

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 34:17-28

To understand more about the glory of the LORD.

Read the Text:

You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal. 18 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. 19 All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. 20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed. 21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. 22 You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. 23 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. 24 For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. 25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover remain until the morning. 26 The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." 27 And the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." 28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. 29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. 32 Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. 33 And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. 34 Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, 35 the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him. (Exodus 34:17-28, ESV)

Study the Text:

Covenant Restoration, Pt. 2

Chapter 34 continues outlining the risks associated with God driving out the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. If the people do not observe what God has commanded, they will be prone to making a covenant with the other nations instead of keeping their covenant with God, which will be a snare to them. God was not trying to overload Israel with rules, but to ensure His people were well aware of the snares in the promised land. Below is a breakdown of the key details in this section.

CAST METAL

This would seem like a narrowing on what the Lord means in the second commandment: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Ex. 20:4). However, this list is not narrowing the commandments but emphasizing certain aspects. It is similar to the signs in some bathrooms that say, "All employees must wash hands... especially you, John." That sign does not narrow the request to *only* John. It also communicates to

the whole group the need to wash their hands while emphasizing a specific person. Similarly, this command still holds that worshiping any idol breaks the command, but reminds Israel that they just failed with a particular idol, the cast metal calf. Thus, they require a direct reminder in light of that failure.

ALL THAT OPEN THE WOMB ARE MINE

Psalm 50 communicates that the world and its fullness are the Lord's. Psalm 50:10 reminds the reader: "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills." So if *everything* is the Lord's, why does this Psalm state that specifically *the firstborn* is the Lord's? Obedience is important. This has been communicated since Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of which the Lord told them not to eat, and they were removed from Eden. This is yet another example. Even though all the beasts of the forest are the Lord's, He has not required of Israel every beast they own, but only the ones that open the womb, the first fruits. There is an interesting note here regarding the donkey being replaced by a lamb or its neck being broken. The donkey (a beast of burden) was not needed in the temple service (sacrificially or for its labor). Therefore, if the household needed the donkey for labor (or breeding), it could be redeemed for a lamb, but if not, because it was the firstborn and was still the Lord's, they should have its neck broken in obedience. However, while this was true of the donkey, it is essential to note that a firstborn son was never to be sacrificed. He *must* be redeemed (Ex. 34:20).

HE NEITHER ATE BREAD NOR DRANK WATER

Three individuals in scripture are known for fasting for 40 days. Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. This is the second time Moses has been on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights, but this time, it is emphasized that those 40 days are without bread or drink. The first 40 days were for receiving the law, writing the tablets, and possibly fasting for the sins of Israel. Still, the second 40 days (which emphasizes the *fast*) is described in Deuteronomy in more detail: "So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights, because the Lord had said he would destroy you. And I prayed to the Lord, 'O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage...' (Deut 9:25-27). Moses was desperately praying and fasting this time to perhaps make atonement for their sin of idolatry (Ex 32:30).

HIS FACE SHOWN

Verse 29 says: "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." This is a powerful image of the close relationship Moses had with the Lord (Ex. 33:11) and the visible representation of the authority God had given Moses. Both are important. And both are challenged in time (see *Korah's Rebellion* in Numbers 16).

THE VEIL

Verse 30 continues: "Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him." Aaron's and the people's response was fear. They had seen Moses go up the mountain many times during their time at Mount Sinai. They had seen the cloud descend and cover the mountain. They had seen the devouring fire and dealt with the plague. They had fear of the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking and the voice of God, but they had not feared *Moses*. And in response, as is the typical response, they did not want to deal with their sin but instead required a veil to be placed over Moses' face. Very similar to the response after the 10 Commandments are given: "You speak to us, Moses, but 'do not let God speak to us, lest we die'" (Ex. 20:19). Because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and Israel's minds were hardened as they continued to sin (Rom. 1), Moses' unveiled face frightened Israel because it reminded them of God's glory and that they deserved death for continually breaking the law that was given to them.

What About Now?

The beauty of the New Testament is that we are given more hope and less veil. Peter, James, and John were led up a high mountain by Jesus. And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light (Matt. 17). Moses' face reflected the glory of God like the moon reflecting the light of the sun. Jesus, in His transfiguration, was not a reflection or the byproduct of time with God, but His face shone like the sun because Jesus, being fully God, deserves the glory himself. Matthew 17:5-7 says: "A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.'" Note that with Jesus, the disciples were not frightened by Jesus' face, but by the voice from the cloud. The transfiguration of Jesus is crucial to understanding our current hope. Moses veiled his face because of the hardness of the people's hearts. But Moses is not our intercessor. Jesus, whose face shone with the glory of God directly, is our intercessor. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:16: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." The veil of death is over all nations, including Israel (Is. 25), but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed (2 Cor. 3:16). We are bold because we have turned to the Lord, and Christ has taken the veil away and is transforming us into the same image. We have freedom (as opposed to the bondage of the law) through life in the Spirit. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). Therefore, where Moses was sufficient to be a minister of a covenant that was coming to an end, we are sufficient (our sufficiency is from God) to be ministers of the new covenant in Christ.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 34:17-21. Which commandments do you find in these verses?

2. What command does God give about the seventh day? Does this command apply even during busy seasons?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 34:21-24. What should they observe?

2. How many times a year shall all males appear before the LORD? What promise does God make about their land when they do this?

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 34:27-28. How long was Moses on the mountain? What was special about this time?

2. What was written on the tablets?
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Day Four

1. Read Exodus 34:29-32. What happened to Moses' face after talking with God? How did Aaron and the people initially respond when they saw him?

 2. Read Exodus 34:33-35. What did Moses do with the veil? When would he remove it, and when would he put it back on?

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Discuss the Text!

Week 80 Discussion: The Veil

The veil that Moses used to cover his face has been lifted from those who turn to Jesus (2 Cor. 3:16). And those who have the veil removed, unlike Moses, are bold with the hope that they find in Jesus, namely that their sins have been removed and that the Spirit of the Lord has given them freedom. Talk as a group about the hope you have and how to share it with those with hardened hearts and veiled eyes.

1. Icebreaker: Do you remember a time before you became a Christian when you felt blind to your sin?
2. Do you feel the freedom now that comes from the Spirit of the Lord? What does that look like?
3. Do you know someone today in your life who has a veil over their heart? Someone who has hardened their heart to the sin in their life?
4. Do you have the boldness to share your hope with them?
5. How can you show love to that person?
6. Kid Talk (For Home): Play a blindfold game where your child tries to walk across the room or find an object while blindfolded, then removes the blindfold. Talk about how much easier it is to see with the blindfold off! Explain that before people know Jesus, it's like having a blindfold on their hearts - they can't see how much God loves them. But Jesus takes the blindfold off! Ask: "How can we help our friends see God's love?" Encourage them to be kind and tell others about Jesus.

Takeaways:

1. The terms of the covenant are restated.
2. Moses neither ate nor drank for 40 days on the Mountain.
3. Moses' face shone because he had been talking with God.
4. The people's fear of Moses' face led him to cover it with a veil.