



Class 3 - Exodus

Old Testament Seminar - Immanuel Church

Class 3: Exodus

Good morning, and welcome back to our Old Testament Survey. We are still working on finding our stride... after the introduction two weeks ago and Genesis last week, we'll be covering Exodus this week. Next week we'll start to pick up the pace and cover Leviticus and Numbers, and the following week is Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges.

The Exodus is a great story – but as you might imagine, it's not *just* a story... it serves an important role in our view of Scripture. I'd like you to think through the following question as we walk through our study today: ***Why is it critical to understand the Exodus if we're going to understand the rest of the Bible?***

Last week we observed the beginning of God's great drama in the book of Genesis. Genesis unfolded the story for a few generations after Abraham, but for the most part God's plan of redemption was unknown beyond this small band of Hebrews. Now, in Exodus, God will turn the floodlights on and his salvation purposes will be seen on the world stage as he defeats the most powerful nation on earth and delivers his people, all for his own glory. And not only does the scope of the drama expand, but in Exodus God also introduces themes and patterns that will shape the way he works throughout the rest of history.

For the first part of our study today, we'll approach the first half of Exodus in two ways. Because this is a historical narrative, we'll first do a quick overview of the story to see the main points and find out how Exodus fits into redemptive history. Then, we'll step back and explore five main themes that emerge from this foundational account. We'll discuss what each theme means in the context of Exodus, and how it lays a foundation for the rest of Scripture.

Part 1: Exodus 1-19

Our overview of Exodus begins where we left off last week. Remember the crucial verse that guided our study of Genesis, Gen. 3:15? God declared that the seed of the woman, a promised

Son, will crush the head of Satan, and Satan will strike his heel. Who is this seed? We learned in Genesis that he would come from the line of Abraham.

Now, God had made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation that would possess the land of Canaan and be a blessing to the rest of the world. But that's not the case at the start of Exodus. They aren't a great nation, and they don't possess any land. Instead they are living as foreigners in Egypt, where they settled with their brother Joseph during a great famine.

But one aspect of God's promise to Abraham *is* being fulfilled – the promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Look at 1:7: “the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” But approximately 300 years later, around 1500 BC¹, Israel's multiplication has become Egypt's aggravation. In response to these great numbers, Egypt oppresses and enslaves Israel. So, does God remember his promises? What will happen to the children of Abraham – what will happen to the promised seed of the woman? This is the stage for the drama of Exodus.

And the great hope in Exodus, chapter 2 verse 24, is that God hears Israel's cry for help. Look at 2:24: A man named Moses is born in chapter 2, and in chapter 3 God appears to Moses in a burning bush. God reveals his plan in 3:8, to rescue his people.

After that, the showdown begins. This is not a battle between Egypt and Israel – *it is a battle between Egypt's Pharaoh and Israel's God* - the great “I AM.” Starting in 7:14, God sends a series of horrific plagues upon the land. But after the first few plagues, God begins to distinguish in his judgment between Egypt and Israel to make it plain who is his enemy and who is his people. The Egyptians receive boils on their skin, hail destroys their land, locusts devour their crops, utter darkness suffocates their homes. But none of these plagues affect God's people. Amazingly, Pharaoh refuses to yield and release Israel.

Not, that is, until one final act of judgment: the tenth plague. The Lord warns Moses that he will go throughout Egypt and kill every firstborn son at midnight. But even as he plans to pour wrath out on his enemies, the Lord in his mercy provides a way to spare his people. Each family is to slaughter a year-old lamb and put its blood on their door frame. We see this in Ex. 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.” That's why this decisive act of judgment and grace is called the “Passover” – God passes over those homes that are marked by

¹These dates are rounded for simplicity's sake, and based on 1 Kings 6:1 as a reference, knowing that the Temple construction began in 966 BC. The dates also assume that the 400 years mentioned in Genesis 15:13 began when Joseph was enslaved.

the blood of the substitute, the lamb that was slain.

Well. After this ultimate blow, Pharaoh finally surrenders, and Israel marches out of Egypt in a great “Exodus” – the word comes from the Greek for “departure.” But the Lord is not done with Egypt yet. Look at 14:4: *“I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.”* So in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, God leads them to the shore of the Red Sea - a dead end, a trap. Red hot in pursuit, the Egyptian army closes in. The Lord divides the waters, Israel walks through on dry land, and then the Lord drowns their enemies in a torrent of judgment. An amazing account.

Now... the people have been redeemed by the Lord; will they continue to trust the Lord? Their journey is not over – in fact, their trek to the promised land has just begun. In chapter 15 Moses praises God for his deliverance... but then the people complain that there’s no water or food. Yet, even though this grumbling, disobedient people are not worthy of God’s favor, God leads them through the desert to make a covenant with them. Look at 19:4-5: *“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 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.”* God descends upon Mt. Sinai in all his majestic holiness, and as we’ll see later, he marks Israel off as his own by giving them his law.

It’s an amazing chapter in redemptive history – oppression, judgment, and miraculous deliverance. The promises made to Abraham are one step closer to their fulfillment in the seed of the woman that is to come. But this is not just a gripping story. In fact, you may have noticed during our overview that throughout the narrative, God speaks – he speaks to Moses and Aaron, and through them he speaks to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel. Through his words, the Lord reveals the meaning of the great events he’s accomplished on this grand stage. And it’s for that reason that Exodus is a foundational book for understanding the rest of the Bible. That’s what we’ll discuss next, as we look at five key theological themes that emerge in this first half of Exodus.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

I. God’s Unique Identity

The first theme is ***God’s Unique Identity***.

Let’s look at 3:13-14. *“Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I*

say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, “I am has sent me to you.”’” He is saying that He exists and that His existence is absolute; He did not derive His existence from anyone or anything else. He is self-existent, self-sufficient. He simply and absolutely *is*. As the I AM, God reveals himself as the free and sovereign ruler – and that is why he will prevail against Egypt on this grand stage.

You’ll notice that from this point on in Exodus, Moses refers to God most often not by the word “God” but by “The Lord” – in all caps in our English Bibles. The Hebrew for this title is “Yahweh,” which most literally means “I AM.” Against Egypt’s countless deities, God insists that **he is supreme, he is unique**. The verse that sums up the conflict between God and Pharaoh is 5:2: “But Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord [that is, Yahweh], that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? *Who is the Lord?! The whole book of Exodus is an answer to that question.*

Let’s walk through just a few of the attributes of the “I AM” that Exodus reveals to us.

- First, the Lord is a *covenant-keeping God*. Exodus 6:5 says God acted in Exodus because he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Second, the Lord is *utterly supreme*. Moses tells Pharaoh in 8:10: “Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.” *No one* like Yahweh.
- Third, the Lord is the *great warrior*. That’s what Yahweh’s defeat of the Egyptian army is all about, as Moses sings about in 15:2-3.
- And finally, the Lord is the *caring provider*. When Israel is hungry, Yahweh feeds them. Why? Chapter 16, verse 12: “Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.”

Is this God our hope? In our own times of trouble and persecution, we can meditate on the attributes of the I AM that are revealed in Exodus. Perhaps you know someone in the church who is enduring a season of suffering. Maybe you can use these descriptions of God’s character to inform your prayers for him or her.

II. The Pattern of Redemption

Moving to our second theme – not only do we see something of God’s unique identity in Exodus, but we see something of the way he works – specifically, the pattern of redemption that prefigures later salvation history. There are three aspects of this pattern that we see in Exodus:

1. **First, the problem: the people are oppressed in slavery.** The exodus is the salvation of God’s people out of something: in this case, out of tyrannical captivity.

2. **Second, the solution: the Lord single-handedly acts to save the people, sparing them from his judgment through a blood sacrifice.** The concept of redemption, of course, refers to purchasing freedom for a slave. The death of the Passover lamb is the ransom price for the firstborn sons of Israel.
3. And **third, the result: the Lord leads his people to the promised land where they can worship him and be in fellowship with him.** When Moses tells Pharaoh that God wants his people free, he says the reason is that the Lord's people can go to *worship* God. So, Israel is rescued out of slavery with the intent of taking them into a land where they can worship as God's **people** in God's **place** under God's **rule**. And this last point is critical. If we only think of the Exodus as a release from physical slavery, we will misunderstand all the references to it that come later in the Bible. *Instead, we need to see the ultimate goal as worship and relationship.*

These three aspects of God's redemption – the problem of slavery, the solution of salvation by sacrifice, and the result of restored worship – will be major reoccurring themes in the rest of the Bible.

For example, listen to how Psalm 130:7 reflects this exodus pattern: "O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." The problem? Not a foreign captor, but the people's own sins. The solution? God himself will redeem. The result? Israel puts its hope in the Lord.

Or for another example, in a twist, the OT prophetic books describe Israel's later exile into Babylon as a reversal of the exodus. The people fall out of fellowship with God and lose the land, becoming aliens again in foreign lands where they are again mistreated.² Then the return from exile is portrayed **as a new and greater exodus**, returning to the land by God's mighty right arm, to again have fellowship with Him.³

Ultimately, we see the greatest expression of what the exodus foreshadowed in the ministry of Christ. In Luke 9:31 Jesus literally calls His death and resurrection an "exodus" (the ESV uses the word "departure", but the Greek is "exodus"). Titus 2:14 says that Jesus Christ "gave himself for us to redeem us [the solution] from all lawlessness [the problem] and to purify for himself a people for his own possession [the result]."

²See Jer. 21:5-7, where God again fights "with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm," this time *against* Israel.

³Jer. 23:7-8: "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, "As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt," but they will say, "As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them." Then they will live in their own land."

Isn't it amazing: the very real and historic event of the Exodus was in part God getting us ready for Christ. So that *we* could be saved from our sin! When you remember your own slavery to sin, let it drive you to worship and thank the God that has so powerfully rescued us.

III. God's Gracious Provision of a Substitutionary Sacrifice

The third theme of Exodus that proves foundational for the rest of scripture is *God's Gracious Provision of a Substitutionary Sacrifice*.

Let's turn to 12:12-13: God says, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 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." Did you notice how Yahweh intends to strike down every firstborn? In most of the earlier plagues, Israel was spared while Egypt suffered. But in this final plague, the Lord is crystal clear: every firstborn son will die. Unless... a lamb is provided in his place. As you'll remember from our discussion of Genesis, Israel isn't God's people because they're perfect. Just like the Egyptians, they deserve punishment for their sins. Yahweh could kill the firstborn sons of Israel too, and no one could question his goodness and justice. Yet he provides a substitute! It's not that punishment is given to Egypt but not to Israel - rather, Israel's punishment falls on a substitute.

And if you read through chapter 12 this week, you'll see that *before* the Passover even happens, God gives instructions for how they are to remember the Passover... every year! The Lord wants the celebration of the Passover to define his redeemed people throughout their future. God even commands them to start a new calendar, with a Passover feast in the first month. Why does he do this?

Well, because the symbolism of Passover wasn't just a reminder of the past. It was the shape of what was to come. So when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he cried out: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) And then Paul tells the Corinthians, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). Just as the Passover lamb's bones were not broken, as God instructs in Ex. 12:46, so John 19:36 points out that Jesus' bones were not broken on the cross. And it is at a Passover celebration when Jesus establishes the Lord's Supper and tells his disciples that "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt. 26:28).

Whenever the New Testament remembers the Exodus, it focuses in on the Passover. Why? Because the main point wasn't political liberation. It was substitutionary sacrifice. The primary application of the Passover is to believe in Christ, because those who turn to Jesus are washed⁴ and justified⁵ by his blood.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

IV. God's Special People

This discussion of how God used the Passover to deliver Israel leads us to our fourth major theme in Exodus: *God's Special People*.

Remember: God's purpose for the Exodus isn't just rescue. It's to establish this people as a nation that belongs to him and that represents him in the world. The most striking verse that shows this special identity is 4:22-23, where God tells Pharaoh, "Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son." Israel, of all the descendants of Abraham, is called "God's son." Israel is first in God's affections. As God's covenant people, they receive special blessing, but they also have a special mission: to display Yahweh's glory to the rest of the nations.

So, how does Israel do at representing God as God's "son?" Pretty poorly. Just in the book of Exodus, here's what we get:

1. At the end of the Exodus, the "son of God" – Israel – miraculously passes through the **waters** of the Red Sea in chapter 14.
2. Then, in 16:2, they begin to march through the **desert** wilderness.
3. But in 16:8, they grumble against the Lord because they have no **food** to eat.
4. In 17:2, they put the Lord to the **test** when they quarrel with Moses about not having water to drink.
5. Then, in Exodus 32 (which we'll cover more in a few minutes), while Moses receives the very 10 commandments that forbade idolatry, the people **worship** a golden calf and call it their god!

And this behavior only gets worse as the Old Testament goes along. But their failure as God's son only highlights **Jesus** as God's son. Matthew is careful to point this out in Matthew 3-4. (1) In his baptism, Jesus passes through waters and is called "God's beloved son;" (2) Then, he

⁴Rev. 7:14

⁵Rom. 5:9

goes into the desert to be tempted; (3) His first temptation is about not having food to eat; (4) His second temptation is to “test” God; and (5) his final temptation is to worship someone other than God. But put in the same circumstances as Israel, God’s true son obeys perfectly. He is the fulfillment of all that Israel was supposed to be. He is the true Israel⁶.

V. God’s Glorious Motive

Finally, we should conclude this section by considering what ties all these themes together – fifth, *God’s Glorious Motive*.

Most secular retellings of the Exodus miss this point entirely. They focus on the tragedy of slavery or the heroism of Moses. But when you read the text, you can’t get around the most common refrain in Exodus, a refrain that shows God’s motive in all that he does. Look at 6:7: “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” “and you shall know that I am the Lord” – this phrase occurs at least 14 times in the first half of the book. God’s purpose is to show off who he is, to exalt his glory!

God’s glory is the purpose of the plagues – as Moses says in 9:29, “The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord’s.”

God’s glory is the purpose of the judgment of Egypt at the Red Sea – as God says in 14:4, “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.”

And, perhaps most amazingly, God’s glory is the reason why God himself sovereignly hardens Pharaoh’s heart so that Pharaoh would resist the Lord and come under his judgment. Did you notice that in the verse I just read? “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them.”⁷ Really? God is the one who orchestrates Pharaoh’s refusal... of God? Precisely. And God does it specifically so that he can receive maximum glory. This does not mean that Pharaoh is not responsible for his decisions; he is personally guilty and deserving of judgment. Paul clarifies that point in Romans 9. No, Pharaoh stands as a humbling example that God does all that he does – even hardening sinners’ hearts – for his own glory.⁸

⁶Matthew actually makes this connection even more explicit in his description of Jesus’ flight to Egypt in chapter 2. (2:15)

⁷See 7:3-4 for a more explicit example

⁸See also Ex. 9:14-16.

I hope you can see that God's self-glorification is the ultimate summary for what we've studied in this first half of Exodus. After all, why had this sovereign God chosen to leave his people in Egypt anyway? Because Egypt was a great power. *Because Egypt provided the perfect stage on which God could display his glory.* Now, God has gone on a public campaign for his own glory, raising himself up on this great stage, and he has prevailed. He has revealed his unique identity. He has established a mighty pattern of redemption. He has provided a substitutionary sacrifice. He has called out his special people. All for his own glory.

There is great application that we can draw from this: you were created to bring glory to God. And if you are trusting in Christ, remember that you were redeemed from the slavery to sin so that you might be a glorious display of who God is. What if the dominating banner over your life was to give glory to God? How might your attitude towards others change? How might your relationships change? How might your money management change? How might your time management change?

It's no surprise that just like the other themes we've seen today, God's self-glorification becomes a central theme in the New Testament. As it says in Rev. 1:5-6: "To him who loves us [God's unique identity!] and has freed us from our sins [God's mighty redemption!] by his blood [God's substitutionary sacrifice!], and has made us a kingdom, priests⁹ to his God and Father [God's special people!], to him be **glory** and dominion [God's glorious motive!] for ever and ever! Amen."

Part 2: Exodus 20-40

As we move into the second half of the book, God has just rescued His people out of brutal slavery in Egypt through great signs and wonders, judging Egypt in the process. In it all, Yahweh caused His great name to be magnified in all the earth. Now the people are heading toward to a land promised to their ancestors long ago. And on the way, they come to a place called "Mount Sinai" where they are to worship Yahweh before they go any further.

In the scope of God's greater plan to redeem a people for Himself out of all the nations of the world, and return the world to it's original Edenic state, we are at a real high point. As soon as the first sin was committed, God had promised to send a Savior. Then we saw that He promised one man, Abraham, that the promised Savior would be one of his descendants.

Well, it's in this section of Scripture that we see Abraham's descendants becoming a real nation.

⁹An allusion to Ex. 19:6.

They are about to get laws and a national religion. The re-creation of humanity is slowly creeping forward, and God is beginning to dwell with His people again!

Theme

A thematic sentence for the second half of Exodus might sound like this:

God is establishing the covenant terms to direct His people in how to live in fellowship with Him since He will now dwell with them.

So in this part of God's word we'll see the covenant laws that Israel was to live by. And we'll also see the construction of something called "the tabernacle," where God's presence was. In it all we'll see how poorly the people kept the terms of the covenant (the laws), and Yahweh's response to them as covenant breakers. Again, biblically speaking, a covenant is an inviolable bond between two parties that, if kept, brings about great blessing, but, if broken, brings a curse. In these chapters, Yahweh will give the terms of the covenant to His people.

Now, in this second half of the book there's a lot of laws. But in this class, I'm going to talk a lot about grace. You'll see why in a moment. But first, I want us to think about those two concepts for a moment. ***Why is it that we need to understand God's Law if we're going to understand God's Grace?***

Structure

It's important that we take a few minutes here at the beginning to talk about the structure of the second half of Exodus because that will provide us with a basic outline for our time together. In chapters 20 through 23 of our text, we have the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue as it's sometimes called, along with additional commandments and regulations regarding society, morality, and the religious calendar of God's people. *These four chapters, which lay out the covenant obligations of Israel, act as prologue to the second half of the book.*

Now, here's where the structure gets interesting. Chapters 24 through 40 are written using a literary device called a chiasm. A chiasm is a structure, found commonly in texts from the ancient world, in which important concepts or ideas are placed in a symmetric order for emphasis. The chiasm in chapters 24 through 40 of Exodus is especially noteworthy because it presents us, right

here at the outset of the Old Testament, with a beautiful picture of the gospel. Let's look at the slide here and see if I can explain.

Section II - which covers chapter 24 - is about the ultimate goal of the covenant: fellowship with God. Then III explains how that's going to happen; it gives the instructions for building the tabernacle where God will dwell with his people. But then IV, chapters 32-34, test the covenant. In chapter 32 the people sin. In chapter 33 God shows grace. In chapter 34, quite unexpectedly, God renews the covenant even after the people's rebellion. And then we continue to work our way out of the chiasm, with each section paralleling the one above it. Section V parallels section III as it describes the tabernacle getting built. And then in section VI we see the promise of section II fulfilled as God's presence enters the tabernacle.

Now, in a chiasm the most crucial piece is in the middle. The "crux" of the matter, so to speak. So what's in the middle of this section of laws, disobedience, and punishment? It's chapter 33: grace. The centerpiece of the gospel at the turning point of this second half of Exodus. As we journey through the second half of Exodus, we'll talk about each part of the chiasm in more detail. And as we do that, my hope is that we'll take away a greater awe for God's grace to us in Christ - previewed here in Exodus.

Exodus 20-23: Covenant Obligations

Let's get right into the text, beginning with the prologue. Turn to chapter 20. Let's now read the law that Yahweh gives to the people on Mt. Sinai.

1 And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or

the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. 12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. 13 “You shall not murder. 14 “You shall not commit adultery. 15 “You shall not steal. 16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” 18 Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off 19 and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” 20 Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” 21 The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Okay, I need to say a few things here if we’re to understand this Law in God’s economy of grace. Remember, God’s promises to Abraham are being fulfilled here, and those promises were pure grace. A free gift. Why does God give these commands to his people, when the covenant was already made with Abraham by grace?

Well, remember that in the garden of Eden God’s plan was to display his glory and beauty *to* and *through* his creatures. We learned in Genesis 12 to 50 that he was going to do that through a particular people. But while Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received God’s promise, they were just as sinful - probably more sinful - than Adam and Eve. And that brings us to Mount Sinai.

So, why was the law added to God’s promise to Abraham? Two reasons. First. Do you remember reading Exodus 19:6? Turn back there. God wanted to have “a kingdom of priests and a *holy* nation.” That’s creation language. That’s mankind imaging God.

But look again at verse 5: they will only fulfill this purpose and be these people *if* they obey him fully and keep his covenant. God seems to be saying, “If you keep my word, if you keep my commandments, then you will rightly image me once more. I’m giving you the law as a blueprint for what this looks like!”

In other words, the first purpose of the law is that it revealed who God is. The people needed direction about *how* to image forth the Creator.

OK - but the law gets broken, doesn’t it? How does that all fit into this? In Galatians 3 (verses

17-19), we read a few important aspects to this answer.

1. First, we see that the law **in no way replaces the God's gracious covenant he had made with Abraham**. Even when the law is broken by God's people, God will never break his gracious promise to Abraham.
2. Second, **the law was added because of our sin**. It is there to make our sin clear to us so that we will flee to God's savior.

I want to make sure this is very clear. *First* you have the promise. *Then* you have the law. Why is the law added to the promise? First, as we saw in Exodus 19, to fulfill God's purposes of revealing his character. But second, as we learn later in the New Testament, it was added because of transgression; because through the law we become conscious of our need for a Savior.

Two reasons here, then, why the covenant of law was added to the covenant of grace.

One last point of clarification needs to be made concerning the Law. And it's this: Israelites were not saved because they kept the law. Rather, you'll notice that Exodus 20:2 says that the Israelites were **already** saved out of their bondage in Egypt before they were given the law. No one has ever been saved by keeping any kind of law. Salvation has always been by grace through faith.

The application for us here should be obvious: don't use the Law as means to establish your own righteousness, as though God will approve of you if you keep it well enough. Rather, use the Law to remind yourself of your own sinfulness and drive you to Christ! Then, endeavor, by the grace and strength that God provides through His Spirit, to keep the law – not to establish your own righteousness, but – to image God more accurately to the world.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Exodus 32-34: Covenant Disobedience and Covenant Grace

Having looked at the prologue, which introduces God's law, let's venture further into the chi-asm. We'll start from the center and work our way out. How did the people do in keeping this covenant? Turn to chapter 32, not a very happy chapter. While Moses was up on the mountain receiving the 10 commandments, here's what was going on at the bottom of the mountain: look at verse 1. "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, 'Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not

know what has become of him.’” Well, there go commandments numbers 1 and 2!

How does God respond to this covenant disloyalty? Look at verses 7-10.

7 And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ ” 9 And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

He’s about to disown them! Did you notice that He doesn’t call them “my people” anymore, but he says to Moses that they are “your people!”

But look at what Moses does. Moses is *truly* a type of Christ here. Look at verses 11-13.

11 But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ”

Moses intercedes on behalf of the people. And look at what Moses appeals to in God: God’s desire for His own glory. Did you see it there? Look again at verse 12. He doesn’t want the nations to see God’s actions as evidence that God is evil. And look at verse 13. Moses appeals to Yahweh’s faithfulness and covenant trustworthiness. He says, “Keep your promises! Do it for Your own name’s sake!”

God hears and answers God-centered prayers. We see that in verse 14 and the verses that follow. He shows the Israelites grace. And you’ll notice in verse 14 that they are called “God’s people” again.

Are there consequences? Definitely. But God is gracious and his plan of redemption moves forward. In chapter 34 we read that God has renewed the covenant with people, even after what

they did, and gave them new stone tablets with the 10 commandments carved on them.

Before we move on to the next section, I think it's also important to point out, even if just briefly, the interchange between Yahweh and Moses in chapter 33, verses 12-23. We learn here that to Moses, the covenant was not just a lot of rules to be kept in exchange for some blessings. Rather Moses was concerned that he and the people of Israel have a relationship with God. Look at verses 15-16. Moses doesn't want to travel any further unless God is with them.

To know, love, and enjoy the fellowship of God is rightly on Moses' agenda. If that is not our goal too, then this is all a wash. Church, Bible studies, gospel, etc. are not just religious artifacts to bring us social acceptance, or make us feel pious, or take away worldly stress. or order our otherwise chaotic lives. Rather, they are instruments to bring us to the greatest good: knowing, loving, and enjoying God – and the rest of His people, for the sole reason that they are just that, His people!

But we are not done with Moses' request just yet. Look at verse 18. "Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.'" God's glory is the manifestation of all His internal perfections and beauty – the full realizations of His dazzling brilliance in who He is. Moses wants to see that. But look at what God says. To summarize: "You cannot see My face, Moses. You cannot see the full display of my holiness, and beauty, and perfections, and radiance. You cannot see my full glory. You're a sinner – it would destroy you!" So what is God's solution, so that He could grant at least part of Moses' request? He protects Moses from the blast of His glory by placing him in the cleft of a rock.

Just like we'll see ultimately with Christ's death on the cross, God is making a way to be with his people while protecting them from the holy outlash of his glory against their sins.

Exodus 25-31 and Exodus 35-40:1-33: Instructions for and Construction of a Covenant Meeting Place

Now, speaking of God's glory and how that causes a problem for sinful people, let's turn the "tabernacle," our next pairing in the chiasm. The tabernacle was a tent which Yahweh instructed His people to build so that He could dwell with them, even though they were sinful. How can Yahweh dwell with His people, and "go with them" as Moses asked, if they are sinful? Well, the tabernacle offers the solution. In these chapters describing the Tabernacle and its worship we are pointed *backwards* and *forwards* in the Biblical storyline as this question is answered.

First, we're pointed backward:

Backward

The tabernacle is presented in these chapters as a reconstruction of Eden. Let's look at how:

Note the parallels between this account and the creation account.

- The structure. The creation account in Genesis is structured around 7 acts of creation, each marked by the statement, "And God said." Here, read carefully and you will find seven "acts" of tabernacle building, each marked by, "And the Lord said"
 - Open up to chapter 5 and do some flipping with me. Ex. 25:1, 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12
 - God speaks, and the tabernacle, his presence, is to be constructed. The tabernacle is a reconstruction of God's good creation.
- Descriptions. The tabernacle parallels Eden in that it contains:
 - Pure gold (Gen 2:12; Ex. 23:3)
 - Precious jewels (Gen 2:12; Ex. 25:7)
 - Guarded by cherubim (Gen 3:24; Ex 25:18)
- Sabbath. Here is another parallel.
 - At the close of Creation account in Genesis 2:1-3 is a reminder that God rested on the Sabbath day.
 - The last instruction in the tabernacle account is to observe the Lord's Sabbath (Ex. 31:12-18)
- God's Evaluation
 - At the end of the creation account, "God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Gen 1:28)
 - After the tabernacle is built, Moses "saw all the work, and behold, they had done it just as the Lord had commanded." (Ex 39:43)
- Fall
 - Creation in Genesis 1 & 2 is followed by the Fall of Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve disobey God's command.
 - Immediately after chapter 31... what comes next? Another "fall". Exodus 32 Israel worships the Golden Calf and disobeys God's command.

Time and time again, God tells Moses that the tabernacle was to be build according to the pattern he had shown him. The tabernacle was to be a model of God's edenic paradise, of his heavenly abode. God was creating a place where he would dwell with his people.

Forward

And yet, let's think about these chapters in light of what's coming ahead. Let's focus on chapter 29, an insightful and, frankly, astonishing chapter in which God lays out how these priests are to be consecrated and explains the function and purpose of the tabernacle. The persevering question at this point in the Biblical narrative - How can a sinful people dwell in the presence of a holy God? It's addressed here. Let's look at seven descriptions in this chapter.

1. Look at verse 38. This offering is to make atonement for sins. Verse 36 and other places in the Old Testament make it clear that sacrifices are for the atonement for sins. And notice that they have to be carried out every day!
2. Look at verse 42. "It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there." Only through forgiveness of sins that anyone meets with God.
3. You'll also notice in verse 42 that the tabernacle is the place where Moses receives revelation from God.
4. Look at verse 43. "There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory." The tabernacle is where God will meet and reconcile with His people.
5. Verse 43 also tells us that the tabernacle is holy because of the presence of God's glory.
6. Look at verse 45. "I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God."
7. And finally, verse 46. "And they shall know that I am the Lord their God." The goal is for God to be known, in all His beauty and glory and power.

These seven realities that describe the priests and the function of tabernacle should sound familiar to us. Jesus does each of these.

1. Jesus makes atonement for sins, once and for all.

Hebrews 9:26 [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

2. It is through this atonement for sins, found only in Jesus, that anyone can come to the Father.

John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

3. Jesus is the full revelation of God, the place where we learn the most about Him.

Hebrews 1:2 ...in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

4. God meets and reconciles with His people in Christ

Romans 5:11 ...we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

5. Jesus is the manifestation of God's glory.

John 1:14 ...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

6. Jesus is God in a physical body, dwelling with His people.

Colossians 2:9 ...in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...

7. Only through Jesus does anyone know God.

John 14:7 "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

You get the point, right? The tabernacle is a beautiful picture of how God condescends to be with His people. They don't deserve such a blessing. But God does it. And it is all meant to point forward to an even greater revelation of God, an even more immediate access to God – the Lord Jesus Christ.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Exodus 24 and Exodus 40:34-38: Covenant Ceremony and God's Presence

Let's conclude our time on a high note, with the climax of the book of Exodus. In Exodus 24, Moses, Aaron, and other important men of Israel confirm their covenant with God in an elaborate ceremony and God dwells with them. Then Moses goes up Mount Sinai and continues to have fellowship with God. However, God is not yet dwelling with the people because there is not yet a tabernacle, and the people are not yet acceptable to a holy God.

But in Exodus 40:34-38, the mirror to chapter 24, Moses has interceded for the people and the tabernacle is built. So everything comes together.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their

journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

Finally, God is again dwelling with His people as He did in the Garden of Eden. The plan of redemption is not done yet. But we are well on our way here at the end of Exodus.

Application

We have already thought about some application today, but before we leave, we should make one more obvious yet utterly crucial point of application. The gospel of grace is shot through every page of Scripture.

Like the Israelites, we are sinners who cannot have fellowship with a holy God without a savior, and that is exactly what God has provided for us in Jesus Christ. Let Exodus and the story of Israel and their covenant disobedience, and of God's grace and covenant faithfulness lead you to despair of your sin and cling to the cross of Christ this week with a heart full of praise to this holy God whose glory, as the text says, "filled the tabernacle." Let your prayer be the same as Moses' on the mountain: "God, show me Your glory." And then praise Him for how he has shown us His glory in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

[PRAY]

This material is adapted from a course with the same name developed by Capitol Hill Baptist Church. It has been modified for our purposes and has been condensed to fit our time schedule. The original version is available on their website at <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/old-testament-overview/>