

# THE STORYFORMED WAY

## Part 3: Exodus and the Law

### Questions for Personal Study

- As you re-read the Story up to the end of Genesis, what stands out?
- What stands out in this weeks installment? Any repeated themes?
- Read Exodus 1-2. What comes first - God's plan or Israel's need? Why?
- What does the exodus and passover teach us about God?
- What does the Law teach us about God? Is the Law a good gift? How?
- Why does God give Israel the tabernacle and sacrificial system?
- What does the blood of the lamb teach us about God, sin, and forgiveness?

### Questions for Study in Community

- How are you doing on keeping up with the daily reading together?
- Can you retell the Story up to Genesis 50? What are the main themes?
- What are the main events in Exodus - Deuteronomy?
- How is the promise of Gen 12 worked out in this section of the Bible?
- How do we see Jesus and our need for a Savior in these sections?
- How is the Family of God created, grown, and shaped in these sections?
- What does this mean for how we live as a community in this Story?

### Questions for Staying on Mission

- How is the mission of blessing the nations working out in Gen 12-50?
- What changes in the mission from Genesis to Exodus - Deuteronomy?
- How does the Passover, Law, and Tabernacle point to Jesus?
- Do you see obedience to God as a way to earn favor or live as a blessing?
- What is the difference?
- Do your neighbors know that God is healing the world? Why or why not?

### For Further Reading and Learning

Throughout the Story, two main themes we'll see again and again are Community and Mission. God is calling a people - not solitary individuals - to himself. He wants to create a new humanity, so responding to Him in repentance and faith always includes a deep commitment to community. At the same time, God creates this people to be a blessing to the rest of the world, so this Family is always looking outward, living out their identity as "blessed to be a blessing."

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### Understanding The Story

The Bible is such a huge book that most people never read the whole thing and those who do rarely understand what it means. It is challenging to try to put all the pieces together and to understand the it all. But the Bible is really telling just One Story, and when we realize that the whole Bible is about Jesus, we can put all the chapters in their place in the Story. Professor Ed Clowney says, "There are great stories in the Bible... but it is possible to know Bible stories, yet miss the story. The Bible has a story line. It traces an unfolding drama... If we forget the storyline we cut the heart out of the Bible." Our goal in this 10 week series is to see the heart of the Bible and place all the smaller stories into the One Story of God's redeeming work in and through Jesus Christ. As we see that Story unfold, we'll find ourselves called again to faith in Jesus and to join with him in his redemptive work in our city.

### Reviewing the Story

The Bible begins with an extended description of God's handiwork in creation. God has gone to great lengths to create something beautiful, perfect, and awe-inspiring, and in the middle of it all he puts a people whom he can love and bless. Adam and Eve form the first human community, and they are created to reflect God and to cultivate God's creation. They are viceroys under the Great King, bringing his gracious reign to all the earth.

But the early chapters of Genesis also tell the fall of this kingdom. Adam and Eve decide that living independently, rather than honoring and thanking God, will bring greater freedom, and the human race is plunged into ruin. Rather than gaining freedom, humanity finds slavery to sin, decay, and death. Creation begins to unravel, and Adam and Eve lose their sense of purpose in the world.

Last week we looked at the immediate consequences of man's "freedom" to live independently of God: "Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." There was no other option - without a humble dependence and thankfulness on God, humanity was truly fallen, having no moral compass and no clear sense of identity. They were lost in every sense of the word.

But God was not finished; indeed, his intentions were not thwarted by human sin and rebellion. He had a plan, and he zoomed in on one man and his family with a huge promise: Through Abraham, God would redeem all that was lost through man's rebellion. If Abraham would trust and obey, God would bring about redemption, heal the world, and restore his blessing to the humanity that he loved.

The rest of the book of Genesis traces God's faithfulness to his promise despite human faithlessness. The promise passes from Abraham (though he sleeps with his wife's servant), to Isaac (though he pimps out his wife just like his father Abraham did), to Jacob (though he is a momma's boy, a schemer, and marries 2 sisters). God renames Jacob, calling him Israel, which means "wrestles with God," an apt name for the people God has chosen to work through. Genesis ends with Jacob in a coffin and his family in Egypt, where God begins to prosper and multiply them into a great nation.

### **Exodus and Passover**

We pick up the Story this week with God's people multiplying rapidly in Egypt. They are well on their way to becoming the "nation" that God promised. Unfortunately, their hosts, the Egyptians, also see them multiplying, and are afraid that Israel might easily rise up and conquer them. So they force them into hard labor, and begin to kill all males born to Israelite women. Under the pressure of slavery, God's people cry out to him, not realizing that he has already set a rescue plan in motion in the birth and rise of Moses.

Moses, though born an Israelite, is raised in the home of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. God calls Moses to be his prophet, and sends Moses to command Pharaoh to let Israel go. God brings a series of plagues on Pharaoh for his refusal to let Israel go. In the final plague, God takes the life of all the first born in Israel, but provides a substitute for Israel. Every Israelite is to kill a lamb and smear its blood over the doorframe. The blood of the lamb would be God's great sign, and he would not take the life of the firstborn in those homes. In this way, God provides a way out of slavery for Israel while making a very clear point: the blood of the lamb is required for Israel to be free of their slavery.

### **The Law**

After this miraculous rescue, God takes his people into the desert on their way to Canaan, the land he promised to Abraham. It is during this time that Israel stops at Mt. Sinai and God gives Moses the Law. Summed up in the 10

commandments, the Law was given to Israel as a gift, a blessing from God that would allow them to live as his special people and become a blessing to the whole world. The law was not a new bondage, as if by obeying it they could somehow earn God's favor; rather, the Law was a way of life that would keep his people dependent on him and enable them to show his wisdom and glory to the surrounding nations. The Law was designed to be a conduit of blessing.

### **Tabernacle and Worship**

At the heart of God's instructions to Israel was the building of the tabernacle, a moveable tent where God's people could come to worship, pray, and meet with God. In an incredible act of condescension, God actually inhabits the tabernacle. He comes to dwell among his people! Rather than rule over his people from a distance, God took up residence among them, and invited them to come and enjoy fellowship with him.

And yet God would not allow Israel to have direct interaction with him. Sin remained a barrier between God and his people. Though he had rescued them and given them his Law, he had not removed sin from their hearts. In order to teach them this, he gave them the priests and sacrificial system. Israel could receive forgiveness of sin and be reconciled to God whenever they broke God's law if they brought an lamb or other animal to be sacrificed. God was teaching his people about the problem of sin deep in their hearts and the punishment that it required, death. But he was also teaching them about the mercy deep in *his heart*, in which he would forgive their sin and reconcile them to himself. But how could God forgive and heal his creation from the sin that required death?

The Story only makes sense in light of Jesus. When John the Baptizer first saw Jesus, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" When Jesus went to the cross, God placed on him the sin of the world, the sin that lies deep within each of our hearts, and dealt with it in one final sacrifice. And when Jesus rose again 3 days later, he conquered sin and death forever.

When we respond to this Story in repentance and faith, turning from our little self-fulfilling stories to find life in His Great Story, God removes the power and stain of sin from deep within our hearts, and writes His Law on our hearts. The Law is no longer an external command but an internal desire, placed within us by God Himself. In Jesus, God finally makes a people who has his full blessing and who can bring that blessing to every family under heaven!