarized ourselves with the layout of the tabernacle, we'll now survey each section, specifically by focusing on the pieces of furniture displayed. As we do this, it might be helpful to refer to the diagram on the previous page.

THE MOST HOLY PLACE

The Most Holy Place was the innermost room of the tabernacle. Its shape was a perfect cube, measuring 15 feet wide, 15 feet long, and 15 feet high. It was separated from the Holy Place by an elaborately woven veil made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31-33). The high priest was permitted to enter into the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:2-3; Heb. 9:7).

READ EXODUS 25:10-22 – ARK

The Ark of the Covenant is the first element described in the instructions for the tabernacle, underscoring its central role in God's dwelling among His people. Though simple in form, a wooden box overlaid with gold (Ex. 25:10-15), it represented the throne of God (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2).

6. WHAT ITEMS ARE PLACED INSIDE THE ARK (VV. 16, 21; HEB. 9:4)? WHAT DO EACH REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE?

7. HOW IS THE MERCY SEAT DESCRIBED (VV. 17, 21)? WHAT FEATURES ARE ADDED TO IT (VV. 18-20)?

8. WHERE DOES GOD PROMISE TO MEET WITH MOSES (V. 22)? HOW DOES THIS CLARIFY THE ARK'S PURPOSE?

Ex. 25:10 – The "ark" symbolized God's leadership of Israel. It went before the people, actively escorting them throughout their wandering (e.g. Num. 10:33-36) and conquest (e.g. Josh. 3:1-17).

Ex. 25:10 – The "ark" was sometimes carried into battle, symbolizing God's presence fighting for His people (e.g. Josh. 6:6-21; 8:30-35). However, its presence didn't guarantee victory. When Israel treated it presumptuously, it led to defeat and capture (e.g. 1 Sam. 4:1-11).

Ex. 25:10 – Jeremiah 3:16 foretells a time when the "ark" would no longer be central to worship. This points to fulfillment in Jesus, who is now the true meeting place between God and man.

DIGGING DEEPER

Leviticus 16 outlines the Day of Atonement. It was the one time each year when the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place (Ex. 30:10). On that day, after presenting a bull as a sin offering for himself (Lev. 16:6) and a goat for the sins of the people (Lev. 16:9), He would enter behind the veil and sprinkle blood “on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat” (Lev. 16:15).

These actions only make sense when two key realities are remembered. First, the stone tablets on which God’s Law was inscribed (Ex. 24:12; 31:18) were stored inside the ark (Ex. 25:16, 21). Second, God’s presence was enthroned above the mercy seat, between the cherubim (Ex. 25:22). That said, as the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, God would look down from His throne to the Law that Israel had broken (Heb. 9:7). However, instead of condemning His people, He would see the blood of a substitute and accept it as payment for their sin (Lev. 16:34).

9. HOW WOULD THE DAY OF ATONEMENT HAVE SHAPED ISRAEL’S PERCEPTION OF THEMSELVES AND GOD? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

“The Day of Atonement perpetually confronted Israel with the seriousness of sin and God’s gracious provision.”
– Tim Keller

THE HOLY PLACE

The Holy Place was the first room of the tabernacle, situated just outside the veil that led into the Most Holy Place. It measured approximately 30 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high (Ex. 26:15-25). Though not as restricted as the Most Holy Place, access was still limited. Only priests were allowed to enter as they performed their daily duties (Ex. 28:43; Num. 18:1-7). The Holy Place contained the table (Ex. 25:23-30), the lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40), and the altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-10), all of which were made of gold.

READ EXODUS 25:23-30 – TABLE

The table for “the bread of the Presence” (v. 30) was positioned on the north side of the tabernacle. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold (vv. 23-24). Additionally, it was equipped with rings and poles that allowed it to be carried without being touched (vv. 25-28).

10. WHAT WAS PLACED ON THE TABLE (V. 30)? WHY WAS IT SET “BEFORE [GOD]” (V. 30)? HOW OFTEN WAS THIS TO BE DONE (V. 30)?

“The regular offering of bread teaches us that worship is a constant act of depending on God’s grace and presence.”
– Kevin DeYoung

"The table of showbread is a powerful symbol of God's covenantal presence and provision."
– DA Carson

11. READ LEVITICUS 24:5-9. WHAT DETAILS DOES THIS PASSAGE ADD? WHAT WAS THE TABLE'S PURPOSE FUNCTIONALLY AND SYMBOLICALLY?

DIGGING DEEPER

Twelve loaves of bread were "regularly" (v. 30) set before God "on the table" (v. 30). This bread, known as the "bread of the Presence" (v. 30), served as a sign of God's continual provision for the twelve tribes of Israel and symbolized that His people always lived under His care.

Additionally, in contrast to pagan rituals, where food was offered to nourish the gods, Israel's bread was not given to meet God's needs (Ps. 50:12-13). Instead, the loaves were given back to Aaron and his sons, who ate them "in a holy place... [as] a most holy portion" (Lev. 24:9). This meal in God's presence was a picture of peace and communion, assuring Israel that God not only provided for them, but welcomed them into ongoing fellowship.

12. WHERE DO YOU SEE GOD'S PROVISION IN YOUR LIFE? HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP GREATER AWARENESS AND GRATITUDE FOR IT?

"The greatest comfort is that God longs to dwell with us."
– Martin Luther

13. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT GOD DESIRES FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE? WHAT HABITS OR PRACTICES HELP YOU ENJOY COMMUNION WITH HIM?

READ EXODUS 25:31-40; 27:20-21 – LAMPSTAND

Because there were no windows or places for light to come through in the Holy Place, the lampstand was the only source of light in the tabernacle. Regardless of whether anyone was present, the lampstand was constantly burning (Lev. 24:2-3).

14. WHAT MATERIALS AND SHAPE ARE SPECIFIED FOR THE LAMPSTAND (EX. 25:31-40)?

15. WHAT WAS USED TO LIGHT THE LAMPSTAND (EX. 27:20)? WHY DID GOD COMMAND THAT THE LAMP BURN “FOREVER” (EX. 27:21)?

“The lampstand teaches that the light of Christ must ever burn in the hearts of believers, dispelling darkness and guiding their steps.”
– Thomas Watson

READ EXODUS 30:1-10 – ALTAR OF INCENSE

The “incense” (v. 1) burned in the tabernacle was a blend of rare spices, frankincense, and salt, ground into fine powder (Ex. 30:34-35). Its formula was not to be copied (Ex. 30:37), as it was reserved solely for worship in the Holy Place.

16. WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC USE OF THE ALTAR (V. 1)? HOW OFTEN IS THE INCENSE TO BE BURNED ON IT (VV. 7-8)?

17. WHAT WARNING DOES GOD GIVE REGARDING USE OF THE ALTAR (V. 9)? WHAT RITUAL IS REQUIRED ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (V. 10)?

DIGGING DEEPER

The altar of incense was placed just before the veil of the Most Holy Place. Every day, the high priest would burn incense, creating a pleasing aroma. Along with the smoke that was produced, this symbolized the ongoing prayers of Israel being reverently offered to God.

During the Day of Atonement, the high priest brought burning coals and “two handfuls of sweet incense” (Lev. 16:12) inside the veil. There, he placed the incense on the coals so that a thick cloud would cover the mercy seat, ensuring he would “not die” (Lev. 16:13). This cloud served as a protective covering from God’s holy presence.

18. HOW DOES THE ALTAR OF INCENSE HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSISTENT AND REVERENT PRAYER? WHY IS THIS PRACTICE PLEASING TO GOD?

“The altar of incense is a picture of prayer, which must be constant and holy, ascending continually before the throne of grace.”
– John Owen

"The altar's perpetual flame anticipated the ceaseless intercession of Christ."

– Edmund Clowney

"The laver signified that even those who are consecrated to God must be daily cleansed from their defilements."

– Matthew Henry

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

The "court of the tabernacle" (Ex. 27:9) was the space that surrounded the tabernacle, forming a designated area where Israel could approach God's dwelling in a regulated and reverent manner. It measured approximately 150 feet long and 75 feet wide (Ex. 27:18) and was enclosed by linen curtains (Ex. 27:9-19). The single entrance was located on the eastern side (Ex. 27:13-16) and symbolized that there was only one way to approach God.

READ EXODUS 27:1-8 – BRONZE ALTAR

The bronze altar was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. It featured a horn on each of its four corners and was equipped with bronze utensils and a grating for burnt offerings. The position of the bronze altar near the entrance of the main court was a clear reminder of the absolute necessity for atonement to be made before genuine fellowship with God could be initiated.

19. READ LEVITICUS 1:2-9. WHO WAS ALLOWED TO USE THE ALTAR? WHAT WAS ITS PRIMARY FUNCTION?

20. READ LEVITICUS 6:12-13. WHAT WERE GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE "FIRE ON THE ALTAR" (V. 12)? WHY WOULD GOD COMMAND THIS?

READ EXODUS 30:17-21 – BRONZE BASIN

The "basin of bronze" (v.18) was placed "between the tent of meeting and the altar" (v. 18) in the court of the tabernacle. It was filled and used for ritual washing, emphasizing the need for purity before coming near to God's presence in service.

21. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE BRONZE BASIN (VV. 18-19)? WHEN WAS IT MEANT TO BE USED (VV. 20-21)?

Ex. 27:16 – The courtyard's east-facing "gate" recalls Eden, where humanity was sent eastward and kept from reentering God's presence (Gen. 3:24). The tabernacle entry was symbolic of God inviting His people to return to His presence through the path of sacrifice

**22. WHAT HAPPENED IF GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS WERE NOT FOLLOWED (VV. 20-21)?
WHAT DOES THIS INDICATE ABOUT HIS HOLINESS?**

CONCLUSION

Beyond its immediate function in Israel's worship, the tabernacle offers the most comprehensive revelation of Jesus in the entire Old Testament (Heb. 8:5). Because of this, we should expect each element of the tabernacle to foreshadow some aspect of Jesus' person and work.

**23. WHAT ASPECT OF JESUS' PERSON AND WORK ARE FORESHADOWED IN THE
FOLLOWING ELEMENTS AND FURNISHINGS OF THE TABERNACLE?**

MERCY SEAT (HEB. 9:12-14)

BREAD OF THE PRESENCE (JN. 6:48-51)

LAMPSTAND (JN. 8:12)

ALTAR OF INCENSE (HEB. 7:25)

BRONZE ALTAR (HEB. 9:22)

BRONZE BASIN (HEB. 10:19-23)

**24. HOW DO THE ELEMENTS OF THE TABERNACLE HELP YOU SEE JESUS' WORK IN A
MORE TANGIBLE WAY?**

*"Jesus is the reality of
which the tabernacle
was the symbol. In Him,
the holy God meets
sinful man through
atonement, cleansing,
and communion."
— JI Packer*

"The tabernacle taught God's people that He could dwell among them, but only through divine appointment, priestly intercession, and blood atonement."

– BB Warfield

"Unrestricted access to God should make us eager to pray, slow to despair, and diligent in communion."

– Joel Beeke

Though the tabernacle allowed the Israelites to live with the visible reminder that God was dwelling in their midst, it also made clear that access to His presence was limited and carefully regulated. In other words, the structure of the tabernacle visibly communicated degrees of separation.

25. HOW DID THE STRUCTURE OF THE TABERNACLE COMMUNICATE BOTH GOD'S NEARNESS AND HIS HOLINESS?

26. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN JESUS DIED (MATT. 27:50-51)? WHAT DID THIS MOMENT SIGNIFY (HEB. 10:19-22)?

DIGGING DEEPER

At the time of Jesus, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was an enormous curtain, approximately 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide, and four inches thick. Its sheer size made it impossible to be torn by human strength, underscoring that its rending at the exact moment of Jesus' death was a sovereign act of God Himself.

This action conclusively declared that Jesus' atoning sacrifice was sufficient to remove the barrier of sin. What had once excluded sinful humanity from God's presence had now been torn apart by the cross. Through Jesus' blood, the way into the true Most Holy Place is opened, not just for one high priest once a year, but for all who trust in Him (Heb. 10:19-22). Now, nothing can separate us from God (Rom. 8:39).

27. HOW SHOULD KNOWING YOU HAVE UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO GOD AFFECT THE WAY YOU APPROACH HIM? WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE PRACTICALLY?

WEEK 14

THE TABERNACLE PART II

EXODUS 29:44-45

I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar.
Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to
serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of
Israel and will be their God.

EXODUS 25:1-31:18

INTRODUCTION

In Part 2 of Exodus 25:1-31:18, we'll focus on the priests who served God in the tabernacle. While we already covered some of their activities, especially as they related to the furnishings of the tabernacle, this week we'll emphasize their garments (Ex. 28:1-43) and their consecration (Ex. 29:1-46).

READ EXODUS 28:1-43

While all Israel was called a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), Exodus 28:1 marks the formal appointment of a priesthood to serve in God's presence. Though others had offered sacrifices before, Israel's priests would be uniquely consecrated to mediate for the people in an official, ongoing way.

1. WHO WAS CALLED TO SERVE AS "PRIESTS" (V. 1)? WHAT DID THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ENTAIL (NUM. 3:5-10)?

2. WHAT TRIBE DID THE PRIESTS BELONG TO (EX. 4:14)? WHY IS THIS SURPRISING (GEN. 49:5-7)? WHAT DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT GOD?

"The priest's job was to bring sinful people into the presence of a holy God."

– Tim Keller

DIGGING DEEPER

Based on Jacob's stern rebuke in Genesis 49:5-7, God's selection of the tribe of Levi to serve as Israel's priests is both profound and unexpected. Once condemned for their violence (Gen. 34:1-31), the Levites are now set apart to lead God's people in worship (Ex. 28:1; Num. 3:5-10). This pattern is consistent with how God often works. Throughout Scripture, He delights to choose the unlikely and unworthy in order to display His glory and magnify His grace (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

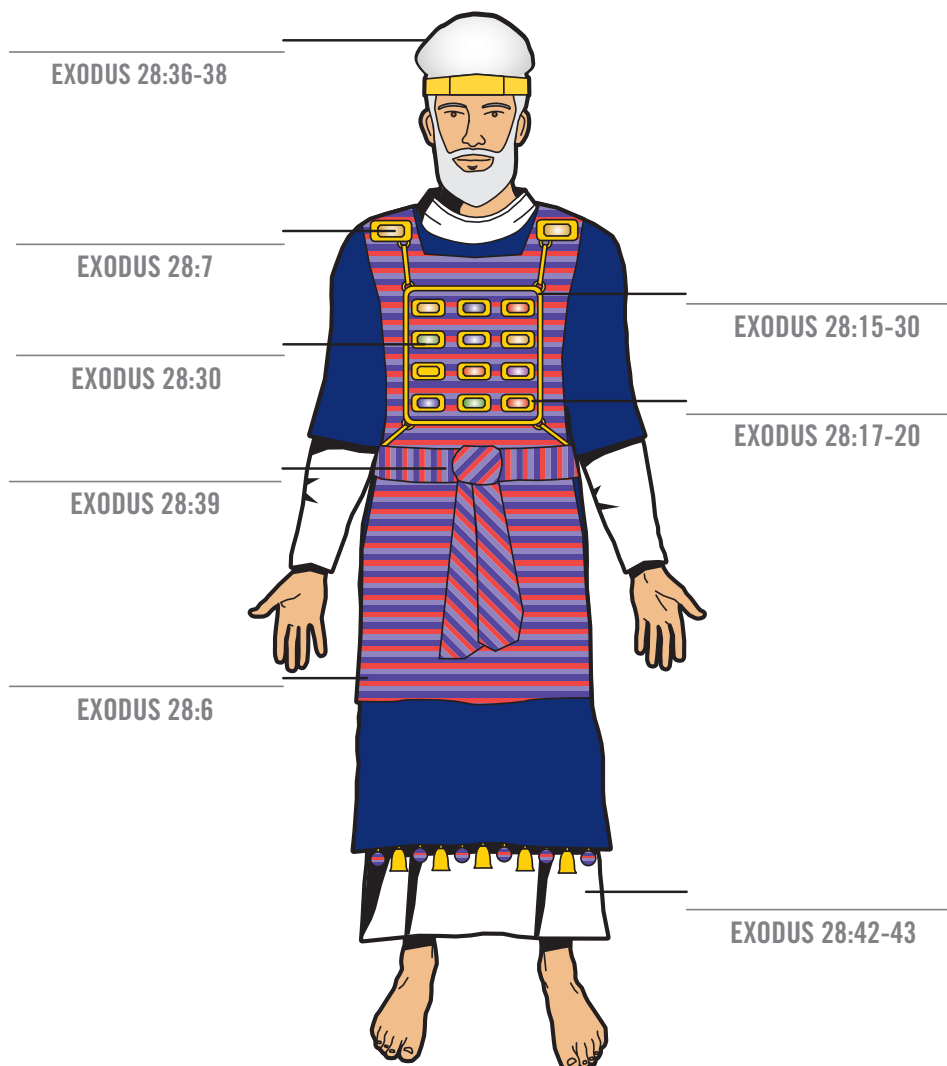
This should be both challenging and encouraging. God still chooses to use sinful people to carry out His purposes (1 Tim. 1:12-16). In response, we must not cling to past failures or present fears, but choose instead to walk in faith whenever and wherever God calls us to serve (Phil. 3:13-14). As with the Levites, God's grace is sufficient to restore us and reassign us to kingdom work (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

3. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT GOD BOTH RESTORES AND REASSIGNS US? HOW SHOULD THIS SHAPE YOUR VIEW OF PAST FAILURES OR MISTAKES?

4. HOW COULD YOU APPLY THIS LESSON AS YOU INVEST IN OTHER PEOPLE? WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT DOES IT OFFER BOTH YOU AND THEM?

After calling “Aaron... and his sons” (v. 1) to serve, God provides detailed instructions for each item of clothing to be worn. Like the ornate features and furnishings of the tabernacle, the priests’ garments pointed beyond themselves, each signifying some aspect of their ministry.

5. LABEL THE ARTICLES OF THE PRIESTS’ GARMENTS ON THE PICTURE BELOW.



“God delights to glorify Himself in redeeming the least likely, showing that His purposes are not thwarted by our failures.”
– Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“The priest’s attire was both a uniform and a sermon. By his dress, he taught the people the holiness of God and the necessity of intercession, purification, and atonement.”
– Matthew Henry

"The priestly garments proclaimed that access to God was neither casual nor common."
– Joel Beeke

"The high priest wore holiness upon his forehead so that the people might know the necessity of purity in all who come before God."
– Thomas Watson

6. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS (VV. 2, 40)? HOW IS THIS FULFILLED IN THEIR OVERALL APPEARANCE AND DESIGN?

7. WHAT DO THE "ONYX STONES" (V. 9) AND "TWELVE STONES" (V. 21) REVEAL ABOUT THE PRIESTS' ROLE? HOW IS THEIR PLACEMENT SIGNIFICANT (VV. 12, 29)?

8. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE "BELLS" (V. 33) ON THE PRIEST'S ROBE (V. 35)? WHY DOES GOD INCLUDE THIS DETAIL IN THE DESIGN?

9. WHAT WAS WRITTEN ON THE GOLD "PLATE" (V. 36)? WHY WAS IT PLACED ON AARON'S "FOREHEAD" (V. 38)?

10. WHAT KINDS OF GARMENTS WERE MADE FOR AARON'S SONS (V. 40)? HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM THOSE WORN BY AARON HIMSELF?

11. WHY DID GOD REQUIRE PRIESTS TO WEAR "UNDERGARMENTS" (V. 42)? WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT HIS STANDARD FOR HOLINESS?

Ex. 28:6 – An "ephod" was a vest or apron-like garment worn over the priest's robe.

Ex. 28:33 – In addition to indicating that the priest was still alive (v. 35), the sound of the "bells" served as an audible reminder to the people that their representative was interceding for them.

DIGGING DEEPER

Although Scripture doesn't provide detailed information about "the Urim and the Thummim" (v. 30), most theologians agree they were likely physical objects that God occasionally used to reveal His will in a miraculous manner (e.g. Num. 27:21). Regardless of their precise function, the placement of the Urim and Thummim over the high priest's heart symbolized his unique responsibility to discern God's direction for the people (Ex. 28:30).

Because we live in a time where immediate answers are always at our fingertips, the idea of a tangible decision-making tool may seem attractive. However, we must realize that God hasn't left us less resourced than Israel. In fact, we've been given far more.

To start, God has clearly revealed His will through the Bible, providing us with timeless commands, principles, and wisdom that address every aspect of life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Additionally, unlike the high priest, who bore the weight of discernment alone, we walk under the continual guidance of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12) and within the safety of Christian community, where wise counsel serves to challenge or confirm the choices we make (Prov. 24:6).

While God's Word may not always offer specific answers to every decision we face, it does provide freedom to walk in faithfulness, as long as our choices are not in direct violation of God's commands (Ps. 119:105; Gal. 5:13). Ultimately, what matters most is that we seek to live with integrity and purity in whatever we do (Job 8:6; 1 Cor. 10:31). Even when outcomes are uncertain, we can move forward in confidence, knowing that God is sovereign and delights when we aim to please Him (Prov. 16:9; Ps. 37:23).

12. HOW DOES THE BIBLE REVEAL GOD'S WILL? WHY DOES STUDYING IT LEAD TO GREATER CLARITY AS YOU MAKE DECISIONS?

13. WHAT ROLE DOES THE SPIRIT PLAY IN OUR UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL? HOW CAN YOU SEEK THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE MORE INTENTIONALLY?

14. WHY IS CONSULTING COMMUNITY AN IMPORTANT STEP IN DISCERNING GOD'S WILL? WHY IS IT DANGEROUS TO MAKE DECISIONS IN ISOLATION?

"To be led by the Spirit is not mystical guesswork.

It is the result of walking in the Word, communing with God in prayer, and growing in Christlike character."

— Sinclair Ferguson

"The man or woman who is wholly or joyously surrendered to Christ can't make a wrong choice."
– AW Tozer

"The priests' eating of the offering was a sign that God's ministers must be nourished by His grace to carry out their holy duties."
– John Owen

15. WHAT DECISION OR SITUATION REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION OR DELIBERATION RIGHT NOW? HOW CAN YOU APPLY THESE PRINCIPLES?

READ EXODUS 29:1-46

In Exodus 29:1-46, God gives Moses detailed instructions for the consecration of the priests. Rich in symbolism, this ceremony inaugurates a priesthood that would mediate the covenant God had established with Israel.

16. WHAT ANIMALS (V. 1) AND OFFERINGS (VV. 10-14, 15-18, 19-28) ARE REQUIRED TO "CONSECRATE" (V. 1) THE PRIESTS?

17. WHAT IS DONE TO PREPARE THE PRIESTS FOR CONSECRATION (VV. 4-9)? WHAT DO THESE ACTIONS SIGNIFY?

18. WHY WERE THE PRIESTS COMMANDED TO EAT PART OF THE OFFERING (VV. 31-34)? WHAT ASPECT OF THEIR ROLE DID THIS HIGHLIGHT?

19. WHY IS THE ALTAR ITSELF "[CONSECRATED]" (V. 36)? WHAT DOES THIS INDICATE ABOUT GOD'S DEMAND FOR PURITY?

Ex. 29:1 – The "bull" was often used for sin offerings because its strength and value symbolized the serious nature of sin and the heavy cost required for atonement.

Ex. 29:35 – The "seven days" of ordination involved washing, clothing, anointing, and sacrificing. This elaborate and prolonged ceremony underscored the solemnity and thoroughness of preparing priests to serve and reflected the biblical significance of seven as completeness.

DIGGING DEEPER

Three distinct types of offerings were involved in the consecration of the priests, each revealing something vital about their relationship to God and the nature of their service.

Sin Offering (vv. 10-14): The “sin offering” (v. 14) emphasizes the need for atonement. When the priests laid their hands on the bull’s head (v. 10), it symbolized the transfer of their guilt onto the animal, which was then offered as their substitute. This act underscored the holiness of God and the unworthiness of those called to serve Him apart from His mercy.

Burnt Offering (vv. 15-18): The word used for “burnt offering” (v. 18) means “to ascend” and was used to refer to the “pleasing aroma” (v. 18) that rose from the altar to God. Additionally, the “whole ram” (v. 18) was consumed by fire (v. 18), signifying a life completely devoted to God.

Fellowship Offering (vv. 19-34): This offering involved presenting portions of the sacrificed ram, along with bread, by lifting or “[waving]” (v. 26) them before God in acknowledgment of His provision. After being offered, the food was eaten by the priests, marking a moment of fellowship with God (vv. 31-34).

Together, these offerings reveal that serving God requires a consecration of the whole person. Through these rituals, God made clear that those who would serve Him must do so completely set apart for His glory.

20. HOW DOES GOD’S STANDARD OF HOLINESS CHALLENGE OR CONVICT YOU?

*“God’s holiness
confronts us with
the reality that we
cannot stand before
Him as we are.”
– RC Sproul*

21. WHICH ASPECT OF CONSECRATION – CLEANSING, SURRENDERING, OR THANKING – DO YOU NEED MOST RIGHT NOW? WHY? HOW CAN YOU RESPOND?

Exodus 29:38-42 marks a transition from the one-time consecration of the priests to the daily responsibilities of their ministry. This shift emphasizes that Israel’s worship was to be ongoing.

22. WHAT DAILY OFFERINGS ARE COMMANDED FOR THE ALTAR (VV. 38-41)? WHAT PURPOSE WOULD THEY SERVE (V. 42)?

*“The continual sacrifices
illustrated the persistent
reality of sin and the
need for a repeated
turning to God’s grace.”
– Geerhardus Vos*

*"Holiness is not something man imparts by his own power but is a divine gift."
– John Calvin*

23. WHO IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR "[CONSECRATING]" (V. 44) THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTS? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

24. WHAT PROMISE DOES GOD MAKE TO ISRAEL (VV. 43-46)? HOW WOULD THE PRIESTS' MINISTRY SERVE TO AFFIRM AND UPHOLD IT?

DIGGING DEEPER

The book of Hebrews essentially serves as a commentary on the Old Testament, written to persuade Jewish readers of the surpassing greatness of Jesus. Central to this argument is the superiority of Jesus' priesthood.

Jesus is called our "great high priest" (Heb. 4:14) and is appointed according to the "order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:11). This means that, unlike priests from the tribe of Levi, His ministry is eternal and unchanging. Additionally, through His "once for all... sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26), He established a "better hope" (Heb. 7:19) and brought about a "better covenant" (Heb. 7:22).

What the Levitical priests could only point to, Jesus fulfilled. He brought an end to the temporary priestly system, which could never fully atone for sin or bring people near to God.

25. HOW DO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES FROM HEBREWS SPEAK TO THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS' PRIESTHOOD OVER THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD?

HEBREWS 4:14-16

HEBREWS 7:23-28

HEBREWS 8:1-6

HEBREWS 9:11-15

HEBREWS 10:11-14

*"Christ is the only priest we now need. The shadow is gone. The substance is here."
– Charles Spurgeon*

CONCLUSION

Just as the tabernacle was meant to be temporary, God never intended the Levitical priesthood to be permanent. In fact, as He declared earlier at Sinai, His desire was for Israel to be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). Though this calling was delayed as a result of sin not being fully atoned for, it was never abandoned.

However, when Jesus died on the cross, He offered the final payment for sin (Heb. 10:10) and removed the barrier between God and man. As we discussed in Week 13, this monumental moment was marked by the tearing of the veil at His death (Matt. 27:51). As a result, God’s original intention for Israel was fulfilled. Now, every believer is part of a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), called to draw near to God and to reflect His glory to the world.

26. WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE PRIESTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIANS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

EXODUS 29:4 / HEBREWS 10:22

EXODUS 29:5-6, 8-9 / GALATIANS 3:27

EXODUS 29:7 / 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21-22

EXODUS 29:10-11, 15-16, 19-20 / 1 JOHN 1:7

EXODUS 29:17-18 / ROMANS 12:1

27. PICK ONE OF THE SIMILARITIES LISTED ABOVE. WHAT DOES THAT TRUTH REVEAL ABOUT YOUR IDENTITY? HOW COULD YOU LIVE IT OUT MORE FULLY?

“Christians are a priestly people who offer spiritual sacrifices, intercede for others, and live lives consecrated to God. The whole Christian life is priestly in character.”
— JI Packer

WEEK 15

THE GOLDEN CALF

EXODUS 32:30

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

EXODUS 32:1-35

INTRODUCTION

After confirming the covenant (Ex. 24), Moses ascended the mountain to receive God's instructions for worship (Ex. 25-31). In Exodus 32, the people he left below grew impatient and committed egregious idolatry. Their act of covenant infidelity exposes the wickedness of the human heart and highlights the need for a mediator to stand between a holy God and a sinful people.

READ EXODUS 32:1-6

Just forty days after Moses ascended Sinai (Ex. 24:18), the people grew restless and turned to idolatry. Though they had just pledged to obey God's covenant, they now demanded a visible god to lead them and engaged in practices likely absorbed during their time in Egyptian slavery.

*"Israel's faith was immature and fragile, prone to turning to visible objects rather than trusting the invisible God."
– Sinclair Ferguson*

1. WHY DO THE ISRAELITES APPROACH AARON (V. 1)? WHAT DO THEY DEMAND FROM HIM (V. 1)?

2. HOW DOES AARON RESPOND TO THE PEOPLE (VV. 2-4)? WHAT DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO LEAD?

3. WHAT DO THE PEOPLE SAY AND DO AFTER THE CALF IS MADE (VV. 4, 6)? WHAT DO THEIR WORDS AND ACTIONS REVEAL?

4. HOW DOES AARON ATTEMPT TO REDEEM THE PEOPLE'S IDOLATRY (V. 5)? WHY WAS HE UNSUCCESSFUL?

*"Aaron's attempt at peace through compromise only led to greater disorder and judgment."
– Francis Schaeffer*

DIGGING DEEPER

Idolatry is the act of elevating anything above God in our hearts. It occurs whenever we love, trust, or submit to something more than God Himself (Deut. 6:5; Rom. 1:25).

To grasp how idolatry takes root, it's helpful to distinguish between two layers. Surface idols are the visible, external expressions of our misplaced worship. They are the things we long for more than God, including achievement, appearance, career, entertainment, health, money, recreation, relationships, and reputation (1 Jn. 2:16). Beneath all of these pursuits lie source idols. These are the deeper longings that drive our behavior. Historically, source idols have been organized into four categories: approval, comfort, control, or power.

Exodus 32:1-6 provides a vivid picture of these concepts. The "golden calf" (v. 4) was the surface idol. It was the tangible and visible object that received the Israelites' worship. However, a closer look at the narrative reveals the foundational source idols. There was a hunger for comfort amidst delay (v. 1), a grasp for control in the face of uncertainty (v. 1), a craving for approval to silence dissent (vv. 2-4), and a lust for power in the staging of a self-glorifying celebration (v. 6). In the end, the people's sin was not just sculpting a statue. It was turning to their own creation instead of to God to fulfill their desires (Ps. 106:19-21; Is. 44:9-20).

When confronting idolatry in our own lives, we must look beyond behavior to the affections that drive it (Mk. 7:20-23). If we focus only on external habits, we may change routines without transforming our hearts (Matt. 23:25-28). Conversely, when we trace our actions to their roots and confront what's beneath them, we are able to reorient our lives toward God alone, trusting that His approval secures (Ps. 16:11), His comfort satisfies (Jer. 17:7-8), His control sustains (Is. 26:3-4), and His power strengthens (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

5. WHY MUST WE IDENTIFY THE DESIRES UNDERNEATH OUR ACTIONS? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE TRY TO FIGHT SIN EXCLUSIVELY AT THE SURFACE LEVEL?

*"Unless we discern and mortify the root desires of sin, our struggle remains vain and temporary."
– John Owen*

6. WHAT ARE SOME SURFACE IDOLS YOU ARE TEMPTED TO DESIRE OR PURSUE? WHAT IS THE DEEPER SOURCE IDOL THAT DRIVES THEM?

Ex. 32:2 – The "rings of gold" were part of the wealth taken from Egypt (Ex. 12:35-36). This represents a tragic inversion of God's blessing and an ironic distortion of God's call for contributions to the tabernacle (Ex. 25:1-2).

Ex. 32:6 – The phrase "rose up to play" likely implies sexual immorality, which was common in pagan worship. Paul later cites this as a warning against idolatry's corrupting effects (1 Cor. 10:7).

"The only way to break the power of idolatry is to turn to the One who can truly fulfill the desire behind it."

– Tim Keller

7. HOW IS GOD ULTIMATELY THE SATISFACTION OF THE SOURCE IDOL YOU IDENTIFIED IN QUESTION 6? WHY MUST YOU REDIRECT THAT DESIRE TO HIM?

READ EXODUS 32:7-14

Because Moses was up the mountain, he didn't know what the people were doing in the camp. However, God interrupts giving the Law to tell Moses what was happening with His people at the base of Mount Sinai.

8. WHAT DOES GOD REPORT TO MOSES (VV. 7-9)? HOW DO HIS WORDS EMPHASIZE THE SERIOUSNESS AND SUDDENNESS OF THEIR SIN?

9. WHAT INITIAL JUDGMENT AND SOLUTION DOES GOD PROPOSE (V. 10)?

10. HOW DOES MOSES RESPOND TO GOD'S "ANGER" (V. 12)? WHAT DOES HE APPEAL TO IN HIS INTERCESSION FOR THE PEOPLE (VV. 11-13)?

11. HOW DOES GOD RESPOND TO MOSES' PLEA (V. 14)? WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT HIS CHARACTER?

12. WHAT DOES THIS EPISODE TEACH US ABOUT HOW PRAYER FITS INTO GOD'S WILL?

"God's relenting reminds us that His threats are often conditional and meant to stir repentance."

– Martyn Lloyd-Jones

DIGGING DEEPER

In the face of God's righteous "wrath" (v. 10), Moses steps forward in bold humility to plead for the Israelites. In doing so, he models several key principles for intercessory prayer.

First, when God speaks of starting over and making a "great nation" (v. 10) from him, Moses refuses any thought of personal gain. Instead, he shows a selfless concern for the people and willingly bears their burden, despite their outright rebellion. Second, as he "[implores] the LORD" (v. 11), Moses appeals to God's faithfulness, recalling both God's redemption (vv. 11-12) and covenant (v. 13).

Ultimately, Moses' faithful intercession results in God "[relenting]" (v. 14) from immediate judgment. While this doesn't imply a change in God's nature or will (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6), it does reveal the gracious and mysterious way God has ordained prayer as a means by which He accomplishes His purposes (Jas. 5:15). As we pray like Moses, we have the opportunity and privilege to participate in the unfolding of God's redemptive work in the lives of the people we love (2 Cor. 1:11).

13. HOW WOULD YOUR PRAYERS CHANGE IF YOU GROUNDED YOUR APPEALS IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS? WHAT DOES THIS ENSURE ABOUT OUR REQUESTS?

14. WHO IN YOUR LIFE IS SPIRITUALLY REBELLIOUS OR VULNERABLE? HOW COULD YOU INTERCEDE FOR THEM? WHAT TRUTHS COULD SHAPE YOUR PRAYERS?

*"No Christian can offer
a more loving service
than interceding for
a soul in danger."
– Charles Spurgeon*

READ EXODUS 32:15-35

As Moses "went down from the mountain" (v. 15), he found the people in boisterous and chaotic celebration around the golden calf. Instead of exclusively worshiping God as they had agreed to, Israel had fallen into pagan-style debauchery, demonstrating profound spiritual rebellion.

15. WHAT DOES MOSES BRING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN (VV. 15-16)? HOW DOES HIS REACTION TO THE PEOPLE SYMBOLIZE THE ISRAELITES' REBELLION (V. 19)?

"Moses sought not only to destroy the idol, but to brand it with utter disgrace."
— John Calvin

16. WHY DID MOSES "[GRIND] [THE CALF] TO POWDER... AND [MAKE] THE PEOPLE... DRINK IT" (V. 20)? WHAT DID THIS ACT COMMUNICATE?

17. HOW DOES AARON ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF TO MOSES (VV. 21-24)? WHO DOES HE ATTEMPT TO SHIFT BLAME TO?

DIGGING DEEPER

When confronted by Moses, Aaron shifts blame to the people, saying they were "set on evil" (v. 22). While true, Aaron was at fault for attempting to please the people instead of fearing God (vv. 2-6). Worse still, after denying culpability, Aaron lies, claiming the golden calf seemingly sprang into existence on its own (v. 24).

Though Aaron's response is false and shameful, it reflects a common tendency. When confronted with sin, we are often quick to deflect blame in order to shield ourselves from embarrassment or guilt. Other times, like Aaron, we even twist the truth, convincing ourselves that our actions were justified or unavoidable.

Despite how natural this is, the Bible teaches that sin doesn't originate from our circumstances, but from the disordered desires of our hearts. Though attempts to excuse or minimize sin may quiet our consciences for a time, they ultimately hinder genuine repentance and renewal. Understanding this, we must be willing to take responsibility for our sin, allowing conviction to lead us to humility before God and not to self-preservation.

18. WHAT EXCUSES DO YOU MOST OFTEN USE TO JUSTIFY YOUR SIN? WHY?

19. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND WHEN CONFRONTED WITH SIN? WHY DOES TAKING RESPONSIBILITY LEAD TO REPENTANCE AND RENEWAL?

"Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet."
— Thomas Watson

Despite his earlier rebuke, Moses turns to see that many of the people remained engaged in their sin. In response, he issues a call for the faithful to act in obedience to God. The Levites respond, carrying out God's judgment against the unrepentant.

While the execution of "about three thousand men" (v. 28) may appear severe, the judgment was likely directed toward the leaders of the rebellion and those who persisted in idolatrous revelry. Far from indiscriminate violence, this was a decisive act of covenant justice intended to halt further corruption and preserve the integrity of God's people. Even so, Moses recognized that further "atonement" (v. 30) was still needed.

20. WHAT DOES MOSES OFFER TO DO FOR ISRAEL (V. 32)? HOW DOES THIS REVEAL HIS COMMITMENT AND LOVE FOR THEM?

*"Moses aligns himself with God's people in their guilt not to justify sin, but to plead for mercy."
– John Murray*

21. WHAT DOES GOD DETERMINE TO DO TO THOSE WHO SINNED AGAINST HIM (VV. 33-35)? HOW DOES HIS RESPONSE BALANCE JUSTICE AND MERCY?

DIGGING DEEPER

In offering to be "[blotted] out of [God's] book" (v. 32), Moses demonstrates astonishing humility and love for the people. He effectively reverses God's earlier offer to "make a great nation of [him]" (v. 10), instead placing himself between the people and God's wrath. Essentially, Moses offers his own life as an "[atoning]" (v. 30) sacrifice on their behalf.

However, as God makes clear, He cannot accept Moses' substitution. Despite his sincerity and selflessness, Moses cannot satisfy the demands of God's justice as an imperfect mediator. In the end, as powerful and unprecedented as his willingness to represent his people is, it points forward to a greater reality (Heb. 7:23-28).

Like the Israelites, we stand guilty in our idolatry, in desperate need of a mediator who is both able and willing to bear the weight of our sin. In His mercy, God has provided that mediator in Jesus. Unlike Moses, Jesus bore the punishment we deserved, dying in our place and rising to secure our reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:8-11; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Ex. 32:32 – Though Hebrew has no punctuation marks, it often uses breaks or pauses to show strong emotion or hesitation. English translators added the dash to help readers sense Moses' apprehension and reluctance, highlighting the intensity of his offer to take the people's place.

*"Moses demonstrates
that real leadership
bleeds for the people."
– JI Packer*

22. WHERE DO YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD OR SERVE OTHERS? HOW CAN YOU REFLECT MOSES' HUMILITY AND SELFLESSNESS IN THOSE ROLES?

23. HOW SHOULD JESUS' WILLINGNESS TO DIE IMPACT YOUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S LOVE? WHY IS THIS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WHEN WE FAIL?

CONCLUSION

While there is much to gather from the account of the golden calf, Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 that we should learn from the Israelites' bad example. In fact, Paul says that this story was "written down for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11) so that we would "not desire evil as [the Israelites] did" (1 Cor. 10:6). Specifically, Paul points us to a warning and encouragement regarding temptation.

24. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:11-14. WHAT WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT DOES PAUL OFFER WITH REGARD TO TEMPTATION (VV. 12, 13)?

25. HOW DO THE INSIGHTS ABOVE HELP YOU "FLEE FROM IDOLATRY" (1 COR. 10:14)? WHAT SPECIFIC STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO DO THAT?

*"The remedy to idolatry
is to fix the heart fully
upon Christ and to find
satisfaction only in Him."
– Martin Luther*

WEEK 16

GOD REAFFIRMS HIS COVENANT

EXODUS 34:6-7

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

EXODUS 33:1-34:35

INTRODUCTION

Though God already agreed through Moses' intercession to spare Israel from complete destruction (Ex. 32:14, 34), He delivers some disconcerting news to the Israelites in Exodus 33. In response, Moses will again intercede on behalf of the people in order to renew their covenant with God.

READ EXODUS 33:1-11

Exodus 33 picks up immediately following the golden calf incident. In the aftermath of God's judgment and Moses' intercession, Moses pleads for God's continued presence, leading to one of the most intimate and theologically rich encounters in the entire Bible.

1. WHAT COMMAND AND PROMISE DOES GOD ISSUE TO MOSES (VV. 1-2)? WHAT DISAPPOINTING CAVEAT DOES HE ADD (V. 3)? WHY?

2. HOW DO THE ISRAELITES RESPOND TO THE "DISASTROUS WORD" (V. 4)? WHAT DOES THEIR REACTION REVEAL ABOUT THEIR DISPOSITION TOWARD GOD (VV. 4-6)?

Exodus 33:7-11 might seem like a misplaced or parenthetical explanation that interrupts the narrative. However, these verses introduce the "tent of meeting" (v. 7) as a visible symbol of God's distance. While God once dwelt with His people, His presence now remained outside the camp. This scene highlights the relational breach caused by Israel's sin and emphasizes the mediating role of Moses, who alone is allowed to draw near to God.

3. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MOSES ENTERS THE "TENT" (V. 9)? HOW DID THE PEOPLE REACT (V. 10)?

"The Israelites' mourning is a sign of covenantal sensitivity and earnest desire to return to God's favor."
— BB Warfield

"The people's reverent response reflects a restored fear of the Lord and respect for His holy presence."
— Sinclair Ferguson

4. HOW IS MOSES' RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD DESCRIBED (V. 11)? HOW DOES HIS EXAMPLE CHALLENGE AND ENCOURAGE YOU?

"This face-to-face interaction sets Moses apart, yet it also stirs up holy ambition in us."
– Matthew Henry

DIGGING DEEPER

In Exodus 33:11, we are given a glimpse into the intimacy of Moses' relationship with God. Moses speaking "as a man speaks to his friend" (v. 11) marks a profound development from his original fear and uncertainty at the burning bush (Ex. 3:13). Over time, through faithful obedience and regular communion, Moses grew into a man who walked closely with God.

As amazing as this picture is, it anticipates something greater. Through Jesus, who calls His disciples "friends" (Jn. 15:15), we are welcomed into an even deeper and more secure relationship with God. By the Spirit, we have continual access to the Father (Eph. 2:18) and are invited to commune with Him daily. What Moses experienced in part, we now enjoy in full.

5. DO YOU PRIORITIZE REGULARLY COMMUNING WITH GOD? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHY?

"Fellowship with the Father and the Son is the substance of our faith and the life of our souls."
– John Owen

6. HOW CAN WE APPROACH GOD WITH THE NEARNESS OF FRIENDSHIP WHILE STILL HONORING HIM WITH THE REVERENCE AS FATHER?

READ EXODUS 33:12-23

Interceding once again, Moses makes three requests to God. Through each one, Moses reveals his eagerness to be in God's presence and his desperation for God to remain with Israel.

7. WHAT DOES MOSES ASK ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE (VV. 13, 15-16)? HOW DOES GOD RESPOND (VV. 14, 17)?

8. WHAT DOES MOSES WANT TO “SEE” (V. 18)? HOW DOES GOD BOTH GRANT AND LIMIT HIS REQUEST (VV. 19-23)?

*“We may know God truly,
but not exhaustively.”
– Joel Beeke*

9. WHY CAN MOSES NOT “SEE [GOD’S] FACE” (V. 20)? WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT HE WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO SEE HIS “BACK” (V. 23)?

DIGGING DEEPER

Even though Moses had already witnessed God’s power and presence in extraordinary ways, he boldly asks to see even more of God’s “glory” (v. 18). His request reveals a principle for us. The more we give ourselves to God’s work, the more our desire to know Him grows.

One of the primary ways God has ordained for us to know Him more intimately is through the use of our gifts and time in disciple-making ministry (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2). As we walk alongside people, we come to experience God’s faithfulness, grace, and wisdom in tangible ways (Ps. 34:8). In turn, the more we experience Him, the more we grow to love investing in the lives of others (Phil. 2:17).

This creates a lifelong cycle. Knowing God fuels ministry, and ministry draws us closer to God.

10. WHY HAS GOD DESIGNED MINISTRY AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL WAYS WE WOULD EXPERIENCE HIM?

*“Ministry is the school in
which God trains us in
humility, trust, and love.”
– John Calvin*

11. WHERE DO YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTENTIONALLY INVEST IN SOMEONE? WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO DISCIPLE THEM?

Ex. 33:23 – The language in this verse is metaphorical. God’s “face” symbolizes His full glory that no one can see and live. Seeing His “back” signifies a partial revelation of His presence.

READ EXODUS 34:1-9

Immediately after his encounter with God, Moses is commanded to prepare new “tablets” (vv. 1, 4) to replace the originals that were broken. This continuation highlights God’s mercy despite Israel’s earlier rebellion and serves as a powerful reminder of God’s faithfulness to His covenant, even when His people fall short.

12. WHAT ATTRIBUTES AND ACTIONS DOES GOD USE TO DESCRIBE HIMSELF (VV. 6-7)? WHAT PROMISES DOES GOD MAKE (V. 7)?

13. WHAT DOES MOSES DO IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S PROCLAMATION (VV. 8-9)? WHAT DOES HE ASK GOD TO DO (V. 9)?

“God’s character cannot be reduced to one dimension. His mercy and justice are perfectly integrated within His covenantal dealings with His people.”
– Anthony Hoekema

DIGGING DEEPER

It’s no exaggeration to say that Exodus 34:6-7 contains some of the most theologically important words in Scripture. In fact, this declaration of God’s character is so significant that it’s repeated in at least twelve other Old Testament books, often in nearly identical language (e.g. Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; Jnh. 4:2).

This passage emphasizes the richness of God’s mercy and grace, as well as His patience and readiness to forgive. At the same time, it affirms that God doesn’t overlook sin but upholds justice and righteousness. This balance of compassion and holiness leads God to “pardon [the Israelites’] iniquity” (v. 9).

Like Israel, we are often self-reliant and stubborn, slow to repent and quick to rebel. In our sin, we stand in need of the same mercy that God revealed to Moses. The appropriate response to this revelation is not presumption, but humility. As Moses “bowed his head... and worshiped” (v. 8), we must also draw near to God with reverence and trust in His “steadfast love” (vv. 6, 7).

14. WHICH OF THE ASPECTS OR ATTRIBUTES LISTED IN EXODUS 34:6-7 IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU RIGHT NOW? WHY?

“The God we serve is not sentimental nor harsh, but perfectly righteous and infinitely gracious.”
– Martyn Lloyd-Jones

READ EXODUS 34:10-35

Having revealed His name and character to Moses, God now graciously renews the covenant that Israel broke. This reaffirmation is not just a repetition of earlier commands. Instead, it's a purposeful restatement that addresses Israel's recent failure and calls them to return to faithfulness.

15. WHAT PROMISE DOES GOD MAKE TO ISRAEL (VV. 10-11)? HOW WOULD THIS HAVE REASSURED HIS PEOPLE?

"Divine jealousy is an expression of God's desire for exclusive and faithful worship."
— Kevin DeYoung

16. WHAT DOES GOD COMMAND CONCERNING THE CANAANITES' GODS (VV. 12-17)? HOW DOES THIS REVEAL JEALOUSY FOR HIS PEOPLE'S DEVOTION (V. 14)?

17. WHY DOES GOD RESTATE THE COMMANDS CONCERNING THE FEASTS AND ORDINANCES (VV. 18-26)? WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

After Moses' exchange with God, he "came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets" (v. 29). This time, instead of discovering the people engaged in idolatry (Ex. 32:15-19), Moses found the people eager to receive God's instruction.

18. WHAT HAPPENS TO MOSES' FACE AFTER "TALKING WITH GOD" (V. 29)? WHY DOES HE HAVE TO WEAR A "VEIL" (V. 33)?

"The shining of Moses' face demonstrates the sanctifying effect of God's presence on His people."
— John Murray

19. WHAT DOES THE PEOPLE'S ATTENTIVENESS AND REVERENCE REVEAL ABOUT THEIR POSTURE TOWARD GOD (VV. 30-33)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

DIGGING DEEPER

After being in the presence of God's glory, Moses descended from Mount Sinai with a face that radiated light (vv. 29-30, 35).

Moses' shining countenance was not just a physical phenomenon. It was a visible expression of what it means to glorify God (2 Cor. 3:18). This teaches us that as we commit to consistently and intentionally draw near to God, our lives are inevitably changed (Jas. 4:8). Ultimately, this transformation enables us to become living testimonies to a watching world of who God is and what He's like (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15).

20. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD? HOW COULD CONSISTENCY WITH THAT HABIT OR PRACTICE ENABLE YOU TO LOOK MORE LIKE JESUS?

21. HOW CAN YOU REFLECT GOD'S GLORY MORE VISIBLY? WHAT EFFECT WOULD THIS HAVE ON THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU?

*"To glorify God is to live a life that manifests His holiness and grace in all things."
– Augustus Strong*

CONCLUSION

Despite Israel's rebellion, God remained faithful to His character by forgiving His people and renewing His covenant with them. This clearly shows that no matter how deeply we fail, God's mercy is greater. His faithfulness serves as a firm foundation on which we can put our hope.

22. WHEN HAS GOD SHOWN YOU MERCY DESPITE YOUR SIN? WHAT IMPACT DID IT HAVE ON YOU?

23. HOW CAN REMEMBERING GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS ENCOURAGE AND MOTIVATE YOU TO PERSEVERE THROUGH FUTURE FAILURES?

*"Remembering what God has done in the past fuels our confidence that He will be faithful in the future."
– RC Sproul*

WEEK 17

GOD'S GLORY DWELLS

EXODUS 40:34

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting,
and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

EXODUS 35:1-40:38

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 35-40 records the final preparation, building, and assembly of the tabernacle, culminating in the glory of God descending to dwell with Israel. While much of the content in these chapters repeats God's earlier instructions (Ex. 25:1-31:18), they serve as a satisfying ending to the overarching narrative of Exodus.

READ EXODUS 35:1-36:7

Before leading the people in carrying out God's instructions for the tabernacle, Moses first reminds the Israelites of their obligation to keep the "Sabbath" (Ex. 35:3). Afterward, the Israelites enthusiastically respond to God's call for both "contribution" (Ex. 35:5) and "craftsman" (Ex. 35:10).

1. WHY DOES MOSES REPEAT THE SABBATH COMMAND (EX. 35:1-2)? WHAT DOES THIS REINFORCE ABOUT THE BALANCE OF REST AND WORK?

2. WHAT ATTITUDE AND DISPOSITION MARKED THE PEOPLE WHO MADE A "CONTRIBUTION" (EX. 35:5) TO THE TABERNACLE (EX. 35:21, 22, 29; 36:3)?

3. HOW DOES GOD RESPOND WHEN THE PEOPLE BRING "MORE THAN ENOUGH" (EX. 36:5)? WHAT DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT GOD?

4. WHY WERE THE PEOPLE SO EAGER TO CONTRIBUTE? HOW DOES THEIR WILLINGNESS TO GIVE EXEMPLIFY THEIR DEVOTION TO GOD?

"The repetition of the Sabbath law teaches us that even holy business must not crowd out holy rest."

— Matthew Henry

"Generosity flows from grace received."

— RC Sproul

DIGGING DEEPER

Exodus 35-36 offers an instructive depiction of eager giving, as the people of Israel, freshly forgiven, responded to God's mercy with overflowing generosity (Ex. 35:21-22, 29; 36:3-7).

Today, giving is often a sensitive and misunderstood topic. Because of this, it can be either completely ignored or misrepresented, leading many to feel confused, guilty, or unwilling. However, the Bible actually speaks broadly and clearly about stewardship. In fact, more than one-quarter of Jesus' teaching was on money (e.g. Matt. 6:19-24; Lk. 12:15-21; Mk. 10:17-25). To demystify the subject, it's important that we consult Scripture to better understand.

To start, our minds typically go directly to the Old Testament tithe (Num. 18:26), which literally means ten percent. What many people don't realize is that the Israelites were actually required to give multiple tithes every year (Num. 18:21-24; Deut. 14:22-27). All in all, an estimated twenty-five to thirty percent of an Israelite's income was to be offered to God annually.

That said, while the Old Testament tithe serves as a helpful and practical benchmark, the New Testament teaching on giving is more concerned with the disposition of the heart (Mk. 12:41-44; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). In other words, the New Testament focuses less on what is given and more on how it is given.

To this end, we should all diligently pray and seek God's wisdom in the matter of how much, not if, we should give to the church (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). If we are disobedient in this area, we are not only withholding from God what He has freely given to us (Jas. 1:17), but we are also missing out on an opportunity to respond to His grace and participate in His work (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

5. WHAT DO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES TEACH ABOUT GIVING?

PROVERBS 3:9-10

MATTHEW 6:1-4

LUKE 21:1-4

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-2

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7

*"What you do with your resources in this life is your autobiography."
– Randy Alcorn*

*"They are fools that
fear to lose their wealth
by giving but fear not
to lose themselves
by keeping."*

– John Trapp

*"When we put our hand
to God's work, He puts
His hand to our heart."*

– Thomas Watson

6. HOW CAN YOU GROW IN BECOMING A MORE EAGER AND "GENEROUS" (EX. 35:5) GIVER? WHAT WILL THIS REQUIRE OF YOU?

Gathering materials was only the first step in making preparation for the tabernacle. In addition, Moses called on skilled workers to use their gifts in the execution of God's plan.

7. WHO DOES GOD APPOINT TO LEAD THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE (EX. 35:30, 34)? WHAT ABILITIES DOES HE GRANT THEM (EX. 35:31-35)?

8. WHO ELSE DOES MOSES CALL TO WORK ON THE TABERNACLE (EX. 35:10, 25-26; 36:1-2)? WHERE DOES THEIR ABILITY COME FROM (EX. 36:1-2)?

9. WHY DOES GOD UTILIZE HIS PEOPLE IN CONSTRUCTING THE TABERNACLE? HOW WOULD THEIR INVOLVEMENT ENCOURAGE THEIR WORSHIP?

DIGGING DEEPER

In the construction of the tabernacle, God called "every [skilled] craftsman" (Ex. 35:10) and graciously equipped them by His "Spirit" (Ex. 35:31) for the task. Though God could have created the tabernacle as He created the world (Heb. 11:3), He chose instead to work through His people. In doing so, He invited them into deeper fellowship with Himself.

In the same way, God calls every believer "to excel in building up the church" (1 Cor. 14:12). To this end, He gives spiritual gifts for the edification of the body. Even though He's not dependent on our efforts, God delights to include us in His purposes. As we use our gifts to serve the church, we experience more of God's presence, and we have the privilege of participating in what God is doing.

10. HOW CAN/DO YOU USE THE GIFTS AND SKILLS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO BUILD THE CHURCH? WHY IS THIS NECESSARY FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

11. WHY DOES THE CHURCH REQUIRE FULL PARTICIPATION FROM THE CONGREGATION? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONLY A FEW PEOPLE DO THE WORK OF MINISTRY?

"When the service of Christ is committed to a few, pride is nourished in them and sloth in the rest."
– John Owen

READ EXODUS 36:8-39:31

Though not in the exact order, a majority of the content in this section repeats God's instructions from Exodus 25-31. Because we've already covered many of these details in Weeks 13-14, we'll focus this section on the obedience of Israel in carrying out God's stipulations.

12. WHAT REPEATED PHRASE DESCRIBES THE ISRAELITES' WORK (EX. 36:22; 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31)? WHAT DOES THIS REPETITION DEMONSTRATE?

13. WHAT DOES THE VOLUME OF PRECIOUS MATERIALS USED IN CONSTRUCTION REVEAL ABOUT THE BEAUTY AND MAJESTY OF GOD (EX. 38:24-31)?

14. WHAT DOES THE TABERNACLE'S DETAILED CONSTRUCTION TELL US ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIPING ACCORDING TO GOD'S DESIGN?

"Worship must mirror God's revealed pattern, not our creative preferences."
– Edmund Clowney

Ex. 36:8-39:31 – The repetition served a didactic and liturgical function that helped subsequent generations memorize the details God prescribed for the tabernacle.

Ex. 38:24-31 – According to the totals recorded, Israel contributed approximately one ton of gold, four tons of silver, and two and a half tons of bronze. Today, this amounts to well over \$100mm.

*"God does not dwell with sinners apart from the cleansing blood."
– JI Packer*

*"The filling of the tabernacle is the completion of God's work of deliverance."
– Herman Bavinck*

READ EXODUS 39:32-40:33

After "all the work...was finished" (Ex. 39:32), the last steps were Moses' inspection and final assembly. As with the previous section, the theme of these verses is found in the repeated refrain, "as the LORD had commanded" (Ex. 39:32; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32).

15. WHY DID MOSES APPROVE OF "ALL THE WORK" (EX. 39:43)? WHAT DOES THIS SIGNIFY ABOUT ISRAEL'S ATTENTION TO GOD'S COMMANDS?

16. READ EXODUS 12:1-6. WHAT WAS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE TABERNACLE'S ASSEMBLY (EX. 40:1, 16)? WHY IS THIS NOTEWORTHY?

READ EXODUS 40:34-38

With the work being completed and inspected, the tabernacle was set up, and "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (vv. 34, 35). Remarkably, in the very middle of the Israelite camp, the transcendent became immanent! The same God who was unable to be approached at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:12-13) was now "in the sight of all the house of Israel" (v. 38).

17. HOW IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD DESCRIBED (VV. 34-35)? WHAT VISUAL SIGNS ACCOMPANY HIS GLORY (V. 38)?

18. HOW WOULD GOD GUIDE AND PROTECT HIS PEOPLE (VV. 36-37)? WHY WOULD THIS HAVE BEEN AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THEM (CF. EX. 33:2-3)?

Ex. 39:43 – Moses' blessing signifies his formal approval of Israel's obedience and his invitation of God's favor on their work.

Ex. 40:34-35 – The "Shekinah Glory" is a theological term that is used to signify God's nearness and favor. Throughout the Old Testament, this visible manifestation of God's presence guided and protected Israel.

19. WHY IS “THE GLORY OF THE LORD [FILLING] THE TABERNACLE” (VV. 34, 35) A FITTING ENDING TO THE BOOK OF EXODUS?

“God's glory abiding with His chosen people is the ultimate end of all His works in Exodus.”
– John Calvin

DIGGING DEEPER

At first, Moses being barred from “[entering] the tent” (v. 35) seems unexpected, especially considering the unprecedented access God had previously given him. However, God had already explained that “man shall not see [God] and live” (Ex. 33:20).

It was not until later that Moses was able to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. In Luke 9:28-36, we’re told that Jesus unveiled His glory at the Mount of Transfiguration to Peter, James, and John. During this time, Moses and Elijah appeared and “were talking with [Jesus]” (Lk. 9:30). While we aren’t given the exact details of their discussion, Luke states that the subject of their conversation was Jesus’ coming “departure” (Lk. 9:31), which, in Greek, is the word “exodus.”

In this, we not only see Moses’ wish to see God’s “glory” (Ex. 33:18) fulfilled, but we also get a glimpse of Jesus being displayed as an even greater Deliverer. Like Moses, Jesus would lead a new exodus, but, instead of rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt, Jesus would save them from sin and death.

20. HOW IS JESUS THE TRUE AND GREATER MOSES? HOW HAS EXODUS COLORED YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS’ WORK?

“Jesus is the true Moses who not only guides His people out of bondage, but leads them into the fullness of God's promises.”
– Jonathan Edwards

CONCLUSION

In Exodus 40, God fulfills His word to His people by choosing to dwell in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34). While this serves as the climax of Exodus, it also represents a biblical theme that can be traced throughout the narrative of Scripture. The God who redeems is also the God who draws near.

21. READ JOHN 1:14-18. WHY WAS JESUS AN EVEN GREATER MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S PRESENCE THAN THE TABERNACLE?

"For us, no sanctuary is needed, for the fellowship of believers with their God is direct and immediate."

– William Hendriksen

"God's intent to dwell with His people assures believers that they are never abandoned or alone."

– AW Pink

22. READ JOHN 14:16-18. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT EXHIBIT GOD'S PRESENCE TODAY? WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THIS HAVE FOR HOW WE LIVE?

23. READ REVELATION 21:1-4. WHY WILL HEAVEN REPRESENT THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE?

DIGGING DEEPER

In Genesis, Adam enjoyed perfect communion with God in the garden. However, because of his sin, Adam was "sent out" (Gen. 3:23), separating him from God. For some time after this, God exclusively revealed Himself to individuals (e.g. Gen. 6:8; 12:1-3; 26:2-5; 28:13-15). Then, as we've seen in Exodus, God commanded the building of the tabernacle in order that He might "dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8). For many years, the tabernacle, and eventually the temple, was "filled" (Ex. 40:34; 2 Chron. 5:13) with the presence of God until, finally, Jesus appeared.

In Jesus "becoming flesh and dwelling among us" (Jn. 1:14), "the whole fullness of deity" (Col. 2:9) was expressed in a human being. The glory that Moses could only glimpse from a cleft in the rock (Ex. 33:21-23) could now be seen, touched, and heard (1 Jn. 1:1-4). Even still, when Jesus was about to depart the earth, He spoke of the Holy Spirit, who represented God's dwelling "in" (Jn. 14:17) His disciples "forever" (Jn. 14:16). Now, all of Jesus' followers would be manifestations of God's presence wherever they went.

At the consummation of all things, the "dwelling place of God [will be] with man" (Rev. 21:3), restoring the intimacy of Eden in a far greater way. While each former demonstration of God's presence was miraculous and revolutionary in its own right, none will surpass the day when we "will see His face" (Rev. 22:4) and dwell with Him in unbroken fellowship for eternity.

24. WHAT DOES GOD'S DESIRE TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE REVEAL ABOUT HIS CHARACTER? WHY SHOULD THIS STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH?

Ex. 40:34-35 – The Greek word translated "dwelt" in John 1:14 literally means "tabernacled," intentionally linking Jesus' incarnation with God's presence filling the tabernacle. This connection highlights Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's dwelling among His people.

25. WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN GROW IN AWARENESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN YOUR LIFE? WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE?

26. HOW DOES THE HOPE OF DWELLING WITH GOD FOREVER SHAPE YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE TODAY?

*"Hope in the eternal
presence of God
redefines our priorities
and fuels perseverance."
– Tim Keller*

WEEK 18

CONCLUSION

EXODUS 15:11

Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

EXODUS 1:1-40:38

CONCLUSION

Exodus tells the story of God making Israel His covenant people. By rescuing His people from slavery, giving them the Law at Sinai, and instructing the construction of the tabernacle, God reveals His faithfulness and holiness and demonstrates a desire to dwell with His people.

1. HOW DID GOD PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE (WEEKS 2, 4, 5, 8, 9)? HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE YOU AS YOU FACE DIFFICULTY AND TRIALS?

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS HOLY (WEEKS 3, 10, 13, 14)? HOW HAS STUDYING EXODUS SHAPED YOUR PURSUIT OF HOLINESS?

3. HOW DID GOD ADDRESS MOSES' INSECURITIES AND OVERCOME HIS OBJECTIONS (WEEK 3)? WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US ABOUT MINISTRY?

4. HOW DOES GOD'S JUDGMENT OF HIS ENEMIES REASSURE YOU (WEEKS 5, 6, 7, 9)? WHY SHOULD WE NEVER LOSE HOPE WHEN FACING EVIL?

5. HOW HAS YOUR DESIRE FOR AND UNDERSTANDING OF WORSHIP DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF STUDYING EXODUS (WEEKS 7, 12, 13, 17)?

"The holiness of God is not simply one attribute among others. It is the attribute of attributes. It's the one that gives glory to all the rest."
— RC Sproul

"The worship God accepts is worship He prescribes. All else is but the product of human invention."
— John Owen

6. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT GOD GAVE THE LAW AFTER DELIVERING ISRAEL (WEEKS 10, 11, 12)? HOW DOES THIS ORDER SHAPE OUR OBEDIENCE?

*"The law is given not as a ladder to climb, but as the path for those already brought near."
– John Calvin*

7. WHAT SPECIFIC COMMANDS OR PRINCIPLES FROM EXODUS HAVE MOST CHALLENGED YOUR DAILY HABITS OR PRIORITIES (WEEKS 10, 11)?

8. HOW DOES EXODUS DEMONSTRATE THE DANGER OF IDOLATRY (WEEKS 10, 15)? HOW CAN YOU FIGHT THIS TEMPTATION? BE SPECIFIC.

9. WHAT STANDS OUT ABOUT MOSES' RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (WEEK 16)? HOW CAN YOU EMULATE MOSES' PURSUIT OF GOD?

10. WHY DOES GOD REQUIRE HIS PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN BUILDING THE TABERNACLE (WEEKS 13, 17)? HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO US TODAY?

11. WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT GOD DESIRES TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE (WEEKS 13, 17)? HOW SHOULD GOD'S NEARNESS SHAPE YOUR DAILY OUTLOOK?

*"The great end of God's work of redemption is to bring His people into the enjoyment of His immediate presence."
– Jonathan Edwards*

*"Jesus is the true
Passover Lamb, the
greater Moses, and the
living tabernacle. Exodus
gives us the contours of
His saving work."
— Sinclair Ferguson*

*"The Christian life is not
lived in isolation but in
the communion of the
saints, where grace
is multiplied through
mutual care."
— John Murray*

CONCLUSION

We trust that studying Exodus has been beneficial and encouraging to you! As you've hopefully seen, knowledge of the Old Testament not only informs our understanding of the New Testament, but also it provides depth to our affection for the person and work of Jesus. In the end, even as you've accumulated greater biblical knowledge, our greatest prayer is that your study this year will enable you to more fully worship and serve God.

12. HOW HAS EXODUS DEVELOPED YOUR APPRECIATION FOR AND UNDERSTANDING OF GOD? WHAT ASPECT OF HIS CHARACTER STICKS OUT MOST?

13. HOW HAS EXODUS ENHANCED OR ENRICHED YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS' IDENTITY AND MISSION?

14. HOW HAS EXODUS CHALLENGED YOU TO MORE FAITHFULLY MAKE DISCIPLES? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO APPLY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED?

15. HOW DID YOU GROW AS A RESULT OF BEING IN COMMUNITY THIS YEAR? EXPLAIN.