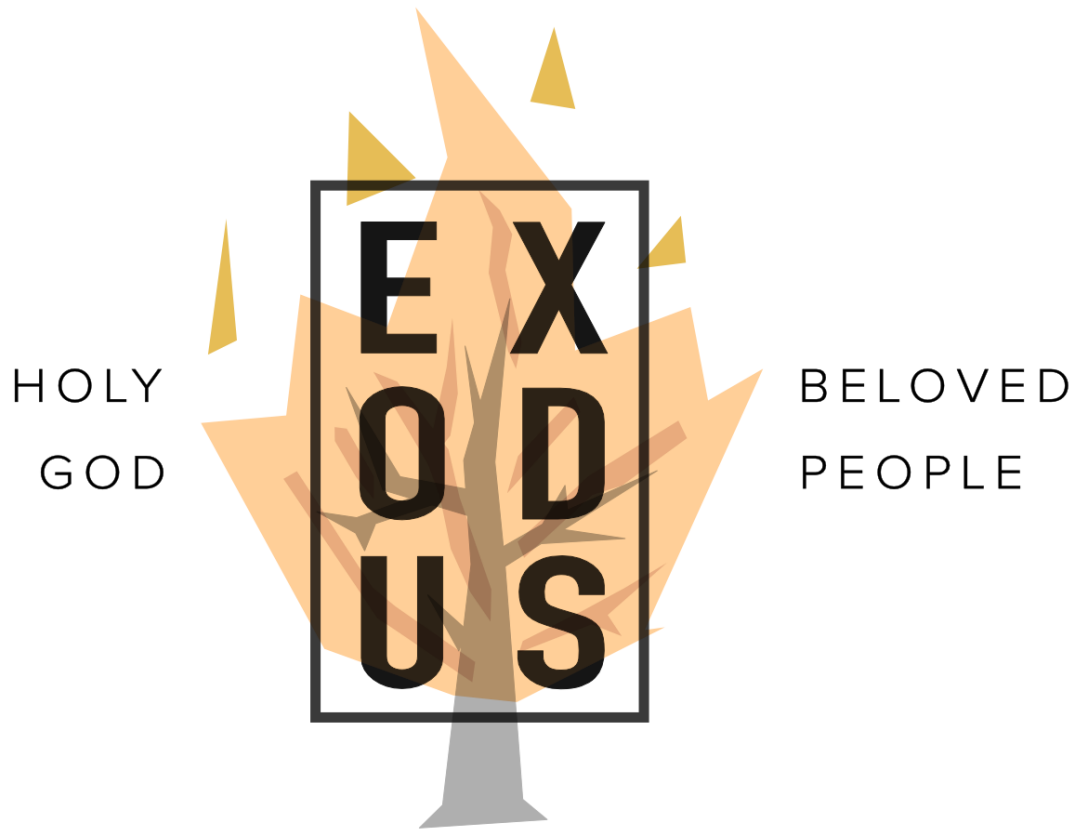


Bible Study



Exodus 16-40

May-July 2024

Trinity Church Brighton

Introduction

There's a good argument that no piece of writing has shaped our world more so than what we're looking at together over the coming weeks. Exodus was the foundational story for the Jewish people. A story of how they were saved: redeemed from slavery and brought out from Egypt into freedom. But in the story of Exodus, freedom is not about people being able to go and do whatever they wanted. Freedom is people being set free *from* something and *for* something.

Notice what God said in Exodus 6:6-7

*"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. **I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.***

God's intention is that he would set his people free from slavery, so that they could be his people and worship him and live for him. The message of Exodus is that real freedom comes when we live for our creator and with him as our God. That's when we find life as it was meant to be, in all its fullness.

As we come to the second half of the book of Exodus, this helps us make sense of why a people that has just been set free is immediately given laws and rules to follow. They've been set free to live God's way. The laws are for their good, they're given to enable the people to thrive in close relationship with God. And this goal of thriving in relationship with God is not for them alone. God's goal in rescuing them is to bless the whole world, as people enjoy the fullness of life with God.

These themes of Exodus have shaped our world dramatically. The Exodus story has been at the heart of the way the Western world values freedom. And we've always understood that a free society is one where people are able to thrive under good government with compassionate, fair and just laws. These things are very much in line with God's intention for people. The ten commandments and other laws he wrote for his people in Exodus still shape our society's laws and values today, more than many realise.

Even more than this, the second half of Exodus points us forward to the glory and necessity of our Lord Jesus. In Exodus we learn that the only way the Holy God can dwell with his Beloved People is through his provision of mercy. It begins with his gracious act of making us his people, and it continues with his gracious provision of the means for us to live as his people. Whether it is the concern for ethical living, the complexities of the sacrificial system, or the details of the Tabernacle construction, Exodus teaches us of the overflowing grace of the Holy God towards his Beloved People.

The story is filled with dramatic moments; storm clouds of God's presence, miraculous provision, pillars of fire, betrayal and rebellion, unexpected mercy. Perhaps these moments stand in contrast to the parts that might seem dull in comparison – construction plans and lists of rules. But as we study together, our prayer is that we'll come to see the heart of our God who wants to be known and wants to be with his people, and come to see how this shapes our lives in dependence on his grace, responding to his redemption in faith and obedience.

On a practical note, these studies will be most useful if they're done after the related sermon, as outlined in the table below. First the sermon unpacks the big ideas, then the studies dig a bit deeper, and then we would then encourage you to read the section in full, confident that as the details come together we will understand the significance of what God is revealing to us in this wonderful book.

For those who appreciate some tools to dig deeper: An excellent print commentary to consider is *Exodus For You* by Tim Chester. An excellent online commentary is available at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/exodus/>

For a helpful summary of the first half of Exodus that sets the scene for where we pick up the action, see The Bible Project video on Exodus 1-18 at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/book-overviews/>

In all of this, let's keep asking our great and Holy God to build us up and grow us as his beloved people at Trinity Church Brighton!

Series Plan

Sermons			Bible Studies		
Sermon 1 26 May	Desert Trust	Exodus 16	Study 1	God Cares for His People	Exodus 17-18
Sermon 2 2 June	Love the Lord	Exodus 19:1-20:8	Study 2	God Calls His People	Exodus 19
Sermon 3 9 June	Live for God	Exodus 20:1-21	Study 3	God Commands His People	Exodus 20
Sermon 4 16 June	The law of God	Exodus 21-24	Study 4	God's Covenant Laws	Exodus 21-24
Sermon 5 23 June	False gods	Exodus 32-34	Study 5	God's Place with his People	Exodus 25-31
Sermon 6 30 June	God's dwelling place	Exodus 35-39	Study 6	Merciful God, Sinful People	Exodus 32-34
Sermon 7 7 July	Holy God, Beloved People	Exodus 40	Study 7	God's Gracious Presence	Exodus 35-40

Study 1: God Cares for His People

Exodus 17-18

Introduction: I wonder if you can imagine being among the Israelites who were brought out of Egypt? I wonder if you can bring to mind some of the emotions they may have felt? I'm sure there were amazing moments of joy and excitement: passing right through the sea and then seeing the soldiers who wanted to capture you fall. (It is worth reading through the song of celebration in Exodus 15:1-18 to get a feeling for it.) But then I wonder what other emotions you would feel, suddenly finding yourself away from the place you'd spent your whole life, walking into the wilderness with no idea what was ahead of you? Freedom is a wonderful thing, but freedom can often be scary! As the Israelites head into the wilderness some of these fears arise quickly – but we see that God is ready to care for his people.

1. Can you think of a situation or time when you find it easy to trust God with something? Perhaps you can also think of things where you find it harder to trust God? Share with the group what comes to mind for you.

Read Exodus 15:22-16:3

Here we see how quickly the Israelites turned from celebration to grumbling, and how generously God provides for their needs (the rest of chapter 16 makes that abundantly clear!). With that in mind, read on into chapter 17.

Read Exodus 17:1-7

2. What's your reaction to hearing the Israelites grumble about water?
3. How do you think the Israelites should be responding in this time where they find it hard to trust God?

4. How do we see God's care for his people?

Read Exodus 17:8-16

The Israelites had to face more than hunger and thirst in the wilderness. The Amalekites were cousins of Israel (see Gen 36:12), but they sought to exploit these vulnerable travellers (see Deut 25:17-18).

5. What's the key to the Israelites winning this battle? (As a bonus challenge you could try and see who can keep their hands raised out at their sides while you answer the next couple of questions)

6. How do we see God's care for his people once more?

Read Exodus 18

Through the last couple of chapters we've seen God providing for their needs of food, water, and protection from military attack. One thing that remains an issue is that God's people need good leaders. You might have noticed that a lot of strain is being put on Moses (17:4, 12) and he seems to be the main target for the people's complaints. Chapter 18 seems to address this need as Jethro, Moses father in law whom we met in chapters 2-4 comes to speak with Moses.

7. How does Jethro respond to the news of God's rescue of Israel, and what is so remarkable about this? (see v9-12)

8. Jethro goes on to encourage Moses to delegate his duties to other leaders, "men who fear God, trustworthy men." (v19-22)
How does this delegation of authority demonstrate ongoing faith in God to care for his people?

Looking back over chapters 15 to 18, reflect on what we learn about God and what we learn about his people:

9. Having rescued his people, how does God act?
10. Having been rescued by God, how do his people respond?
11. What lessons are there in this for us who have experienced an even greater rescue by God in Christ?
12. What difference might this make on the ground for you in the coming week, or in a situation in life where you find it hard to trust God?

Study 2: God Calls His People

Exodus 19

Introduction: Today's chapter marks a pivotal moment on the story of Israel's journey out of Egypt through the wilderness. Two months after leaving Egypt, they've arrived at their first destination, which we've been anticipating ever since Exodus 3:12. This is where they'll stay for around a year, and where the relationship they will have with their God moving forward will be formalised and defined before moving towards the promised land.

1. Can you think of a decision or an agreement you've entered into that's then shaped a large portion of your life in a significant way? Share what first comes to mind for you, with your group.

Read Exodus 19:1-6

Here God introduces the covenant he is making with his people. A covenant is a formal agreement, which often includes promises to be kept and consequences for either side if the covenant is not kept.

2. Look carefully at verses 4-6. What has God already done for his people?
3. What is required of the Israelites in this agreement, and what does God reveal about his purposes for this covenant?

4. What do you think is meant by Israel being a kingdom of priests? How does this make God's covenant good news for all people, not just for Israel?

Read Exodus 19:7-15

5. How do the Israelites respond to God's proposed covenant?

6. What does God now plan to do, and how must the Israelites prepare for this? What does this reveal about God? Why do you think there's a sense of danger in what's coming?

Read Exodus 19:16-25

7. List out the various phenomena that the people are seeing and experiencing. What do you think you'd be feeling if you were there on this morning when Moses led the people out to meet with God?

8. What is the picture of God you take away from this chapter?
How do you feel about the idea of being in covenant relationship with this God?

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

Here we see Peter picking up on some of the language from Exodus as he describes the role of Christians in the years after Jesus came.

9. In what ways is being one of God's people today similar to being one of God's covenant people in the book of Exodus? What role do we have as followers of God?

10. What's one way you could 'declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' this week?

Study 3: God Commands His People

Exodus 20

Introduction: God's people have come to the mountain, a covenant agreement has been introduced, and now God himself comes down onto Mount Sinai to speak to his people. It's a moment of glory, danger, drama and fear as God's booming voice rings out around the desert valleys. What he speaks becomes famously known as the ten commandments.

Read Exodus 20:1-17

11. What is the first thing God says in verse 2? What does this, and the story of Exodus so far, teach us about the relationship between God's salvation and our obedience?

12. As a group, look through the 10 commandments and list them in the summary table below. Summarise rather than writing out the full verses:

Verse	Commandment	Verse	Commandment
1. (20:3)		6. (20:13)	
2. (20:4-6)		7. (20:14)	
3. (20:7)		8. (20:15)	
4. (20:8-11)		9. (20:16)	
5. (20:12)		10. (20:17)	

13. Talk through the commandments and what you notice about:
- a. the difference between the first half and the second half.
 - b. The difference between the 'middle' (2 to 9) and the 'bookends' (1 and 10).
 - c. What you like about the commandments and what you find harder to read.

Read Exodus 20:18-26 (Or just 20:18-21 if you're rushed)

14. What reaction do the people have to hearing God speak the commandments? What role will Moses now have for the people?

As a group divide up these New Testament passages and read them together:

Matthew 22:37-40

Mark 10:17-22

Romans 3:19-21

Romans 13:8-9.

15. What view does Jesus and the New Testament have of the ten commandments?

16. Should Christians keep the ten commandments today? How do you feel about this idea?

17. How does the pattern of salvation and obedience established by Exodus 20:2 shape our understanding of salvation and obedience today?

It's important to see from the context of Exodus that keeping the ten commandments has never been the way in which God's people are saved. They were rescued from Egypt before they were given the law. God brought them to himself before he taught them how to live. Salvation is by God's initiative; by God's grace. But Exodus shows that we're also saved for something: for God. And living as God's people means living his way. These ten commandments reveal the very heart of God and how he wants his people to live. While they weren't written directly for Christians, the New Testament certainly affirms their ongoing value as Christians continue living for him. These are commandments to love and learn from today!

Study 4: God's Covenant Laws

Exodus 21-24

Introduction:

There is a reason that law degrees are some of the longest you can do at university: Law is complex and confusing!! And most of us find the long passages of law in the Old Testament complex and confusing too! But God has not been haphazard in what he has had recorded for us in Exodus, and though we live on the other side of the world and the other side of the cross of Christ, we have much to learn from this part of God's word!

Read Ps 119:1-16

1. How would you describe the attitude of the psalmist towards God's law? How does this stand in comparison with our general attitude?

God's Law is good because it reveals God's character, teaches us his wisdom for life, points us forward to Jesus. But God's law does not save. God saves by his grace. Always has, always will. So how should we handle God's law? Well, for one thing, it is worth noting the wide scope of God's law – touching on every aspect of life (even if the culture and time means that is expressed differently than it might be today). It is also helpful to see that there are both laws that make absolute statements (20:15 "You shall not steal") and those that are 'case law' that illustrate how these principles might apply to specific situations (22:1 "whoever steals an ox..."). On occasion there are reasons given for a particular law that help us understand more of the underlying principle of the law and others like it. And it is this underlying principle that we must pay most attention to. In the midst of all of this, it is worth bearing in mind that while we might sit uncomfortably with some of what we read, we ought not judge it by our own sensibilities – so many of which have themselves been informed by Jesus who came to fill out the picture that these laws sketch for us.

Use this table to get an overview of the kinds of laws given by God.

Passage	Area of life	General or Case Law	Reason Given	Underlying Principle
21:1-6				
21:12-15	Murder	Both	-	Human life is precious. Intent matters.
21:16				
21:22-27				
22:5-6				
22:7-9				
22:19				
22:21-24				
22:25-26				
22:29-30				
23:1-9				
23:10-12				

What observations to you have in light of this?

Christians and the Old Testament Law.

The New Testament has quite a bit to say about the relevance of the Old Testament law for Christians. Read the following passages to consider some of what we learn:

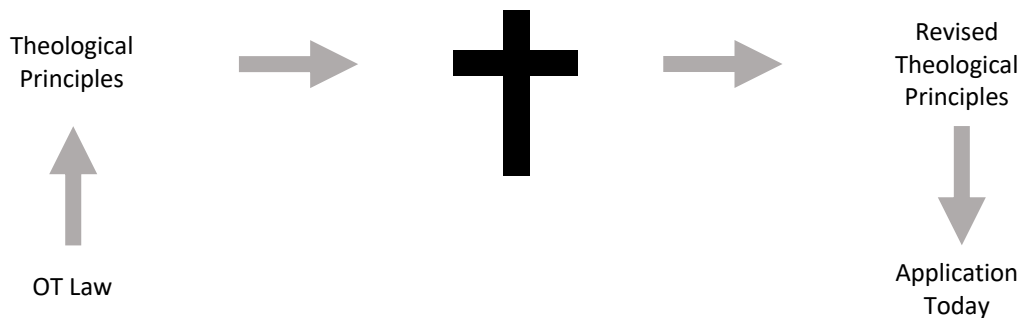
Passage	The law is...
Matt 5:17-20	
Rom 5:20-21	
Gal 3:19-27	
2 Tim 3:15-17	

2. How would you sum up the New Testament attitude to the Old Testament law? How might your own mindset need to shift?

Andrew Reid gives this helpful summary as we consider the ongoing relevance of OT law:

“First, law is part of Scripture, therefore it can teach us about Christ. Because it teaches us about Christ, it is therefore also able to make us wise for salvation, and teach us right doctrine and conduct. Second, it is possible to abuse law by cutting loose from its context of grace and turning it into a way of entering relationship with God. This must be avoided. Third, Jesus fulfils the law. This doesn’t mean that he does away with it, but that it can only be understood properly for us as Christian people in the light of what God has done in Jesus Christ.”

“There is much more that could be said, but the diagram below gives a way ahead for working out the implications of Old Testament law. First, when you read a particular law, separate the theological or ethical principles that undergird this law (e.g. treating disadvantaged people in society with proper care). Second, ask whether the coming of Christ has changed the implications of this law for Christians (e.g. food laws). Third, in light of this, work out what implications of this law are in your own context.”



(Andrew Reid, *The Shadow of Glory*, p25.)

With this in mind, it can be said that:

- we should apply all of the Old Testament law to our lives, because it is God’s word that reveals his character and points us to Christ.
- At the same time, we should apply none of the Old Testament law to our lives, because it is not “law” for us as Christians.
- And finally, we apply some of the law to our lives differently to others – in as much as Jesus affirms the ongoing significance of some (e.g. condemning murder, or upholding sexual integrity) while teaching that others find their ‘in-principal’ application in very different practical contexts (e.g. cleanliness laws).

Return to Psalm 119:9-16.

3. How might this become your own prayer?

Study 5: God's Place with His People

Exodus 25-31

Introduction:

I love visiting people's homes. It can give so much insight into the people who live in them. Pictures of the people and places that matter, furniture that enables people to gather and share food and enjoy each other's company. It's often the stuff we take for granted that highlights what is important to the people living there. And when God told his people he was going to set up home in their midst, he gave some very clear instructions for what it should look like to reflect him and their relationship with him. In fact, it is so important to God that it takes up nearly a third of the whole book of Exodus.

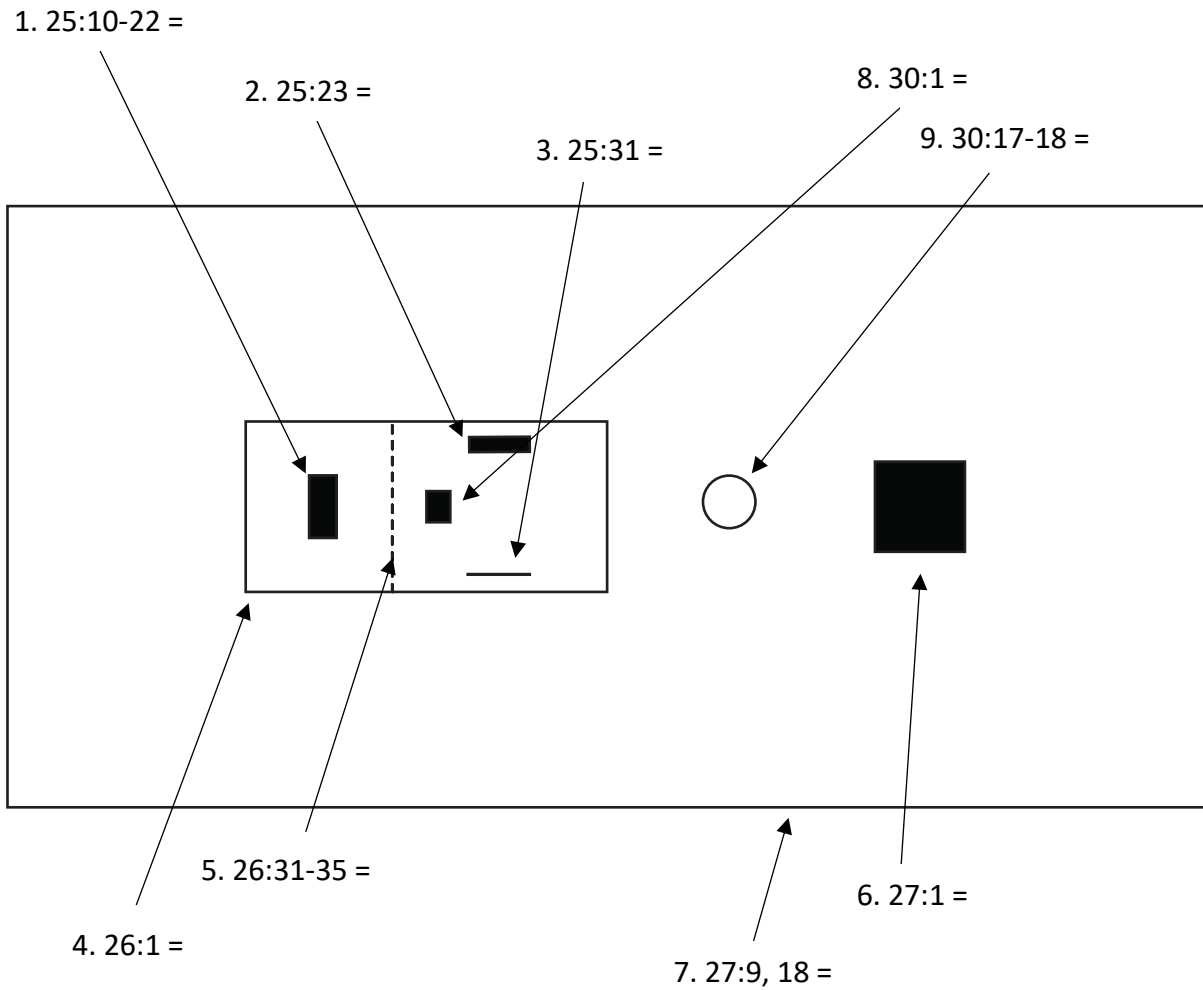
Read Exodus 25:1-8

1. What are the offerings for and what is to motivate the giver?

The remainder of chapters 25-31 sets out how these offerings should be used to make the tabernacle and the special garments for the priests to wear when they serve in the tabernacle.

There is a lot of detail provided, and we can easily get lost in it all, but the layout helps us grasp the big idea. Use the passages below to label the diagram.

(For those who like to know how we know where the furniture was placed, see 26:33-35, 30:5 and 30:18)



Consider the following:

2. What does 25:22 say about where God's presence will be located?

3. What is woven into the curtains around the tabernacle and in front of the ark (see 26:1 and 31)? What might these signify given what we read in Genesis 3:24?

4. For the Israelite entering the courtyard from the east (see 27:12-15 for the description of the entrance on the eastern end), what stood between them and the place where God chose to locate his presence?

5. The lengthy description of priestly garments and consecration (28:1-29:37) highlights that only a particular few people could enter the tabernacle itself, and even then, only with special offerings and washing. What does this say about God's presence with his people?

6. What do 25:8 and 29:42-46 say is the purpose of this tabernacle?

With all of this in mind, read the following passages and consider their implications for how you will relate to God this week:

7. John 1:14-18
(note that in the original language, the word 'made his dwelling' in verse 14 comes from the same word as 'tabernacle')

8. Mark 15:37-38, together with Hebrews 10:19-22

9. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and Ephesians 2:19-22.

Study 6: Merciful God, Sinful People

Exodus 32-34

Introduction:

Last week we were on top of the mountain with Moses, receiving the very words of God as he gave instructions for how he would dwell in their midst. It took a while (24:18 tells us that this took 40 days), but this was meant to be the great climax of Exodus, the very reason that God had brought them out of Egypt (see 29:44-46).

Meanwhile, back at the camp, things were going very badly. What we have in Exodus 32-34 is shift of scene to see how things were going at the bottom of the mountain.

It's like a movie where an engaged couple are preparing for their wedding. In one moment we're seeing the bride having her hair and makeup done, getting excited with her bridesmaids and reminiscing with her mum. Then we cut across to the other side of town to see the groom making a terrible decision and getting caught up in a last-minute fling with another woman. It's difficult viewing, and anyone who cares for the bride will feel both heartbroken and outraged. That's how we should feel as we come to Exodus 32.

Read Exodus 32:1-6

1. What did the people do? Why?
2. What did Aaron do? Why?
3. Note that the people still want to worship a god, and Aaron gives them a god. What is so dangerous about what he says in verse 4 and 5?

4. On the top of the mountain God was giving Moses the plans for a tabernacle that would illustrate just how holy God is, and how dangerous it is for sinful people to approach him on their own terms. In what sense does the idol at the bottom of the mountain 'domesticate' God, trying to make him safer and more approachable?

Tim Chester sums up:

"The choice of the idol-shape is not arbitrary. The word translated 'calf' need not mean a young cow, and Psalm 106 describes it as a bull. A bull was a common symbol of strength and fertility in surrounding nations. Israel is adopting the images of the surrounding cultures to re-imagine God.

The people are happy to worship God, but they want to worship him on their terms. They are happy to worship God, but they want to combine this with worldliness and indulgence. They let the nations set the agenda. They want a god who is visible and manageable. Even if they are not replacing God, they are reducing him."

(Tim Chester *Exodus: Liberating Love* p49.)

Read Exodus 32:7-33:6

5. When Moses hears of Israel's sin in v7-9, he prays boldly as their representative in light of God's promises. How does God use Moses' prayer to safeguard his promises?
6. What do verses 15-30 teach us about the seriousness of "re-imagining" God?

7. In verse 30-32 Moses attempts to mediate on behalf of the people once again, but this time as their substitute. What does he ask for, and how does God respond?

8. God has shown a willingness to withhold destruction (v10, 14), and has shown the impossibility of atonement at this time (v33-34). What does this teach us about the work of Jesus?

In the context of Israel's idolatry and God's righteous judgment, God's character shines through.

Read Exodus 33:12-34:10

9. What is so bold about Moses' request in v12-18?

10. What is so gracious about God's response in 33:19-34:1?

11. The words of Exodus 34:6-7 were seared into the memory of God's people and became a refrain that they returned to on many occasions (e.g. Ps 86:15; 103:8; 116:5; 145:8). What do you find encouraging from these words? What do you find awesome, or even fearsome?

12. What is the profound grace of 34:10?

As we saw above, the fundamental issue for Israel was not that they denied God up front, but that they had reduced him to something they could fashion with their own hands and tried to make the holy God more approachable. This is, in the end, to deny him.

13. What are the 'golden calves' that we might be attracted to? Why are they hard to spot? Why are they so destructive? Why are they so inexcusable?

14. How does this episode in the history of God's interaction with his people grow you in thankfulness for and dependence on our Lord Jesus?

Optional extra:

Psalm 106 recounts the history of Exodus, and then forward through to the promised land to reflect on how God's people ought to learn from this history. What does this psalm emphasise about the people and about God? What are the core requests in the opening and closing verses, and how might these translate to prayer for us today?

Study 7: God's Gracious Presence

Exodus 35-40

Complete the sentences to recount together the story so far:

- God rescued his people from...
- God promised to be their...
- God promised to take them to...
- When the going got tough, the people...
- When the people grumbled, God...
- When they arrived at Mount Sinai, God said...
- While God spoke to Moses, the people...
- When Moses prayed for the people, God said...
- When Moses offered to be their substitute, God said...
- When Moses asked to see God's glory, God described his glory saying:
 - Even after their grumbling and their idolatry, God renewed his...

Given all of this, it is only by God's grace that he was still willing to dwell in the midst of his people. And so from chapter 35:1-39:31 we read the account of making the tabernacle, the furniture and the priestly garments, then in 39:32-43 we have an account of Moses inspecting it all, then in chapter 40:1-15 we have a summary of God's instructions to set it up, and then from 40:16-33 Moses finally sets it all up.

Read Exodus 40:1-33

1. What is the phrase repeated over and over in 40:16-33? What do you think is the point of having so much repetition in chapters 25 to 40?

2. What sense of expectation are you given by the time we reach this point in Exodus?

Read Exodus 40:34-38.

3. How does this resolve the tension created in chapters 32-33?
4. What does v35 reveal about the problem that remains?
5. How are these verses a fitting end to the book of Exodus, demonstrating both the holiness of God and his great love for his people?

Read John 1:14-18 and John 14:1-6

6. How do the things we have seen in Exodus grow our appreciation of who Jesus is and what he has done for us?

Read John 10:11-18

7. How has the role that Moses played in Exodus grown our appreciation of who Jesus is and what he has done for us?

End Of Section Reflection

Having come to the end of Exodus, take a moment to reflect on what we've learnt.

How has the book of Exodus caused you to be:

- More in awe of God?
- More appreciative of Jesus?
- More grateful to be part of his people?

How has God been challenging your perspective on yourself?

What are some changes that you would like to make in light of what we have learned from Exodus? Aim for 1 or 2 that are specific enough that you can put them into action in the next few weeks.

What unanswered questions do you have at this stage?

How have you seen God answering prayer in your group?

Given what we've learned of the holiness of God and his relentless love for his people, who can you pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with? In addition to praying them, what is one specific action that you can take towards this goal?

Prayer Points

Prayer Points

