

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Week 3 - Day 1: Salvation for God's People

Exodus 34:6b-7 The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

One of the most challenging moments in my life was when I saw my dream career, to which I had dedicated many hard-working years of my life, vanish right before my eyes. In the year that followed, I struggled through an identity crisis. I constantly wrestled with what would come next and whether or not I believed that, "God is good and He is in control!"

That last phrase sounds so cliché right?

Yet when we think about it, there are so many situations in our world today that make us doubt that God still rules and He loves us. When we see tremendous suffering in our own lives or around the world today, do we really believe that God still rules as Lord and cares about His kingdom people?

I imagine this sentiment was unbelievably prevalent in the hearts of the descendants of Abraham, (now known as the people of Israel) during the book of Exodus. The book of Exodus begins by briefly mentioning the Abrahamic generation of Joseph and his descendants after they left God's promised land and experienced God's blessings in Egypt. However, once a new ruler rose to power in Egypt, God's blessings suddenly appear to morph into some kind of a *set-up* for Israel to be oppressed:

Exodus 1:7-10 the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Imagine the kind of questions the Israelites would have had over 400 years of slavery. Does God still love us? If He does, why are we enslaved? Is God still in control? If He is, why did He decide to bring us here? Will the promises made to our father Abraham still remain true even when it seems like there is no way? Were we wrong about this God?

Enter the story of Moses! Moses' life was miraculously preserved by Pharaoh's daughter as Moses' family escaped the oppressive orders of Pharaoh to kill all males born to the

Israelites. In the face of Israel's oppression, God lifts up Moses within the ranks of Pharaoh. When Moses eventually learns of his own Hebrew origins, he withdraws from his position in Pharaoh's household to meet with his people. Here, Moses comes face-to-face with the oppression of his people and acts in his rage by murdering an oppressive Egyptian. This sets up the scene where Moses flees Egypt to Midian and finds a burning bush on top of a mountain. He takes off his sandals to approach this holy space and hears this:

Exodus 3:7-8, 14 Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites... God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.' "

After 400 years of slavery, God calls Moses and Aaron to become His kingdom representatives. Through them, God would bring the Israelites out from under the rule of Pharaoh and into His promised land under Yahweh's ("I am" in Hebrew) loving rule. In a story you may be familiar with, God rains down a series of 10 plagues to crush the Egyptians culminating at the Passover where God kills the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and spares the Israelites through the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. He then rescues His people out from Egypt, brings them through the waters of the Red Sea, and destroys the Egyptian army pursuing them.

*These thrilling portions of Exodus tell a story of **salvation**. This word essentially refers to the process by which God pursues His kingdom people and saves them from an oppressive and foreign kingdom to bring them back to His promised kingdom land under His loving rule.*

Remember up to this point, it is **salvation** from the kingdom of the serpent, that bondage to sin, that we are looking for!

Salvation is not only a rescue mission from an oppressive kingdom, it is also a **reestablishment** of God's beloved kingdom family! The rest of Exodus shows how God directs His wandering people back towards Mt. Sinai where Israel camps for a full year and where Moses spends time meeting with the Lord.

Exodus 19:5-8 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

Exodus reveals God's desire to transform His kingdom **people** into who they were created to be all the way back in Genesis: a kingdom family called into a treasured and beloved relationship to be set apart as God's representatives in order to bring God's blessings and glory to the nations!

However, just like in the garden, Israel's end of the bargain was to uphold the Lord's commands. What follows is a series of 613 commandments given to Israel (including the famous first 10) that talk about the ways in which Israel would fall under the **rule** of God. Broadly speaking, these commandments address the way in which they would become a people who would love God (no other gods before me, keep the sabbath, Lord's name in vain, etc.) and love their neighbors (murder, adultery, covetousness, etc.)! Here is how Israel responds...

Exodus 24:7-8 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Furthermore, Exodus shows us the Creator's desire to dwell with His family in His kingdom **space**. Moses is given instructions to create a portable tabernacle on earth so that God could be with His people and rule over them as Lord wherever they went! Israel would become God's kingdom space!

Exodus 29:43-45 There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

God rescued his people from a wicked regime. Then He desires to establish His kingdom family under His loving rule of law in the midst of His glorious presence...

...if His people would obey His commandments. Would they be able to overcome the kingdom of the serpent?

Unfortunately, it did not take much time for the Israelites to disobey. Aaron, Moses' brother and assistant, and many others did not want to wait for Moses to return after his 40-day venture into the Lord's presence on Mt. Sinai. Instead, they built for themselves an idol they could grasp; a calf that represented the Egyptian god Apis who represented the strength of the king.

Exodus 32:30-32 The next day Moses said to 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." So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."

Moses returns to the Lord and offers himself as a sacrifice to take the place of the Israelites. God had something much better in store. After punishing and eliminating the sin of idolatry within the camp, the people of Israel repent and band together to obey the instructions of the Lord to build the tabernacle. God would dwell with His people! He would be their God! They would be His people!

Exodus 6:7-8 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’ ”

Even in Israel's bleakest circumstance, God was still in control. Out of Israel's slavery, God was able to demonstrate His supreme kingdom authority by bringing **salvation** to the people of Israel. He then shows His love by preparing them for the kingdom land He was bringing them to, molding them into the kingdom of priests that God had intended for humanity from the beginning, and setting up a new garden-like tabernacle so God could be with His people!

God is still good and he is still in control!

Interestingly, after a whole book where Moses was freely able to approach the Lord, we are told that Moses is now unable to enter the tent of meeting to speak with God.

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

What changed? Israel was stained by their sin against God's law. Exodus leaves us wondering how would Israel ever find a way to enter into God's presence again without being utterly destroyed because of their sin? How will God bring **salvation** from the kingdom of sin?

-AJ Vanegas

Share the Gospel: God's loving faithfulness toward His people extends beyond the depths of your bleakest circumstances. Our God offers a **salvation** from the foreign kingdom of sin and a **reestablishment** of His kingdom rule in His kingdom space as we become members of His kingdom family!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: