

Through the Bible

Exodus 28-40

Review of 19-27:

- Last time we met we followed Israel's journey to Mt Sinai...a pivotal point in the Exodus narrative.
 - When Israel arrives at Sinai (Horeb=the parched mountain) we see that before they have even finished setting up camp Moses is climbing the mtn to meet God (where he met him once before)
 - God reveals his plan/destiny for Israel to Moses: if Israel will obey and keep God's covenant, they would then be God's own special treasure/a kingdom of priests, a holy nation
 - We learned that the rabbis describe Israel meeting God at the mountain as a type of marriage
 - God is offering marriage to His bride: Israel, and His bride willingly agrees to marry Him
 - both agree to faithfulness, loyalty and love
 - Then God shows up dramatically (terrifyingly!) in thunder, lightning, cloud...the sound of a supernatural trumpet...Sinai is on fire and covered in smoke
 - God communicates to Moses the necessity of His people respecting the holiness of His presence
 - In ch 20 the 10 Commandments are given and we learn how these commandments are GOOD (moral guidance and the government of God that allows for the good of all)
 - we also learned that these commandments or law did not do away with the Abrahamic covenant but were added to it. This law does not save us, it CANNOT save us, but it does, through its revelation of God's character and its exposure of our sin, prepare us to meet Jesus....we called this the "schoolmaster" as we live under it as our tutor
 - The giving of the Law (in such dramatic fashion) terrified the people and they asked Moses to speak to God for them
 - and God then gives further instructions for things like:
 - proper use of altars, fair treatment of all humans (eg slaves) and how to handle assaults, murder, kidnaping and all sorts of mistreatment of humans/justice and social issues and disagreements over property
 - God reminds the people to obey and follow Him and He promises to lead them into the land He is giving them
 - Israel (the bride) enters into this covenant with God, repeatedly agreeing to do everything the Lord has commanded/ and is "married"
 - God's glory settles on the mountain (where Moses is) and Moses stays in the fire of God's presence for another 40 days where he receives the law, written on tablets as well as instructions for offerings, the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle and its furnishings
 - these instructions are found in chapters 28-31
 - noteworthy in these instructions are instructions for keeping the Sabbath Day
- Ex 31:16&17 describe the keeping of the Sabbath as a covenant obligation for all time and a permanent sign of God's covenant with the people of Israel.

And this brings us to chapter 32

-Have you ever watched a movie...even a movie you have seen before, and you KNOW what is about to happen, but you find yourself tensing up and HOPING it doesn't turn out the way you know it will?

-that is chapter 32

-we know it is coming

-we know that Israel struggles to wait the 40 days that Moses is in the presence of God, IN THE FIRE on top of the mountain they are camped beneath

-and we know they are going to GRIEVOUSLY SIN

-In fact, last week we said that the turning of the hearts of the people away from their brand new covenant with God was the equivalent to cheating on your spouse...on your honeymoon.

-And yet this is exactly what is about to happen

-32:1 *"When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain..."*

-they convince Aaron to step into Moses' place

-The text does not tell us if idolatry was anyone but Aaron's idea

-it is Aaron who tells the people to bring him their gold earrings (likely given to them by the Egyptians when they escaped Egypt)

-it is Aaron who melts it down and molds it into the shape of a calf

-Many scholars suggest Aaron may not have been rejecting God, but instead trying to give the people a physical representation of God to worship (this confuses me since God, in the form of FIRE is on the mountain above them!)

-Some also suggest he chose the form of a calf because bulls and calves represented strength and fertility...Egyptian gods were fashioned after bulls...so perhaps the golden calf was meant to represent God's power? I propose that Aaron knew better

-Regardless, Aaron was Moses' helper in leading the people to worship, trust and follow God

-Instead, he not only did NOT rebuke the people, he instead led them in creating a false image of God and then, when he saw how excited the people were, he announced that he will build an altar in front of the calf (so they could bring offerings to the golden image)

-The people get up early the next morning to sacrifice offerings to the calf and indulge in "pagan revelry"

-What exactly is pagan revelry? The text gives us clues to most of it:

1. offerings to a golden image is already breaking the first of the Ten Commandments
2. Ex 32:18 tells us that Moses heard the sound of singing (it wasn't long ago that they had been singing praise to the Lord for leading them safely through the Red Sea)
3. Dancing (v 19) which is not wrong in and of itself...but this dancing made Moses so mad he threw the Tablets...this dancing was in worship/celebration of an idol
4. unrestrained "partying" ...v. 25 tells us it was out of control..we don't have details, but we probably don't need them

5. turning of their hearts away from the Lord (this is embedded in the text and shows up in phrases like “stubborn and rebellious”/ “how quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live”

- Most commentaries agree that the cause of the sin of Israel was their unbelief: while waiting for Moses, and without true faith, they decided they had to have something they could see
 - What follows in vv. 7-13 is God’s decision to wipe out Israel (and just build a great nation from Moses) and Moses “talking God out of it” by reminding Him that the other nations are watching...and they will think God is weak, or angry
 - v. 14 tells us “So the LORD changed His mind”
 - and Moses, heads down the mtn, Tablets in hand to hear and see the state of the people...and in burning anger, throwing the Tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mtn
 - he then grinds up the calf into powder and puts it into water that he makes the people drink and then he holds Aaron accountable, demanding to know why he had brought such terrible sin on the people (look at the responsibility Aaron, as the leader, carries!)
 - Strangely, Aaron blames the people (they are evil) and lies (I put gold in the fire and a calf leaped out!)
 - notice the “enemies” are amused by how out of control the people are (v25)**
- This translation is unclear and could possibly mean that the people were so out of control that mocked anyone who opposed them (mockery more accurately “derision” (which is mockery and enemy is more accurately “rise up”) amused is not there in Hebrew

- So Moses makes the people choose a side....if you choose the LORD, “come and join me”
- All of the Levites join Moses and choose the LORD
- They are then tasked with killing everyone (these are their brothers, friends, neighbors)
- does this mean EVERYONE? Likely not....every Levite obeyed, and every person they were to kill was likely those participating or “ringleading”
- the Levites obeyed
- Notice there is punishment, not abandonment (who bears the weight of the covenant?)**
- v. 28 tells us how many die? **3,000**
- This then sets apart the Levites (“ordains them”) for service of the LORD
- The next day, Moses tells the people still remaining that he will intercede on their behalf (and perhaps God will forgive)
- Moses intercedes and God declares the people will be held accountable/responsible for their sins (**wait, didn’t the guilty people die?**)
- “Then the LORD sent a great plague among the people” v. 35
- ch 33 begins with God telling Moses to get the people moving toward the land He was giving them..sending an angel before them to drive out the people in the land
- BUT He says He won’t travel with them because they are stubborn and rebellious and He would destroy them
- AND THIS brings the people to repentance...they mourn as God “decides what to do with them” (33: 5)
- this marks the beginning of Israel no longer wearing jewelry or fine clothes

- and Moses begins the practice of setting up the Tent of Meeting some distance from the camp/this was symbolic for how wicked the people had been
- the people would stand at the entrance to their tents and watch Moses go into the Tent of Meeting, and Joshua with him
- this tent is not the Tabernacle (it hadn't been constructed yet) it is the tent where God met with Moses and shared His plans with him (Num 12:6-8/Deut 34:10)

This is a good spot to ask....who is this Moses?

- Intercessor: Moses stood between the nation and their past sins
- Mediator: Moses stood between the nation and their future blessings
- *Moses was not content to have the nation forgiven, he wanted to be sure God would go with them
- *Moses asked for God's grace to bless the people and for God's presence to go with the people and the Lord granted this request...it was the glorious presence of God that distinguished Israel from all the other nations
- Worshipper: the conclusion of chapter 33 tells us Moses' requests of the Lord:
 - Let me know your ways so I can understand you more fully
 - remember this nation of your own people
 - I won't go anywhere without your presence/your presence is what sets us apart from the rest of the people of the earth
 - show me your glorious presence/Kavod: weightiness
 - and the Lord promises His goodness (character and attributes) will pass before Moses along with His NAME but Moses could not see His face and live
 - But Moses could see from "behind" or "what remains" ...the afterglow of the glory of God
- Priest/prophet

This is also a good spot to ask about Aaron...and why he wasn't punished, or was he?

1. Could make a strong case that Aaron *was* punished for making the golden calf
Though he was not punished at that exact time, Aaron would later die in the wilderness and never enter the Promised Land
Aaron also endured the loss of two of his adult sons in a judgment from God
After Aaron made the golden calf, his life included many difficulties that could be seen as a punishment
 2. It possible he was not punished because he was already installed as the high priest...I would like to insert here the idea that it could be worse to watch the suffering and punishment to those around you that you led poorly than to suffer yourself
- Also important note: God used an unlikely person in a spiritual leadership role and had a reason for it
 - add to that, Aaron would have been among those who repented of sin. Ex 32:26 tells us that the Levites chose God's side, and Aaron was a Levite

-And keep in mind, that v. 30 tells us that Moses interceded for the people: “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

Ch 34 records for us the making of the new copy of the Covenant

-Not a new Covenant, and new copy

-Moses chisels two stone tablets and God promises to write on them and instructs Moses to climb the Mountain once again and no one else is allowed to appear anywhere near the mountain

-Moses obeys and the LORD meets him in a cloud, calling out his own NAME

-v 6 tells us the LORD passes in front of Moses

READ Ex 34:6 & 7

-Let me read my study notes on these verses:

The Creator who was revealing Himself to the Israelites, and through them to the world, is a God of grace. Neither his justice nor his sovereignty are underlined here, as true as those attributes are. If God were merely just, the OT would have ended at this point, or it would have picked up and started again with an entirely new family. This did not happen because God, in his unique character, is slow to anger and full of unfailing love and faithfulness. These qualities were the basis for his renewal of the covenant...These are not weaknesses or indecisiveness, nor are they reason to sin.

-Moses then throws himself on the ground and.....WORSHIPS and begs for forgiveness and to be claimed as God’s own special possession.

-God replies...reaffirming a covenant to Moses and extended to Israel. He promises to:

-perform miracles never seen before, so all we see the power of the LORD

-if they listen carefully, he will go ahead and drive out the people of the land

-no treaties are allowed (or they would be aligning themselves with pagan nations and would fall into their idolatry)

-they must break down symbols of idolatry when they take the land

-they must worship only the LORD for God declares that He is jealous about His relationship with them

-they must celebrate Festival of Unleavened Bread (Passover)

-dedication/redemption of firstborn (males) animals and people

See notes on “redemption of the firstborn”

-Sabbath

-Festival of Harvest /Weeks**

-three times a year Israel must appear before God

-following are rules for sacrifices of animals (for humanity) and harvests

-And Moses writes these things down and remains there with God on the mtn for 40 more days

-The Bible records that his face, when he descends Sinai with the tablets and terms of the covenant, is radiant (Hebrew word Qaran/Kaw-ran means to send out rays)

-this made everyone afraid (including Aaron) so the people ask him to wear a veil

-Moses would then go into the Tent of Meeting to meet with God, and when exiting, put a veil over his face in order to give them instructions

**** a Note about the two of the three Festivals: Passover, Harvest/Weeks**

Passover (we teach on every year) recognized according to Lunar calendar (Ex 34:18 *“celebrate this festival annually at the appointed time in early spring, in the month of abib for that is the anniversary of your departure from Egypt”* (roughly, according to lunar calendar, this shows up in march or April)

-The year that Jesus was crucified, Passover was the Thursday before Easter and in Catholic and many present day Christian churches it continues to be recognized in “holy week” (the week before Easter)

-Easter is determined by the Vernal Equinox: it is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox

-So following the modern Christian/Catholic calendar for Holy week, this would put Passover at the first Thursday following the first full moon following the vernal equinox.

-The Hebrew calendar would need to be followed for the exact accurate date for Passover each year.

-**Harvest/ Weeks** was the offering of First fruits: first of your spring (barley) offering

-later in Leviticus we will learn that God then tells them to count 7 full weeks (roughly 50 days) and bring him an offering from this harvest(what harvest)...this will become known as Pentecost and will be a day that later Jews would remember every year the giving the Law at Sinai

-WE often equate Pentecost to Acts chapter 2 (baptism in the Holy Spirit)

*From my message on Acts 2:

If we place the **giving of the law at Sinai**, next to the **giving of the Spirit** here in Acts 2 there are some amazing correlations

-I will note just a couple:

-Both accounts have a mountain. Mt Sinai where Moses meets with God to receive the law and in Acts, the Temple (where all of the Jews would have been going to celebrate Pentecost) is on Mount Moriah

-Both accounts include an audible sound of thunder. The same word is used for both tongues & thunder

-Both accounts have fire. At Sinai God descends in fire when he meets with Moses on the mountain, in Acts, fire is resting on each of the disciples

-Both accounts are about God establishing his Temple. At Sinai it is the Tabernacle that will be built and **in Acts it is the Temple of the Spirit, the very people themselves**

-At Sinai, Moses descends with the law: God’s message to his people for right relationship, when he does this, he finds the people (as we just learned) grievously sinning and 3,000 people die

-and in Acts, Peter, filled with the Spirit, delivers God's message to the crowd and we already learned about their reaction..they beg to know what they should do to be right with God

-In Acts 2:38 Peter tells the people to repent and be baptized

-And do you know how many people believed and were baptized?

-THREE THOUSAND

-the same number who died by the swords of the Levites at mt Sinai

-Coincidence?

-No

-Prophetic? (as in repent now or die) NO

-This is actually a beautiful redemption story

-How?

-At Sinai, God's reason for giving the law was to help his people know how to be in right relationship with him

-and that had another purpose: to reflect that relationship to the world

-Jesus' followers are instructed to wait and seek and receive the Spirit

-and then they offer that message to others and who RECEIVE IT, repent and are baptized

-THIS IS THE WHOLE POINT

-We don't wait for and seek the infilling and empowering of the Spirit so we can have an experience,

-it is so we can testify to the world

-this has always been the point!

-it is for the redemption of humans and their reconciliation to God

Exodus 35-40

-The chapters that follow give specific instructions for what should be given as offerings to God for the building of the Tabernacle and how the people are stirred to give

-It's also the first time we see that God specifically fills humans with a spiritual gifting for specific (artisan) tasks for the construction of the Tabernacle

-In the succeeding verses, Moses names the various parts of the tabernacle one by one, as well as the garments of the priests

-God is concerned with every detail of our work and does not minimize any aspect of it

-The smallest hook for the curtains was as important to Him as the brazen altar

-Noteworthy: Scholars have estimated that in the construction of the tabernacle, the people used nearly a ton of gold, about three and a quarter tons of silver, and two and a quarter tons of bronze. It was not an inexpensive structure!

-And then **The Lord Gives His Glory** (ch 40)

-Israel had arrived at Sinai three months after their exodus from Egypt and it was now the first day of the second year of their pilgrimage

-so nine months transpired from the giving of the Law to the dedicating of the finished tabernacle

-Nearly three months of that time, Moses had been with God on the mountain

-We see then that the construction of the tabernacle took about six months.

-As he was setting up the tabernacle this first time, Moses put up the tent, and then, working outward from the holy of holies, he put the pieces of furniture in place

-When that was done, he set up the outer court

-With everything in its proper place, Moses then anointed the structure and its contents and set it apart for the Lord

-His final act of dedication was the consecration of Aaron and the priests

-The climax of the dedication service was the revelation of the glory of God in the fire on the altar (Lev 9:24) and the cloud in the tent (Ex 40:35-38 and 1 Kings 8:10)

-No matter how expensive the tabernacle was, without the presence of God it was just another tent

-The glory not only resided in the tabernacle, but it guided the Israelites on their pilgrim journey

-The dwelling of God in the tabernacle (or later the Temple) comes from the Hebrew word *shakan* which means "to dwell"from this we get "shekinah" or "shekinah glory"

God's presence dwelling among His people

Final thought:

In Genesis 1 God makes the space (separating dark from light, waters of earth from heavens) and he told his people to fill the space (be fruitful and multiply)

Here, in Exodus 40, we see that God's people make the space (tabernacle) and God fills it with his presence

Principle: if we make the space, God will fill it