

The Story (3) – Moses in God's Story

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I. Review and Introduction

A. The sin plague that Adam and Eve introduced into the human realm, the physical world we inhabit, intensified and spread so that the very good creation was thoroughly corrupted. God judged the world in his holy and righteous wrath by bringing a cataclysmic worldwide flood, but sin came through the flood with Noah and his family into the "new," post-flood world.

B. By the end of Genesis 11, the fundamental question of sin and its corrupting effect on God's very good creation remains unresolved. The creation is not the way it is supposed to be. Clearly some kind of extraordinary work was going to be necessary to heal the sin-sick world, to restore the broken creation that it might be all that God intends it to be.

C. And we see that work begin to take shape in the calling of Abram (later Abraham) in Genesis 12. God calls this man and promises to bless him with a multitude of descendants living securely in a bountiful homeland and promises to bless *all the nations of the world through him*.

D. The veiled statement of Gen. 3:15 that a man, a descendant of Eve, would win the ultimate victory over Satan is narrowed by God's election of Abraham. And later we see the family line of the Messiah being further specified to the lineage of Abraham's son Isaac (Gen. 26:4), to Isaac's son Jacob (Gen. 28:14), and to Jacob's son Judah (Gen. 49:8-10).

E. Jacob, also named Israel, had 12 sons, who are, of course, the family heads of what are known, not surprisingly, as the 12 tribes of Israel. The eleventh of those brothers, Joseph, the first son born to Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel, was sold by his brothers into slavery. And as we saw last week, by God's blessing and providence he rose to a position of great prominence in Egypt.

F. Recall that God revealed through Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's two dreams that there was going to be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. Joseph was put in charge of Pharaoh's grain conservation and storage program so that when the famine hit Egypt was the only place that had food. So people from all over the region were coming to Joseph to buy food.

G. This led ultimately to Jacob, his twelve sons, and their sons – seventy men in all – and all of their wives living together in Egypt under the blessing of Joseph's rule. Jacob died in Egypt at the age of 147 (Gen. 47:28). His body was embalmed and then taken to Canaan for interment in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron.

H. Genesis 50:24-25 (ESV) states: ²⁴ *And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to*

Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." Heb. 11:22 states: *By faith Joseph, when at the end of life, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions regarding his bones.*

1. At the end of his life, Joseph expressed his continuing faith in God. Though he and the entire family of Israel had lived in Egypt for many decades, he trusted that God would be true to his promise and would one day bring them into the promise land, the land he had sworn to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2. And Joseph died in Egypt at the age of 110, about 54 years after Jacob's death. He also was embalmed, an Egyptian practice, and was put in a coffin in Egypt.

II. The Oppression

A. There is some uncertainty in dating of these events, but according to the dating that seems most reasonable to me, Joseph died around 1805 B.C. Joseph's brothers and the remainder of his generation passed away (Ex. 1:6), but the people of Israel were multiplying rapidly. I assume this had been going on throughout their time in Egypt and simply continued at an accelerating pace.

B. We read in Ex. 1:8 that a new king came to power in Egypt, one who "did not know Joseph." This need not mean that the king was unaware of who Joseph was; it more likely means that he did not accept any obligation toward Joseph's people; he did not recognize the worth of Joseph's contribution to Egypt and refused to honor any prior arrangement for protecting the Hebrews.

1. But we do not know who this ruler was. Some think he was a foreign ruler of Egypt, one of the group known as the Hyksos that ruled in northern Egypt from about 1720 until they were expelled around 1570 B.C. by the native Pharaoh Ahmose (or Ahmosis). Some think Ahmose was the new king who did not know Joseph. Others think it was a Pharaoh prior to the Hyksos and that the Hyksos and the later native Pharaohs continued the oppression.

2. What we know is that there was a shift in policy toward the Hebrews with the coming of this new king, and that shift was tied to concern over the size of the Hebrew population and suspicion that they might align with ruling group's enemies in the event of a war. So they made the Hebrews slaves in the hope that making life miserable for them would restrain their population growth.

3. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, which fueled even greater dread of them. In turn, the Egyptians ramped up the oppression. Exodus 1:13-14 states (ESV): ¹³ *So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves* ¹⁴ *and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.* Notice the emphasis on how difficult their lives were.

C. At some point during this era of oppression of the Hebrews, the then king of Egypt commanded the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, who almost certainly were the senior midwives who functioned as leaders of an indefinite number of other midwives, to kill all the male Hebrew babies. Exodus 1:17 says (ESV): *But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.* Verse 20 says (ESV), *And the people multiplied and grew very strong.* You see, God is multiplying the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he promised, and every attempt to thwart that blessing is defeated.

D. In Ex. 1:22 Pharaoh decides to put the responsibility for killing the Israelite babies on his own people. He commands them to throw every male child that is born to the Hebrews into the Nile River. This is a long-term plan for population control.

III. Moses' Birth

A. During this time, two Levites, Amram and his wife, Jochebed, had a son, and when Jochebed saw that he was beautiful (or good or fine), she hid him so he would not be killed.

1. This child is, of course, Moses. Accepting that the Exodus occurred in 1446 B.C. and that Moses was 80 years old at that time, he would have been born in 1526 B.C. His brother, Aaron, being three years older (Ex. 7:7), apparently was born before the edict that the people were to kill the Hebrew children since there is no mention of him being exposed to a similar peril.

2. Some 1600 years later the writer of Hebrews said in Heb. 11:23: *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden [for] three months by his parents because they saw [that] the child [was] beautiful and were not afraid of the king's edict.* It was by faith in God's purpose for their child, which purpose they perceived from something about the child's appearance that was taken as a sign of God's favor, that Moses' parents hid him despite the risk of doing so. His parents were motivated by faith in light of some kind of spiritual insight into his significance. This child was going to be used by God for something special.

B. After three months, when the child could no longer be hidden, Jochebed waterproofed a papyrus basket, put the little boy in it, and placed it among the reeds by the river bank at a spot where Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. Pharaoh's daughter spotted and opened the basket, and though she realized it was a Hebrew baby that her father had ordered be drowned, she took pity on the crying infant. The baby's sister, Miriam, asked Pharaoh's daughter if she would like her to get a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby, and Pharaoh's daughter ended up giving the boy to Jochebed to keep until he was weaned and paid her for her services! Don't you just love the way God works?

C. Pharaoh's daughter named the child Moses because she drew him out of the water. Mose was a fairly common Egyptian name meaning "son" or "to beget a son," but the princess apparently chose it (or a variation of it) because it sounded like the Hebrew word for "drawing out." So as Douglas Stuart notes (p. 93), she "both consciously honors the Hebrew origins of her son and also makes him legitimately Egyptian with a name in her own language that emphasizes

that she is adopting a son." As Stephen says in Acts 7:21-22, Pharaoh's daughter brought Moses up as her own son. He was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

IV. Flight to Midian

A. When Moses was forty years old (Acts 7:23) he was taking note of his people's burdens when he saw an Egyptian wrongly beating a Hebrew. In protection of the Hebrew, Moses killed the Egyptian and then buried the body. The next day when he tried to break up a fight between two Hebrews, the man in the wrong said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" and then added, "Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?"

B. Moses knew at that point that his deed was too well known to remain hidden from the Egyptians, and sure enough, Pharaoh heard of it and sought to have Moses killed. Moses then fled to Midian.

1. Hebrews 11:24-26 states: ²⁴*By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing instead to be mistreated with the people of God than to have [the] temporary pleasure of sin, ²⁶considering the reproach of the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.*

2. By faith Moses chose to identify with the people of God and thus to share in their mistreatment rather than to enjoy the temporary luxury and prestige that could have been his if he had sinfully ignored the plight of the Jews and identified with Pharaoh's house. In doing so, he considered "the reproach of the Christ," the hardship and contempt that he, like Jesus, chose to suffer through identification with the people of God, of greater value than the treasures of Egypt (since he chose that reproach above those treasures). He had that perspective because his eyes were focused on the eternal reward that comes only to the faithful of God.

C. In Midian Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Jethro is sometimes referred to as Reuel probably because that was his clan name (like our last name). (The vowels in the noun referring to Hobab in Judg. 4:11 should be pointed to mean "son-in-law" rather than "father-in-law.") Moses had two sons there: Gershom and Eliezer (Ex. 18:2-4; Acts 7:29).

V. Moses' Call

A. Moses was in Midian for forty years (Ex. 7:7; Acts 7:23, 30), during which time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites continued to be sorely oppressed, and God chose to act in response to their cries.

B. In Exodus 3 God calls Moses to service through this great theophany of the burning bush. He tells him that he is going to deliver Israel from the hands of their taskmasters and bring them into the promise land, which he describes as a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. He also says that he is going to send him to Pharaoh to bring his people out of Egypt.

C. Moses balked at this call several times.

1. He said "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" And God told him, "I will be with you."

2. He said what am I to tell them if they want to know your name? God said in 3:14 to tell them אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים ('*ehyeh*) sent me. This is the first person singular form of the verb הָיָה (*haya*, "to be"). It means "I AM." But when Moses or anyone else speaks God's name, it must be changed to the third person form "HE IS." This is the standard expression of God's name, almost certainly pronounced YAHWEH (יְהוָה). This name was known by earlier generations (Gen. 4:26, 9:26, 12:8, 26:25, 28:16, 30:27) and used by Jacob in Gen. 49:18 when he was blessing his son, so the Israelites should recognize that Moses is coming as an agent of the true God, the God their ancestors worshiped.

3. After God told Moses that the elders of Israel would listen to him and support him and that he would stretch out his mighty hand and bring his people out of Egypt, Moses said they would not believe that God had appeared to him. God tells him, and even demonstrates for him, that he will empower him to perform certain miraculous signs (staff becoming a snake and changing back to a staff, leprosy coming and going on his hand, Nile water becoming blood) to convince the people that God did indeed appear to him.

4. Moses said he was slow of speech and tongue, and God said he would be his mouth and teach him what to speak.

5. And finally in Ex. 4:13, Moses just said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." God became angry with Moses for his unwillingness to serve, but he told him that Aaron would speak to the people what Moses told him to say and that he, God, would teach them both what to say. He also gave Moses a staff with which to perform signs.

VI. Moses' Return

A. Moses headed back to Egypt with his wife and two sons. This is probably around 1446 B.C., and Moses is 80 years old, which given the longer lifespans is not comparable to our 80.

B. On the way back, they stopped at a lodging place, and Ex. 4:24 states that Yahweh (or "the angel of the Lord" per LXX and Targum) "met him and sought to kill him." This is a puzzling text.

1. In the context, "him" seems to refer to Moses. The statement that God *sought* to kill him does not mean he attempted to kill him but was unable to do so; the God who spoke creation into existence certainly is capable of killing Moses if that were his intention. Rather, it most likely means that God made Moses deathly ill so that he would have died had the desired corrective action not been taken. In other words, God was attacking him in a way that gave time to rectify the circumstance that had caused the judgment.

2. With Moses presumably incapacitated, Zipporah either assumed or was told that his condition was related to his failure to have circumcised one of his sons. We do not know why Moses had neglected this duty, but Zipporah circumcised the son and then touched the bloody foreskin to Moses' ("his") feet, presumably to associate him with the act (since he was incapacitated), and then God relented and Moses recovered. Her statement "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me" is perhaps intended to convey her gratitude that God had given her husband back to her because of the blood of circumcision, so he is now her bridegroom of blood (see Motyer, 93). So Moses' life has been saved repeatedly by women: the Hebrew midwives, Jochebed and Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter, and now his wife, Zipporah.

3. This incident dramatically emphasized at the beginning of Moses' mission the importance of obedience, covenant faithfulness, for the Jewish people. God protects and blesses, but his people are called to honor him with the loyalty he deserves.

B. Moses and Aaron met with the elders of the people of Israel and performed in the sight of the people the signs that God had empowered Moses to do. The people believed that Moses was indeed God's representative, and they worshiped God for having visited them in their affliction.

VII. First Confrontation with Pharaoh

A. In Exodus 5 Moses and Aaron say to Pharaoh that Yahweh, the God of Israel, commands him to let his people go into the wilderness to hold a feast in his honor. But Pharaoh absolutely defies the Lord saying "Who is Yahweh that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

1. Pharaoh was historically viewed in Egyptian society as the earthly embodiment of the god Horus, but this perception was somewhat tempered by the time of Moses. Pharaoh was then seen more as the holder of a divine office who in some way participated in divinity in the fulfilling of that role, more like a channel for the gods. But even at that, the conflict is really between Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the god or gods represented by Pharaoh.

2. The statement by Pharaoh that he does not "know" Yahweh means that he does not accord him any respect. His entire response is dismissive and sarcastic. As we would say, "It's on!"

B. Aaron and Moses politely say that the God of the Hebrews had met with them and ask Pharaoh to please let them go a three-day's journey into the wilderness that they may offer sacrifices to Yahweh (which would be done as part of the feast). Pharaoh says, in essence, that this nonsense would not be happening if the people did not have so much time on their hands, so he orders the Egyptian taskmasters and Israelite foremen who are under them to tell the Israelites that they must gather their own straw and still make the same number of bricks per day. When the people failed to meet their quota, the Israelite foremen were beaten.

C. The foremen appealed to Pharaoh to change his mind, but he would not. So they were angry with Moses and Aaron for having made their situation worse.

D. Moses complained to God, who said, in essence, just keep watching. And by the Lord's instruction Moses told the people that God was going to bring them out of their Egyptian bondage. But the people would not listen because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

E. God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh again to let his people go, but Moses said that even the Israelites would not listen to him so how would Pharaoh. But the Lord gave Moses and Aaron a charge, relating to both the people and Pharaoh, to bring the people out of Egypt.

VIII. Second Confrontation with Pharaoh

A. Exodus 6:14-25 is a genealogy of Moses and Aaron, but it focuses particularly on Aaron. Perhaps it serves to reinforce that Aaron is a worthy partner in the deliverance of Israel and in serving as Moses' mouthpiece in particular (Enns, 178).

B. In chapter 7, God gives a preview of how this is going to play out, and then he sends Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh. Pharaoh wanted them to prove themselves by working a miracle, so in keeping with the Lord's instruction, Aaron threw down his staff and it became a snake. Each of Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing by their "secret arts," but Aaron's snake then swallowed up each of the other snakes.

1. We are not told how the magicians duplicated the miracle performed by God. If their staffs actually became snakes as Aaron's had done, instead of only appearing to do so by magical deception, it must be through some satanic power that God allowed to be exercised.

2. The fact Aaron's snake swallowed all the other snakes left no doubt as to where the real power lies. And interestingly, snakes represented Egyptian power.

3. But Pharaoh remained unmoved. Exodus 7:13 states (ESV): *Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.*

IX. The Ten Plagues

A. The account of the ten plagues runs from Ex. 7:14-12:32. The overview is that God commands Pharaoh repeatedly through Moses and Aaron to let his people go so that they might worship him in the wilderness, but Pharaoh refuses to do so until the final plague is visited on the people of Egypt.

B. God first turned the Nile and various inland bodies of water into blood. The fish died, the river stank, and blood was everywhere. Exodus 7:22 says the magicians did the same by their secret arts, but since the Nile and inland waters already were blood, it must mean that they turned or appeared to turn some small quantity of water, perhaps some of what the people dug for along the Nile (7:24), into blood. It is significant that they did not change the Nile back to water. But given Pharaoh's heart, it was enough for him to convince himself he did not need to yield.

C. In the second plague (8:1-15), God brought countless frogs upon the land. Again, the magicians did something similar – obviously smaller in scope since frogs were already everywhere – but Pharaoh tells Moses and Aaron to plead with Yahweh to remove the frogs and he will let the Hebrews go to sacrifice. The Lord did so the next day in response to Moses' prayer, but when Pharaoh saw they were gone he hardened his heart and reneged.

D. In the third plague (8:16-19), gnats or possibly mosquitoes covered the place, being all over people and animals. The magicians ran out of tricks at this point, and even they told Pharaoh "This is the finger of God," but Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

E. In the fourth plague (8:20-32), great swarms of flies came on the people, in their houses, and all over the land. But Goshen, where the Hebrews lived, was specifically exempted, a true "no fly zone." Pharaoh says he will let the Hebrews sacrifice to Yahweh in the wilderness and asks Moses to plead for him, meaning for the removal of the flies. God grants Moses' prayer and removed the flies, but Pharaoh again hardened his heart and reneged.

F. In the fifth plague (9:1-7), a death-producing disease came upon all the various kinds of livestock of the Egyptians (horses, donkeys, camels, sheep, and goats), and their populations were decimated. But not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he refused to relent.

G. In the sixth plague (9:8-12), boils came on the Egyptians and their beasts. The magicians could not even stand before Moses because of the boils. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (first time God is mentioned as hardening), and he would not listen to them, presumably the magicians and other Egyptians.

H. In the seventh plague (9:13-35), God brought an unprecedented hail storm that pummeled the crops and killed all the people and animals that remained outside despite the Lord's warning. But Goshen, where the people of Israel lived, was a no-hail zone. Pharaoh tells Moses and Aaron "This time I have sinned; Yahweh is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong." He asks them to plead for the hail to cease and says he will let them go. Moses says he will do it, but he tells Pharaoh "I know that you do not yet fear Yahweh God" (NJB) or "Yahweh our God" (CSB). When the Lord relented, Pharaoh again hardened his heart and reneged.

I. In the eighth plague (10:1-20), Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh he is going to be overrun with locusts who will blanket the place and devour whatever crops are left and eat the trees. Pharaoh's servants try to talk sense into him, but Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go on their own terms. So God brings the devastating locust attack. Pharaoh says "I have sinned against Yahweh your God and against you" and begs them to plead with God to remove the plague. The text says this time "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people go."

J. In the ninth plague (10:21-29), an absolute and surreal darkness falls on the land for three days, but there was light where the Israelites lived. Pharaoh calls Moses in and says they can go but must leave their livestock behind. Moses explains why that was unacceptable, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not let them go. Pharaoh tells Moses that the next

time they meet he will put Moses to death, and Moses announces to Pharaoh the coming tenth plague.

K. In the tenth plague (11:1-12:32), Moses tells Pharaoh that in the middle of the night every firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the slave girl, to the firstborn of the cattle. There is going to be an unprecedented crying in Egypt, but the people of Israel will remain untouched that Pharaoh may know that God makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. And when that happens, Pharaoh will let them go.

1. Pursuant to God's directive, Moses instructed the people of Israel to kill a lamb (without blemish – 12:5) for each household, to spread some of the blood of that lamb on the lintel and doorposts of their houses, and to remain inside the house until morning. Exodus 12:23 says (ESV), *For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.*

2. The people were further instructed to roast the lamb and to eat it with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs and to eat it in haste, with their belts fastened, their sandals on, and their staffs in their hand, all of which symbolizes the swift exit from Egypt that God was about to bring about.

3. In the middle of the night, the Lord did indeed strike down all the firstborn of Egypt. And amidst the great mourning, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron at night and said (12:31-32, ESV), *"Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³² Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"* And in very short order, about 600,000 men, beside women and children, marched out of Egypt taking with them silver, gold, and jewelry that the Egyptians had given them. And Moses carried with him the bones of Joseph (13:19) as the sons of Israel had promised.

4. The people were instructed to eat this meal each year on the 14th day of the first month as a memorial, as a way of symbolically re-living the Lord's great deliverance. This is, of course, the feast known as Passover, because (12:27) the Lord "passed over" the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt. It was eaten every year thereafter to commemorate God's act of sparing his people from death and taking them from bondage to blessing through the sacrifice of a blemishless lamb.

5. As Terry will no doubt mention today, the last supper Jesus ate with his disciples was a Passover meal (e.g., Mat. 26:17-19).

a. We read in Mat. 26:26-29 (ESV): ²⁶ *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."* ²⁷ *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

b. You see, Jesus instituted a new symbolic meal by transcending the original meaning of the Passover meal. He transformed that ancient meal, instituted some 1500 years earlier, in light of his rescuing work. The bread represents *his* body and the juice represents *his* blood. As Paul says plainly in 1 Cor. 5:7, Jesus is the Passover lamb. He is the innocent one, who was sacrificed that God's people might be spared from death and taken from the bondage of an alien power and delivered into the glory of the kingdom of God.

c. And with the Lord's transformation of the Passover into the Lord's Supper, we as Christians do not hark back to the lesser and celebrate the Passover. Rather, we embrace the fulfillment of that type in God's ultimate deliverance in Christ, which is symbolized in the Lord's Supper.

L. In regard to the tenth and final plague, the Lord said to Moses in Ex. 12:12 (ESV): *For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD* (see also Num. 33:4). In forcing Israel's deliverance through this final plague God demonstrated to the Egyptians, the Israelites, and the world his supremacy over Pharaoh and thus over all the so-called gods worshiped by the Egyptians. He revealed each to be a "paper tiger," something that had no power to stand before the true God, the creator of heaven and earth.

X. Crossing of the Red Sea

A. God, however, was not finished demonstrating his supremacy over Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. He instructed Moses to have the people change course and to camp in what seemed to be a vulnerable position up against the sea, which when coupled with Pharaoh's remorse over having let them go, prompted Pharaoh to pursue them.

B. Ancient Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was finalized by their passing through a parted Red Sea, a passage that began with their going under God's guiding cloud as it moved from their front to their rear to separate them from the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:19-20). Paul in 1 Cor. 10:1-2 characterizes this water passage of deliverance as a baptism into Moses and analogizes it to Christian baptism on his way to making the point in 1 Cor. 10:1-5 that their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper will not save them if they continue eating meals at the idol temples. He explains that all the Israelites who came out of Egypt participated in a type of baptism and shared in a type of Lord's Supper, and yet, as we will see, *most* of them were struck down in the wilderness. Sharing in those privileges did not make them invincible or immune to disqualification.

C. Of course, the Egyptian army, chariots and all, pursued the Israelites into the parted sea. God threw their forces into panic, clogging their wheels, and then when Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, he closed the channel, drowning the Egyptians.

XI. Journey to Mount Sinai

A. God led the Israelites from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, which is probably in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula, having them stop at various places along the way. (A fuller recounting of their journey is provided in Numbers 33.) After going three days into the wilderness of Shur without finding any water, they found some at Marah, but it was undrinkable. The people grumbled against Moses about that, and in response to Moses' prayer, God directed Moses to a log and purified the water when Moses threw the log into it.

B. God led them into the wilderness of Sin (pronounced Seen), and on the 15th day of the second month after leaving Egypt they grumbled against Moses and Aaron for not having sufficient food. This is when the Lord began providing manna, a white, thin, sweet, seed or wafer-like substance that was visible each morning when the dew lifted except the morning of the seventh day of the week. Recall Jesus' words in Jn. 6:49-51 (ESV): *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.*⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.* God also, presumably for that one night, provided an abundance of quail for them in the evening.

C. At Rephidim the people again grumbled against Moses because they had no water. At God's direction, Moses strikes a rock with his staff and water came pouring out of it!

D. In Ex. 17:8-16 Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim, and the Lord gave Israel the victory. God tells Moses to record and to recite before Joshua that he will blot out the memory of Amalek, and Moses declares (v. 16) "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

E. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came to Moses and reunited him with his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Apparently they had been sent back home, perhaps during Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh. This is when Jethro advises Moses to create a kind of lower court system where only the most difficult cases came to Moses for decision.

XII. The Covenant Confirmed

A. At Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), there is this awesome manifestation of God's presence: thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, trumpet blasts, fire and smoke. God calls Moses to the top of the mountain and then sends him back down to warn the people again, who are gathered at the foot of the mountain, not to dare try to approach him by venturing up the mountain. And then God thunders out in the hearing of all the people the Ten Commandments.

1. Next week we will look at the Ten Commandments in a bit more detail, but notice the reaction of the people to the overwhelming majesty of God's presence as depicted in the thunder, lightning, trumpet sound, and smoke. They were terrified and said to Moses (v. 19), *"You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."*

2. Moses reassured them by saying that God's nearness in the theophany was a test was a test to see if they really would be afraid of disobeying him. You see, fearing the Lord in the sense we fear the consequences of defying or rebelling against him is spiritually healthy

and is commanded throughout the Bible (e.g., these NT examples: Acts 9:31; Rom. 3:18, 11:20; 2 Cor. 5:11, 7:1; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 10:30-31; 1 Pet. 2:17 [direct command]; Rev. 11:18, 14:7, 15:4). It helps to keep us from abandoning God. But fearing the Lord in the sense we fear that he may damn us despite our faith in his Son, that he may damn us even though we are merely weak instead of defiant or rebellious, is not spiritually healthy. That is the kind of fear we are not to have (e.g., 1 Jn. 4:18; Heb. 12:18-24).

B. In Ex. 20:21 Moses then went back up the mountain where he met with God and received many additional laws, instructions, and promises. In Exodus 24 he tells the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules, and they say (v. 3), "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." Moses then wrote down all the words of the Lord. After that, he built an altar, had sacrifices offered, and threw half the blood of the sacrifices against the altar. And after that, he read the words of the Lord he had written down, the people again said they would obey them (v. 7), and then he threw remaining blood on the people saying (v. 8), "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

C. Moses, Aaron, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel (which would include Joshua), leaders who represent all of Israel, come part way up the mountain to participate in a covenant meal (v. 11). They were allowed to see some manifestation of God pictured as standing on something like a pavement of sapphire.

XIII. Moses' Forty-Day Visit on the Mountain Top

A. Sometime after Moses and all the other Israelite representatives at the covenant meal had come off the mountain, God again summoned Moses to come up, this time to receive the tablets of stone which God had written for their instruction. Joshua accompanies Moses, presumably only part way up the mountain, and at the end of chapter 24 Moses enters the cloud at the top of the mountain, where he remained for forty days and forty nights.

B. During this time God gave Moses laws on the means of worship, dealing with such things as where it is done, how it is done, by whom it is done, with whom it is done, and with what it is done. Douglas Stuart says (p. 561-562) these concerns "dominate the rest of the Sinai covenant, that is, the law through the rest of Exodus, through all of Leviticus, and up to Num. 10:10. Not all of these materials are strictly legal in genre; . . . But the overwhelming emphasis of the rest of the covenant is worship."

C. While Moses was on the mountain, we see in Exodus 32 that the people had made a golden calf and engaged in idolatry.

1. Moses interceded for the people to prevent God from destroying them. Moses broke the two stone tablets that had been engraved by God, burned the golden calf, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the people drink it.

2. The way I understand Ex. 32:25-28 is that Moses summoned the Levites who were on the Lord's side to come to him. They all did, which includes Aaron who had clearly been involved in the rebellion, so at least Aaron was given the opportunity to repent. That suggests to

me that when the Levites were then sent throughout the camp they likewise called the people to renounce their conduct and reassert their loyalty to God. Only the active idolaters who refused to do so were then executed.

3. The remaining people, however, were still guilty for having tolerated the rebellion. Moses returned to the Lord to intercede for them, and God tells him to lead the people to the promise land and that his angel will go before them. This means that he is not going to wipe them out. But he sends a plague on them to reinforce for them the seriousness of idolatry in the community. The text does not say whether anyone died from this plague.

XIII. Command to Leave Sinai – In Exodus 33:1 God commands Moses to depart for the promise land.