

Bible 101 Notes for Exodus 1-4

Principles of Bible study:

1. The Bible is a unified literary narrative, linear in structure, the story beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation (God is the main character, sin is the conflict and redemption is the theme).
2. The Bible is rooted in geography.
3. The Bible emerges from history.
4. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Because the Bible is a unified literary narrative, we need to review the main events of Genesis in order to see how they connect to Exodus.

Review of Genesis: In Genesis, we saw God creating the universe, animal and human life. It was perfect - until sin (the narrative's conflict) entered the picture at Gen. 3. From that time on, the OT pointed to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was God in human form. Significant events early in Genesis showed the depravity of mankind: Cain killed his brother Abel; when "all the thoughts of all the people were wicked all the time" (Gen 6:5), God destroyed all living creatures on the earth by a flood, saving only Noah, his wife and sons, their wives, and enough animals to repopulate the earth. Mankind is given a second chance, but by Gen. 11, people had forgotten God, trying to become great by their own efforts, building the tower of Babel; God confused them by giving them different languages and scattering the people. God had had enough of human beings on their own; in Gen. 12, he calls Abram out of the land of Ur and Harran, and tells him to go to a land God will show Abram. God makes a covenant with Abram (Gen. 12:2-4), promising that Abram will become a great nation, he will be blessed, and that Abram will be a blessing to others and through Abram (his descendants) all the earth will be blessed. Jesus fulfills this promise. Abram's name is changed to Abraham (ch. 17) and Sarai's name becomes Sarah, and 25 years after God's promise to make Abraham a great nation, his son Isaac is born. When Isaac is about 30 years old, God tells Abraham to sacrifice him on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22), and here we see a foreshadowing of Jesus' death and resurrection. Abraham's faith is tested; he obeys God and God prevents his killing Isaac, providing a ram as the sacrifice. Isaac marries Rebekkah and they have twin sons: Jacob and Esau. Jacob becomes the son through whom the covenant line descends. He has 12 sons (Judah is the son through whom the Messiah is traced), and the 12 sons become the ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. One of Jacob's sons is Joseph, hated by his brothers because Jacob favors him. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery (Gen. 37), but in Egypt, Joseph becomes a man of power, second only to Pharaoh. Joseph administers a program of food storage and distribution so that Egypt will survive 7 years of famine. The famine, stretching to Canaan, the land where his brothers and father still live, is affected by the famine, and in God's time, the brothers go to Egypt to get food. Joseph recognizes them, but they do not recognize him. Finally, he reveals the truth and forgives them, saying "do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me ahead of you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). The brothers return to Canaan, load Jacob, their wives and children onto wagons Pharaoh has provided, and move to Goshen, a territory of Egypt in the Nile delta. Thus the Israelites live in Egypt in fulfillment of God's revelation to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-14) that his descendants would live as strangers and be slaves in another country for 400 years. And that's when Exodus begins.

Exodus overview: Exodus is the second book of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament written by Moses. Genesis was a book of beginnings; Exodus is a book of deliverance and establishment of the nation of Israel as a separate people with a God-given spiritual and secular

system leading holiness. Two great events in the desert demonstrate the latter: God gives Moses the law, the 10 commandments principles by which people can live in relation to God and to other human beings. And God gave the people the Tabernacle, a holy place where God could live with his people and be accessible to them.

When Exodus opens, 400 years have passed since Gen. 50. Jacob's descendants, the children of Israel are enslaved. Some of them have heard about Joseph and their heritage, but Pharaoh does not remember Joseph. The children of Israel look for deliverance from God. God gives Moses to a Hebrew couple named Amram and Jacobed; Moses will become the deliverer - but not until he's 80 years old. Moses is raised in Pharaoh's household; he gets the best education in the world at that time: science, history, military strategy, the arts. He is a prince, groomed to become Pharaoh. But he kills a man and has to run, and for 40 years, he stays in Midian, the back side of the desert, working as a shepherd. It is here that God calls him (Ex. 3) to return to Egypt to lead the children of Israel out. Eventually, after a series of disastrous plagues, the people, now 2 million strong, leave Egypt with Moses leading them across the Red Sea and into the desert where they begin to learn who God is and who they are in relation to God. The book covers 82 years - and at the end, it's just 2 years after they've left Egypt. That's when Leviticus begins, the law in detail, and Numbers, their training in the wilderness or "boot camp" as Bill Creasy calls it, which consume the next 38 years of their lives.

With that as preview, let's begin Exodus. (Housekeeping: we'll try to average 5 chapters each session since we'll hold class for 8 weeks and there are 40 chapters. But some nights we'll cover more and some less.)

Exodus 1: In the first 6 verses, Jacob's sons are named and we're told that those 70 who had emigrated to Egypt 400 years before had been fruitful and multiplied (as God had told Adam and Eve, and Noah and his family in Genesis), and this upsets successive Pharaohs who fear this large population of Hebrews, people "not like them" the Egyptians. Pharaoh, seeing their location on a trade route, fears that they'll rise up in revolt. So they make the Hebrews slaves under oppressive supervisors. And because they still thrive, a Pharaoh orders the midwives to kill the Hebrews' sons at birth; the midwives ignore this. Finally, the Pharaoh tells Egyptians to throw Hebrew sons into the river.

Exodus 2: The birth of Moses is recorded (he's from the tribe of Levi, one of the 12 tribes of Israel; Levi was Jacob's 3rd son by Leah), and by all accounts, Moses is an exceptional child. His mother can't bear to throw him in the river, and so she hides him as long as she can. After a few months, Jacobed decides on a plan to save him: she puts Moses into a little boat and floats it at a spot on the Nile River where she knows the Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe each day. Miriam, Moses' big sister, watches. When the Pharaoh's daughter hears the baby crying, she takes pity and rescues him (a baby's tears and a woman's heart meet, in Bill Creasy's words). Miriam volunteers to find a wet nurse - her mother. And so Jacobed is paid for nursing her own child for several years (probably 2 or 3) while teaching him that he is a Hebrew with tradition and a God to worship. Then Moses is given to the princess (who gives him an Egyptian name, Moses), and he's raised in Pharaoh's household. He dressed and behaved like an Egyptian, not a Hebrew: clean-shaven, bathed, concerned about cleanliness. He kills an Egyptian one day after seeing the man beating a Hebrew. He buried the man thinking no one has seen him, but the next day, when he returns to the work site and tries to break up a fight between 2 Hebrews, he learns that he was seen. He runs. Pharaoh puts out an APB and Moses runs as far and as fast as he can and ends up in Midian.

Midian: In Ex. 2:16, another chapter of Moses' life begins. He meets Jethro's daughters and through them, their father who is a priest in Midian. Moses marries Zipporah, one of Jethro's seven daughters, joins the family and becomes a shepherd.

Exodus 3: This is one of the most important chapters in the book because it records the call of Moses. There are several calls in the Bible: Abraham is called by God to leave his country and go on a journey without knowing the destination - trusting God to show him where he'll settle (Gen. 12). Samuel is called by God while still a child (1. Sam 3); Isaiah is called as a prophet (Isaiah 6), as is Jeremiah who tries to tell God that he should get someone else (Jer. 1). In the NT, Paul receives a dramatic call from God on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). As we'll see, Moses reacts somewhat like Jeremiah did.

Exodus 3 is a scene that should capture our attention as it did Moses'. "The angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Christ) appeared to Moses in a bush which was burning - there were flames, but the bush didn't burn up. Moses went to investigate. A voice called to him: "Moses, Moses!" and Moses responded as all of us must: "Here am I" And then God tells Moses to take off his shoes; he's on holy ground. Now Moses knows for sure this is no ordinary busy. God tells him who he is and that he wants Moses to rescue his people from Egypt. Moses has five objections to this plan of God to send him:

1. Why me? Who am I? I'm the wrong man. God says "I will be with you." (Gen. 3:11) Notice God's answer: I am God and I will be with you. (He doesn't tell Moses who he is, but who God is).
2. Who shall I say sent me? God says: "I am who I am." (Gen. 3:13) Israel has been in Egypt for 400 years and Egypt has 80 or more gods and a system of religion. How would the Hebrews know their own religion? No one to teach them except a few old people who'd had tradition passed down to them. But at best, they had only a faint memory of folk lore about Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. Tell them "I am that I am" or pure essence, pure being. Tell the Hebrews my name; I am the God of your fathers. But Moses knows little or nothing of God.
3. What if they don't believe me? (Ex. 4:1) God asks "what is in your hand." God tells him to throw the staff on the ground and it becomes a snake. Moses runs. God tells him to pick up the snake and it becomes a staff again. Moses hand becomes leprous and healed. These are signs God tells him to use to convince the Hebrew elders, along with pouring Nile water on the ground when it would become blood.
4. I am slow of speech and tongue (Ex. 4:10), Moses says, a man without words. Moses had oratorical skill in his youth, but believes it's in the past. God says I made the mouth; I will help you speak.
5. Send someone else (Ex. 4:13). Moses is afraid; he thinks his life has been a failure. God suggests that he take Aaron with him and Aaron will speak for Moses.

God has decided that Moses is the man: It will take time and experience before Moses is convinced, but ultimately, we see a great leader emerge. In Acts 7, Stephen reviews the history of Israel including Moses (vv. 17-44) Stephen says of Moses that "Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he became mighty in both speech and action," (v. 22), not a man "slow of speech" as Moses tells God. (And we can see other evidence in Ex. 15 - a beautiful song/poem by Moses which he leads the congregation to sing following their crossing of the Red Sea.)

Moses' commission: Moses is told (v. 16) to go back to Egypt and "gather the elders of Israel together" and tell them God has heard their cries for help. God gives Moses a script, and in his promise to deliver the people, he also echoes the covenant he made with Abraham that he will take them to Canaan, a land "flowing with milk and honey" - popularly known as "the Promised Land." Notice that God promises to change the attitude of the Egyptians to one of generosity, rather than the oppression they've known so long.

Exodus 4: An eventful chapter which begins with Moses again telling God "I'm not the man; they won't believe me" and God giving him signs that will convince not only Moses, but also the elders of Israel and Pharaoh. Moses protests again: I am slow of speech. God says "who made mouths?!" In other words, God isn't sure that Moses had heard anything he's told him. He's promised to deliver the people; he's promised to make the Egyptians think so well of the Israelites that they'll give them gifts as they leave. And Moses doesn't get it yet!! I think this tells us that God has chosen him; it's just going to take time for Moses to understand what this means. He probably questions God's timing, too. Why not become the deliverer when he was still in Egypt, still the favored son? God needed to humble Moses in the desert, to make him dependant on God, and not on himself.

Moses appears to be convinced when God says Aaron can go with him (this doesn't seem to be God's first choice). Moses goes to Jethro and asks permission to leave (he IS humble). And God tells him to go back to Egypt - the APB has been cancelled. Moses takes his wife and sons and off they go. On the way, God tells him again, "This is what you are to say to Pharaoh." God's using the trip to educate Moses and to build his confidence in himself as leader, and in God's leadership and guidance, since God will give him the words to say.

I am the Lord: God is speaking to Moses about what he wants Pharaoh to learn about God: that He alone is God. This is something Moses must be convinced of and so must the children of Israel. We'll encounter this "name" and power of God often in the next few chapters.

Circumcision: This is a very odd interruption of the trip (Ex. 4:24-26). Moses, failing to circumcise his sons on the 8th day after their birth, as God had commanded Abraham in Gen. 17 as the sign of the covenant people, nearly becomes ineligible to lead. God is ready to kill him - God's getting his attention. If Moses is to lead these people into the covenant, to become the people of God, they must follow the laws God gives - circumcising males at 8 days of age. So Moses must do this. Zipporah actually does it and says "you are a husband of blood to me" a bitter statement. These two don't get along very well. Now it's unclear whether Zipporah goes with Moses to Egypt or returns home (Ex. 18, Jethro comes to the wilderness where Moses and the people are camping and brings Zipporah and the boys to him). We don't know how far she went on this trip. Aaron meets Moses and together they go to meet with the elders who believe that God has spoken to them.

Next week, we'll pick up here and continue in Egypt, meeting the Pharaoh and seeing God's power.

Let's close in prayer.

Bible 101 Notes for Exodus 5-9

Review: In chapters 1-4, we discovered that all of Jacob's descendants were slaves in Egypt. 400 years have passed since Joseph was governor of the country. Now no Pharaoh reigned who remembered what Joseph had done to organize the food program during the famine; instead, the Hebrews were considered a potential threat. Living in Goshen, they lived on the major trade routes coming from what we now think of as Israel then Canaan. He knew a mass of people in rebellion could control this route thereby hurting and perhaps destroying the Egyptian economy. First, he enslaved all of them. God permitted this because it prevented their assimilation into Egyptian culture; they remained his own, separate people. Pharaoh, because the Hebrews kept multiplying, ordered male babies killed, but one special child was saved Moses, and adopted by Pharaoh's own daughter. Raised in the palace, Moses received a first-rate education, trained as a prince to rule. But at age 40, he killed an Egyptian overseer and fled the country. Recall that Moses had gone out to see his people; he felt that the Egyptians were mistreating the Hebrews.

To pick up the narrative: Once in Midian, Moses became a shepherd, married a shepherd's daughter and had two sons. God found this prince of Egypt, a man from the tribe of Levi (one of Jacob's 12 sons), after 40 years in the desert, and called him to go back to Egypt to deliver God's people. Moses resisted, but finally, God ordered him to return, and back he went.

Exodus 4:27 to end: Aaron came to the desert at God's "invitation" and compulsion, and the reunion of the brothers was a loving one as God had predicted it would be. They met at Mt. Sinai, the "mountain of God" and there Moses fills him in on what God has asked him to do. The two of them go to the elders of Israel and convince them that God has sent them. Notice their response to the good news: "they bowed their heads and worshiped." This is the proper response to a promise of deliverance and one they hope will come very soon.

Exodus 5: Moses and Aaron go to see Pharaoh. This is the first of many visits. They tell Pharaoh that God has said "Let my people go" and Pharaoh asks "what god?" With more than 80 gods in Egypt and Pharaoh himself considered a god he is not about to respond to some unknown god of the Hebrews. Pharaoh kicks them out. And Pharaoh, thinking the Hebrews have too much free time, piles on more work. This angers the Hebrews who come to Moses and say "what have you done to us?" and Moses goes to God and says "why have you mistreated your own people like this? Why did you send me?" Moses is having second thoughts. But God is just beginning to work on both Pharaoh and Moses. He will keep his word.

Exodus 6: The chapter begins with this wonderful announcement: "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh." God is telling Moses and Aaron to hold onto their hats; they're about to take an exciting ride. Recall that God's purpose is three-fold: he wants to show Pharaoh that HE alone is God; He wants to show Israel that HE alone is God, an all powerful God, the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and last, God wants to defeat all the gods of Egypt, showing them to be ineffectual compared to him. They're impotent. He needs to demonstrate all of this to Moses, Pharaoh and the rest of the Hebrews. And God promises that "when Pharaoh feels my powerful hand upon him, he will let the people go. In fact, he will be so anxious to get rid of them that he will force them to leave his land." This is strong; and so far, all Aaron, Moses and the Hebrews have seen is the power of Pharaoh. But God is going to turn things around. Then God continues: "I am the Lord," and he reiterates the

message he'd given Moses in ch. 3:14 when he said "I am that I am" or "I am the one who always is", saying here "I am the Lord" and he reminds them that he is the God of their fathers, the God of the covenant. Part of Moses' job is to educate the people of Israel about their history, their roots. They have lived in Egypt for 400 years, among 80 gods who look like frogs and bulls. They've largely forgotten their own religious history. So God constantly goes back to it, reminding Moses of who he is, so that Moses can tell the people. God says "I have remembered my covenant with them." They must believe this, and it's not easy for them to do so. The first time Moses told them God remembered them, they'd gotten more work. God tells Moses to return to Pharaoh; Moses doesn't want to. But God says "go" and so they go. This journey back to the king is interrupted by a genealogy. These are the "connective tissues of history" according to one writer. They establish who's who and in this case, Jacob's sons are named with some of their descendants (not all) and then we come to Levi, from whose line Moses and Aaron were born. In v. 26, we're told "The Aaron and Moses named in this list are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Lead all the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. . .'" Moses doesn't want any mistake: this is his family line; it is he to whom God came in the burning bush. He is a son of Israel.

Exodus 7: In the first verse, God makes a curious statement: "Pay close attention to this. I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh. Your brother Aaron will be your prophet; he will speak for you." God wants Pharaoh to respect Moses; Pharaoh believes himself to be a god; therefore, God will make Moses a man to be reckoned with. A prophet speaks for God to the people. Again, God repeats the promise that Pharaoh will ask them to leave, demand that they leave. But he also says that Pharaoh will first be stubborn, and it will take several miraculous signs before he relents. He's preparing Moses and Aaron, saying "be patient," because eventually God says "I will crush Egypt with a series of disasters. . . When I show the Egyptians my power and force them to let the Israelites go, they will realize that I am the Lord." This is a repeated promise; it emphasizes what God is doing.

So Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh; they do the signs God gave them to do. Pharaoh is unimpressed since his own magicians can do the same things except Aaron's staff becoming a snake eats up all of their staffs which became snakes. So God tells Moses that in the morning, he should meet Pharaoh at the river. The river will turn to blood.

The River Nile is the source of life in Egypt. It is a powerful river, 4000 miles long (longest in the world), flowing South to North, emptying into the Mediterranean through a fertile delta. It supplies a rich soil to Egypt's farmers. Remember that because Egypt was the "bread basket" of the ancient world, famine in other nearby countries, drove people to Egypt for food. Jacob's sons and their families had gone to Egypt for that reason. The Nile is thought to be sacred by Egyptians, because the economy, happiness and well being of the people depended on the river. Now God has turned the river to blood, and all the water in the pots in their homes, taken from the Nile, is also bloody. The fish die; the place stinks. Just imagine it.

The last verse (Ex. 7:25) shows the duration of the plague: 1 week. Wells are dug to find fresh water another sign of God's miraculous work. The second plague is frogs EVERYWHERE. And Pharaoh still will not relent.

Exodus 8: There are three plagues in this chapter: first frogs; second, gnats and third, flies. All of these are irritating in the extreme.

Pharaoh remains stubborn, and once again, this plague targets an Egyptian God. In this case, it is Heqt who has the head of a frog and the body of a human. Both with the river and the frogs, it is the staff that Aaron points, at God's direction, which signals the start of the infestation. This time, Pharaoh pleads with Moses and Aaron to ask God to end it. He promises to let the people go to worship. See Moses' growing confidence and faith. He says to Moses: "you set the time and I will pray for you and the land will be rid of frogs," and Pharaoh tells him "tomorrow." Why not right now? The Lord answered Moses' prayer and the frogs departed the next day. But Pharaoh, even in the stench of dead frogs piled everywhere, changed his mind and prevented their leaving.

So . . . gnats come. And this time there's another variation: the magicians can't duplicate the gnats. They tell Pharaoh, "it's the finger of God," but Pharaoh doesn't hear them, either. Of added interest is the stuff from which the gnats came: dust. God is the only one who creates from dust human beings were made from it in Gen. 2.

The next plague is flies swarms of them. Not just unpleasant flies at a picnic, but clouds of them, buzzing everywhere. It could drive a person crazy, not to mention animals. This plague, the fourth, exempts the Israelites. In Goshen there are no flies. Now they're seeing even more of God's power: he can direct the plagues to the area he wishes to infect.

Pharaoh says he'll let them go; he's disturbed by all this. But once the flies are gone he changes his mind again. There are six plagues remaining.

Exodus 9: Another three plagues in this chapter, and another three Egyptian gods targeted (handout). The first is against livestock, the second a plague of boils on both people and animals, and the third is a plague of hail. All are devastating, and the time period is indeterminate. All make Egypt suffer. Notice that Israel in Goshen is exempt from all these. God is showing Egypt that he can protect his own people. And again, even though Pharaoh appears to soften, he refuses to let the people go.

The plagues are thought to have consumed 18 months to 2 years of time. Moses is 80 when he returns to Egypt; Aaron is 83. Each plague affects the people and one of their gods; each plague affects their livelihood and their lives. Pharaoh apparently doesn't care. He's tough; he's out to prove that he can survive even this god of the Hebrews. But he can't.

Why does he harden his heart? He's a man who thinks he's god. Is God being unfair to Pharaoh? Pharaoh is a stubborn man by nature; God doesn't force him to be more stubborn than he already is; he uses his stubborn nature to show how powerful he is to the nations of Israel and Egypt.

Next week, we'll begin with chapter 10 and locusts.

Let's close in prayer.

Bible 101 Notes for Exodus 10-13

Review: So far, we've seen God at work in Egypt, showing his power, campaigning for both Pharaoh and the people to see that He alone is God. At the same time, he's convincing the Hebrews that he, God, the Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, keeps his promises. He is able to deliver them as he has said he will. We've seen Egypt plagued by the Nile turning to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, a plague on the cattle, boils, hail and locusts. The agricultural harvest is ruined; people have suffered badly. And God has kept his own people immune to most of these. We see God accomplishing his three purposes: first, to show Pharaoh that He alone is God; second, to show and convince his own people that He alone is God, and third, to render all the gods of Egypt impotent: they have no power; only God has power - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses stature as leader increasing: With each succeeding plague, we see Moses confidence growing. He's bolder and stronger in his faith and knows God's presence is with him. These months back in Egypt have been Moses' seminary: he's growing in knowledge of God, and faith in God's ability to do what he says he will do. He's had, as Othello says, "ocular proof" - he's SEEN God's mighty power at work, and it's nearly completely destroyed Egypt.

Genesis 10: In this chapter, locusts, which we discussed last week, and now darkness. Moses had warned Pharaoh at the end of ch. 9, and Pharaoh had said "I'm sorry; I was wrong. God is right, and my people and I are wrong. Please beg the Lord to end this terrifying thunder and hail. I will let you go at once." So Moses makes a deal: as soon as I'm out of the city, I'll lift my hand and the hail will stop. The earth belongs to God. But Pharaoh, you don't fool God or me: you don't believe God." The flax and barley were destroyed by the hail; the wheat and spelt hadn't sprouted yet. There was still hope for a harvest in Egypt.

At the beginning of ch. 10, God sends Moses back to Pharaoh but before Moses goes, God reminds him that he and Aaron and all the people of Israel have witnessed wondrous things - events to tell their children about. God wants the memory of these proofs of his power to stay alive. Moses instructs them in Deuteronomy never to forget what God did for them, and in Deut. 6:4-9, he tells them specifically teach the law - teach God's ways to their children, day and night, at home, and on the way. God knows human memory is short; he's preparing them to do special things to remember and pass them on. It's time for another of God's reminders to Pharaoh that He alone is God.

Now darkness for three days. Darkness so thick it could be touched - in Egypt, but not in Goshen. The sun shines there. The darkness is confusing; it's so thick that it prevents all work and movement. Pharaoh tells Moses "go worship God but leave the flocks here; take the kids, but not the animals." Moses says "all or nothing," and Pharaoh won't budge, throws Moses out and says "don't come back." Moses says "I won't see your face again." This is an attack on the sun god Re. God controls the sun. Darkness also symbolizes the darkness of sin and a lack of knowledge of God. Jesus says in John 8:12: "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness because you will have the light that leads to life." John 1:1, 4-5: "In the beginning was the Word. . . Life itself was in him [Jesus], and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it." Life and light go together; darkness and death go together. Jesus says in John 3:19 "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." John writes in his 1st epistle "God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. . . if we are living in the light of God's

presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, cleanses us from every sin." This darkness, then, is a prelude to death.

Chapter 11: Now God is going to do what he said he would in the very beginning: attack the firstborn, the heir to the throne in Pharaoh's case, the heir to the family name and wealth and reputation in commoners' cases. The firstborn is to die - even the animals. But not in Israel as long as the people do as God commands them to do. Chapter 11 is very short, but it contains a dire warning: God describes exactly what he's going to do. Pharaoh's stubborn heart refuses to listen.

Chapter 12: This is a very significant chapter in Israel's history: it is the institution of the Passover, commemorated to this day by Orthodox and reform Jews alike. If you recall, it was Passover that surrounded Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, he ate his Passover meal with the disciples, the "last supper" as we label it, and he died at the end of that week of remembering the "first redemption." Christ Jesus, Paul says, "is our Passover [lamb] has been sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." (1. Cor. 5:7-8)

When God gave Moses instructions, it became apparent that Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were sacred occasions with special foods and rituals; God is very precise about what it is and how it is to be observed the first time and all succeeding times. Notice that God gives the instructions in Ex. 12:1-20, Moses tells the leaders and people in vv. 21-27; the people follow the instructions in v. 28, and by the end of this chapter, the firstborn sons of all Egypt are dead and the Israelites are on their way to the promised land. And once more, at the end of the chapter, God reiterates the "regulations" for Passover, vv. 43-49. These repetitions show us just how vital it was that the children of Israel follow God's instructions to the letter.

Passover: What were they to do?

1. Select a year-old lamb without spot or blemish (goats and sheep were called "kids") four days before it was to be sacrificed. Selected on the 10th of Abib, now to be the principal month of the year (the first month of the year is in the fall, as Rosh Hoshana celebrates with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement this year on Sept. 27 and Oct. 6, respectively. Sept. 27 is Jewish New Year, and notice that the first act is one of asking for forgiveness - confession and repentance - to begin a new year fresh with God.)
2. Abib is the "first month" as in importance. That's because remembering Passover will be important to them.
3. The lamb lives with the family until the 14th when it is to be slaughtered and the blood drained into a bowl. The blood will be used in a substitutionary way for the people.
4. The lamb's blood is sprinkled on the door posts and lintel - and this was an act of faith. The angel of death would see the blood and "pass over" that house. They believed in the blood - that the lamb's blood would stand for their own and they could live. It is sprinkled with hyssop - also connected to the cross. A sponge with vinegar was lifted to Jesus on hyssop. It's used in the OT to sprinkle blood at the altar, always a sign of purification. (Hyssop is an herbal bush)
5. The lamb is to be roasted whole - not to be boiled or eaten raw. No bones must be broken (remember John tells us Jesus legs weren't broken, as was the custom to speed the death of men on the cross, fulfilling scripture prophecy that "not one of his bones was broken"). 6. One lamb per family depending on size; the rabbis later determined that 10-20 per lamb was correct. So families could go together, if small in number. Anything uneaten was to be burned.

6. The lamb was eaten with bitter herbs to symbolize their bitter slavery in Egypt.
7. They also ate with unleavened bread. Yeast symbolizes corruption and sin; they were to rid their houses of yeast before making this bread. We, too, celebrate the Passover at Communion with "unleavened bread."
8. For seven days, no bread except unleavened - to remember their deliverance by the Lord.
9. The regulations and the festivals (Passover and Unleavened Bread) were permanent - to be done annually without fail and without any variation. They were to begin the annual celebration when they got to the Promised Land.
10. There were some activities only done the first year, in Egypt: They are the blood on the doorposts, eating standing up and with shoes on, ready for a journey.

Seder suppers now: reenact the Passover meal, and the answers to the questions that the children ask are the way the first Passover is remembered. This is what the Jews do each year, and often, they are holding Passover as we are celebrating Holy Week and preparing for Easter.

Our Passover: Jesus became the Paschal Lamb, the Passover sacrifice for our sins - once and for all. The New Testament, and especially Hebrews, makes this very clear. For example, Heb. 10:1-18, explains that Jesus' one-time sacrifice as the sinless Son of God (the lamb without spot or blemish), became the only sacrifice needed to take away human sin. When Jesus died, he substituted his blood for ours, and for all the animal sacrifices that had been made under the law. That's why we are said to be under a new covenant. Paul tells us in Romans 3:21-27: "Now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight - not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this way, no matter who we are or what we have done. . . For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. . . Can we boast then that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on faith." And Paul reminds us that Abraham was justified by faith: Abraham believed God [when God promised to make him a great nation] and God declared him to be righteous." (Rom. 4:3)

Exodus 12:29 to end: Death comes to Egypt at midnight; God's angel of death passes through the land, killing the firstborn son in every family - the favored son, the one who would inherit the family name and wealth. And in Goshen, where the people had put blood on their doors, the angel spared the first born son. But remember, though they were God's people, they also had to do as God told them: sprinkle the blood. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no redemption," Hebrews 9:22. If they failed to put the blood on their doors, the angel of death visited them, too. Pharaoh sends for Moses and Aaron, and as God had said he would, he tells them to "Leave," pushing them out. And he tells them to take everything but first "give me a blessing." At last, the Pharaoh is humbled; at last, he sees the power of God - the God the Hebrews serve - is far powerful than he. And all the Egyptians gave them gifts: gold, silver, clothing, "like a victorious army, they plundered Egypt," says v. 36. (Remember God had told Moses that this would happen back in Ex. 3:21-22). Back wages for 400 years of being deprived and in slavery! And we'll see how God makes use of all these gifts later on.

That night, they left their homes and started for the Promised Land. They left an old life, and entered a new one; they left an old way of life (slavery) and entered a new way of life (freedom) just as Jesus redeems us from an old way of life - slavery to sin, to live a new life of freedom from sin and guilt.

They do not go the expected way on the Via Maris, or the trade route. It would be the shortest route to the Promised Land. But God knows that as slaves, they are unprepared as warriors. They can't fight their enemies; they need toughening and seasoning in the wilderness. And so they head for the Red Sea. They go, 600,000 adult men of fighting age (20-50) with at least that many women, children, and adults over 50, to add up to 2 million people. What a trip for Moses as tour guide!!

And of course, God is the guide, with Moses as the human leader. A pillar or column of fire signifies God's presence, goes ahead of them; in the daylight, it becomes a pillar of cloud to their sight (the same fire of God is there; fire is a sign of the Holy Spirit). And on their way, God reminds them not to forget the Passover - this night when their freedom was obtained through God's power.

Exodus 13: Here God gives instructions for dedicating or setting apart for His use, the firstborn sons of Israel. Remember that God has called Israel his "firstborn son," in Ex. 4:22. The firstborn sons were killed in Egypt to demonstrate to Pharaoh that God will take their best if they don't give him their best. That's what he wants from his own nation: their best. God gives them the regulations for this dedication, as he does again for Passover celebration. God tells Moses several times what he is to tell/teach the people. And over and over, God says "remember." We, too, must remember what God has done for us. That's what we do each time we take the Eucharist: we are remembering Christ's sacrifice. It's not to be done casually. God knows our memories can be distracted!

Joseph's bones: At the end of the chapter, we see Moses taking Joseph's coffin with them. Joseph had asked, in Gen. 50, that his remains be taken to the Promised Land. He was sure that God would take them back to their inheritance, fulfilling the promise he'd made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His faith was in God's word.

Next week: the Red Sea and all kinds of excitement.

Let's close in prayer.

Bible 101 - Exodus - Chapters 14-19

Review: We spent a lot of time on Passover - an event, a ritual and a festival God instituted as a memorial to the event. And we saw that it was a type of Christ's sacrifice of himself, as the Lamb of God, for our sins centuries later. We also saw Pharaoh begging Moses and Aaron to leave, the Egyptians themselves giving the Hebrews gifts to say "good bye" (goodbye forever!) and off they went. In Egypt there was mourning; in Israel, there was celebration. They were free people, and after years of slavery, living as free people was a new and giddy experience. They left as a plundering army. They left also with God's admonition that they were to remember this night, this powerful deliverance, and to teach their children.

Exodus 14: When they got to the Red Sea after several days of freedom, they panicked because they saw the Egyptian army following them. God intervened and parted the water, put a cloud between His people and Pharaoh, and got them to safety. God triumphed. Moses had told them: "Don't be afraid. Just stand where you are and watch the Lord rescue you. The Egyptians that you see here today will never be seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. You won't have to lift a finger in your defense." (Ex. 14:13-14). And that's what God did. So far, God has defeated Pharaoh in Egypt and wiped him out in the wilderness. He is doing mighty acts for his people. What will their response be?

Exodus 15: What did the children of Israel do on the other side? Celebrated and told God thanks! This chapter is a song of thanks and praise to God, setting aside forever the idea that Moses was a man of slow speech or a man who couldn't talk. Here's poetry. Many of the images from this hymn are repeated in the Psalms - in particular Ps. 78. Many of the Psalms were songs of ascent; that is, they were meant to be sung when the faithful went to Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). One always goes "up to Jerusalem" because it's on a higher elevation than the land around it (lots of symbolism there). This psalm and others like to carry out God's command to "remember your deliverance and teach it to your children."

Notes on imagery in the hymn of praise:

God has triumphed over man and beast;

God is my strength and song and my victory

He is my God. I will praise him.

He is my father's God; I will praise him.

The Lord is a warrior.

Your right hand, o Lord, is glorious in power.

In your greatness and majesty, you overthrow your enemies.

God's anger flashes against his enemies.

God's breath is powerful: it divides and dries the sea.

Who else is like you, God?

With unfailing love you will lead us.

All of this will be of vital importance to the children of Israel on this pilgrimage and in training camp. They must repeat this hymn; it tells them who God is and what he can do, and that he has anger against his (and their) enemies, but he loves his people. Then notice: **the nations will hear and tremble (v. 14)** and they discover this to be true when they, 40 years later, get to Jericho. Rahab tells them: "I know the Lord has given you this land. We are all afraid of you. Everyone is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to. . . ." (Joshua 2:9-13)

Complaining begins (v. 24): The euphoria doesn't last. Three days after the triumph at the Red Sea, the people are thirsty and disappointed. The water they found after 3 days was bitter and they turned on Moses: "What are we to drink?" and Moses cried to God and he showed him the solution; the water turned sweet and they were saved.

God's lessons: God is disciplining the people to depend only on him. Everything they need will be supplied if they ask him and trust him to give it to them. This is a fundamental lesson they must learn. They've been gone about a week, and their first lesson has been one to remember.

Note that we'll see a pattern developing: God rescues them "by his mighty hand" first in Egypt and then at the Red Sea. What's the people's response? They march out like a plundering army with gold and silver and clothing, a victorious army. And once they're safe on the other side of the Red Sea, the children of Israel sing and dance. They're safe; they praise God for defeating Pharaoh and his troops. But when they encounter adversity, marching for three days with no water, and they come to a well or spring and the water is bitter, they turn on Moses. He cries out to God. God gives him the means to sweeten the water and they drink. And then God says conditions govern their relationship:

1. They must listen carefully to God's voice
2. They must do what is right in his sight
3. They must obey his laws and commands
4. And IF they do all these things, God will not make them suffer diseases and plagues which he sent to the Egyptians (remember?). "I am the Lord who heals you."

God very clearly lays out the future for them: listen to me, do what I tell you and all will go well. Don't listen and don't obey, and you'll suffer for it. Why is he being so strict? This is a slave people. They've been under human rule for 430 years. Now he's going to shape them into a new nation; a nation of people who are ruled by God and God alone. They must learn from experience that he means what he says, and his ways are best.

Marah and bitter are repeated three times in a matter of two verses. Why? It's a metaphor: Without God life is bitter. We don't have the strength or resources to overcome the obstacles we face; but when we cry out to God, he is there and he will deliver us.

Exodus 16: Now it's food they complain about. Think of the logistics facing Moses: he's got 2 million people to feed in a hostile environment. There aren't 7-11s and water dispensing machines on every corner. There's no Motel 6. There isn't even a Shalom Inn. They're in tents in a barren, hot and dry wilderness. They have nothing but God here. A month after leaving Egypt they're in the desert between Elim and Mt. Sinai. Their first destination is Mt. Sinai. Remember? God told Moses he'd bring him back to the "mountain of God" the place where God called him to return to Egypt (Ex. 3:12). The people are weary, tired of marching, tired of being on the road, tired of everything, tired of Moses and Aaron, and they're complaining about everything. "Oh that we were back in Egypt" where they had "three hots and a cot" is the song they sing. They're afraid, with good reason, that they're going to starve. They haven't understood God's purpose in all of this (perhaps they didn't understand God's purposes in the plagues: to show Pharaoh He is God; to show his own people that He is God, and third, to defeat the Egyptian gods). So God tells Moses he's doing to rain food from heaven to feed the multitude. The result is manna or "what is it" which is available every morning except the Sabbath. They are given strict instructions about collecting this food. Why? So that they will learn to obey. God also gives them quail on that first night; the rest of the 40 years they're in the wilderness, manna arrives six mornings a week, no matter where they are. It's a miracle from God. It ceases to arrive once they arrived in Gilgal on the plains of the Jordan River (Josh 5:10-12). And Num. 11:7-9 describes in more detail what manna looked like. Mrs. Moses and the other wives organized a cookbook of 365 ways to fix manna - like mannacotti, manna bagels, manna casserole, manna sandwiches. Two quarts of manna were gathered to be kept forever in the Ark of the Covenant - yet to be built. And God is teaching them, a slave people, about a day of rest - something they've never had. The Sabbath is to be a day without work.

Exodus 17: Once more they break camp, are on the go, and find no water. Once more they complain. Moses is getting testy; he begs God to tell him where to find water, and God shows him a rock at Mt. Sinai. Moses strikes it with his staff and water pours out. Another miracle. Jesus tells his disciples and crowds in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles that anyone who believes in him will never thirst again and in him will be a spring of living water (John 7:37-39) a clear reference to the wilderness experience of thirst.

Defeating the Amelekites: God helps Israel defeat an enemy. As Moses prays with uplifted hands holding the rod, the troops under Joshua win; when his arms fall, they start to lose. Aaron and Hur hold up Moses arms as they are atop a hill to see what's going on. They defeat their enemy in God's might and power. And Moses is told to write this down; he'll be told this over and over as the book progresses. Moses built an altar there to give thanks to God for the victory.

Exodus 18: Remember Jethro? He's coming to visit Moses and brings Moses' wife and sons. Jethro does two things: he first worships God, praising him for the deliverance of the people from Egypt and slavery. Secondly, he observes the camp. He notices that the people come all day long to Moses with their problems and Moses is worn out. He makes a suggestion - and does so diplomatically. Moses

thanks him and follows his father-in-law's advice. Jethro is a handy guy to have around! But he goes back home.

Exodus 19: God will reveal himself to the people in an amazing way! This is the prelude to the giving of the law in Exodus 20-31. They're camped at Mt. Sinai, the mountain of God. They've been out of Egypt for two months. What have they learned? 1. That God keeps his promises to feed them; 2. That God will defeat, or help them to defeat, their enemies. They are learning to obey God, and to follow his commands. Moses has better organization so that his days aren't filled with complaints. Life is moving along; now God is ready to prepare them to hear his voice: he's going to give the law - principles for their relationship with God and each other.

First God speaks to Moses in the mountain: vv. 3-6. Moses and God have a conversation, and God tells him to remind the people of what he's done to the Egyptians. And he reiterates the conditions by which they are to live: "If you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the nations of the earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, my holy nation." Remember the covenant with Abram back in Genesis 12? No conditions: I will make you a blessing, and through your descendants all the world will be blessed. And later in Genesis, God promises land to go with the family he will have - a family more numerous than the sand and the stars. Now God is repeating that covenant but putting conditions on it. "If you obey me and keep my covenant. . . then I will make you my special treasure." Notice that God is choosing THEM. He is doing this because he wants to, not because they earned it. Why? He wants them to be a "kingdom of priests, his holy nation." In Gen. 3, sin entered the world, and we saw that human beings were incapable of being holy left to their own devices. So God chose Abraham and started over, building a nation that would worship him alone. The phrase "kingdom of priests" implies that this holy living that God expects and will command them to participate in will be shared with others. Priests are mediators between God and Man; Jesus is the great high priest who replaced the old covenant with the new. So were the Hebrews ever "a kingdom of priests"? Peter tells us I Pet. 2:5 that we, as Christians, are God's holy priests offering spiritual sacrifices to God. And Romans 12, Paul says, we're to be living sacrifices - to offer ourselves daily, body and soul, to God.

Moses prepares the people: God tells Moses that he'll visit the people in a thick cloud. They are to be clean, purified inside and out, and on the third day, he'll come to the camp. There are strict boundaries; be sure the people understand this. So Moses follows God's instructions. The people stand back from the mountain and God comes down in thunder, lightning, trumpet blasts, an earthquake, fire - God uses everything to get their attention and respect; and he's successful. The people tell Moses: "you speak to God for us; we're too afraid." In Exodus 20, God gives his commands TO the people in his own voice. In Deut. 5, Moses reminds the people, 39 years later, that "God spoke to you from the heart of the fire on the mountain. . . the Lord spoke these words with a loud voice to all of you from the heart of the fire." They heard God's audible, thundering voice. In Hebrews 3, we're told "who were those people who rebelled against God even though they heard his voice? Weren't they the ones Moses led out of Egypt?" (v. 16). There's no doubt that God spoke these commands directly to them. They have no excuse. Nor do we; we have the written word of God.

Let us close in prayer.

Bible 101 - Exodus - Chapters 20-24

Review: We covered a lot of ground - literally - last week, moving the people from the far eastern bank of the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai. They've been on the trail for three months when they camp at the foot of the "Mountain of God" and Moses meets God who says "prepare the people; I'll come and speak to them." Their journey to this mountain has been marked by testing: thirst and hunger have driven them to grumbling and complaint; Moses has cried out for God's help, and God has provided for their needs. But he's also said: "If you listen to me and obey me, you'll be blessed; if you don't listen and don't obey, your lives will be full of disease." (Ex. 15:26). They're learning all this the hard way. They've also battled with the Amalekites, defeating them with God's help. The Children of Israel are slowly getting organized, and God has much more to teach them. He'll begin by giving them principles for holy living.

Exodus 19 is therefore a transition in the lives of the people. God is ready to give them a full set of laws and regulations - a civil and moral code - the foundations of government. And in addition to rules for the day-to-day functioning of a civilized society, God will give them a religious foundation. This will be the true foundation of their nation: God, their God, is first in their lives; he loves them, protects them and has chosen them for a special role in the world: to be a kingdom of priests and a holy people (Ex. 19:6). They will be different from their neighbors. God has an ideal theocracy in mind, and it is for these reasons that he prepares them to receive the law and religious precepts, the specific details of which are found in Ex. 20-31. Note that they already have a spiritual foundation: faith in God. Their hearts and souls have been turned to him. They are redeemed by faith - trusting that God will see the blood sacrifices and apply his grace. But they do not yet have a religious system: a means of worship, a prayer book, a liturgy. That is what God is going to give Moses to give to them.

Covenant renewed: Also important to the giving of the law is the renewal of the covenant God made with Abraham. We saw this in Ex. 19:3-6. The people respond that they will do all God asks them to do.

Exodus 19:7: And Moses returns from meeting with God, telling the people to clean up and to be ready for an occasion they'll never forget, a very sacred visit. Thunder, lightning, fire, smoke, earthquake and trumpet blasts signal God's coming to speak to them; the people tremble for good reason.

Exodus 20: This chapter and those which follow make up the law - God's law; in all there were 613 laws derived from the 10 Commandments, regulations and judgments which follow. In Jesus' time, Pharisees would have obeyed all of these plus Rabbinic law was added to become the Talmud. They were laws for the way Sabbath is observed, for example. Rabbi Dershowitz, who is a friend of Bill Creasy's, told of one of these. When does Sabbath begin? Sundown Friday to sundown Saturday is the common definition of Sabbath. So let's say sundown is 5 p.m. At what time does the wife and mother light the Sabbath candles? If she lights them at 5 p.m., she's "working on the Sabbath." So, the rabbis said, light the candles 18 minutes prior to sundown. And if she's a good, observant Jewish wife, Rabbi Dershowitz says, she'll be ready 10 minutes before that. Jesus was outraged by all these nit-picking rules. Remember what he told the Pharisees who complained that he worked on the Sabbath by picking grain and then healing a man? Jesus said: The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:23-3:6)

[Book on Judaism that is referenced while discussing this chapter is Marc-Alain Quarknin's *Symbols of Judaism*, Barnes and Noble Publishing in agreement with Assoline Publishing, 2003]

10 commandments are foundational: We'll find in going through these chapters that the 10 commandments or principles are interpreted in detail. God anticipated the questions people would have about what it means to not steal or to not commit murder. There are "borrowings" that aren't returned; there are accidental deaths. What category do either of these fall into? Those interpretations are given in detail in ch. 21-24. From now until the end of Exodus, God and Moses are concerned with communicating the regulations for living, and the design and building of the Tabernacle. And God is concerned with providing the people who will staff the Tabernacle, carry it and pack it, as well as the rituals and rules for worship. So the last half of the book is mainly "legislation."

Exodus 20:1-17: the people hear God speak the 10 commandments (not the 10 voluntary initiatives or suggestions). The first four concern our relationship with God; the last six concern our relationship to our fellow human beings. (Incidentally, you can understand that the first four aren't the foundation of civil law, and they may be the commandments the courts object to posting.) Notice where God begins: "I am the Lord your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt; [therefore] do not worship any other gods besides me." God is telling them to remember his power: He rescued them. He alone is God. He is Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the covenant God. Commandment 2 is related: "Do not make idols of any kind to worship." Don't let a carved image take the place of God. This will be a constant condemnation of the people in the time of the judges and kings. Worship of Baal, Ashtoreth and other pagan gods and idols comes and goes in the nation's history. Commandment 3 is also related to the first: "Don't use the Lord's name in vain." Honor God's name and you honor God. A person's character and life are in a name. Don't misuse it. And the last of these God-relationship commands is to honor the Sabbath day. "It is set apart as holy." And in this command, God relates the Sabbath to creation: God worked six days, made the world and all that's in it, and then he rested.

The last six commands begin with honoring father and mother. It's a command with promise: "Honor your parents and you will live a long full life in the land the Lord your God will give you." This isn't talking so much about individuals, though it is directed to sons and daughters: take care of your parents, honor and respect them. But by extension, it's about the whole nation: if you as individuals honor your parents, the health of the nation will be strong. Then follows prohibitions against murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting. All of these will be explained in detail in the chapters that follow.

Exodus 20:18: the people tell Moses "you tell us what God says and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us. If he does, we will die." They're terrified by God's voice. Remember what God told Moses? "I will speak to the people as I speak to you so that they will have confidence in you." (Ex. 19:9). God is doing this to give Moses his stamp: He's the man I speak with; listen to him. He speaks for me. And the people understand this. But their fear is real and Moses says "let your fear keep you from sinning." Reverence and awe, respectful fear are good things when dealing with God. He's not our buddy.

Moses goes up the mountain: Ex. 20:21 "as the people stood in the distance, Moses entered into the deep darkness where God was." And he stays with God on the mountain for a period of time, but returns to the people in Ex. 24 to read all the regulations to the people. In Ex. 20:22, God begins to give these instructions, expanding on and explaining in detail how the 10 commandments are to function in every day life.

Exodus 21: Highlights of this chapter include regulations for the humane treatment of slaves (vv. 1-11); death by a blow, whether accidental or on purpose (v. 12-14); striking father or mother, kidnappers, cursing father and mother (vv. 15-17); quarreling that results in injury, slave beating, hurting a pregnant woman (vv. 18-23; 26-27); "eye for an eye" precepts (vv. 24-25); animals who hurt humans or animals killed through negligence (vv. 28-36).

Exodus 22: Highlights of this chapter include theft of animals and/or other types of property and restitution for it (vv. 1-5; 7-8); loss of crops or animals by negligence (vv. 6, 10-15); and a variety of "codes of conduct" including treatment of virgins (vv. 16-17); sorceresses, exploitation of widows, orphans or slaves, tithe, redemption of firstborn sons and animals (ref. Ex. 13), cursing, blasphemy (vv. 16-31). Ch. 22 concludes with this statement which sums up the reason for these regulations: "You are my own holy people." God is speaking; these are his expectations for a life set apart (holy) unto him and his service.

Exodus 23: Highlights of this chapter, vv. 1-9 have to do with false witness, helping others, false charges, bribes and oppressing foreigners ("remember you were foreigners in Egypt"). Then in v. 10, Sabbath rules are explained. God makes sure they understand that "Sabbath" is any seventh day or year (vv. 10-13), and he emphasizes: "obey all my laws"; we can't pick and choose. The three annual festivals are outlined in vv. 14-17 - these are Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Festival of the Harvest (which later becomes the Feast of Tabernacles when they're settled in Canaan), all of which are explained in full detail in Lev. 23. In vv. 18-19, we see regulations which seem unrelated, but which become very important as the five great sacrifices are explained in Leviticus, and the last, "you must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk" is the beginning of the Kosher food laws. (Much more in Leviticus).

Exodus 23:20-32 is a beautiful promise. God is looking ahead; he's giving all these instructions to the people not just for their time on the journey, but primarily for their life in the Promised Land. God assures Moses that he will be with them: "I am sending my angel before you to lead you safely to the land I have prepared for you." God says "pay attention to him; obey him." This is Jesus, the preincarnate Christ, who's leading them, THE angel of the Lord. Again we have an "if/then" covenant: "If you will obey all these instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies." God will "send terror upon all the people whose lands you invade and they will panic before you." God will make it easy for them to conquer the land IF they obey him. He will fight for them. (And they've had proof of this twice: at the Red Sea, God wiped out the Egyptian army, and in Ex. 17, he helped them defeat the Amalekites under Joshua's leadership.) At the end of this chapter, God says the boundaries are fixed, and he reiterates the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-20).

Exodus 24: God sends Moses back down to get Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's sons), and seventy of the leaders. And at this time Moses also reads all that God has announced to him, and the people promise "to do everything the Lord has told us to do." (v. 3). Moses writes all the regulations down

(the second reference to writing; Ex. 17 was the first), the result is the Torah. Moses builds an altar and sacrifices are made to celebrate the giving of the law and to ratify the covenant between the people and God. Notice the blood is sprinkled on the people as well as the altar. The blood reminds them of the blood of the Passover and when God sees the blood, he passes over them, spares their lives. The animal gives its life in place of the man's. Moses said "this blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these laws." We take communion and remember the covenant Jesus made with us when he died for us. Moses read all the covenant laws again, and again the people say "we'll do it." It's easy to say "I'll obey you Lord" but as we discover in every day life, it's not as easy to DO it. On Easter, with all the beautiful music, the bells, the flowers and ceremony, we get caught up in the wonder and glory of it all and we say to God "I love you; I'll serve you." But we go out into traffic and someone cuts us off, and we yell "what's the matter with you?!" and our Easter pledge is forgotten.

Moses and the leaders go up the mountain and have dinner with God: Ex. 24:9-11 is a remarkable scene. It's a picture of heaven, and certainly of God's being different from human beings. Why is this? God wants the leaders to have a firm grasp of his presence, his holiness, his majesty. They will communicate this to the people. It's a different image from the fire, thunder and loud trumpets in Ex. 19. This is a time of fellowship. It's a tender, loving God who reaches out to them here. God is both a God of fire and thunder, and a God of "eagle's wings" and gentle concern.

Exodus 24:12-18: The leaders, except for Moses and Joshua, return to camp; Moses is called higher up the mountain and stays for six days (the ratification takes 7 days, the number of completion; 6 days to create the earth and 7th is a day of rest); then the "glory of the Lord" appears on the mountain - the Shekinah glory which in ch. 40, will fill the tabernacle. It's the shining glory of the Lord's presence which lights Moses face so intensely (Ex. 34:29), the people can't look at him. Now the cloud covers the mountain, and Moses is gone for 40 days and 40 nights to hear God's word and instructions.

Next week: The ordination ceremony of the priests will be given in clear detail. And we'll read further descriptions of items for the Tabernacle and its construction. And we'll have pictures!

Let's close with prayer.

Bible 101 - Exodus - Chapters 25-30

Review: As we learned, Exodus 19 is a transition in the lives of the people. God prepares them to receive a full set of laws and regulations - a civil and moral code - the foundations of government. And in addition to rules for the day-to-day life, God will give them a religious foundation. This will be *the true* foundation of their nation: God must be first in their lives; he has chosen them for a special role in the world: to be a kingdom of priests and a holy people (Ex. 19:6).

Exodus 20-24: These chapters contain the law as principles (10 Commandments) and as specific case studies (Ex. 21-24). The first four commandments have to do with a human being's relationship to God; the last six have to do with our relationships with each other. In brief, we are to put God first, worship no other gods, honor our parents, not lie, cheat or steal, and of course, not kill another human being. Moses reads the Book of the Covenant (all the laws and regulations) to the people and they say "all that God has commanded we will do." At the end of chapter 24, Moses and the leaders have a fellowship dinner with God, and then, all except Moses return to the foot of the mountain, while Moses goes higher to speak with God. Moses will be with God for 40 days and 40 nights. And during that time, he'll get the plans for the Tabernacle and the priesthood's use of this "tent of meeting" or place where God meets his people.

Exodus 25: Now God begins to reveal his plans for a tent of meeting, a portable temple which will be God's house, or the symbol of God's presence in the camp. The Tabernacle is the result. In this chapter, God begins by telling Moses to ask the people to give, voluntarily, materials for the construction and furnishing of the Tabernacle. In ch. 35, we discover that they respond with such generosity that Moses tells them "enough; stop giving." The purpose is explained (v. 8) and the plans revealed. The Tabernacle is a model of a perfect heavenly Tabernacle. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "the earthly tent and everything in it were copies of the things in heaven" (Heb. 9:23). So what God shows Moses is a heavenly worship space, which he is to reproduce on earth.

Tabernacle details: The details of the Tabernacle are minute. God is very intent about having everything "just so." Remember in Genesis? God created and said "It is good." God is concerned with order and balance, harmony and beauty. He wants a space for the people to see beauty that will remind them of who God is. In Ex. 25:10-40, the furnishings are described: the ark of the covenant (see figure 2), the table of the bread of the presence (see figure 3), the golden lampstand, and God concludes by saying "be sure to make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain."

Exodus 26: the Tabernacle details continue with the walls of the tent to be made of linen, other curtains, the roof and its coverings, and wooden frames set in silver bases. This is the tent which will hold the "Holy of Holies" and the Holy Place. These two sections of the Tabernacle are the places only the high priest can enter, and the "most holy place" or holy of holies, is entered once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The colors, the materials and the designs for all of this are outlined in very clear and emphatic detail. (see figure 4, Interior of Tabernacle) In the Holy of Holies, God will receive the offering for atonement for the entire congregation of Israel. This most sacred space is open only to the High Priest, and only one day a year. It is hidden from the other "room" of the Tabernacle by a thick curtain. The Temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem made permanent this plan for a "tent of meeting," and it also contained the Holy of Holies. In Matthew 27:50-51, we read "Then

Jesus shouted out again, and he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." Jesus on the cross made the ultimate sacrifice for us, giving himself as atonement for sin. He became sin for us even though he never sinned. He was the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. Because he instituted a New Covenant" with his death and resurrection, the writer of Hebrews tells us that we can now "boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). The curtain was torn in two symbolizing that Jesus once-for-all atonement removed the separation between God and man. Instead of coming through a curtain or a priest, we can now go directly to God through Jesus. That is, we ask "in Jesus' name" for forgiveness, invoking before God Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf.

Exodus 27: this chapter describes the outer part of the Tabernacle: the altar, the basin and the courtyard which the people may enter with sacrifices. (see figure 5, Altar of Burnt Offering, 6 and 7, views of courtyard) The bronze altar is as far as the individual Israelite can go; he goes to the priest with his animal for sacrifice. The man places his hands on the animal, the priest kills it, blood is shed and the animal is then offered as a complete burnt offering. The blood of the animal is given for the life of the person - instead of the death of the person. This is the principle "substitutionary sacrifice," which we first saw in Exodus 12: the lamb was killed, its blood put on the door posts, and when God saw it, he passed over that house, sparing the first born son. He, God, redeemed that household by their faith in the blood, and by extension, God's grace. God saw the blood of an animal and redeemed the life of the people. The fire in the bronze altar was to burn continuously; offerings were made daily. Acacia wood, which is plentiful in the Sinai Peninsula, is a hard wood and burns slowly.

The courtyard was huge; the Tabernacle itself measures 45 x 15-feet, whereas the courtyard that surrounds it measures 75 by 150-feet. The courtyard contains two items: the Bronze Altar for sacrifice and the Laver at which priests cleansed themselves and the animals to be sacrificed. The courtyard is enclosed by linen curtains hanging on a framework of 60 wood uprights set in bronze bases and crowned by silver caps - all of which would catch the sun and glitter in the daytime. The entrance measures 30 feet across; there is only one entrance, a gate facing east, by which all must enter. This symbolizes our entrance into God's forgiveness through Jesus who said "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." (John 14:6).

Oil for the lampstand is also ordered along with its lighting. The lampstand had six branches from a central lamp - a seven-branch candelabra or menorah as it's come to be known. For Chanukah, it's an 8-branch Menorah. The lamps were to be kept burning 24 hours a day; this was a job for the priests, and the oil and light symbolized the presence of God. Olive oil, incidentally, burns without smoke, and so is ideal for use in lamps. In Jesus' time, the Garden of Gethsemane, right by the Temple, was an olive grove. Its olives were harvested and pressed to supply oil for the Temple lamps.

Note: Tabernacle construction: Exodus 25-27 describe the Tabernacle's plan, its purpose and its portability. It is not *built* until chapters 36-39, and finally in ch. 40, the last chapter of the book, God sanctifies this space; it is dedicated to God's glory and his Shekinah Glory, the presence of God, fills it.

Exodus 28: the priests' clothing is described. These are very special garments, and our own priest's vestments are descendants of these. Note the unusual features such as the Ephod and the Chestpiece. (see figure 8, Chestpiece with 12 stones) These were reminders that the priest

represented the 12 tribes of Israel, the whole nation in his actions. He didn't act for himself alone; he acted on their behalf. The robe, coats and crown or headpiece, which contains an engraved, golden plate saying "holiness unto the Lord" or "Set apart as Holy to the Lord", completes the Priest's outfit. These are the garments for the High Priest; the priests' basic garments are similar, but without the ephod, chestpiece and Urim and Thummim. Notice just how closely the present day vestments of our priest resembles the garments Aaron and his sons wore: while Fr. Nee does not wear a headpiece or turban, the Bishop does wear a pointy hat, right? And the sash, the stole, the alb and chasuble are modeled on the garments God described and asked to be made for his priests in the wilderness, and later, in the Temple.

Exodus 29: the ordination ceremony of the priests is given in clear detail; it is conducted as described in Exodus 40:12-15, and in even more detail, this ceremony is repeated in Leviticus 8. The ceremony has several parts and extends over 7 days. Here's what God orders to be done: washing or purification, sin offerings presented to atone for the sin of the priests and a guilt offering must also be offered (these offerings are described in Lev. 1-7; there are five offerings and sacrifices altogether). After atonement and restitution for sin is offered, the priests are anointed with oil, oil symbolizing the Holy Spirit because it is God who makes them holy and sets them apart for his service. The altar itself is dedicated and made holy. And then Aaron and his sons are to stay inside the Tabernacle for 6 more days to complete their consecration and sanctification. (Seven is the number for completion: God created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh). The dedication or ordination of the priests also contains instructions for their duties: to offer sacrifices daily, keeping the fires burning and the lamps lit.

Exodus 30: In this chapter, God shows Moses plans for the construction of a smaller altar, this one to be used for burning incense. Incense is a symbol of prayer, a sweet aroma to God's nostrils. In John's vision of heaven, he writes in Rev. 5:8: "they [the 24 elders] held gold bowls filled with incense - the prayers of God's people." The Psalms also refer to prayers as incense as in Ps. 141:2 "Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering," clear allusions to the Tabernacle's altar of incense.

Ex. 30:11-16 prescribes a ransom offering for the upkeep of the Tabernacle - silver in the amount of half a shekel (as in Temple Shekel in Jesus' time). Each male age 20 and over was to give this offering when a census was taken; the census was not to count the number of warriors. God did not want them to trust in their numerical strength, but in His strength alone. But the census was here a way to tax the people and provide income for the Tabernacle's maintenance.

The bronze washbasin or Laver is described, and the recipe for making the anointing oil is given. The oil is to be sweet smelling, and is holy; it is not to be used for anything that is NOT holy or dedicated to the Lord. It's not to be burned in lamps or applied to anyone who is not a Levite or priest. A recipe for incense follows.

Next week: Instructions for *building* the Tabernacle will be revealed; so far, we have just the architectural plans God gave Moses.

Let's close in prayer.

Bible 101 - Exodus - Chapters 31-38

Review: Hebrews 9 offers a clear and "connected" review of Ex. 25-30 which we covered last week. I say "connected" because it shows how the OT teaching is related to and is fulfilled in the New Testament; in other words, it connects the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. What the writer of Hebrews tells us is that the OT wilderness tabernacle was just a shadow of reality: the reality is Jesus and his death on the cross. We learn in Heb. 9 what we discovered in ch. 25-30 that God has a plan and that he follows the plan exactly; he wants his people to do the same.

God repeated regularly within Ch. 25-30, "see to it that you follow the plan shown you on the mountain." God wanted Moses and the craftsmen, the women who made and embroidered the curtains, the carpenters who made the supports and the box for the altar, to understand that God was the master architect and builder: everything was to be done precisely as he instructed. Who's going to do the work? That is revealed in chapter 31.

Chapter 31: God tells Moses to find and enlist Bezalel and Oholiab, two craftsmen whom God has endowed with special gifts, as the lead craftsmen and teachers. It is their skill and their intelligence, augmented by the Holy Spirit's inspiration and gifts, that will carry out the plans Moses now has. God is very clear about who these men are, giving their tribe names, and their father's names. God has chosen them.

At the end of Ch. 31, God reiterates the need to continue to observe the Sabbath. Even when the fabricating of the Tabernacle furnishings and tent itself is underway, they are to rest on the Sabbath, doing no work at all. Apparently God feared that because they were doing "His work," they'd feel an urgency to continue their tasks 7 days a week. God says keep the Sabbath day set apart and holy. And once again he reminds them that he created the world and all that is in it in 6 days and rested on the 7th.

Exodus 31:18: "Then as the Lord finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tables inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God." What an epilogue to the 40 days and 40 nights! God has given Moses the entire law, plans for the Tabernacle, all his desires for a system of worship that involves the tribe of Levi - all this Moses has taken down like a scribe. And then God gives him stone tables which God himself has inscribed. What a moment that would have been - picture Moses taking them from God's hand. It's the stuff of art, movies, poetry, and of course, the Children of Israel would be reminded over and over that these weren't Moses' laws, but God's. God himself wrote them for their obedient and reverent observance.

Exodus 32: In ch. 32, we see anything BUT obedience. Moses has been up on the mountain with God for a period of time - how long we don't know. (His entire stay is 40 days, but where this incident begins in that time period is unknown). The people go to Aaron and ask him for ". . . some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who bought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don't know what has happened to him." (Ex. 32:1). Here we see just how limited human imagination is; the people ask Aaron for something they can see and touch. Aaron's opportunity to teach them about God is lost. Instead of saying "Moses went up on the mountain with God; he'll be back soon," or "Remember that not too long ago you heard the voice of God thundering from that mountain? Remember THAT God whom you promised to obey?" or "We've agreed to worship only ONE God," Aaron asks them to bring

him jewelry and he makes them a golden calf. He works at this; it's not an accident. The people have lost faith, and apparently, so as Aaron. In ch. 24, Moses had said to the leaders, "... if there are problems while I am gone, consult with Aaron and Hur, who are here with you." (v. 14). Either Aaron and Hur have not had a chance to develop their own ministries, or their personalities/characters are weak, or they are as faithless as the people. Their memories are short, too. God has done miraculous things to deliver them - they witnessed the parting of the Red Sea, the drowning of the entire Egyptian army, water from a rock, manna every morning - but they still are unable to have faith in the God who made all this possible. Hab. 2:4 tells us "The just [or righteous] will live by faith," and Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see." Paul said "we walk by faith, not by sight." These people suggest that they can only walk by sight, not by faith. And yet, are we so different? How often do we feel that God is distant? How often do we neglect going to God in prayer, drawing near to him? How often do we substitute "church" for "faith"; that is, how often do we go through the motions instead of believing that God will do what he says he will do: provide for us, love us, redeem us, and that as redeemed people, we are his own and he loves us? We aren't much different from these wandering folks except in time and space.

Aaron responds to the people who rejoice in the golden calf's appearance, recalling the god Apis in Egypt - the bull, an animal of strength. Aaron tells them the next day will be a "festival to the Lord." What a mockery of God's ways! They sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings, and then they party. The sound of their revelry reaches up the mountain and God and Moses have a conversation. God says "Those people YOU brought from Egypt. . ." and Moses says ""Why are you so angry with YOUR own people whom YOU brought out of Egypt?" God tells Moses he's going to destroy all of them; Moses asks God to spare them.

What Moses finds: The upshot is that Moses hurries back down the mountain, sees the orgy, festival, party, whatever it was, and is so angry, he throws down the stone tablets, breaking the law. What a metaphor for what the people had been doing! They'd broken how many commandments? The first (worship God alone, no other gods but He), the second, (make and worship no idols), the third (they've taken God's name in vain). And if it is the Sabbath day (and the text doesn't tell us one way or the other), they're violating the 4th.

Moses ground up the calf, mixed it with water and made the people drink the "beverage." He asked Aaron whether the people had tied him up and hypnotized him to get him to do such a terrible thing, and Aaron replies with the lamest excuse in the Bible: "I told them 'bring me your gold earrings,' and when they brought them to me, I threw them into the fire, and out came this calf!" (Ex. 32:24) I don't think Moses believes him.

Moses is angry for two reasons: he's disappointed and frustrated with the people, as God is, over their disobedience; he's impatient about their immaturity and lack of trust in God. Secondly, he's angry because they've shown God's enemies, the pagan peoples around them, that they're capable of rejecting God time and time again.

So what happens? Moses says "all who are on the Lord's side, come to me," and the Levites did. He told them to strap on swords, move through the camp, and kill God's enemies. And they did; 3,000 people died that day, many of which were relatives of the men who had the swords.

A parallel passage in Acts is instructive here. In a sense, the book of Exodus is the birth of the Jewish nation and the Jewish faith; Acts in the NT is the book which tells us about the birth of the Christian church. In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preaches, 3,000 people are added to the church on one day. (Acts 2:41). They believed and were baptized in response to the message of Jesus as savior. In Ex. 32, 3,000 died in a lack of faithfulness to the covenant God offered.

Exodus 32:30-35: Moses tells the people they've sinned mightily but that God is a forgiving God and he's prepared to intercede for them. Moses does, offering to forfeit his life for the people's. Moses here is a type of Christ, a man who's willing to sacrifice himself for others. God says that he will punish the people and sends a plague. He spares many of the people, and tells Moses to lead the people on, promising that his angel will be with them to guide them and lead them to the Promise Land.

Exodus 33: God continues, in more detail, to reiterate that their final destination is the land God promised to give Abraham. Moses is told to tell the people to remove their jewelry in penitence, to humble themselves before God, and they do. Remember that Jacob told his wives and children to remove their jewelry in Gen. 35 in preparation for a sacrifice at Bethel, an altar Jacob had built on the way to Haran, and now returning, he wanted to meet God there. Taking off ornaments and jewelry appears to be a sign to God of humbling, a stripping of human signs of status in order to be "naked" and natural before God our creator.

Ex. 33:7 through 34:28 records another encounter God and Moses have. Several things happen: God agrees to continue to go with the people to the Promised Land; God agrees to show Moses his presence; God calls Moses his friend; God restates the covenant; God restates some of the most important tenants of the law, and God tells Moses to write everything down again. These chapters repeat the earlier giving of the case law, ch. 21-24, but in less detail. The highlights are God's saying that he will be with Israel as they travel; this reassures Moses that God truly is their leader, Moses' friend, and the one God who has the power to defeat their enemies and preserve them as a nation.

Highlights of this passage: Moses is told to move his own tent outside the camp, and he does. There God speaks to him "face to face as a man speaks with a friend.". God calls Moses his friend. What a wonderful gift to Moses: to be called God's friend!! Moses asks for another favor: he wants to "see" God's face, but God cannot let him do that. "No man can see God and live," God tells him, but he agrees to hide Moses in a cave and pass by it so that Moses can see God's presence.

Exodus 34: God tells Moses to prepare two stone tablets to take back up the mountain for engraving; Moses does, and meets God on the mountain. God's presence is revealed to Moses (v. 6) and God tells Moses his character: "I am the Lord; I am the Lord, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so, I do not leave sin unpunished." And Moses was so overcome, he fell to the ground in worship. In that statement we understand why God has given the Tabernacle and the law: he is holy; he is gracious and compassionate, but he is holy. He is not like us. He is sinless. He cannot have fellowship with sinners. If we sin, he forgives, but we still must pay the consequences, and that's what God tells Moses.

Exodus 35: Moses tells the people about the Tabernacle. Remember that ch. 25-31 have been instructions to Moses alone; now he's revealing the plans to the people. He asks them for the materials to build the sanctuary; he asks for their help building it. The people respond with such generosity that they have more than enough gold, silver, bronze, linen and goat's hair, as well as people to do the work.

Exodus 36 through 38: Moses tells Bezalel and Oholiab that they are God's choice for lead craftsmen; the project gets underway. All of the specifications for the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat and Cherubim, the Altar, the Altar of Incense, the Lampstand, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, and the linen curtains, tapestries, supports for the Tabernacle and the courtyard are restated as each item is constructed.

A few other facts to consider: The people left Egypt and got to Mt. Sinai 3 months after the night of the first Passover. The Tabernacle was completed exactly one year after they'd left Egypt. They are ready to celebrate their first "Festival of Unleavened Bread" as a reminder of the Passover miracle that God wrought on their behalf, and of their deliverance from slavery and from sin.

Let's close in prayer.

Bible 101 - Exodus - Chapters 39-40

Review: Last week, we covered Exodus 31-38, significant chapters in the history of the children of Israel-in their journey toward the Promised Land, their formation as a nation, and in their growth as a community of faith. They are, as we saw, somewhat immature spiritually, evidence of which is the stark contrast between their disobedience of God's law in ch. 32, and their strict obedience and desire to please God in ch. 34-38.

In ch. 32, we read about the golden calf Aaron made in Moses' absence, and the party that followed. The children of Israel, not a month before, had heard God speak directly to them; he'd given them principles for living in relationship with him and with others - or what we know as the 10 Commandments. Moses had gone up on the mountain with God to be given case law and regulations, as well as plans for the Tabernacle and priesthood. During his absence, they took matters into their own hands, asking Aaron to make them gods. We observed them breaking at least three of the first four commandments, and a few of the second six. God threatens to destroy all the people, Moses intercedes for them while still on the mountain with God; God relents. But when Moses sees the revelry in the camp, he becomes angry, throws down and breaks the tablets of stone on which God had written the 10 Commandments. Many people die that day - at least 3,000 - by the sword and plague. Moses pleads with God on behalf of the people, asking first to secure forgiveness for the people, and secondly, God's promise to go with them to the Promised Land.

God promises he will go with them (he'd said earlier he's send his angel, but not go along because of the people's "stiff-necked" ways). God forgives the people, but there's work to be done: God restates the terms of the covenant, rewrites the 10 Commandments on tablets of stone, and Moses returns to the people to reveal all that God has told him.

In ch. 35-38, the actual work on the Tabernacle begins: two craftsmen, God's choice, selected by name to do the work are aided by the people whose gifts of materials (gold, silver, bronze, linen, goat skin and acacia wood, among other things) are so generous, Moses tells them to "stop giving."

Tabernacle: By ch. 38, all the curtains have been woven, the embroidery completed, the furnishings (Ark, Table of the Bread of the Presence, Altar of Incense, Altar of Burnt Offering, Lampstand) are finished. The children of Israel left Egypt three months before arriving at Mt. Sinai; they've stayed there since, and nine months later (or a year since leaving Egypt), they've begun to learn what it is to obey God-and they've done it through work. Perhaps it's because they were a slave people whose days had been filled with work that having specific tasks to do, a huge project requiring everyone's effort, brings them together. Under Bezalel and Oholiab, God's choice as the head craftsmen, the people have accomplished a great deal.

They did it by working together: while craftsmen and women were weaving and embroidering, the carpenters were building posts, the metal workers making rings and brackets, bases and decorative top pieces, someone had to cook, mind the children, organize the flow of materials, keep the projects on track, and get everyone together periodically for a reading of the law and a sing-along. These secondary tasks were performed by "support" staff, or other members of the community whose talents didn't run to setting jewels or building frames for curtains. And we can picture Moses' several assistants running around with clipboards and Palm Pilots, keeping him informed, and taking down

his notes. The project was huge. Ex. 38:24-31 reveals that a ton of gold, more than three tons of silver, and more than two tons of bronze were given to fashion the various pieces of the Tabernacle.

What are they learning? The project taught them dedication to a task God had ordered; they learned to follow God's instructions meticulously. They've learned to depend on each other and on God to get it done. And we can assume that all during the 9 months of work, the people kept the Sabbath every Friday evening sundown to Saturday evening sundown; they are learning to respect God's laws. This is evidence that God is molding them; their conversion into people who are different from surrounding nations has begun.

And perhaps, too, they're beginning to think like the covenant people they are. Remember what God told Moses in ch. 34 about the terms of the contract or covenant? He said IF you do as I say (obey me and worship no other Gods), THEN I will defeat your enemies and you will live in the land I promised. This is a conditional covenant: They must do their part or else God will not do his.

Chapter 39: Before the Tabernacle can be erected, Moses must review all that's been done to see that it's been completed "as the Lord commanded Moses." He does so in Ch. 39. The list of what he inspects begins with the High Priest and the priests' garments including the ephod and the chestpiece. The latter two elements of the High Priest's vestments were significant because they bore the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, so that when Aaron offered sacrifices, he was doing so on their behalf-and God could see that. At v. 24, the detail about the hem of the ephod (a kind of apron) was not forgotten: the pomegranates and golden bells are the "fringe" of this part of the High Priest's robes. And they've completed the turban with the engraved gold plate "Holy unto the Lord" for Aaron to wear.

Then the various elements of the Tabernacle are brought to Moses: the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, the Lampstand, the Golden Incense Altar-all with their utensils and tools, and then from the courtyard, the Altar of Burnt offering and the Bronze Laver. At v. 43, we read that "Moses inspected all the work and found that they had done it as the Lord had commanded Moses. And he blessed them."

Chapter 40: And God now tells Moses: set up the Tabernacle, and so it is done. It's set up on the first day of the first month which is Abib or Nisan. Go back to Ex. 12:2: God told Moses "This month shall be to you the beginning of months, the first month of the year to you," as God was giving instructions for Passover. So they have reached the first anniversary of Passover-their deliverance from Egypt by God's mighty hand-in time to celebrate the raising of the Tabernacle, the ordination of the priests, and the offering of the first sin offerings in their new portable sanctuary.

God gives instructions about the order of setting up the Tabernacle in vv. 3-11; then Moses is to anoint all the items with the anointing oil, setting them apart exclusively for God's use and honor. In vv. 12-15, God tells Moses to dress and priests and anoint them.

And v. 16 reads: "And Moses did everything as God had commanded him." In the following verses, 17-33, we see Moses actually doing the work of erecting the frames, hanging the curtains, placing the furnishings, and anointing the priests.

God's glory: Then v. 34-35: "And the Shekinah glory, the cloud of the visible presence of God, covered the Tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud remained upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle."

As Solomon found 500 years later when he dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, II Chron 5-7, man builds the Temple or Tabernacle, but God dedicates it to his glory by his presence. Solomon holds a great ceremony and reverently prays: "I have built You a house, [God], but . . . will God actually dwell with men on the earth? Behold Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built." (II Chron 6:2, 18) And we read that "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God." (II Chron. 5:14).

For the Tabernacle's dedication, since we aren't told the details of the ceremony, we can only imagine just how lovely and memorable it was. The children of Israel could rejoice in seeing their project completed; but God's arrival showed them that it was HIS plan they'd carried out, and it was HIS tent they'd built.

Priesthood established and sanctified: We read much more detail about the priests' ordination in Lev. 8 and 9. Looking back at Ex. 28 and 29, we know that the garments of the priests are meant to give them dignity and honor, and that their ordination is filled with purification, sacrifice for sin, and anointing with oil.

What does Exodus tell us about Jesus? That HE is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation begun with Abraham, made "visible" in the wilderness with the construction of the Tabernacle and the institution of the sacrificial system, all of which points to Christ's coming to become THE sacrifice for sins and the one who would atone for our sins. "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor. 5:21).

Next time: We return to the New Testament to study the Gospel of Mark.

Let's close in prayer.