

## Reading Exodus

Assuming that you take seriously the desire of God to communicate to us through the whole of Scripture, the following 3 steps may keep you on track when interpreting the Old Testament, and so, the 10 commandments before us in this sermon series:

### 1. First, we must try to understand the Law of Moses on its own terms, as it was given and understood in its original historical setting.

- ⇒ What did the first Israelite hearers think of this commandment?
- ⇒ What had God done before this?
- ⇒ What was God promising to do immediately after this?
- ⇒ What response was required from them? What response was required from later generations?

### 2. Secondly, we must try to understand how the New Testament completes God's story and God's Word.

Jesus claimed to fulfill the Scriptures in his life and teaching. He opened the disciples' minds to understand the Scriptures- how they pointed forward to Him, His suffering and rising; how the Kingdom promised to prophets of old had now arrived in his very presence.

- ⇒ What things has Jesus done which bring to fulfillment the teaching of these Laws?
- ⇒ What does Jesus now teach about the response required to the Law of Moses? What do the Apostles teach in the New Testament letters about the place of the Law in our Christian lives? (For us, books like Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount, letter to the Hebrews & Galatians, and Romans 1-8 will be important to study)
- ⇒ What role does the Spirit of God have now in equipping our lives to live according to the teaching given to God's people so long ago?

### 3. Thirdly, we must seek to obey and apply God's Word to ourselves and our circumstances today in the light of steps 1 & 2 because Jesus himself claimed that whilst he fulfils the Law, not one part will be diminished until all he came for is accomplished.

- ⇒ In what sense shall we apply the rules and regulations of the commandments to our congregation here at St. Michael's?
- ⇒ If the particular command or ritual appears restricted to the time of the Israelite community, are there principles behind the laws/rituals which can guide our worship and living now?
- ⇒ What is revealed about God's love and character that helps me appreciate and understand the nature of my salvation in Christ?
- ⇒ How will such laws/principles affect my choices, decisions today?
- ⇒ What can be achieved/expected now, and what awaits the return of Christ?

## 10 Commandments

Exodus 20:1-21

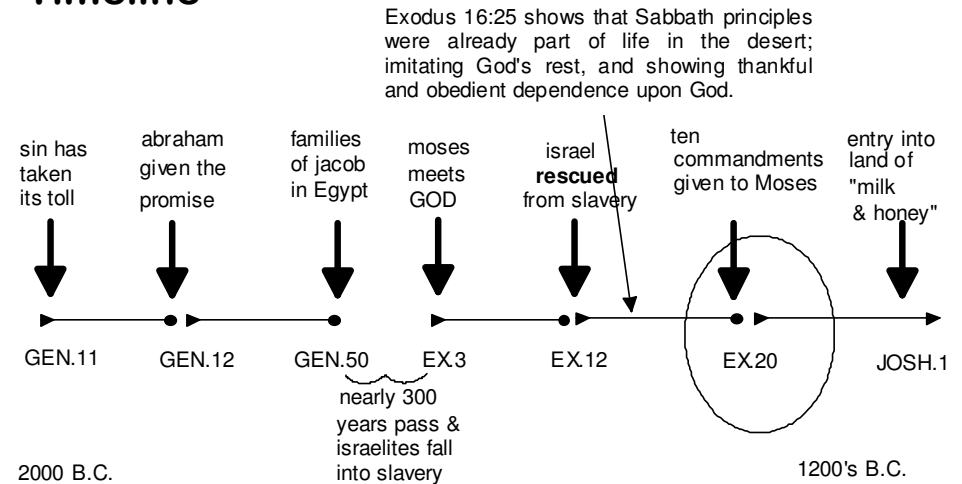
#1 Introduction- Knowing your past

### Introduction

*"The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey..." Exodus 3:7-8 (NIV)*

10 Ways  
2 Live

### Timeline



In Deuteronomy chapter 5, Moses reminds the people of Israel of the events recorded in Exodus in this way:

- 1 Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.
- 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.

3 It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.

4 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.

5 (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

7 "You shall have no other gods before me.

Deut 5:1-7 (NIV)

### **Where had they been?**

The commandments were words which explained the ground rules of a **relationship which had already been established**. Who else had been a friend to the descendents of Abraham like this? Who else could be called God and Saviour? Could they themselves do anything to **make** a friendship and partnership with such an awesome being? This covenant of saving grace is all from God, and established by God.

### **Where were they going?**

In terms of where they were **promised to be going** (Exod. 3:8), the commandments now make a lot of sense. If they are going to build a community in a new land, where God will dwell amongst them- how would they know how to live with such a God? They must ask:

- ⇒ *What is this God like?*
- ⇒ *How will we be expected to live with God present?*
- ⇒ *How will we take up our part in the covenant- the agreement which binds us to a relationship with this God?*
- ⇒ *What sort of lifestyle and order of society will even come close to living in harmony with a God who is HOLY?*

## **Covenant Concept**

A covenant, in the biblical sense, implies much more than a contract or simple agreement. A contract always has an end date, while a covenant is a permanent arrangement. Another difference is that a contract generally involves only one part of a person, such as a skill, while a covenant covers a person's total being.

The word for covenant in the Old Testament also provides additional insight into the meaning of this important idea. It comes from a Hebrew root word which means "to cut."

This explains the strange custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement with each other <Jer. 34:18>. A ritual or ceremony such as this always accompanied the making of a covenant in the Old Testament. Sometimes those entering into a covenant shared a holy meal <Gen. 31:54>. Abraham and his children were commanded to be circumcised as a sign of their covenant with God <Gen. 17:10-11>. Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the altar and upon the people who entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai <Ex. 24:3-8>. The Old Testament contains many examples of covenants between people who related to each other as equals. For example, David and Jonathan entered into a covenant because of their love for each other. This agreement bound each of them to certain responsibilities <1 Sam. 18:3>. But the striking thing about God's covenant with His people is that God is holy, all-knowing, and all powerful; but He consents to enter into covenant with man, who is weak, sinful, and imperfect.

In the Old Testament, God's CHOSEN PEOPLE confirmed their covenant with God with oaths or promises to keep the agreement. At Mount Sinai, the nation of Israel promised to perform "all the words which the Lord has said" <Ex. 24:3>. When the people later broke this promise, they were called by their leaders to renew their oath <2 Kin. 23:3>. By contrast, God does not break promises. His oath to raise up believing children to Abraham <Gen. 22:16-17> is an "everlasting" covenant <Gen. 17:7>. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

