

“The Exodus Reveals God’s Nature” – Ex 34:5-6

Steve Christian – 5 July 2020

Good morning and welcome to church online. Very slowly we are seeing some easing of restrictions due to Covid-19. Unfortunately, restrictions are not yet favourable to allow us to come back together, and so we press on. But I’m so glad you’ve chosen to meet with us this morning with our wonderful God and Father. I trust that you are remaining close to the Lord.

Now, as Christian parents we recognise that children are a gift from the Lord. Today, July 5th is Obadiah Seymour’s birthday (12 months old), and Danny and Wendy not only have the wonderful privilege of enjoying God’s gift to them in Obadiah, but also the awesome responsibility of caring for this gift.

Danny and Wendy wish to dedicate Obadiah to the Lord, and we have the privilege of participating in that this morning. Because children belong to God and are given by His grace, it is only proper and appropriate that children be dedicated back to God.



I draw to your attention the Word of God as recorded in Deut 6:4-7 that advises us: "**Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on their children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.**"

These verses speak of teaching our children, and modelling our relationship with the Lord to them. So this dedication then is not just of Obadiah, but of yourselves as well.

So, Danny and Wendy, do you declare your desire to dedicate yourselves and your son, Obadiah to the Lord? If so, please respond by saying "we do." ("We do.")

I ask you then to enter into the following commitment in the presence of God and your church family – albeit they’re watching this from home, but participating with us. In order that Obadiah might walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, do you Danny and Wendy vow by God's help and in partnership with your church family, seek to provide Obadiah with a Christian home of love and peace, to raise him in the truth of our Lord's instruction and discipline, and to encourage him to trust Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord? ("We do.")

As the church we have been called to assist Danny and Wendy where we can, as we also continue to renew our commitment to assist all parents as they endeavour to bring up their children in the ways of the Lord.

So, let us pray as we seek the Lord's blessing on this family-

“Loving Father, we thank you for your blessings, and we dedicate to You today, Obadiah Seymour. We know that You have your plans for this child, and we trust Him to You as His life unfolds. Thank you for Danny and Wendy and their commitment to honour you, and we pray that you will bless them as they seek to create an environment of love that will enable Obi to become all that you have created him to be. We pray too for ourselves, as we commit to encourage and support this family, as together we seek to be a rich and godly influence on Obadiah and the other children of our church family. Help us all to present Christ to our children as we dedicate them and ourselves to you in Jesus name, and for His glory, Amen”

I pray God's blessing upon each and every one of you. We read in Ex 33 that Moses took a tent and pitched it some distance outside of the camp and called it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone from the camp could use this tent to inquire of the Lord. Verse 11 says that God would meet Moses in that tent and speak with Him face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. What a wonderful time it must have been for Moses being in the presence of God. Can I encourage you, that if you don't have such a place; consider setting aside a place where you can meet with God – your own tent of meeting.

Have you ever wondered where the Hebrew people got the idea that God's name was Yahweh? We'll just imagine this beautiful scene. This time Moses has returned up Mt Sinai, and I'll read from Ex 34:5, **“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.”** That is as we read in Hebrew spelt without vowels, YHWH; Yahweh. Verse 6, **“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”** God is describing Himself, and what a wonderful God he is. And Moses is experiencing the glorious presence of God. What a wonderful time for Moses.

But that's not how it was for everyone. Imagine yourself camping in the desert. Maybe some of you can't imagine that at all. But imagine camping in the desert with half the population of Brisbane. Imagine the peace and quiet, getting back to nature with around one and a half million of your mates. For the most part, most of the Hebrew people who were in camp at the base of Mt Sinai, were busy about their daily lives just trying to make ends meet – providing food and water as much as was needed each day. For others too, they had their flocks and herds to tend to. So, for the most part, most of the people didn't know what was going on at leadership level, and relied on what they were told.



Imagine sitting in your camp, and hearing some distant noise that sounds like a celebration; a party and wondering what was going on? Do you go and check it out? If you do, do you join in: or do stand in amazement and apprehension with a sense that this just doesn't feel right? Nevertheless, I hope that I've given you the idea that not everyone in the Hebrew camp knew what was going on, and neither did they necessarily agree with it.

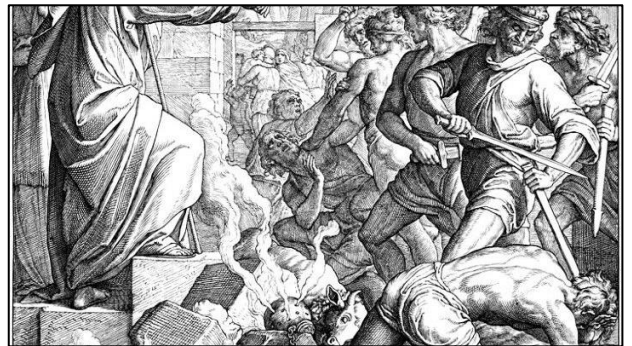
So, let's get back to Moses, and we go back 2 chapters. This morning we're looking at a couple of chapters, 32-34, and I encourage you to read this portion of Scripture.

Moses leaves the glorious presence of God, and goes down to see what the Hebrew people have been up to. He discovers that, what God has said was true – they have made a golden calf and they have worshipped it, and now they have gone rogue. “They,” most likely was the leadership group made up of the seventy elders and those assigned as the leaders from the twelve tribes and probably a few more who then joined in.



Moses is wild with anger. As he approached the camp, he threw down the stone tablets that were in his hands – breaking them to pieces. He took the calf and burnt it in the fire; then he ground it into powder and threw that into their drinking water and made the people drink it all. He then called from the gate of the camp and asked, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.” The Levites rallied to him, and he gave them permission to go through the camp and strike down their brothers with the sword – 3000 people died that day. What a chaotic and traumatic scene.

This is a camp of some 600,000 men and their families. Word would have soon gotten around that a bunch of our people got together and worshipped a golden calf, and now Moses is back and there's been a massacre. “What the heck is going on?”



Do you feel like that at times? As you look at world events? As you look at the state of our nation? “What's going on?” As you look at the universal church around the world with all of its variations and differing emphases? As you look at your family, or those in another family? “What is going on?” And how do you cope when you're anxious and troubled?

Adam Dooley wrote, “God's goal is not our comprehending Him more completely, but our trusting Him more deeply.” God is less concerned with how much we know about Him, as to how much we are trusting Him. Some of you need to re hear that. Because some of you think that your main pursuit should be to get to know God more and more. But God simply wants you to trust Him more, not necessarily know more about Him. God wants us to be growing in how much we trust Him, regardless of whether we can make sense of Him, or how he works in our world.

So, when your spouse dies; when you lose your job; when your family is in disarray; when your health is declining; when you can't understand what is going on; When there's a massacre or a plague and people are losing their lives; are you trusting God more deeply? Are you trusting Him more as each day passes?

Moses is trusting God. He's more than upset with what he has found in the Hebrew camp, and he's made it clear that this has not been acceptable – treating God like He doesn't exist. And so he goes back to inquire of the Lord.

And he says to the Lord in 32:31, **“Oh what a great sin these people have committed. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”** Moses continues to plead on behalf of the people. And the Lord replies, **“Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Now go, lead the people to the land I have promised.”**

“Those who have sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.” This still stands true today. Paul wrote in Gal 6:7-8, **“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”** And on the great Day of judgement Jesus will say to those on His left, **“depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”** But, **“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** (Rom 9)

If we are to be saved from the penalty and punishment for our sin, then we need to repent; confess our sin and turn away from it. God is a holy God, and he will blot out of His book, those who have not sought His forgiveness. So, do need to repent? Do you need to confess your sin and repent from your sin? Are you placing eternal life in the glorious presence of God at risk, by continuing to sin against God? I encourage you to come to God in faith and accept Jesus as your Lord, and that His death has saved you from the penalty for your sin. For God so loves you, that he gave His only Son, that if you believe in Him, you will not perish but rather receive eternal life.

Moses is trusting God to be good to His people. Now, in asking Moses to now lead the people into the Promised Land, God says that He won't go with them but that He will send one of His angels. Moses then continues to plead with God, and appeals to Him, saying that “an angel is no good – we need You, Lord.” And as the story unfolds, God asks Moses to come back to Him with two new stone tablets for the 10 guiding principles or directions to live by, to be written on a second time by God's own hand, and to also receive the instructions for building the tabernacle – this would be God's way of demonstrating that he was with the people.

You see, there is a much bigger picture – a much bigger story that is unfolding as God is working with the Hebrew people, and ultimately providing for all of humanity. And I thought it might be helpful to try to step back from the smaller detail in the story as it unfolds and remember the bigger picture. There is much we can see in the Exodus story, that speaks into our current world.

Firstly we can see, that as God works within human history His focus is upon Him be glorified. God unashamedly seeks his glory and wields his sovereign power over creation to achieve it. At the burning bush, he called a self-doubting 80 year old, with murder in his past to deliver his people from bondage and lead them toward Him and into worship in the desert (Ex. 3:1–4:11).

With each of the plagues, God showed his supremacy over the gods of Egypt by using elements of his creation to prove his power over them (Ex. 7–12). As Pharaoh hardened his heart (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), God demonstrated his sovereign power over world rulers and nations, and again, over the false gods and false religions of the world.

God alone is worthy of all praise—a truth that many in our secular culture deny. While the secular mindset may tolerate some “religious plurality” or say “you can believe your truth while I’ll believe mine,” the Exodus makes it quite clear that every false god will one day be crushed, and every knee will bow before our Creator and judge (Phil. 2:10–11).

Can we sing to the Ancient of Days, worshipping Him because he deserves all the honour and glory. 🎵
Song: TN 077 Ancient of Days

Secondly, in the Exodus story we see God’s Holiness. God’s holiness requires that judgment is exercised. And God’s holy wrath demanded that he step into history at the point where the Hebrew people were subject to Egyptian slavery. Pharaoh had declared that the Hebrew people were to abort their male offspring; he had enslaved the people and forced them to serve the Egyptians instead of God. With each plague God graciously warned them, and then finally took the firstborn sons of the Egyptians including their livestock. God’s holiness required judgement. And we see the ebb and flow of the requirement for judgement and His gracious response time and time again throughout the Old Testament.

God remains a holy God and judgement continues to come today to those who choose to worship other gods. We’ve already spoken of the Day of Final Judgment, but while we wait, the world wants to set its own laws concerning morality. Our world cries out for justice without a Sovereign Holy God. When true justice can only come from a God of perfect holiness. He alone weighs and balances the motivation of the heart. God is a holy God.

Thirdly, the Exodus story reveals God’s Redemption. The Exodus story shows us that redemption comes by the blood of the lamb. The Hebrew people were set free by painting the blood of the lamb over their doorposts, and the angel of death passed over them. This was the final straw for Pharaoh as he lost his first born son, and the Hebrew people were set free from bondage because of the blood of the lamb.

Our world wants to save itself, and our world does not want to recognise sin. Our world refuses to say, “Woe is me, a man of unclean lips.” Our world says, “Woe to me, to think that I might be unclean. I am who I am, and I can become who I want to be. I’m in control, and I choose to be offended for I won’t be told that I’ve done anything wrong.”

But the blood of the lamb, points us to the perfect Lamb of God – Jesus Christ, and the giving of His precious blood to redeem us from our slavery to sin and to Satan’s dominion.

And so we’re going to share in **communion**.

As you pick up the bread, we are reminded that Jesus body was broken for us. Let us give thanks.

As you take the cup, the grape juice reminds us of the blood of the precious Lamb of God – Jesus - dying to save us from our sin. Paul wrote, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7).



The story of Exodus also speaks of God’s grace. God hears the cries of His people and he graciously comes to set them free. God graciously opens up the red Sea to deliver them. God graciously gives them manna and quail. And as we considered a number of weeks ago, He graciously gives them 10 guiding Godly principles to live by that will provide the most beneficial way to live in community. In His grace, God continues to give His people, and us, what we don’t deserve.

And what the Law was unable to deliver, he has graciously provided through the gift of His Holy Spirit. And isn’t it just like God, that on the day that the Law was given, 3000 lost their lives, whilst on the day that the Spirit was given (the day of Pentecost) 3000 were added into the kingdom – receiving eternal life.

Our world on the other hand wants to prove itself and earn its own way into glory. And many a Christian has succumbed to the worldly philosophy of earning your way into the kingdom – by being obedient to the laws of God because that’s what our salvation requires: because we’re being obedient then we must be saved. Rather we should want to be obedient to God because we’ve been saved. Obedience is our desire, not our duty.

And lastly, The Exodus story speaks of God’s presence. Moses goes back to receive from the Lord two new tablets, further instruction in the Law, and the requirements for building the tabernacle. God has been with His people leading them by a cloud during the day and pillar of fire at night, and upon the completion of the tabernacle and its dedication, He would be present with His people wherever they may wander.

Praise God, we live on this side of Jesus death and resurrection. We now have His presence with us through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, and His promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us.

As we read the story of the Exodus of God’s people once caught in slavery and being miraculously set free, taken into the Promised land, we read some amazing stories. But what is of even greater amazement, is how a holy God makes a way for sinful people to dwell with him through Jesus Christ and the gift of His Spirit.



Which brings me back to God’s beautiful description of Himself in Ex 34:6-7. I am, **“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.”**

God is merciful. God is gracious. God is long suffering. God is slow to anger. God is faithful. God is love. God is forgiving. God is good. And God is Judge. Let us serve our God and Father willingly for He is holy, and to be glorified.