Threads

tracing the eternal gospel through the old testament

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Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:27 (NLT)

matthias' lot church

loving him
& loving his.

Threads: ***tracing the eternal gospel through the old testament***

Jesus' command to make disciples (**Matthew 28:19**) belongs to the global church as the one body of Christ; God, in his grace, establishes local expressions of his body to work together as fellow stewards of the gospel and partners in building his kingdom.

Threads is an in-house product of Matthias' Lot Church—a church on mission to make disciples of Jesus who enjoy God and make him known. This resource has been made available for churches and individuals to use for the purpose of encouraging and equipping the saints to make disciples who make disciples for the glory of God until Christ returns.

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Before you begin, please read the introduction on pages 1–3. It contains important context that will be helpful for your study.

can we understand the bible?

why read the bible?

The Bible is one book made up of 66 smaller books; within these books are historical narratives, prayers, instructions, prophecies, wisdom, and praise. The whole Bible was written in a span of over 1500 years, so **it can seem that the stories are disconnected from one another and irrelevant to us**—but nothing could be further from the truth.

Scripture weaves together one overarching story through which we can better understand the individual events and accounts detailed throughout its pages. The Bible was written by many different people, but ultimately has **one divine author revealing his cohesive story of redemption.**

God speaks to us through his word. Unfortunately, some people do not read it because they find it confusing and give up out of discouragement. But God desires for us to understand his word and through it, know him. **The truth is we cannot love a God we don't know, and we can never truly know God apart from his word**.

*All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and profitable...*

2 Timothy 3:16

how do we read the bible?

Since we come to know God *through* his word, we must regularly meet with him *in* his word. So how can we intentionally engage our minds and hearts as we read the Scriptures?

- **Begin with prayer**—we cannot understand God's word apart from the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it is wise to always begin your time in the word with prayer. **Ask the Spirit to open your mind and heart** to understand what you are reading and to help you live in worshipful obedience to his voice.
- **Read repetitively**—the more we read, the more we see the patterns and themes God has intentionally placed in his story. God's word is living and active; **we can never get to the end of abiding in it**. The goal is intimacy not mastery.
- **Have a holy curiosity**—we will never exhaust the depths of who God is. **There is always more to discover**, so as you read, allow yourself to have a holy curiosity: ask a lot of questions, go to God with those thoughts, listen for his voice, and be content in the tension of having unanswered questions.
- **Study in community**—it is important to spend individual time in the word with the Lord, but **it is equally beneficial to spend time in his word with others**. In that community, as you give voice to what the Holy Spirit is teaching you, it both solidifies what you have learned as well as encourages others in their faith.
- **Focus on God**—since the Bible is all God's story, **it is important to not lose sight of God while reading**. Our study of his word should never lead to mere head knowledge, rather it is how we can truly know and worship our Creator.

why does it matter that the bible is telling one story?

Every story in the Bible was intentionally included by the divine Author, which means **every word and phrase has value and meaning**. Once you see the overarching story of Scripture, reading the Bible becomes a deep dive into the riches of God's unparalleled creativity, his endless mercy, and his steadfast love for his people.

The one story of God is the one eternal plan of God for the redemption and adoption of his people in his one Son. **Jesus is the one to whom every story points**. In him we find all the wisdom and promises of God.

The stories of Scripture are historically true as well as spiritually significant. As you familiarize yourself with these narratives, you will begin to see **recurring themes and types God has intentionally woven throughout Scripture**. You will also be better able to read each verse in the context of its particular story—while placing it in the overarching story of the entire Bible.

Every believer, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is invited to read and understand God's unchanging word. The more we study the Bible and process its truths with others, the more we will understand which will lead to increased confidence when we read and increased desire to hear from the Lord in his word.

what is the story?

Scripture tells one overarching story of a faithful God who pursues his people relentlessly—**literally moving heaven and earth to dwell with those who are his**. From the beginning of time, he purposed to create a people for his own possession. However, Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, fracturing creation and our access to a holy God.

God, in his steadfast love, determined to reconcile us to himself and redeem our lives for his name's sake. **He promises that one day all things will be made new** as evil is put to death, and we are able to live in the presence of our Savior for all eternity.

Scripture recounts stories of many people who were used mightily by the Lord, showed steadfast faith, and followed God with their lives, but ultimately they were all sinful humans just like us. They are not simply heroes we are to imitate, but rather **shadows of the promised greater one who was to come**. They all serve to show us our need for a better mediator, a truer prophet, a holier priest, a wholly perfect king.

The narrative of Scripture moves from creation to the fall of Adam and Eve, followed by centuries of God promising a coming redemption which is fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. However, **that is not the end of the story**.

We, too, find *our* stories in the grander story God is still writing. In the end, we are promised that he will be faithful to restore all things to their intended perfect design in the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Our King Jesus will eternally dwell with all his people—which has been his divine plan since before time began.

creation → fall → redemption → restoration: the story of the Bible

why read the old testament?

The writings of the Old Testament start at the beginning of time—very literally *"in the beginning"*—and follow the story of God and his people until about 400 years before the birth of Christ.

It is inaccurate to interpret *old* to mean *outdated* or *irrelevant*. In fact, **these Scriptures are fundamental to us as believers**. The Old Testament contains the Scriptures that were used by the New Testament believers, the apostles, and by Jesus himself. In fact, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament close to 300 times, and if we include where the New Testament alludes to the Old Testament, that number jumps to nearly 1,000.

Reading and understanding the Old Testament is essential to understanding the New Testament. The New Testament is not a replacement for the old—rather it is a continuation of the one story God has been writing since time began.

Within the pages of the Old Testament, we learn about...

- the creation of the world
- the formation of God's people
- their obedience and disobedience
- their deliverance and conquest of the land
- the history of the judges
- the lineage of the kings and kingdoms
- the exile and return
- the prophecies of the coming Messiah

...and most importantly, we learn about God. **It is in the Old Testament where we begin to see and know the character of our unchanging God.**

And he is still writing his story in our lives today. As his children, we are a part of his ongoing purpose to rescue and redeem his people and bring glory to his name.

So we read the Old Testament as a book written about God that we may know and worship him more. The story of God was not just written for the believers of old—**it was written for us, too**.

For whatever was written in former days **was written for our instruction,** *that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Romans 15:4

threads

the exodus & the wilderness

exodus–deuteronomy

As you interact with the Scriptures in each section, keep these three questions at the forefront of your mind:

- *What **observations** have you made while reading this Scripture?*
- *What **questions** come to mind as you continue to process what you've read?*
- *What do you see about God that causes your heart to **worship**?*

the birth of moses

read: **Exodus 1–2**

According to the sovereign plan of God, all the people of Israel settle in Egypt during the famine, and in this new land, **they are fruitful and multiply greatly in accordance with the creation mandate** (**Genesis 1:28**). But with the death of Joseph eventually comes the death of the Israelites' protected status under subsequent kings. After a few hundred years, as their numbers increase greatly from the 70 who first entered Egypt, **the new pharaoh begins to see them as a formidable threat**.

In ancient Egypt, the pharaoh typically wore **a headdress adorned with a serpent** *symbolizing his royalty and presumed divine authority.*

Since the promise of **Genesis 3:15**, many Hebrew women likely lived with wonder and hope that they might be the one to give birth to the son who would crush the head of the serpent. Now Satan uses the Egyptian king in his ongoing desire to thwart God's plan.

» *How does Pharaoh's evil plot reflect the schemes of Satan in his hatred toward God and God's eternal plan to send a redeemer?*

Pharaoh makes the execution of his plan the responsibility of two Hebrew women. However, these midwives do not follow through, but instead, risk their own lives in an attempt to save the lives of many babies. As the serpent had deceived the woman in **Genesis 3**, these two women now boldly deceive this serpent king.

» *Given this situation, what choices would you be contemplating?*

» *In addition to saving the children, why do the midwives choose to disobey Pharaoh's order?*

» *How does God respond to the midwives?*

Imagine the desperation and hopelessness felt by the Israelites. **Yet the wicked heart of Pharaoh could never obstruct the plans of God for his people**. God is faithful to preserve a remnant for his purposes: while Pharaoh commands that all male Israelite babies be drowned, the story quickly narrows in on **one particular baby boy**. Against the decree of Pharaoh, Moses' mother chooses to hide him for as long as she can.

» *Contrast the character of Pharaoh with that of his daughter: consider her response to this Hebrew baby in light of his response to the growing Hebrew population.*

» *What are the many ways you see the Lord's hand in the life of Moses and his mother in these chapters?*

Moses' mother could never have imagined how **God's divine sovereignty would orchestrate her circumstances** to soothe her deepest heartache as she is given the privilege of caring for her baby. When Moses is fully weaned, likely at the age of three or four, his mother returns him to Pharaoh's daughter to grow up in the household of Pharaoh.

Moses is raised in this royal Egyptian household until the age of 40, but his heart is still for his Hebrew brothers and sisters in bondage. **He takes it upon himself to intervene** when he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew.

» *Read **Acts 7:20-29**: what motivates Moses to take action against this Egyptian?*

In fear for his life, Moses flees to Midian. Three hundred miles away from the palace, Moses marries the daughter of a Midianite priest and builds a life tending his father-in-law's sheep for the next 40 years.

» *From Hebrew baby to Egyptian prince to fugitive shepherd, how is God using every stage of Moses' life to prepare him to rescue his people?*

The Hebrew people continue to suffer hardship at the hands of the Egyptians with no earthly leader to advocate or look out for them. **But God is not unaware**: he hears, he remembers, he sees, and he knows.

» *According to **Exodus 2:24–25**, what does God "remember" and why does this cause him to act?*

» *How is it comforting that God also intimately knows you and your story?*

» *Spend time with the Lord in thanksgiving, reflecting on his sovereign hand throughout your life.*

seeing Jesus

Both Moses and Jesus were born under foreign oppression and saved by the acts of faithful individuals who refused the evil orders of ruthless men (**Matthew 2:7–15**). They were also both born to mothers who would have to give up their sons. As the adopted son of a king, Moses chose to be identified with his people; Jesus is the King who humbled himself to be with us so that we can become adopted sons and daughters of God (**Galatians 4:4–5**). We are now co-heirs with this King (**Romans 8:16–17**) and will reign with him forever (**Revelation 5:9–10**). From prince of heaven (**Isaiah 9:6**) to good shepherd (**John 10:11**) to divine rescuer (**2 Timothy 4:18**), Jesus leads us to our promised land (**2 Peter 3:13**).

moses meets God

read: **Exodus 3:1–4:17**

God often meets us in the ordinary if we are paying attention. Moses is not anticipating **a life-altering encounter with God** when he goes out to shepherd his father-in-law's sheep. God uses a burning bush to grab his attention and then proceeds to make himself known to this man who will become his representative to the people.

» What might God be communicating about himself by appearing as a flame of fire that does not consume the bush?

Although God comes in a powerful display of holiness, instead of trusting God, Moses responds to God's command to lead his people out of bondage with a myriad of excuses.

Our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:29

» *What concerns does Moses express, and why might he be so reluctant to obey the voice of the Lord?*

» *How does God respond to Moses' objections? What does this show you about the character of God?*

» *What does God mean by declaring himself to be the* "I AM"*?*

» *What excuses do you most frequently use with the Lord? With these in mind, ask him to reveal how his sufficiency is greater than your human limitations.*

Feeling scared and unqualified, Moses, at the age of 80, along with his older brother, Aaron, returns to Egypt and appears before Pharaoh **in obedience to God's command**.

In **Exodus 5:2**, when Moses delivers the Lord's command to let his people go, Pharaoh retorts, *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."* **The Lord will not tolerate the belittling of his authority** and responds with demonstrations of his miraculous power.

the plagues

read: **Exodus 7:1–10:29**

Moses goes before Pharaoh with a sign to prove that he speaks for God, but Pharaoh is unimpressed and solicits his magicians to replicate the sign. Scripture records that Pharaoh's heart is hardened (**Exodus 7:13**). God does not act against Pharaoh's will; rather God strengthens Pharaoh's heart according to what it most desires (**Romans 1:24–25**). **One man's hard heart toward God has repercussions that reverberate throughout all of Egypt**.

» *What are some clear indications of Pharaoh's hardened heart toward God?*

» *How is God using Pharaoh's hard heart to accomplish his purposes?*

» *When has your heart been defiant in response to the Lord's voice?*

What follows this initial rejection is the fury of God poured out on the land of Egypt in the form of plagues. God uses **blood, frogs, gnats, flies, the death of livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness** to show his supremacy over the Egyptian gods (**Exodus 12:12**) and to send a clear message to Pharaoh and all the people of the land.

- *What is God trying to communicate through the plagues?*
- *Put yourself in the story and consider how each of these nine plagues could have impacted the people, the nation, and creation as a whole.*
- *What do the plagues reveal about God's justice, mercy, and sovereignty?*

Despite all the destruction and devastation, Pharaoh continues to double down on his resistance and arrogance toward the God who continues to powerfully display his might against Pharaoh's prideful disobedience. **God is deathly serious about his glory**—his people will be set free for his name's sake.

seeing Jesus

Jesus is the I AM—the eternally self-existent one (**John 8:56–58**). He is the perfectly obedient rescuer who came to free his people from slavery to sin and shield them, and us, from the coming wrath of God (**1 Thessalonians 5:9**). While the plagues were a one-time occurrence that displayed God's power against evil, God's wrath still remains for those who are opposed to him (**Ephesians 2:1–3**). However, Jesus, in his crucifixion, fully absorbed the wrath we deserved for our rebellion (**Ephesians 2:4–7**), and God will never change his mind concerning those who are his in Christ (**Romans 11:29**).

As a result of Christ's finished work and ascension (**John 16:7**), the Holy Spirit descended on the early believers, appearing as flames of fire (**Acts 2:1–4**). This began the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit for all who are in Christ (**John 14:16–17**). The Holy Spirit softens hearts to respond to God with obedience and surrender (**Ezekiel 36:26–28**) as we wait for the return of our eternal Rescuer (**2 Timothy 4:18**).

the final plague

read: **Exodus 11–12**

God executes nine separate plagues to demonstrate the futility of resisting his power and authority, yet Pharaoh still does not relent.

The final plague comes with detailed requirements for the Israelites to follow in order to avoid being personally devastated by the coming judgment. However, **in order to spare every firstborn son, death is still required**. A perfect, spotless, one-year-old male lamb was to be brought into their homes, live with them for four days, and then be slaughtered in his innocence in order for the sons to be saved.

» *What additional instructions does God give his people about this last plague?*

» *In what ways do the commands regarding the Passover lamb parallel the greater reality of the future Lamb of God?*

God promises his people that this final plague will pass over them if they trust his word and obey his instructions. This would be such a pivotal moment in Israel's history and understanding of God that **he also establishes this Passover as a feast to be celebrated every year** "*as a statute forever*" (**Exodus 12:14**).

» *Why might the Lord want them to commemorate this event every year?*

» *Read **Luke 22:14–20**: how is the Passover related to communion and our remembrance of what Christ accomplished on the cross?*

The Lord is always true to his word—he can't not be—so, as he had forewarned, the Lord sweeps through the land and kills every firstborn son—both man and animal—whose door had not been covered by the blood of the lamb.

This final blow sends Pharaoh into a hurried desperation to rid Egypt of the Israelites permanently. He sees God's people as the source of his problem, not his hardened heart in rebellion toward God.

» *Consider **Genesis 15:13–14** and **Exodus 3:20–22**: what evidence does God give of his foreknowledge long before the Egyptians drive the Israelites from their land?*

» *How can the reality of God's foreknowledge impact how you view all of life?*

the red sea

read: **Exodus 13:17–14:31**

Jacob's family of 70 had gone into Egypt under Joseph to survive the famine. More than 400 years later, they have become a nation of well over a million people who are fleeing out of Egypt in order to save their lives (**Exodus 12:37**). Not only is this multitude made up of an **inconceivable number of Israelites**, but it now includes Egyptians and other foreigners who would dwell among God's people (**Exodus 12:38**).

The Lord, in his kindness, leads them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to the Red Sea—approximately a three-day journey. The people are incredibly fickle toward both God and Moses; stuck between the Red Sea and the advancing Egyptians, they cannot make sense of their circumstance.

» *How does your lack of clarity influence your ability to trust God?*

» *What are all the ways you see God's power and faithfulness in the deliverance of his people out of Egypt?*

In a relatively short amount of time, Moses goes from a frightened man full of excuses, to a bold leader and prophet of God.

» *Similar to Moses, where have you seen God increase your faith and obedience?*

The same water that the Israelites were saved through becomes the judgment of the Egyptians. *"Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore"* (**Exodus 14:30**).

» *Ultimately, why does the Lord lead the Israelites to the Red Sea?*

God is a deliverer of his people; he delivers us from our sins and delivers the Israelites from Egypt. This deliverance becomes a recurring reminder from God to his people of his grace and compassion as they continue to ebb and flow in their affection and obedience to him.

» *In light of all you've seen in Exodus so far, what are you celebrating about God's character and plan for salvation?*

seeing Jesus

In **Luke 22**, we see Jesus observe this same Passover meal with his disciples on the night of his arrest. But instead of celebrating the blood of a lamb that saved them from death in Egypt, he ushered in the new covenant and declared himself to *be* the Lamb whose blood would save his people from their sins (**1 Corinthians 11:23–26**).

Jesus is the firstborn Son and the perfect, spotless Passover Lamb (**John 1:29**; **1 Peter 1:18–19**). It is his blood that cleanses us from our sins (**1 John 1:9**), liberates us from captivity (**Luke 4:17–21**). One day, God promises that he will judge the whole world and only those who cling to the cross of Christ and are covered by his blood will be passed over in the final judgment (**Romans 5:9**). We trust in his blood alone to cover us and in his Spirit to lead us from this life to our eternal promised land.

God provides

read: **Exodus 15:22–17:7**

The Israelites have finally and completely been set free from the Egyptians; their slavery is a thing of the past. However, that does not mean their life is now one of ease. **The Lord leads them into the wilderness where they will encounter a number of hardships**.

After a three-day journey, with the Red Sea behind them, the water they once feared would kill them from its abundance, they now fear will kill them due to its absence. They cry out to Moses who then cries out to the Lord on their behalf.

» *What insights does the Lord give his people about himself while they are in Marah?*

Despite the Lord's recent faithfulness and provision of water, **the people begin to grumble** against Moses because they are hungry. They become driven by their physical desperation instead of their faith in God's goodness.

» *The Israelites come to Moses with many complaints. What do their complaints reveal about the lies they are believing?*

In spite of their grumbling, **the Lord provides bread from heaven in order to feed his people**. But there are specific stipulations for how and when they are to collect this bread.

» *What conditions does God give for the collection of bread and why?*

» *For how long do the Israelites depend on the daily bread from the Lord?*

» *Read* ***Deuteronomy 8:2–3*** *and consider how God's daily provision of manna parallels our daily need for God's word.*

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27

In the creation narrative, God rested from his work on the seventh day as both a pattern and an invitation; here God establishes the Sabbath as a gift for people who had daily been driven to work as slaves in Egypt for generations. On the Sabbath they were to **cease from work and rest in their God as provider and sustainer**.

» *Imagine leaving a lifetime of slavery and now being commanded to rest. How difficult might it be for the Israelites to implement this new practice? Yet what does this command reveal about the heart of God?*

» *How difficult is it for you to freely rest in the finished work of the Lord?*

The Israelites once again find themselves in the wilderness without water and are quick to bring their grievances to Moses.

» *How does the Israelites' grumbling distort their view of God and reality?*

» *In what ways have you seen grumbling impact your life?*

» *What might God be cultivating in his people through their hardships?*

amalek attacks

read: **Exodus 17:8–16**

God remains steadfastly with his people and provides for both their internal needs as well as their external protection.

These Israelites had spent years in slavery. They are likely strong from forced physical labor, but they are not trained fighters, having never been in battle. **Yet God provides powerfully for his people in their weakness**.

Amalek, descended from Esau, attacks them from behind, starting with the slowest and weakest (**Deuteronomy 25:17–19**). They are the first enemy to come upon the Israelites after they leave Egypt, and God does not tolerate this unprovoked attack.

» *What is the significance of Moses' stance during the battle?*

» *In what ways do Aaron and Hur provide critical assistance to Moses, and ultimately Israel, in this battle? Who in your life has been a God-given help in times of struggle?*

God promises to one day do away with the Amalekites so they will no longer even be a memory on the earth. **When God defeats an enemy, he defeats them completely**. Moses then builds an altar in response to the Lord's victory in this battle.

» *Throughout these three chapters, what is God showing us both about his character and about humanity?*

seeing Jesus

We see in **1 Corinthians 10:4** that Christ is the rock from whom the Israelites drank in the wilderness. Jesus declares himself to be the living water (**John 7:37–38**), and if we drink of him we will never thirst again (**John 4:10–15**). He is the fountain of life that eternally satisfies. Jesus is also the bread of life come down from heaven whose body was broken for us as he ushered in the new covenant (**John 6:48–51**).

Like the Israelites, we too have an enemy who attacks us in our weakness. Moses served as a mediator for the Israelites before God; Jesus, our perfect mediator, is interceding for us, praying that we would remain strong in faith and in our battle against sin and the devil (**Hebrews 7:25**). In his death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed the power of Satan, and one day we will see our enemy destroyed completely (**Hebrews 2:14–15**). When we finally stand in the presence of Jesus our King, the works of the enemy in our lives will no longer even be a memory (**Isaiah 65:17**, **Revelation 21:4**).

covenant at sinai

read: **Exodus 19**

In the third month of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites come to a mountain known as Sinai, where they will remain for a little over a year. God references different mountains throughout Scripture—each with its own story and purpose—and this mountain is one Moses is uniquely familiar with; it is also referred to as Mount Horeb.

» *Why is Mount Horeb significant (**Exodus 3:10–12**)?*

» *What could God be showing Moses by bringing him to this particular mountain?*

On this mountain, God speaks to Moses, establishing a covenant with him and the people. **This covenant is in addition to the one God had established with Abraham** (**Genesis 15**). The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional because God bears the full responsibility to uphold it. Whereas, in this Mosaic covenant the people are active participants.

I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life,** *that you and your offspring may live...that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers.*

Deuteronomy 30:19–20

» *What does God promise will be true of the people, and what are the conditions of this promise (**Exodus 19:5–6**)?*

Moses is God's chosen mediator with his people, the Israelites. **Initially, only Moses is allowed to ascend the mountain and talk with God**; all others will die if they so much as touch this mountain.

» *Why does God put such severe restrictions on who or what can be in his presence?*

» *Contrast the Israelites' access to God with the access we now have to this same God in Christ (**Hebrews 12:18–24**)?*

the ten commandments

read: **Exodus 20:1–23**

God delivers a message to Moses that he is to relay to the people. This message is the voice of the Lord to his people regarding their responsibility within the covenant. Out of his love for them, God gives ten commandments that are to define his children. **These commandments are a gift, for in them we see the heart and character of God**.

» *Looking at **Exodus 20:2**, why does God preface the giving of the ten commandments with this reminder?*

» *How does the focus differ between the first four commandments and the last six commandments?*

» *How is this emphasis echoed in the New Testament (**Matthew 22:36-40**)?*

» *What does each commandment reveal to us about the nature of God?*

And by this we know that **we have come to know him**, *if we keep his commandments.*

1 John 2:3

the blood of the covenant

read: **Exodus 24**

Moses delivers the commandments and terms of this covenant. As their mediator, he seals the covenant between God and the people with the blood of an oxen (**Leviticus 17:11**). Moses is given a weighty assignment in leading over a million people through the wilderness. God, in his kindness, eases Moses' burden of leading these people by appointing Aaron, Aaron's sons, and 70 elders to serve alongside Moses.

» *How does Moses confirm this covenant? Why is this significant (**Hebrews 9:19-22**)?*

» *The people declare, "all that the Lord has spoken we will do," but they repeatedly fail. Why? How do you see similar struggles in your own obedience?*

Covenants were commonly sealed by the sharing of a meal between the two parties. Scripture records that Moses and these appointed men went up and "*saw the God of Israel... they beheld God, and ate and drank*" (**Exodus 24:10-11**).

Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!

Luke 14:15

seeing Jesus

Jesus is the perfect mediator between God and humanity (**1 Timothy 2:5**), and the mediator of the covenant to which every other covenant has been pointing (**Hebrews 8:6–13**). On the night he was betrayed, the disciples ate and drank with him as he declared that he was ushering in a new covenant. This covenant was sealed by *his* blood which was poured out for us, and by it we are made clean (**Matthew 26:28**).

Because of this new covenant, those of us who are in Christ are unconditionally "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession*" (**1 Peter 2:9**). And as his chosen people, we will eat and drink with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb in the presence of our God (**Revelation 19:6–9**).

the golden calf

read: **Exodus 31:18–32:35**

God covenanted the Israelites to himself as his people in Sinai. He had, in essence, joined himself to them in marriage, **knowing full well how often they would prove to be unfaithful to him**.

Moses ascends the mountain numerous times during the Israelites' time at Sinai. On this occasion, Moses, along with his assistant Joshua, are on the mountain with God and receive the tablets of the testimony written by God himself—the ten commandments which the Lord had previously spoken to his people (**Exodus 20:1–17**).

During this 40-day period, **Moses leaves the people in the hands of his brother Aaron**.

» *What motivates the people to demand that Aaron make gods for them? What does this reveal about their hearts?*

» *Why are our hearts so drawn to idolatry, and why is this so offensive to God?*

Exodus 32:7-14 reveals a conversation between God and Moses in which we see the severity of God's anger toward the Israelites' idolatry. He will not overlook the unfaithfulness of his stiff-necked people.

» *What does God propose to Moses, and what might be God's underlying purposes in this interaction?*

» *Why does Moses remind God of his own character and promises? How can we apply this as a model for our own conversations with God?*

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, **that he should change his mind**.

Numbers 23:19

Moses descends the mountain to find the people just as God told him: reveling in the worship of their idol. **God's commands were given to set them apart** from the pagan nations for the sake of his holy name and character, yet their flagrant unfaithfulness is on full display.

At the sight of this, Moses throws down the tablets on which God had inscribed the commandments of his covenant. **Moses breaks the tablets just as the people had broken covenant with God**.

» *Recall the specifics of the ten commandments: which of these commandments did the people break in this passage?*

» *What are the consequences of their unfaithfulness, and what do these consequences reveal about God?*

» *Contrast the leadership of Moses and Aaron. What differences do you observe in both their actions and their concern for the people?*

Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, "This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt," and had committed great blasphemies,
you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.

Nehemiah 9:18–19

the glory of God

read: **Exodus 33:1-34:9**

The time comes for them to prepare to leave Sinai. The Lord tells Moses and the people that he will send an angel and provide for them, but because of their unfaithfulness, he himself will not go with them. The people respond with repentance and mourning; they realize **the blessings of God without the presence of God are not what they truly desire**.

Once again, Moses intercedes for the people, and God promises to go with them and give them rest. **Exodus 33:7–11** describes a previous pattern of Moses' interactions with God. **He has come to know the Lord intimately**, but as much as he knows about God, he still wants more. He says to the Lord, "*Please show me your glory*" (**Exodus 33:18**).

For I the LORD do not change*; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.*

Malachi 3:6

» *According to **Exodus 34:6**, how does God describe himself, and why are these attributes central to his character?*

» *Consider your own desire to know God more. Boldly ask God to show you his glory.*

The people have sinned grievously against the Lord in making the golden calf and yet, in his mercy, he does not blot them out. **God is jealous for the worship of his people** because nothing and no one else is worthy of worship. He is both intensely serious about his holiness and lovingly generous as a Father to his children. **Their sin cannot change him or his faithfulness to his covenant**.

» *Why is it so important that God does not change, and what comfort do you find in this truth?*

seeing Jesus

The Israelites created an image to worship as a god; Jesus is the image of the invisible God (**Colossians 1:15**, **Hebrews 1:3**). Moses was a sinful mediator who interceded on the people's behalf and God withheld his wrath. Jesus is the sinless mediator who took on God's wrath for his people and forever makes intercession for them (**Romans 8:34**). Moses goes before the Lord in hopes of making atonement for the sins of the people; Jesus makes a sure and final atonement with his own life for all who are in him (**Hebrews 10:10–18**). Although, like the Israelites, God disciplines us in our sin (**Hebrews 12:5–6**), he will never break his covenant with us which he has established for all eternity in Christ (**2 Timothy 2:13**).

the tabernacle

read: **Exodus 40**

Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Exodus 25:8

Despite the Israelites' idol worship and blatant infidelity in the camp, God delivers instructions to Moses, while still on Mount Sinai, regarding the construction of the tabernacle. The people are to build a portable tent **to be the place where God's glory would dwell with them**—until the temple would be built almost 500 years later (**1 Kings 8**).

God remains faithful in his promise to always be with his people; one of the Bible's recurring themes is ***God with us***.

The tabernacle will be a daily visible reminder of his presence for his doubting people. The innermost part of the tabernacle, the Most Holy Place, is where the very presence of God will dwell. "*I will dwell among the people of Israel and be their God*" (**Exodus 29:45**).

» *As an Israelite living in the wilderness, how might this visible reminder impact you?*

The tabernacle was a tent that sat in a courtyard and contained two distinct areas: **The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place**. These rooms and their furnishings were constructed with gold, silver, brass, jewels, woods, and tapestries. In the design of the tabernacle, there was an intentional increase in the value of the materials used with closer proximity to the Most Holy Place.

Not just anyone could enter God's presence; this increase in precious metals came with a decrease in accessibility—the Lord was very precise about who could come into his presence, including when and in what manner.

» *Where could the Israelites have gotten the materials to build the tabernacle?*

» *Fifty chapters of the Bible speak about the construction and operation of the tabernacle. Why might God dedicate so much of his word to these details?*

the tabernacle elements

The elements and furnishings within the courtyard and tabernacle served both practical purposes as well as conveyed deeply meaningful symbolism.

in the courtyard

- **the altar of burnt offering**: a large, bronze altar used for daily sacrifices required to atone for sin. Fire burned continually on this altar.
- **the basin**: a bronze bowl located before the entrance into the tabernacle used exclusively by the priests for purification of their hands and feet before serving.

in the holy place

- **the lampstand**: a 75-pound tree-shaped candlestick—a menorah—with seven lamps all made of pure gold. As the only source of light in the tabernacle, the lampstand burned continually, casting light across the room onto the table of bread.

- **the table of bread**: a table overlaid with gold containing 12 loaves of bread. These loaves were gathered weekly from the 12 tribes of Israel. Plates, bowls, dishes for incense, and cups for the drink offering were also on the table.
- **the altar of incense**: a golden altar positioned directly in front of the veil leading into the Most Holy Place. The thick colorful curtain embroidered with cherubim restricted access to God's presence; only the High Priest could go beyond it, and only once a year.

in the most holy place

- **the veil**: the Most Holy Place was located behind a veil which separated it from the Holy Place. The thick colorful curtain, embroidered with cherubim, restricted access to God's presence; only the High Priest could go beyond it, and only once a year.
- **the ark of the covenant**: a gold-covered chest made with acacia wood. This box contained the Ten Commandments, a golden urn of manna, and Aaron's staff.
- **the mercy seat**: the cover of the ark of the covenant. There were two golden cherubim on top—one on each end facing one another with their wings hovering over the place where the blood for atonement was sprinkled. The presence of God dwelt above the mercy seat between these two cherubim.

» *God is holy and intentional in all he does. What might he be communicating through each element in the tabernacle?*

the true tabernacle

read: **Hebrews 9**

The author of Hebrews presents many of the Old Testament practices as types and shadows of their heavenly realities. **The Old Testament points us upward to these divine truths and forward to their fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ**. What was true for the tabernacle would eventually be true for the temple as well—things with which the original readers of Hebrews would have been intimately familiar.

seeing Jesus

Reflecting on **Exodus 40** and **Hebrews 9**, in what ways do you see Jesus foreshadowed in the tabernacle and its furnishings?

And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us.

John 1:14

the law

read: **Leviticus 19:1–18**

The Israelites spend an entire year camped at the base of Mount Sinai. God uses this time to continue **to show them who he is and how they are to honor him** in every area of their lives as they live as his people in his presence.

At Mount Sinai, God communicates **over 600 laws** the people are to follow. These laws stipulate different offerings, sacrifices, and practices that will be a regular part of their lives, as well as the consequences that would occur if a law is not kept. However, **the law was also a grace**—it would provide for the forgiveness of sins, guidance for life, and purity before a holy God so he could dwell with them.

three types of laws

These laws can be understood in three categories: **moral, ceremonial, and civil**:

- **Moral laws reveal the heart and character of God** by defining what he declares right and wrong. These are still applicable truths for believers today. They pertain to sin and how we relate to God and others as we reflect his nature.
- **Ceremonial laws prescribed how unholy people could approach a holy God**. These feasts, festivals, and rituals also distinguished the Israelites from the pagan nations that surrounded them. For the church today under the new covenant, the need to observe these laws has been removed. The blood of Christ purifies us and, united to him, we stand before God holy and clean.
- **Civil laws governed the nation of Israel by providing practical instructions on how to live as God's people**. Many of the principles found in these laws are still useful for believers today but are no longer binding for those in Christ.

- **Moral**: *Leviticus 19:1–4, 11–18*
- **Ceremonial**: *Leviticus 19:5–8*
- **Civil**: *Leviticus 19:9–10*

» *In what ways do these laws reflect God's character?*

» *In light of the ceremonial laws, compare the Israelites' approach to God then with your access to God now in Christ.*

» *What principle from the civil law in this passage can be applied to our lives today?*

why the law?

read: **Galatians 3:5–29**

With the giving of the law, God again covenants himself to his people and this covenant contains responsibilities for both parties: they were to obey him as his people and he would bless them as their God (**Exodus 19:5–6**). Now, on this side of the cross, we see the law in a different light.

» *According to **Galatians 3**, what were the reasons for the law?*

» *How does our union with Christ change our relationship to the law?*

» *What is the danger of measuring our righteousness by obedience to the law, and how do you see this wrestle in your own life?*

Under the law, their lives become an endless cycle of washings, rituals, sacrifices, and offerings. Their sin and human frailty were always before them, yet these laws were also meant to reveal **God's heart for his people and his determination to remain in their midst**.

For Christ is the end of the law *for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Romans 10:4

day of atonement

read: **Leviticus 16**

Sacrifices were performed every day, **both morning and night**, for the forgiveness of the Israelites' sins (**Exodus 29:38–39**). However, **one day a year was set aside as the Day of Atonement** for the purification of the tabernacle and the covering of the sins of the people. Many ceremonial laws dictated how sacrifices were to be made on this sobering day.

» *What does the Lord require of the high priest to enter behind the veil?*

» *What does Aaron do while in this sacred space?*

Ultimately, the high priest sacrifices a goat as a sin offering for the transgressions of the people. He also confesses the sins of all the Israelites as he lays his hands on the head of another goat—the scapegoat—who is then led out into the wilderness.

» *What might each goat symbolize in our atonement?*

» *We still require the sacrifice of a high priest to redeem us from our sins. With the burden of all these sacrifices in mind, how does* ***Hebrews 9:11–15*** *lead you to worship?*

seeing Jesus

As there was no end to the Israelites' sin, there would be no end to the sacrifices, unless their sin—our sin—could be atoned for in another way (**Leviticus 17:11**). We needed a great high priest who would go before God on our behalf (**Hebrews 2:17**), and we needed a perfect sacrifice to make us right before God and give us a holy identity (**Hebrews 7:26–27**).

Jesus, our sinless sacrificial Lamb (**1 Peter 1:18–21**), was both taken outside the city gate and slaughtered for the removal and atonement of our sins (**Hebrews 13:11–12**). He has fulfilled every law that we could never keep (**Matthew 5:17**), and he will keep us united to himself both now and forever (**Hebrews 10:12–14**).

the twelve spies

read: **Numbers 13**

The wilderness has an end goal; the wandering has a destination. The Israelites have spent close to a year in the wilderness of Mount Sinai where God taught his people his ways and established his covenant with them.

In the second year after having been freed from Egypt, the Israelites now head to the land promised to them by God. They set out from Mount Sinai and travel to the southern border of the promised land. **Their journey appears to be almost over** and the wilderness will soon be a distant memory.

» *Imagine you have wandered and hungered and grumbled in the wilderness, but now you are within arm's reach of the promised land filled with milk and honey and rest. What could be running through your mind at this moment?*

But first, they send in 12 men to spy out the land God is giving them; one man from each tribe of Israel.

» *Read **Deuteronomy 1:19-24**: whose idea is it to spy out the land, and what is likely the motivation for this plan?*

» *With this Deuteronomy passage in mind, what might the Lord be doing in **Numbers 13:1–2**?*

After 40 days, the spies return with a mixed report: **the land is everything God said it would be**—but the spies come back with two very different perspectives.

» *What do the 10 spies report about the land? How does Caleb's account differ?*

» *What does this indicate about how the spies view God?*

» *How can you continue to walk in obedience when faced with real-world obstacles?*

wilderness rebellion

read: **Numbers 14**

Although God has already shown his power and faithfulness repeatedly, in their fear and unbelief, the people come up with a new plan.

» *What is the collective response to the spies' report, and what is their new plan?*

Moses urges the people not to rebel against God, **reminding them of the Lord's promises and goodness**. Instead of repentance, they respond with a shared determination to stone Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua to death. But then the Lord appears and speaks to Moses in the presence of all the people.

For **freedom** *Christ has set us free...do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Galatians 5:1

» *How does Moses respond to the Lord, and what does this dialogue reveal about the heart God has been cultivating in him throughout this journey?*

The 10 spies who brought back a bad report about the land meet an immediate fate, but the rest of Israel is spared—for now. However, **God declares they will wander in the wilderness for their rebellion** until every person 20 years of age and older passes away— with the exception of Caleb and Joshua.

» *What is the root of their sin that warrants the discipline they receive? And why is this sin so offensive to God?*

» *After the judgment, what do the people determine to do, and what is the result?*

» *When have you not trusted God to be true to his promises but instead relied on your own understanding and strength?*

As a result of their unbelief and blatant rebellion, what had been an 11-day journey to the edge of the promised land, now becomes a 40–year affliction wandering in the desert (**Deuteronomy 1:2**).

seeing Jesus

Immediately following Jesus' baptism, the Spirit led him into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted by Satan (**Matthew 4:1–11**). These 40 days parallel the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness. Where they failed to trust and follow God during their testing in the desert, Jesus obeyed God perfectly (**Hebrews 4:15**).

We cannot force our way into the promised land. There is no way to God the Father except through God the Son (**Matthew 11:27**). Because of Jesus, we never have to fear God will disown us or cut us off (**John 6:37**). In Christ we can be sure that our wilderness wanderings will most certainly lead to our eternal promised land.

moses strikes the rock

read: **Numbers 20:1–13; Deuteronomy 3:23–4:14**

The years in the wilderness are finally coming to an end. Overall, the people have maintained the same grumbling disposition as those who left Egypt—**it's just a new generation**. Moses has spent 40 years in the wilderness and watched an entire generation of rebellious Israelites die in the desert.

» *As Moses deals again with a lack of water for the people, how is God's command to him different from the first time he provided water from a rock in* ***Exodus 17:6****?*

» *What are Moses' failures in this instance, what does God say is at the heart of his sin, and what is the resulting consequence?*

He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.

Psalm 78:15

» ***1 Corinthians 10:1–4*** *gives us a wider perspective of the Israelites' journey; with this passage in mind, what is so significant about the rock that God would respond to Moses in this way?*

» *When have you, like Moses, known God's commands, but chosen to disobey?*

The Lord disciplines Moses but he is not done with him. At the age of 120, Moses prepares this next generation of Israelites to enter the promised land by reiterating all God had commanded and promised their people.

Moses will not lead them into the promised land; therefore, he instructs them to teach these things to their children as well, so **God's love and God's law would be known throughout the generations**.

the death of moses

read: **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**

This life is one Moses could have never imagined for himself. From being saved out of the waters of the Nile as a baby, to being called by God from a burning bush at the age of 80, Moses spends his last 40 years living in intimate communion with his Lord.

At the end of his life, Moses is alone with God on yet another mountain. This interaction depicts his final moments on earth and God's fatherly care for his faithful servant.

» *In what ways do you see God's great love and care for Moses in this passage?*

» *How does your heart respond as you imagine yourself alone with God at the end of your life and why?*

» *Read* ***Psalm 90****, written by Moses, in light of all he has experienced and endured. What do you see about God's character that leads you to worship?*

The Israelites' story is **one of deliverance from captivity to freedom in the promised land** and is the most frequently referenced Old Testament account in all of Scripture.

» *Having followed the Israelites' exodus from Egypt through the wilderness and to the edge of the promised land, what most encourages and/or challenges you?*

seeing Jesus

Deuteronomy 34:10 tells us that there would be no other prophet like Moses whom God knew face to face – that is, until the coming of Jesus (**Matthew 21:11**). He is the only one who has truly seen God the Father (**John 1:17–18**), but he assures us that anyone who has seen him has, indeed, seen the Father (**John 14:9**).

Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. **You shall listen to him** *in whatever he tells you."*

Acts 3:22

In his life, Moses was only permitted to see the promised land from afar due to his disobedience. However, several hundred years after his death, Moses stood in the promised land alongside Elijah (**Luke 9:28–31**). These two men, representing the law and the prophets, were sent to speak to Jesus about "*his departure,*" which in Greek is *exodos.*

One day we will stand in our eternal promised land and be welcomed in by our loving heavenly Father with the words "*well done, good and faithful servant*" (**Matthew 25:21**)—not because of our works but because of the works of Christ alone. He is the good and faithful servant and he is God and we are forever secure in him.

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matthias' lot church

loving him
& loving his.