

Exodus

Introduction

God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his offspring, but *only* after the inhabitants of the land had become so corrupt that there was nothing left to hold back God's judgment (Genesis 15:16). Now, the time had come.

Themes in Exodus include: God keeps his promise (made to Abraham); and God is in control of history (demonstrated by what happens in Egypt). We learn who God is (including his holy and righteous character), the nature of redemption (seen in the Passover), the basis for ethics and morality (the Law), and the grace of God (seen in the tabernacle, in which the holy God would choose dwell among humans).

Throughout their journey in the desert, the people had opportunities to prove whether or not they would trust God - the God who had already delivered them through the Red Sea. More often than not, they *didn't* trust him. (In this way, they were no different than many church-going people are today. Their example should serve as a warning to us - 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.) Even after they had witnessed the holiness and righteousness of God and made a commitment to devote themselves to him, they constantly chose to indulge in sin and rebellion. Having just been placed in a relationship with God that was unique among all the peoples of the earth (19:5-6), their rebellion was all the more worthy of death. Only the grace of God (and Moses' intercession) prevented this.

Interesting Features

God's direct interaction with the nation: The book of Exodus contains the only instance in which God audibly spoke to an entire nation of people - his proclamation of the 10 Commandments. In addition to this, many of the leaders were given the opportunity to see God with their own eyes (probably a temporary manifestation of Jesus Christ *before* his birth at Bethlehem). God was the one who wrote the 10 Commandments on stone. His visible glory (indicating his presence) was seen by all the people - and would reside in the tabernacle for many centuries to come.

Outline

1. God prepares to deliver his people out of Egypt (1:1-4:31).

- 1. The Israelites had become very great in number; the Egyptians put them into cruel slavery and try to kill their newborn boys; the midwives refuse to kill, and God blesses them.
- 2. Moses is born; hidden for a while, then raised by Pharaoh's daughter; kills an unjust Egyptian; flees to Midian.
- 3. God calls Moses (from the burning bush); reveals who he is; commands Moses to deliver Israel out of Egypt.
- 4. Moses protests; is given miraculous signs to perform; returns to Egypt; is required to obey the covenant of circumcision (which was intended to be a *perpetual* reminder of God's promise to Abraham - Genesis 17:9-14).

2. Moses confronts Pharaoh.

a. Conditions get worse for the Israelites (5:1-7:7).

- 5. Pharaoh refuses to let the people leave; makes working conditions more brutal; the Israelites are discouraged.
- 6. God promises deliverance; the genealogy of Moses and Aaron; Aaron will go with Moses.
- 7. (7:1-7) God reveals to Moses what is about to happen (how God will deliver Israel and punish Egypt).

b. God's judgments against Egypt (7:8-11:10).

- 7. (7:8-25) A warning sign: Aaron's staff becomes a snake; then the plague of blood.
- 8. The plagues of frogs, gnats, and flies. Pharaoh keeps refusing to let the people go.
- 9. The plagues of death to the livestock, boils on the people and animals, and hail. Pharaoh still refuses.
- 10. The plagues of locusts and darkness. Pharaoh still refuses and threatens to kill Moses.
- 11. The plague on the firstborn announced (before Moses leaves Pharaoh's presence for the last time).

3. The journey from Egypt to Sinai

a. Preparation for the last plague; the Passover; crossing the Red Sea (12:1-15:21).

- 12. Instructions for the Passover; the death of all the male firstborn in Egypt (all who did not celebrate the Passover); the people are told to leave the land; they plunder the Egyptians; unleavened bread and Passover restrictions.
- 13. Because God spared the Israelite firstborn, all male firstborn belong to God and must be redeemed. They camp by the Red Sea.
- 14. The Israelites appear trapped, but God opens the Red Sea and lets them cross through. The Egyptians drown, when they try.
- 15. (15:1-21) A song of celebration and praise to God for deliverance from Egypt.

b. Being tested in the desert, on the way to Sinai (15:22-18:27).

- 15. (15:22-27) A lack of water; the people complain, and God provides. They should have trusted God, for he had plenty of water waiting for them, just a few miles away!
- 16. Complaints about food; God sends quail and manna. Some of them ignore God's instructions about the manna.
- 17. More complaints about water; God has Moses strike the rock for water. The Amalekites attack and are defeated.
- 18. Moses' father-in-law visits; gives some helpful advice to Moses.

4. At Mt. Sinai, God gives his Law to Israel.

a. The "Ten Commandments" - spoken directly by God with an audible voice (19:1-20:21).

- 19. Preparation, the need to set themselves apart as holy before God; terrifying wonders.
- 20. (20:1-21) God speaks the 10 Commands to the people; hearing the voice of God terrifies them; so from now on, God will speak through Moses.

b. Additional instructions, the "Book of the Covenant" - given through Moses (20:22-24:18).

- 20. (20:22-31) Instructions about idols (i.e., don't make any) and how altars are to be made.
- 21. How servants are to be treated; dealing with personal injuries (punishments, compensation, etc.).
- 22. Protection of private property; various other social responsibilities.
- 23. Issues related to justice and mercy; Sabbath laws; annual festivals. God's presence will guide them into the land.
- 24. The people affirm that they will obey these laws; the leaders are allowed to see God; Moses goes up to God for instructions about the tabernacle (the tent of worship).

5. Instructions for building the tabernacle - the tent of worship (25:1-31:18).

- 25. The people are to bring free-will offerings for building these things. Instructions for the ark, the table, the lampstand.
- 26. Instructions for building the tabernacle (tent) itself.
- 27. The altar for burnt offerings, the courtyard, the oil for the lampstand.
- 28. The priestly garments, including the ephod (a vest) and breastpiece.
- 29. Instructions for consecrating the priests - to prepare them for their sacred duty.
- 30. The altar of incense; atonement money; the wash basin; special anointing oil and incense.
- 31. God has gifted two skilled craftsmen to make these things. The need to observe the Sabbath; the tablets of stone are prepared, inscribed by God himself.

6. The people rebel and are almost destroyed; Moses intervenes; the covenant is renewed (32:1-34:35).

- 32. The people want a visible god; Aaron cooperates. God threatens to destroy the nation for their evil; Moses intercedes; some (but not all) are put to death.
- 33. God threatens to *not* go with the people; again Moses intervenes. Moses asks to see God's glory.
- 34. God reveals his glory (in a limited manner) to Moses, causing Moses' face to be radiant for a while; the covenant is renewed; more instructions about holiness.

7. The tabernacle is built, according to the instructions previously given (35:1-40:38).

- 35. Reminder to observe the Sabbath. Materials offered (by the people) for the tabernacle; the craftsmen get ready.
- 36. The craftsmen begin work: the tabernacle (tent) is built.
- 37. The ark, the table, the lampstand, the altar of incense.
- 38. The altar for burnt offerings; the wash basin; the courtyard. A list of materials that were used for these things.
- 39. The priestly garments, including the ephod and breastpiece. Moses inspects everything.
- 40. The tabernacle is set up. The glory of the Lord - a visible display of God's presence - enters the tabernacle.