

# EXODUS

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## 1. THE GREAT ESCAPE

- a. We read in Ex 1:7, “But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” The offspring of the serpent, however, continued to try to stamp out the children of Abraham.
- b. Pharaoh was filled with fear at Israel’s burgeoning population, and therefore, as a child of the serpent, he tried to wipe them out (1:18-22). Nothing, however, could ultimately frustrate the Lord’s sovereign plan.
  - i. Midwives defied Pharaoh’s orders and preserved Israel (1:15-21).
  - ii. The eventual deliverer of Israel and destroyer of Egypt was rescued by Pharaoh’s own daughter, raised in Pharaoh’s palace (2:1-10), and educated in Egyptian wisdom (Acts 7:22).
- c. When Pharaoh realized that Moses was his adversary, he tried to put him to death (2:15), but Moses fled into exile, which pointed forward to Jesus’ exile to escape from another king from Satan’s line (Mt 2:13-15).
- d. Israel suffered miserably under Egyptian rule and cried out for deliverance. The Lord remembered His covenant promise, showing His unfailing love for His people (2:23-25).
- e. Moses was the man appointed to lead Israel out of Egypt, though the narrative stresses Moses’ feeling that he was utterly incapable of being the deliverer (3-4).
  - i. Moses’ greatness stems not from his own inner strength but rather from his recognition that without God he could do nothing. Only God could save Israel from her enemies. Moses is merely a servant in the Lord’s house (14:31; Num 12:7; cf Heb 3:5).
- f. God revealed Himself to Moses as I AM (3:14).
  - i. Yahweh appeared to Moses as the God who keeps His covenant with His people. He will fulfill His covenantal promise by rescuing Israel from Egypt and by bringing them into the land of promise (3:7-10, 16-17).
  - ii. Hence, I AM emphasizes that the Lord is the God of the covenant, that He is fulfilling His promises as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- g. The emphasis on covenant also helps to explain the strange passage in 4:24-26, where the Lord threatens to kill Moses.
  - i. Moses could scarcely be the agent of covenantal deliverance when he himself did not apply the covenantal sign to his own sons.
  - ii. Covenantal blessing only comes to those who obey the Lord, as the Lord reminded Moses and Zipporah on that unusual night.

- h. If Abraham was the father of the nation, the exodus from Egypt under Moses represented Israel's Independence Day. They were freed from oppression and misery in a most astonishing and unexpected way.
  - i. The exodus became the paradigm, a type, of the Lord's redeeming love. The story of the exodus, then, was not merely history. It also signified God's purpose for Israel for the future.
- i. The Exodus narrative details how the Lord saved His people from the Egyptian behemoth, delivering them by sending ten plagues upon Egypt and Pharaoh (7-10)
  - i. Pharaoh repeatedly promises to let Israel go if only he and Egypt can get relief from the plagues, convinced all along that the plagues will end.
  - ii. Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and stubbornly declines to let Israel leave Egypt. His inability to see the obvious is underlined by his servants (10:7).
  - iii. It is evident that Yahweh was fulfilling His covenant promises to Israel and exercising His sovereignty and rule over Pharaoh and Egypt.
  - iv. On one level, Pharaoh resisted the Lord by hardening his heart (7:14, 22; 8:32; 9:34), and yet it was also the case that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (4:21; 7:3, 13; 8:15, 19; 9:7, 12, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8; cf 14:17).
    - 1. The Lord reigned and ruled over Pharaoh's decisions without infringing upon the authenticity of his choices (see Ps 105:25).
    - 2. The biblical writers do not finally and fully resolve the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. They affirm the authenticity of human decision, and yet they see God's sovereign hand behind all that occurs (Prov 16:33; 21:1).
- j. Why were there ten plagues?
  - i. The infliction of plague after plague impressed upon the Israelites and the Egyptians that Yahweh was Lord, and that the liberation of Israel was not a freak accident. It was the outworking of the Lord's plan.
    - 1. Pharaoh began the whole conversation by asking, "Who is the LORD?" (5:2). By the end of the plagues, he knew the answer to that question.
  - ii. The narrative itself explains the reason why ten plagues were sent to Egypt (9:15-16).
    - 1. The salvation of Israel and the judgment of Egypt became the theater for God's glory – the place where His character and name were displayed to the world (7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:30; 10:2; 12:12; 14:4, 18)
  - iii. Israel's redemption and Egypt's judgment reveal the incomparability of Yahweh, so that all people know that there is no one like the Lord, and that He is to be feared both as a loving savior and as a mighty judge and a sovereign

king. The Lord is a mighty and incomparable warrior against whom no enemy can triumph.

- k. It should also be emphasized that the Lord was fulfilling His covenant to the patriarchs in liberating Israel from Egypt (6:6-8).
  - i. The fulfillment of the covenant explains the difficult text where God says that He did not make Himself known as the LORD (Yahweh) to the patriarchs but is now providing such a revelation to Moses and his generation (6:3).
  - ii. The purpose of the statement is not to deny that God revealed Himself to the patriarchs as Yahweh. What is distinctive is that the realization and the fulfillment of the covenant promises were only now taking place.
- l. The Lord fulfilled His covenant by delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt. Israel's liberation represented their redemption and testified to the Lord's love for His people. Israel's salvation was inseparable from Egypt's judgment, for just as the Israelites passed through the waters of the sea unscathed, the Egyptians were destroyed (14:13, 30).
  - i. By defeating Pharaoh, the Lord got glory over Pharaoh (14:17).
- m. The song of triumph interprets poetically the victory that the Lord gained over Egypt. It is a song of praise, and the God-centeredness of biblical revelation surfaces here.
  - i. When the Lord delivers His people, they praise and exalt Him.
  - ii. The Lord's judgment and salvation demonstrate that He is the King, but He reigns over His people so that He could dwell with them and show them His love (15:17-18).
  - iii. The sovereignty and the kingship of the Lord are wedded inextricably to praise, for the Lord of the universe should be praised and exalted for His goodness, for His redeeming love, and for His judgment of the wicked.
- n. The victory that the Lord won was celebrated yearly in Israel in the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread.
  - i. Parents were to tell the story to their children so that Israel would never forget that Yahweh brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand (13:9).
  - ii. If Israel forgot, they would cease to be thankful, and if thankfulness vanished, so would faith and obedience.
  - iii. The Passover events reminded Israel that they deserved judgment as well.
    1. The Lord impressed upon Israel that they were not inherently better than the Egyptians. They were rescued from the wrath of the Lord only if they responded in faith to His instructions by putting the blood of the lambs on their houses.

2. The Passover represents redemption and liberation for Israel. It probably signifies substitution as well, for the blood of the lamb is spilled instead of the blood of the firstborn.
  3. According to the NT, Passover points ahead to the sacrifice of Christ, whereby He gave His life for the deliverance of His people (1 Cor 5:7).
  4. The Lord's Supper almost certainly is a Passover meal (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:15-20), and the blood of Jesus represents the new covenant where the blood of the lamb of God has been shed for His people (Jn 1:29).
- iv. Unleavened bread was also eaten in memory of the great exodus event (Ex 12:15-20, 34, 39, 13:3, 6-7), for the Israelites were pressed for time and thus the bread could not be leavened before they left Egypt.
  - v. Observing the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread helped Israel relive Yahweh's salvation of His people.
    1. Paul suggests that the removal of leaven should not have been a mechanical exercise (1 Cor 5:7-8). It symbolizes the removal of evil from the lives of God's people. Those who are delivered in God's redeeming love should live in a way that expresses their joy at being rescued from evil.
    2. Paul argues that since believers enjoy deliverance through Christ's Passover sacrifice, they are now free from evil (1 Cor 5:7) and should live in accord with the freedom that they already enjoy.

## 2. THE MOSAIC COVENANT

- a. At this juncture Yahweh establishes a covenant at Sinai with Israel. His covenant with Israel involved both His promises to His people and the obligation of the people to obey. Israel was to live under the authority of its great King.
- b. It is imperative to point out that the Lord's deliverance of the people from Egypt precedes the giving of covenant stipulations (19:4; 20:2).
- c. It is immediately evident that the Sinai covenant should not be identified as a legalistic one. The Lord delivers His people by grace, and they are to respond to His redemptive work on their behalf with obedience.
  - i. It was not the Israelites' moral virtue that caused the Lord to save them from Egyptian bondage; He delivered them because of His mercy and love, which were undeserved and unmerited.
- d. The events at Sinai also reminded Israel of the Lord's mysterious holiness.
  - i. He comes to the people in a thick cloud (19:9, 16), indicating that the glory of the Lord is hidden from the people.

- ii. When He descends, a terrible storm erupts on the mountain with thunder, lightning, smoke, and something akin to an earthquake (19:16-19; 20:18-21), revealing the holiness and fierce wrath of the Lord.
  - iii. The peoples' response is to tremble (19:16; 20:18). If they do not follow the Lord's instructions, and if they transgress, then the wrath of the Lord will break out against them.
    - 1. The covenant that Israel is making is not with a deity whom they can manipulate or domesticate to serve their own ends.
- e. The Sinai covenant is conditional. Israel must keep the stipulations of the covenant, or else it will be broken (19:5-6).
  - i. Like Adam, Israel serves as priest-king. The entire nation will be a kingdom of priests that will have access to God and mediate His blessings to others.
  - ii. They will be a theocracy – God's special and distinct people on the earth – if they keep the provisions of the covenant.
  - iii. In the storyline of the OT, however, Israel fails in its role as priest-king, just as Adam did in the garden. The people are corrupted by evil and suffer exile for their sin.
- f. Ultimately, Israel's role as priest-king is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the true Adam, the true Israel, God's faithful priest and true king.
  - i. As the Melchizedekian priest, according to Hebrews, He brings human beings into fellowship with God through His atoning sacrifice.
  - ii. He restores the relationship Adam had in the garden, but it is even better than this, for believers are guaranteed a place in the heavenly city, where sin cannot touch them.
  - iii. At the same time, Hebrews teaches that Jesus, as a result of His sacrifice, is seated as king at the right hand of God.
  - iv. On the basis of His shed blood, He intercedes as a priest for His people.
- g. The stipulations of the Sinai covenant are declared in the Ten Commandments (20:2-17). Here the charter regulations of the covenant are set forth in broad strokes, detailing what it means for Israel to be loyal to their covenant Lord and King.
  - i. No other gods should be worshipped or set before the Lord (20:3).
  - ii. Worshipping the image of any other creature or thing on the earth will provoke the jealous wrath of God, showing that the Lord must be first in Israel's affections and actions (20:4-6).
  - iii. The Lord's name must not be trifled with. He is the ever-holy one and his name must be honored and venerated (20:7).

- iv. The first and the tenth commandments address the same issue. Whatever one covets or desires in one's heart represents what one worships (20:17). Nothing and no one should capture one's affections above the Lord.
- v. Once we see that the first and tenth commandments address the same issue, it is clear that all the commandments fall under the same banner.
  - 1. Those who steal fail to trust the Lord for His provision and live as if they do not have a sovereign Lord who will supply all their needs.
  - 2. Those who do not honor their parents as an authority signify that they are rejecting the authority of the Lord over them, for God's will is communicated through parents.
  - 3. Those who murder view themselves as sovereign over life instead of entrusting both their lives and the lives of others to the will of God.
  - 4. Those who commit adultery are not satisfied to live with the wife or husband God has given them. They become their own lord and find their joy outside of the will of God.
- vi. The Ten Commandments, then, reveal one's relationship with God, but they also set forth what it means to love other human beings, what it means to live in human society. It is the charter for a right relationship with God and with others.
  - 1. Israel's obedience demonstrates that it is centered on God and worships Him as the center of its life.
- h. We find in Exod 21-23 detailed commands that relate to specific situations. The authority of the Lord comprehends all of life, and in everything that Israel does it must seek to please Him, just as Christians are to do everything for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31).
- i. Israel responded to the demands of Yahweh as the covenant Lord by pledging to do all that He had commanded (19:8; 24:3).
  - i. The covenant was established with a covenant meal, with offerings and sacrifices, and with blood that was sprinkled on the altar and the people, being affirmed in 24:8.
  - ii. The establishing of the covenant with blood, as Heb 9:15-22 explains, signifies that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. Israel, because of its sin, was unworthy to enter into covenant with the Lord. It needed forgiveness of sins, which the Lord granted in His covenant mercy.
- j. After the covenant was established, a stunning event occurred. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders enjoyed a covenantal meal in God's presence (24:9-11).
  - i. The reference to God's feet in 24:10 suggests that Moses and his friends saw God in some sense, but did not see His face (see 33:20).

### 3. THE TABERNACLE

- a. Exodus devotes considerable space to the tabernacle, giving instructions for its construction (25:1-31:18) and then describing how it was built (35:1-40:38).
- b. The word “tabernacle” and the phrase “tent of meeting” are used to describe the place where the Lord dwelt with His people (25:22; 29:42-43, 45; 30:6, 36).
  - i. The fundamental purpose of the tabernacle was to devise a means for Israel to maintain fellowship with God.
- c. The construction of the tabernacle had to follow the pattern prescribed by God (25:9; 26:30).
  - i. It seems that the tabernacle and temple corresponded with the heavenly world. Hebrews 8:5 picks up on this requirement, arguing that the tabernacle itself is a type of something greater.
  - ii. The tabernacle anticipates the day when the whole earth will be God’s temple. This vision is fulfilled in Rev 21-22, where there is no need for a temple because God and the Lamb are the temple in the new Jerusalem.
- d. Yahweh specially met Israel at the mercy seat, which was guarded by the cherubim whose wings overstretched the seat (25:17-22; 37:6-8).
- e. Indeed the whole structure of the tabernacle emphasizes that God’s presence cannot and must not be entered casually. The Lord is inaccessible because of human sin and uncleanness. One must enter several compartments in order to arrive in God’s presence.
  - i. The ordination of priests (28-29) drives this point home further. The Holy Place and Most Holy Place are not open to everyone, but are reserved for the priests.
  - ii. The laws that regulate the liturgy there are expressly designed to thwart the irruption of profane experience into the zone of the sacred.
  - iii. The issued precautions and the series of compartments underscore the truth that God is separated from human beings because of sin. The OT stresses the seriousness of sin constantly, for humans are prone to explain it away as if it were a trivial issue.
  - iv. Therefore, the tabernacle was constructed so that those who are enjoying fellowship with Yahweh would not die.

### 4. EXODUS 32-34

- a. Yahweh’s presence at the mercy seat with the overshadowing of the cherubim also represents His reign over Israel (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; cf 1 Chron 13:6; Ps 80:1; 99:1).
- b. Exodus 32-34 presents a fundamental problem with Israel and the Sinai covenant. The covenant was established in grace, yet the covenant was also conditional.

- i. Israel turned to blatant idolatry almost immediately after the covenant was ratified (32:1-8).
  - ii. Israel showed that although the covenant displays God's grace, their hearts were not transformed through the covenant (32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9).
- c. Therefore, one of the problems with the Sinai covenant was revealed (Rom 7:1-25; 2 Cor 3:4-18; Gal 3:15-25; Heb 7:11-19), and is a recurring theme: the pervasiveness and deeply rooted evil in the human heart, and the inability of the law to root out sin.
  - i. The Mosaic (Sinai) covenant was not intended to be a perpetual covenant, rather, it was designed to last until the coming of the Messiah (Gal 3:15-25).
- d. Israel's worship of the golden calf constituted a breaking of the covenant, therefore, the Lord threatened to destroy them and make a nation of Moses and his descendants (32:10).
- e. Moses intercedes on behalf of the Israelites, and Yahweh's anger is stayed, "reminding" the Lord of His covenant promises to the patriarchs (32:11-13).
- f. Moses then breaks the tablets of commandment (32:15-19), representing the breaking of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.
- g. Moses again interceded on behalf of Israel, but could not atone for the sins of the people seeing that he needed atonement himself (32:30-32). Atonement would come through one who was greater than Moses.
- h. Yahweh refuses to dwell with Israel because of their stubborn hearts (33:1-11), so only Moses, Joshua, and those who sought after the Lord could approach the tent, which had been moved outside the camp.
- i. Moses pleads with Yahweh to restore His covenant relationship with Israel by dispensing forgiveness to them (33:12-17).
- j. Moses asks to see God's glory (33:18). God's glory consists in the revelation of His goodness and the proclamation of His name (33:19). It is also displayed in His granting of mercy to some, and not to others, for absolutely no one deserves mercy from God. His judgment is a revelation of His character as well, for the wonder of God is manifested in His justice as well as His mercy.
  - i. The glory that Moses sees is restricted. He cannot look directly at God face-to-face and live (33:20-23).
- k. The Lord approached Moses and revealed His name to him, which signifies God's character (34:5-7).
  - i. The Lord reveals that He is a God of mercy and grace who delights in showing saving love and in forgiving sinners. At the same time, He is also a God of justice who punishes those who rebel against His lordship.



- ii. The importance of this self-disclosure is important, because it is recalled numerous times by the OT writers (Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Nah 1:3).
  - iii. God's grace is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the true tabernacle of the Lord (Jn 1:14).
- l. The Lord answers Moses' plea for restoration of the covenant in the affirmative, and Moses cuts two new tablets of stone to represent covenant renewal (34:1-4). The Lord graciously dwells with Israel, even if access to the Lord is still limited to the sanctuary of the tabernacle.
  - m. When the tabernacle was set up, the Lord descended in the cloud of glory, which represents the glory and mystery of God's presence (40:34-38).

As Exodus concludes, the promise that Israel would become a mighty and large nation was answered. The covenant promises were becoming a reality. Israel was on the way to the land of promise, anticipating the fulfillment of another one of the promises of the covenant with Abraham.