

## The Bible in One Year Week 7: Exodus – A Guided Tour (Pt. 2)

(Exodus 19:3-8, 20:1-18, 34:6-8; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

### • Pulling up to the Mountain

- Well, we've come a long, long way, from that river where a little boy was found floating in a basket and drawn out of the waters. The same boy who grew up, decades later to lead God's people through the waters to freedom.
  - We left off last week in Exodus 18 with the now-liberated people of Israel wandering through the wilderness, complaining that they had lost the comfort and predictability of Egypt, and they actually wanted to *go back* to where they had been enslaved!
- The question now is, *what happens next?* You've been rescued, you've been set free—*now what?* You've been *saved from* captivity and death, but what have you been *saved to?*
  - We pick up the story today in Exodus 19, looking at the second half of the book. We've officially left Egypt and now we're pulling up to Mount Sinai.
  - As we get ready to take 4 stops around this mountain in the second half of Exodus, here are a few key things to remember: Exodus is about the movement from *Egypt* to *Sinai*, from *slavery* to *worship*. Unfortunately, *it's one thing to get the people out of Egypt, it's another thing to get Egypt out of the people.* (Credit to Professor Brian Russell, Asbury Seminary.)
  - Exodus is not just about *freeing people from slavery*, it's about *freeing people to a new way of life*—the way of holiness, the way of *wholeness*, the way of God. We're going to dig into all of that today—quickly! So, buckle up and get ready for a great ride. Here we go!

### • 4 Stops Around Mount Sinai

- **Stop 1: The Mountain and the Tablets.** For our first stop, we're coming up to the big Mountain itself—Mount Sinai, or Mount Horeb, the Mountain of God, where the Lord met with Moses and His people to establish this next step of their covenant relationship.
  - God's glory is so greatly manifested on the Mountain that He forbids the people from even touching it; only Moses and some of the elders of the people are allowed to come near.
  - We can get so used to God coming *near* and making Himself accessible to us in Christ that we forget just how *awesome* and holy God is—and how far we've fallen from Eden. But the point of this story is getting us back to the intimacy of that relationship in the Garden.
  - God starts off this new era of the Covenant with what we know as *the 10 Commandments*. These are like the basic terms of the relationship. They're the basic boundaries or ways of life that show what it means to live as God's people. If life in Egypt was a life of slavery, then this Covenant with God is what a life of freedom looks like.
  - God's idea of freedom is not a life without limits, but a life within the proper boundaries that allow people to *flourish*.
  - God isn't taking a power trip or micromanaging us! These are basic boundaries for the good life, for the prevention of harm and injustice. And it boils down to this: living as God's people in this world is about *living in right relationship with God and with others*.
  - You can see this when you break it down and look at how the commands are arranged: the first three are what you'd call "vertical," concerning our relationship with God. The last six are "horizontal," concerning our relationships with others—because to God, the way we treat the people He has made in His image is as important as the way we treat Him, and to sin against others is to sin against God.
  - But in the middle of these two groups of vertical and horizontal is the fourth command about the Sabbath. And this one is really cool because it kind of ties it all together—it has to do with God, with others, *and* with ourselves. And it causes us to live by the rhythm of redemption. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder woven into the fabric of our lives that makes us look back to God's Creation when He rested on the 7th day and to the Rescue from Slavery when the people could not rest. It also makes us look forward to the *future rest* when God will restore all things.
  - Check out this awesome video from the Bible Project: <https://youtu.be/PFTLvKB3JLM> ("Sabbath" by *The Bible Project* on YouTube, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

- As we watch this story of God’s salvation unfold with His people, we’re going to come to the profound realization that God is trying *to get us back to the Garden*. Sabbath represents the wholeness, the peace, the “Shalom,” of Eden—the very opposite of Egypt. And all of this is about *relationship*.
  - When is the last time you *rested*? Do you have a rhythm of holy rest woven into your life? Does this seem attractive to you? We often see the 10 Commandments and the Sabbath as a burden, a rule to follow—but can you see now how this is actually an amazing *gift*? One of the biggest enemies of our spiritual growth today is all the *hurry* and *noise* we fill our lives with. The practice of Sabbath could transform your life—think about taking small steps to move towards this. It’s taken me and my family years to get a rhythm that works! But it’s so worth it... Ok, *next stop!*
- **Stop 2: The Tabernacle.** After Moses brings the people the 10 Commandments and they agree to the basic terms, God takes it a step further. He invites Moses back to the mountain where he communes with God for 40 days and 40 nights, and receives all these deeper layers of the terms of how the people are called to live as God’s “kingdom of priests.”
  - During this time, *seven whole chapters* are spent with God laying out the blueprints of *the Tabernacle*. God didn’t just want to rescue the people and give them rules to live by; *He intended to dwell in their midst*. That’s amazing! *God’s plan is to dwell with us*.
  - All the details can get a little boring, but this is what’s really, really cool: the Tabernacle is full of all this beautiful, intricate imagery—trees, buds, fruit, beautiful colors—but what does it represent? Are you ready? This is going to blow your mind if you’ve never made the connection: It points back to *Eden*. The symbolism of the Tabernacle *represents the Garden*.
  - Just like we saw with the Sabbath, the Tabernacle is about bringing us *back to the Garden*. Stop and think about that. We’ve read this whole long story from Genesis to Exodus, with all these generations from Noah to Abraham to Moses and beyond. With all that happens in the story and all the details that go by, it’s easy to miss what’s really going on. This covenant with Abraham and the people of Israel, who are chosen out of the world *for the sake of the world* (blessed to be a blessing)—it’s *all been about getting us back to Eden*. To blessing. To Shalom. To Sabbath. Wholeness and holiness and peace and flourishing. *To an uninhibited relationship with God*. God created us for relationship and God wants us to be *near*.
  - God has been working throughout history to bring salvation to the world *so you can have an intimate relationship with him*. But there’s so much that gets in the way: sin and lies are so deeply rooted, hearts are so hardened, and we so quickly turn away. That’s the next stop.
- **Stop 3: The Golden Calf.** All this is happening with God and Moses up on the Mountain, 40 days and 40 nights, but what are the people up to down below? It’s bad, it’s really bad. *“When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, ‘Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him,’”* (Exod. 32:1). *Oh no. How could this happen? How could they do this?*
  - Within days of agreeing to the terms of this incredible relationship with God, they break the first two commandments. It’s like, *the Ceremony isn’t even over and the vows are already broken!*
  - Now, if you want to learn more about this story, checkout a message we did this past fall: it’s on our YouTube channel from September 6<sup>th</sup>, “The Golden Calf.”
  - But here’s the big point for our tour today: remember how we’ve been saying that Exodus isn’t just Israel’s story, it’s our story too, as God’s Covenant people in Christ? Well, that doesn’t just apply to the good stuff—it applies to this stuff too.
  - When we see this catastrophe of the Golden Calf we’re not just meant to ask, “How could Israel be so stupid?” or “How could God be so harsh and actually threaten to wipe everybody out?” but we’re meant to ask, *“What is it about the human heart that makes us so prone to wander back to our wicked ways? That we could personally experience the redemptive power of God with our own eyes and commit to Him with our own lips—and a few days later, turn away?”*
  - Because if we really think it through, we’ve all done it. We’ve worshipped false God’s of our own making—we’ve made our comfort, our security, our pleasure, or whatever else, more important

than God. And we've given our allegiance to God only to turn around and transgress His good and perfect way. We've all rebelled. We all need mercy, or we don't stand a chance.

- *Thank God* that redemption depends not on our faithfulness, but on God's.
- God is just *and* merciful. God has to take wickedness and evil seriously, or He would not be good—but God is also full of love, mercy, and compassion. He always makes a way for redemption with His people—no matter how many times we fail.
- **Stop 4: The Glory of God.** And that brings us to the amazing way the book of Exodus ends. It doesn't end with Israel's blatant failure and rebellion. Any other contract, any other relationship, probably would've been done at this point, right?
  - But in God's Story, human failure doesn't have the last word: God's love has the final say. All of this happened, and God chooses to stick with these people anyway. The Covenant is renewed, they finish the Tabernacle, and God's own glory comes to dwell in their midst.
  - Here's how Exodus ends: *"Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle...So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels,"* (Exod. 40:33-38).
  - And that's it, that's how it ends. Now there are two remarkable things here:
    - On the one hand, it's really good: *in spite of it all*, God still came. God still drew near. God still kept this relationship going forward. That's *amazing* grace, isn't it? The Old Testament is not just a book of wrath and judgement! It is full of grace, because that's who God is!
    - But on the other hand, did you notice what happened? *Moses couldn't enter the tent*. This whole story was building up to God dwelling with His people—going back to the intimacy of the Garden. But their chief representative can't even get in.
  - The peoples' sin really did damage and there's a lot that has to be worked out in this journey to restore what God intends. That's what the book of Leviticus is going to be about: how can a holy God dwell with a stiff-necked, hard-hearted, sinful people? How can this relationship be restored, back to the Garden? *Welcome to the Story of the Bible!*
  - Have you messed up? Bad? Like, *really bad*? So bad, you might not have even told anyone? *Welcome to the dysfunctional family of God*: we're His covenant people, through Jesus, but we're all here because we're messed up and we need God's mercy. And He gives it so, so abundantly. More than you can imagine. Receive His grace, receive His forgiveness today, and walk with God. He wants you.
- **Where Do We Go From Here?**
  - God is not just the One who created you; God is the One who saves you. And this awesome Creator-Redeemer wants to live in *relationship with you*. God created you for this!
    - And once you accept that, *nothing will stop God from redeeming your life for His glory*. Through Jesus, you are rescued by your Creator to live in an intimate relationship again. He's called you out of darkness into marvelous *Light*.
    - So, the question for us is this: where are you at in this Story? Do you need to be rescued and set free? Or have you been set free and now you're struggling to just *live free*? *Do you want to be set free and then, do you want to live free?* This is who God is! The answer is here in Jesus. Let's pray right now for the freedom of Christ.