

Old Testament Survey 04 - Exodus: Redemption, Nationhood, and the

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Introduction

Moving from Genesis to Exodus takes us from Land - Seed - Blessing to a pattern of redemption that is established in the next phase of Jewish History: Blood - Deliverance - Worship. God used a structure of worship that was very exacting. In fact, we see a very specific lifestyle for the nation given. Why this exacting code of expectation from the God who delivered the people from Egyptian bondage? The book begins with God demonstrating that He had not forgotten His promises to Abraham. He called Moses to be His spokesperson and to lead the people out. He then proceeded to show His dominance over many of the Egyptian gods. Through a series of plagues finishing with the death of the Pharaoh's firstborn, who the Egyptians worshiped as deity, God demonstrated His superiority to the nation (and their gods) that had kept them enslaved. After this demonstration, God provided sustenance for His people by providing water and food (Ex 15 and 16). Having demonstrated that He could deliver them, and then feed them, God reveals His plans for them in the first few verses of Ex 19. Their response did not please Him. This caused a change in how God's people would approach them. It also led to tabernacle and then temple worship. Cleansing must precede worship. Ritual determined access. Sin must be atoned for by death. These concepts were integral to the Mosaic law and the Mosaic Covenant.

God deliverance of His people

Through a series of miracles, God humbled Pharaoh and the Egyptians. For a while, Pharaoh's magicians kept up with the signs that God had Moses do, but eventually God established His superiority, culminating in the Passover. This event served multiple purposes. It foreshadowed the blood atonement of Christ, with a worthy lamb. It also separated Israel from the Egyptians. The plagues led to the victory at the Red Sea. This was followed up by provision in the wilderness with water, quail, and manna.

Unbelief at Kadesh - Ex 13-14

God had provided everything that Israel needed to be successful. He demonstrated His power to them at every turn. Joshua and Caleb, two of the twelve spies that went in to view the land, had the confidence in God that they could do what God had asked them to do. Their confidence was in Jehovah. The people did not share this confidence. They fixated on the obstacles instead of the God who was walking with them. This unbelief resulted in judgement. This generation would not see the promised land, everyone over 20 would die in the wilderness and Joshua and Caleb would lead the next generation into the land, to possess it.

God's Pivot in Ex 19

God had made a promise to Abraham and it was not dependent upon how well men obeyed God. So on that background, God asked them, "Now then, if you will indeed hear My voice and guard

My covenant, then you will be My special possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine. And you will begin to be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6a). These people had failed to believe God and failed to reach this location on their own, yet they presumptuously replied, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!" (Exodus 19:8). This was not the same response recorded in 24:7 and Deuteronomy 5:27-28. That response was after the Law was given, not before. This response was given before the mountain was covered by smoke and fire (Deuteronomy 5:22). God had not yet given any law or commandments. He simply asked whether they would hear Him and guard His covenant. The covenant which God remembered was the first covenant with Abraham. He didn't ask them to do anything, except to hear and guard. Israel was to go on hearing God, which implied that they were to believe Him, in contrast to their previous unbelief. They were also asked to guard His covenant, which meant they were not to treat the covenant lightly. They were to be certain the promises of the covenant were clearly seen and explained.

God answered Israel's presumption at Sinai by making it difficult to come into His presence. God's appearances with men, as recorded in Genesis, had been kind and personal. God had met and walked with Enoch and Noah. He had approached Abraham more than once, and was so approachable with Abraham that on one occasion Abraham even questioned God with his concerns for Lot. God appeared to and wrestled with Jacob and was with Joseph in Egypt. He had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Now, God terrified Israel and held them at a distance as He came down upon Sinai in a thick cloud with thunder and lightning flashes (Exodus 19:16-20). The people were told not to touch the mountain, under immediate penalty of death (Exodus 19:12-13). The people trembled (Exodus 19:16; 20). They did not want God to speak with them, for fear they would die (Exodus 20:18-20). God would be present within their camp in the tabernacle, but He gave very stringent means of approaching that tabernacle. If Israel's response, "all that the Lord has spoken we will do" was the right response, why did God make Himself so unapproachable to the nation? Why did He suddenly make it so hard to come before Him?

Had Israel not presumed to be able to "do" all God said, they would have become a nation of priests. Rather they became a nation with a priesthood. Neither does Scripture state that they became a holy nation. Rather Isaiah would later call them a sinful nation (Isaiah 1:4). She was a harlot wife to God (Jeremiah 3:1-6; Hosea 4:15). Israel became an unclean thing (Isaiah 64:6). The purpose of the law was to reveal this. But as we will see, the people misused this tool and attempted to demonstrate their own righteousness with it. ***Rom 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.***

Tabernacle Worship - Ritual cleansing, restricted access, redemption forshadowed

God gave exacting, specific instructions on how the people were to approach Him. The laver, altars, and progressive restricted access gave a picture of a Holy God, that could only be approached by a pure, selected individual. Each observance forshadowed the coming Messiah and the atonement that He would one day achieve for man. God established a Rule of Life for this selected group of people so that they would learn that they had no ability to be righteous. They were being prepared for a time when the Righteous One would come to them, the Promised Seed of Israel. God wanted to tabernacle (dwell) with His people. In order for Him to do this, they must prepare a place for Him. This place was specifically designed by God for Him to dwell in the Holiest of Holies. In order for Him to be there, it had to be exactly as He directed. One cannot approach God unless He is pure. This forshadowed the Spotless Lamb promised to Israel.

Contrast between Law and Grace

God is seeking to dwell with the believer in the current dispensation as well. God indwells the believer immediately upon salvation. But He will not dwell with the believer unless the believer will abide in Him. Jesus laid this out in the upper room discourse (John 15:4) and John explains deeper in his epistles that the believer that is at ease in his position in Christ will cease from sin, and will be empowered to do God's will (1 Jn 2:24-28; 4:12-17). God will abide and dwell with His born one, allowing him to experience God's quality of life. When the believer does not approach by the provisions of grace, seeking to be empowered by the flesh, or the world system, God is not at ease, and the believer is left frustrated. God was seeking to demonstrate to the nation of Israel their lack of ability to "do" what God expected. God is seeking to demonstrate the same thing to the believer today. The believer is powerless to achieve anything that is approved of God, without dwelling in his position, so that he is empowered by God. The believer just needs to appreciate God's quality of life and rest in that. The Israelite and the Grace believer are both struggling to rest. Hebrews teaches the believer how to cease from his efforts and rest in the finished work of Christ.

Conclusion: Establishment of Israel as a Nation under Covenant Administration

God had a plan for His people, and He was revealing Himself to them progressively. He did not leave them in Egypt, keeping His promise to Jacob and his descendants. He provided for them in the wilderness while he was chastening them for their unbelief. This progression led to a prescribed set of rules and regulations for the people. These regulations and rituals will be studied in the coming lessons.

Passover → Exodus → Sinai → Tabernacle → Wilderness → Land