

7. We must read the Bible as a book written by one great Author who revealed himself progressively in different contexts. We must be careful to understand each part of the Bible in its context. This requires some hard work, but it is worthwhile.

### GOING FURTHER

Reflect on how relationship and law are related in Exodus. Then consider how our experience is similar.

Consider whether or not the Ten Commandments should be a defining Christian symbol in our nation or world. If not, what would be better?

What similarities do you see between the ratification of the Old Covenant and the ratification of the New Covenant (in the Lord's supper)?

### PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read Exodus 25–40. You may skim some of the details. Read Leviticus 8–10. You may also read/skim the rest of the book of Leviticus, as time permits.

What is the point of Exodus 25–40? How does it relate to Exodus 1–18 and 19–24? Why does Exodus 35–40 largely “repeat” Exodus 25–31? What is the significance of the “interruption” in chapters 32–34? How does it relate to Exodus 19–24? What is God's ultimate response and how does he express his character? (Don't miss this.) Finally, how is chapter 40 an absolutely fitting climax to the book?

### SOURCES CITED

Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus*, 2009.

Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*. New American Commentary, 2006.

Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch*, 2003.

## THE COVENANT OF YAHWEH AND ISRAEL (EXODUS 19-24)

### PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read Exodus 19–24. Give extra attention to chapters 19 and 24. Think about the covenant ceremony, the nature of the covenant, and the purpose of the covenant.

Think about the Ten Commandments *in their context*. How does the context of a covenant ceremony with Israel affect the church's relationship to the Ten Commandments?

### OUTLINE

- I. Israel is redeemed as God's possession by deliverance from slavery in Egypt (1:1–18:27).
- II. Israel is confirmed as God's nation by the establishment of the covenant (19:1–24:18).
  - a. The Lord's offer to make Israel his people is accepted (19:1–8).
  - b. The Israelites are prepared to meet with God (19:9–25).
  - c. The Lord speaks the Book of the Covenant (20:1–23:33).
  - d. The covenant is confirmed between the Lord and Israel (24:1–18).
- III. Israel is validated as God's people by the indwelling of the tabernacle (25:1–40:38).

### NOTES

“Israel's obligation to keep the law is not to form a relationship with God, but rather to show gratitude to and maintain the relationship that it already enjoys with him” (Longman 2009: 121).

“Priests both declare God's will to people and also pray for them and offer sacrifice on their behalf, and this is what Israel is expected to do for the surrounding peoples” (Wenham 2003: 68).

“The challenge to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” represented the responsibility inherent in the original promise to Abraham in Gen 12:2–3: “You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”” (Stuart 2006: 423).

“What the chapter [20] contains—in particular, the Ten “Words” [Commandments]—is more like the content of a national constitution than merely the content of one section of codified law or another. If the American legal corpus is used as an analogy, it could be said that the ten “words” of Exod 20 are somewhat like the Constitution of the United States (legally binding in a most basic, foundational way but more than a mere set of individual laws) and the laws that follow (cf. 21:1, “These are the laws you are to set before them”) somewhat analogous to the various sections of federal law dealing with all sorts of particular matters that have been enacted legislatively over time. The one group is absolutely “constitutional” or “foundational”; the other is specifically regulatory, following from the principles articulated in the more basic “constitution”” (Stuart 2006: 440-41).

“The case laws are applications of the principles of the Ten Commandments to the specific social and redemptive historical situation of Israel” (Longman 2009: 126).

“In the ancient biblical world, covenants were normally concluded with a special covenant meal in which animals were symbolically cut in half (symbolizing the shared responsibility of the two parties as well as the severity of the penalty for breaking the covenant), then the parties to the covenant walked between the pieces, and then the meal was eaten together as a sign of friendship and alliance” (Stuart 2006: 552).

“Moses sprinkled blood on the people in order to symbolize their being parties to the covenant. Some droplets would remain on their skin for days; some that fell on their clothing would be visible, if faded, for as long as the clothing lasted. The ceremony itself was so vivid and extraordinary as to be memorable, and its memory was intended to keep in the consciousness of the people the fact that God had joined with the people of Israel in a formal, official covenant to which both he and they were bound by oath” (Stuart 2006: 555).

## THE MOSAIC COVENANT AND THE CHURCH

1. The Mosaic covenant was made between two parties: Yahweh and Israel.
2. The Mosaic covenant had many stipulations, *all* of which were binding on Israel.
3. If the church is Israel, then the church continues in the Mosaic Covenant and is responsible to obey all of its laws (cf. James 2:10). The church cannot pick and choose which laws of the Mosaic Covenant that it wants to keep. The church does not have the option of being faithful to one part of the covenant but not other parts.
4. The church, however, is not Israel. The church is a new body of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, who have accepted Jesus’ sacrificial death and follow him as their Head. The church was created as a new group of people because the ethnic descendants of Jacob by and large rejected Jesus as their Messiah. The church is a new group of people intended to arouse Israel to jealousy so that Israel “wants its Messiah back” and gets its Messiah back by repenting of their sin.
5. Since the church is not Israel, the church is not party to the covenant made with Israel. Therefore the church is not under obligation to keep the commands of the Mosaic Covenant.
6. Though *none* of the Mosaic Covenant is binding upon the church, the Mosaic Covenant is one means by which we see God’s character and desires. That some portions of the Mosaic Covenant are clearly timeless is evident from the fact that they are found in God’s revelation outside the Mosaic Covenant (e.g., do not murder because man is made in God’s image). Other parts of the Mosaic Covenant are clearly not timeless as is clear from revelation outside the Mosaic Covenant (e.g., God made pigs and he said they were good).