

## Moses — Exodus 1-2, Hebrews 3:5-6



*He Qi, Finding Moses*

Here we are introduced to the towering figure of Moses. He foreshadows Christ in almost every aspect of His life.

***Nativity:*** Moses' birth bears a direct parallel to that of Jesus. Their lives were in danger from tyrannical political leaders, and God sovereignly engineered an escape.

***Temptation:*** Moses spent 40 years in the desert after leaving Pharaoh's court, paralleling Jesus' 40 days in the desert.

***Passion:*** Moses underwent suffering as Pharaoh refused to let Israel leave Egypt, which corresponds with Christ's suffering from the rulers of his time. The climactic moment of Passover is a direct analogy to Christ's death.

***Resurrection:*** Moses led the people across the Red Sea, escaping from Pharaoh's army to freedom, and the New Testament tells us this is imagery of Christ leading his people to freedom from death.

***Teaching:*** Moses presented the Law, a Covenant, to the people, which corresponds with Jesus giving us the teaching of the New Covenant.

***Leading us through life:*** Moses led the people through the wilderness for 40 years and led them to the Promised Land, just as Christ leads us.

In his years in Midian, Moses could not know the full destiny God had for him, and he was faced with discouragement. Psalm 90 is identified as Moses' prayer and contains a reflection on our human struggles with time. It contains the line "How

long will you delay?" Moses spent the first 80 years of his life as part of a time when God seemed to be silent, longing for change. The final line is a great encouragement, saying God knew it was time to act.

*Just as Moses bore Christ's image, am I allowing my life to be shaped like Christ? If God does not seem to be responding to cries for help, can I trust that He knows when it is time to act?*

**Burning Bush — Exodus 3, Matthew 17:2-3**



*Edwards Knippers, Moses and the Burning Bush*



*Christen Mattix and Orcas Island Community Church: The Tree with Lights in It*

The burning bush is the presence of Christ calling Moses, paralleling His call on our lives. Jesus was marked for ministry by the Spirit at his baptism and Moses was marked for ministry by his encounter with the fiery bush. Moses' response to God's call, "Here I am!" is to be our response. God, personal and knowable, startles us and speaks to us.

This took place near Mount Sinai, and part of God's reassurance to Moses was not only that He would be with him, but that he would return to worship at that very mountain. He promised that He would do miracles to liberate his people. Moses, seemingly living aimlessly, began a transformed life of meaning and purpose that has had an effect on all people.

This burning bush foreshadows Pentecost as the moment when the burning fire of the Spirit invaded all of Jesus' early followers. It foreshadows any moment in our lives when we become full of God's fire.

For us, an encounter with Christ and His Holy Spirit in a blaze of fire sets the trajectory of our own ministries. We look back to these moments with gratitude, knowing God provides power beyond ourselves to do what he is calling us to do.

*Has God set me on fire?*

**Zipporah — Exodus 4, Ephesians 2:14**



*Jacob Jordaens, Moses and his Ethiopian wife*

Zipporah and Jethro foreshadow Christ's message to all nations, not only the Jews. Moses, the lawgiver, and builder of the Hebrew nation, married a Gentile. When he escaped after murdering a man in Egypt, he met the seven daughters of Midianite priest Jethro, became part of the household, and married daughter Zipporah.

At this moment of crisis and encounter with God, Moses was given the capacity to do several miracles. His insecurity was very great and he asked for his brother as a

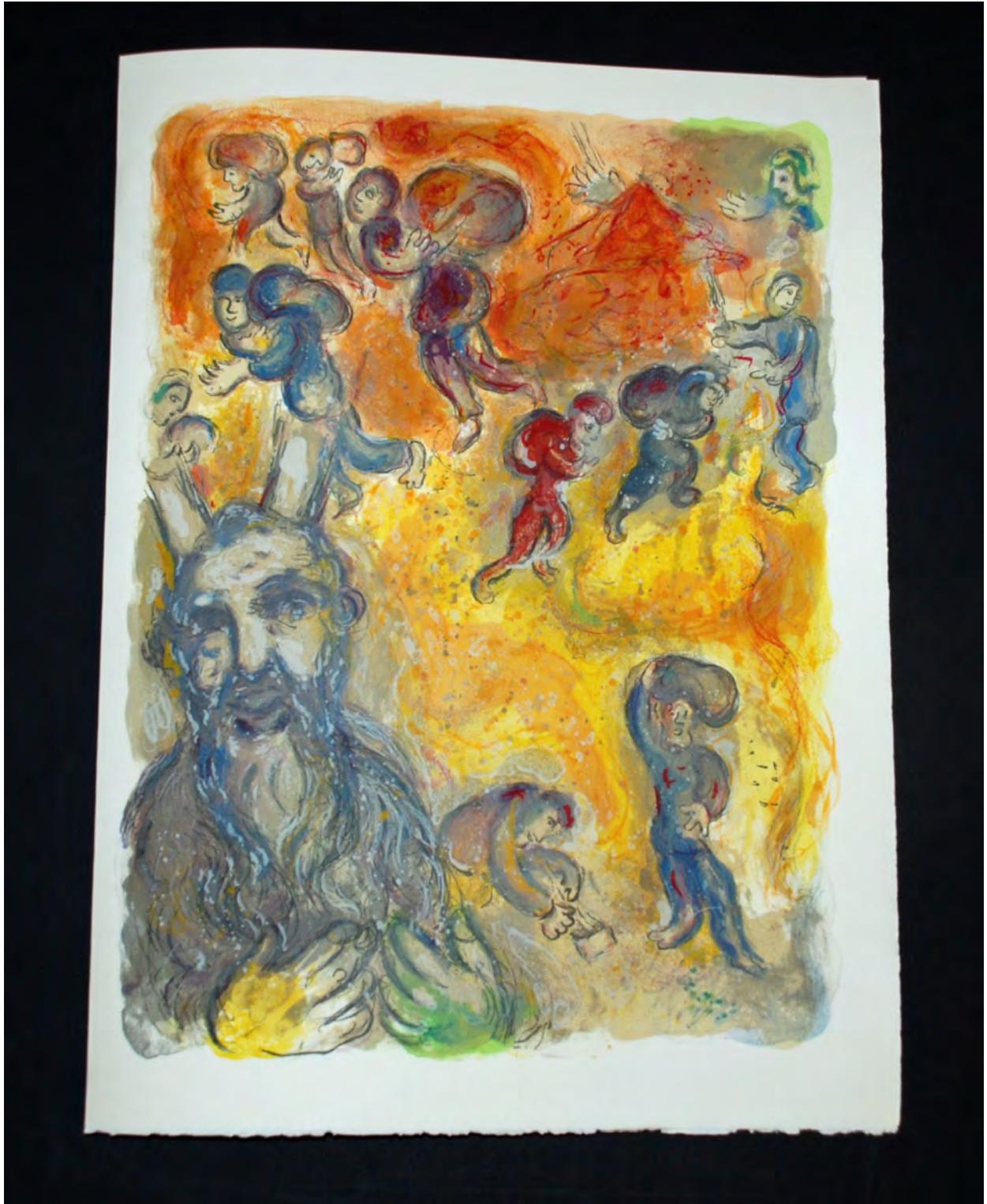
spokesperson. In this transition and calling, Zipporah agreed to accompany him with their children, but to add to his stress, a serious marital disagreement arose.

When they stopped at an inn, she was furious at having to circumcise her son. Moses insisted, saying he felt that God would kill him if he did not. There is a principle that if we are in disobedience to God, we can feel the force of conviction to change as an oppressive thing. Her anger at Moses for forcing this ceremony against her will is humanly understandable, but his children needed to be identifiable as Abraham's children in the leadership role he was undertaking. We are not told precisely at what point Moses sent Zipporah back to her father. But at Mount Sinai Jethro brought her and the two sons to be part of God's people.

There are other instances of marriage with Gentiles—Joseph with an Egyptian, Boaz with a Moabitess, Esther with the Persian King—and in each case it served as a reminder that Jews were called to bless all nations. Christ came and told his disciples to go to all nations, breaking down all ethnic and cultural barriers.

*Do I make a practice of crossing cultural barriers?*

**Moses' Despair — Exodus 5-6, II Corinthians 12:9**



*Moses sees the suffering of His people, Marc Chagall*

Moses' moments of despair over the impossibility of liberating his people point to similar moments of despair in Christ's passion. Moses was fragile, human, and

uncertain, particularly as he began his difficult role. After Pharaoh reacted to his appeal, he plaintively asked, “Why did you send me?” Christ went through emotional pain in the garden to the point that he sweated great drops of blood. On the cross as he was dying, he expressed agony, saying “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

But God gave Moses the needed courage as he does for those who confront oppression today. A leader in the Civil Rights movement once said that people suppose that they knew the movement would succeed, but that was not the case. They persisted because they felt the cause was righteous. The resulting change in laws and opportunities for the African-American citizens of the United States was not a foregone conclusion. We have a similar inability to fully empathize with Moses’ position because we know how the story ends with success. He could only hope and pray it would end that way and try to keep doing the next right thing.

Today whole groups of people are in oppressed situations. Becoming part of social movements to change these situations is certainly part of our calling. The literal slavery of our own time, often called human trafficking, is certainly one of many causes. Our own lives may feel oppressed, or we may feel like a situation has us enslaved and we cry out for freedom. As with Moses, things may get worse for us before they get better, but we must persist.

*Am I engaged in seeking to overcome oppression?*

**Pharaoh’s Stubbornness — Exodus 7-8, Romans 9:17**



*Marc Chagall, Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh*

God challenged Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron to liberate his people. This liberation becomes a principal theme of the relationship we can have with God, and is used throughout scripture to foreshadow Christ's liberating us from Satan's power through the cross.

The mysterious interplay between our free choices and God's sovereign knowledge and plans is highlighted in the interwoven story of Pharaoh's stubborn heart and God's foreknowledge. There is an alternating chain: God says he will cause Pharaoh's stubbornness. After plagues 1-5, it is repeated that Pharaoh is stubborn. After plague number 6, it says that God increased his stubbornness, while simultaneously reinforcing that this was Pharaoh's choice. The plagues correspond to escalating warnings, and because Pharaoh did not respond, he lost everything, including his life.

The first four plagues might have helped the Egyptians recognize the suffering the Hebrew slaves experienced. These are today still challenges for those who are poor: contaminated water, and vulnerability to animal and insect plagues.

Pharaoh is an example of people who will not change, no matter what signs and calls are offered. Here is the simultaneous mystery of free will and God's purposes and plans, both of which are true in our own lives.

God has not changed. He still acts on behalf of the oppressed who call on Him. He still listens to our appeals to soften the hearts of people who oppose us, people who criticize or reject us unfairly, and people who refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit. He is still engaged in contests for human hearts.

*Is my heart soft toward the suffering of others?*

**Ten Plagues — Exodus 9-11, John 3:16-18**



*JMW Turner, The Fifth Plague of Egypt*

The ten plagues of judgment foreshadow Christ taking our judgment on himself on the cross. Moses' intervention and the protection of the Israelites represents God's mercy, both of which were part of Christ's death on the cross as well. The plagues, although powerful and uncomfortable, were necessary to liberate oppressed slaves. Today the Jewish people remember each plague in the Passover celebration with gratitude.

God, the creator, used nature to challenge the oppressor. With the fifth plague, there was a financial loss, minimal compared to the financial loss the slaves had experienced from several centuries of exploitation. The skin diseases showed the greater vulnerability of the poor to disease followed by more financial loss through the hail and locusts. Perhaps the darkness served as a warning that they should be afraid. Each time, as soon as the problem was resolved, Pharaoh rescinded his agreement for them to leave.

Killing the firstborn of Egypt was harsh, but killing Hebrew newborns had been going on a long time and the society as a whole accepted it, or at least ordinary Egyptians may have thought, "there's nothing we can do." They suffered the same tragedy to which they'd been so indifferent as national policy. Exercising power to overcome Egypt's gods was important as proof of God's reality. This became an important theme as God continued to act on behalf of weaker Israel in the face of more powerful nations.

Their situation reminds us of our indifference to today's injustices and sense of helplessness in the face of things we know are wrong. Whatever is oppressing us in our lives and those of others—guilt, addictions, illness, poverty, conflict, social upheaval, depression, disappointment, a sense of failure—the fundamental lesson is that liberation is possible.

*Am I at work to help liberate the oppressed?*

**Passover — Exodus 12, I Corinthians 5:7**



*Marc Chagall, Passover*

The Passover lamb prefigures Christ's death. The beauty of the story is in the triumph of the weak, oppressed, enslaved, and stubborn people. Their freedom, celebrated each Passover by the Jews and completed in the celebration of First Fruits, parallels our freedom in Christ.

The people were told to put lamb's blood on their doorposts so the angel of death would pass over and spare their children. This perfect prefiguring of Christ's death was celebrated on the same day through centuries, and became the very day of His crucifixion. The lamb was to be chosen four days before, the day Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Other details look forward to Christ on the cross, such as the admonition to break no bones. John made the point that Pilate ordered the legs of the three men being crucified to be broken to hasten their deaths, but Christ was already dead. The repeated admonition to have no yeast in the bread, not even in the house, has been seen as a symbol of purity and sinlessness in Christ's body, broken for us.

The Passover meal Jesus shared with His disciples has become our memorial bread and wine. It bundles together so many meanings: forgiveness of sin, freedom from slavery and oppression, God's sovereignty over life and death, over rulers, over his people, his commissioning and call of prophetic leaders to bring freedom, his supernatural intervention on behalf of those who trust him, and a promise of a coming Messiah.

A Messianic Jewish Seder is a wonderful way to understand how Christ celebrated Passover and identified with each symbol. The mystery of his identification with our brokenness, the protection we have through his suffering, and his presence and deliverance deepen our appreciation of his crucifixion and resurrection.

Many poems have been written for contemporary Passover celebrations, including this beautiful song by *Liberated Wailing Wall*.

Pharaoh had us all enslaved, laboring in his land,  
The Lord God heard our cry and freed us by His hand.  
And by the blood of the pure and spotless Lamb,  
We're free, we are all set free.

Passover Lamb's blood upon the door,  
Forming a cross to seal us from death's jaw.  
And by the blood of the pure and spotless Lamb,  
We're free, we are all set free.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah,

God of Abram,  
Thank you for the Lamb.

*Have I accepted Christ's protection from the consequences of my sin?*

**Ransom — Exodus 13, I Peter 1:18-20, Ephesians 1:7**



*Marc Chagall, Exodus*

The firstborn's ransom foreshadows Christ. He compared his death to a ransom, which Peter tells us was Christ's blood. Paul tells us that Christ's blood purchased our freedom. This chapter helps us understand what it means for Christ to ransom or redeem us. He liberated us from the slavery of evil and inevitable death. He purchased us with his blood, and he paid the full price.

The people had left Egypt but not yet crossed the Red Sea and were given two instructions that would identify them: celebration of Passover, and the purchase of firstborn sons. Both were intended to remind them of their liberation from Egypt, and both look forward to Christ's work of redemption.

In the context of liberation from Pharaoh's slavery, God had protected the firstborn from death and they belonged to him. As the people purchased them back, they

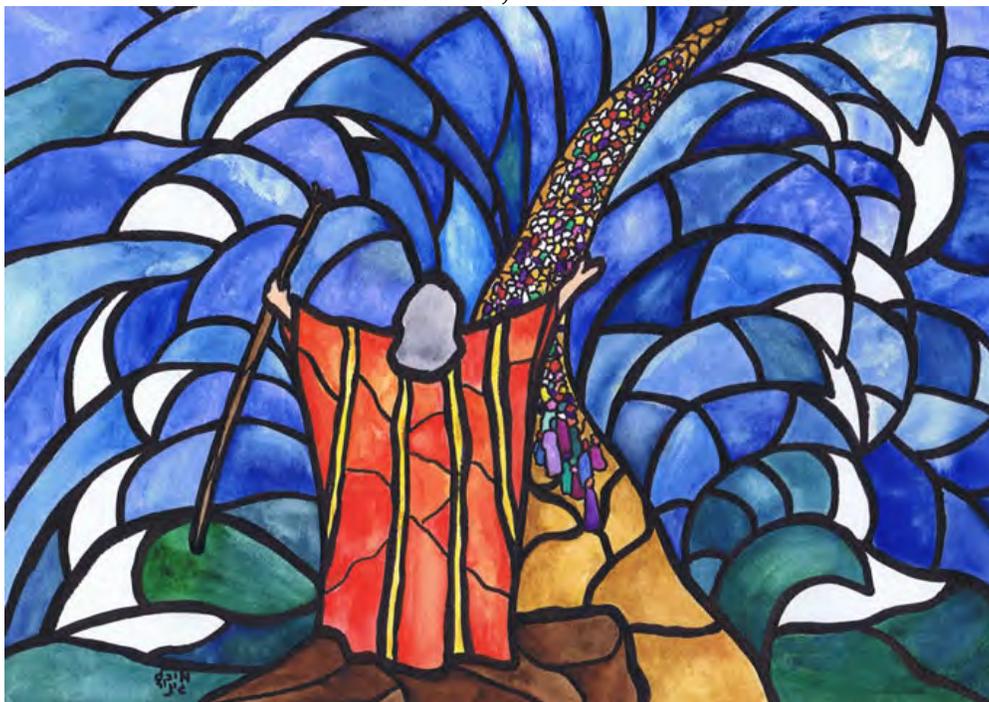
were reminded that their freedom had come through God's miraculous work. When Christ came, he chose Passover as the time for His death to tie it to this story of liberation. God in Christ bought us from slavery with his own blood.

In our modern culture we feel that God owes us rather than that we owe him everything. We unconsciously think that he owes us a good life, protection, or positive circumstances, and if we pay up appropriately with the right prayers, good actions, and participation in a church community, he will pay us back. This ransom serves as an important reminder that we owe our lives to him and are in no position to make demands, but rather live appreciatively for all his gifts.

As they left Egypt, the people were introduced to God's presence in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. This visible, tangible presence would lead them their whole journey. For us, our pillar of cloud or fire can be peace, thoughtful evaluation, wisdom from others, a significant or striking Biblical text, an inner voice, being able to imagine a hopeful future, or a combination of these things. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to have a tangible experience of God's presence.

*Do I act on the belief that my life is not my own, but that I belong to Christ?*

#### **Exodus — Exodus 14, I Corinthians 10:1-2**



*Michelle Gaynor, Splitting the Sea*

Crossing the Red Sea foreshadows Christ's death and resurrection, and symbolizes baptism into his death and resurrection. This is the central story of redemption for

the Jewish people and predates the giving of the law, demonstrating that God's mercy is what opens the opportunity for an obedient and holy life.

For Passover, the Jewish people today sing a song, *Dayenu*, which means, "it would have been enough". The first eight stanzas celebrate bringing the people out of Egypt, executing justice on the Egyptians, executing justice on their gods, slaying their firstborn, giving them the Egyptian's health and wealth, splitting the sea, leading through on dry land, and drowning the oppressors. The last seven stanzas celebrate His care in the wilderness. Each one of these things "would have been enough."

In Jude we are told that Jesus first rescued the nation of Israel from Egypt, and he has been seen through history as a liberator ever since. The escape of slaves from the most powerful empire of the time is astonishing. If today we are not living as free people, we need to claim our freedom.

*Do I know that I am free in Christ?*

**Celebration and Healing — Exodus 15, Colossians 3:16**



*Arcabas, Angels Singing*

This song of celebration for deliverance pointed ahead to heavenly songs of celebration in Revelation, and our songs of worship. It ends with the affirmation of God's everlasting reign, the theme of God as King.

So quickly after their great song of celebration, the people turned against Moses when the water they encountered was bitter. God showed Moses a branch to put in the water to make it sweet. He promised health based on listening and obedience, and exemption from the common diseases of their old culture. The branch points to the cross which gives us health.

One of the first promises to the liberated people was that God would lead them in love, and take them to his home, a prophetic reference to the future Jerusalem

temple. The second promise was for healing. They had long lived under oppression with resulting health challenges, and he promised that as freed people, this would change. He would provide guidance on nutrition, sanitation, community, morality, and rest.

For us today, any kind of oppression can lead to illness. For example, poverty, childhood abuse, stressful jobs or relationships, or not enough rest all contribute to leading causes of death today. In Christ we can be freed from whatever is "our Egypt" and be freed for new patterns leading to better health.

The story reminds us to celebrate the times and ways God delivers us, to have faith that he can give us health, and to avoid the sin of complaining when we have needs we are worried will not be met. The two things are related. If we live a life full of gratitude and confidence in God, this will positively impact our health. If we worry and complain and conform to inappropriate cultural norms, our health may be a bigger challenge. Even so, finding things to celebrate is the right and helpful course of action in the middle of that challenge. Deliverance will come.

*Do I trust God for freedom and for good health?*

**Manna — Exodus 16, John 6:32-33**



*Sieger Kóder*

Manna prefigures Christ as the bread of life and the source of provision for our spiritual needs. When the people in the desert needed food, God provided a way of gathering it. Christ compared himself to this bread from heaven, sustaining food in

a place of scarcity. When people proposed that Christ give them manna, he compared himself to that manna.

In the feeding of the 4000 the disciples asked how they were supposed to find enough food to feed people in the wilderness, a complaint parallel to that of the Israelites. Similarly in the feeding of the 5000 they said they would need to work for months to earn enough for the needed food. Christ, in both cases, multiplied bread, replicating the manna experience.

When Christ spoke about manna, he made the point that the Israelites who lived during the desert wanderings all died, despite the miraculous provision of this food. In contrast, he said that anyone who is able to eat his body will live forever. This very beautiful promise brings us to the Eucharist. We know that at the last supper Christ gave the disciples physical bread as a sign of his coming death, but also as the life brought through resurrection. The communal Eucharistic meal sustains us, can heal us, reaffirms our forgiveness, and strengthens us.

*Do I believe and receive my daily bread--physical and spiritual--from Christ?*

**Water from the Rock — Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 81, 95, I Corinthians 10:4**



*Water from the Rock, Sadeo Watanabe*

Water from the rock presents Christ as the Rock and the water as the Spirit. As Christ said, the water brings us eternal life. Christ fulfilled this in a particular way at the well in Samaria, and at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. At that festival this event was commemorated as part of the journey in the wilderness wanderings.

This becomes an iconic moment for God's people. This story of Israel's complaints and unbelief and the miracle of water from the rock is repeated in scripture as a theme of testing and provision. Moses asked "Why are you testing the Lord?" and named the place Massah, "testing". An additional name, "Meribah", meaning "quarreling" is repeated twelve times through the Hebrew scripture. In reviewing the journey, Moses exhorted the people not to test God as they did at Massah, and Jesus quoted this when confronting Satan in the temptation.

We are also told that God was testing the people at Massah and they failed the test. The theme that God tests our hearts, faith, emotions, thoughts, and purifies us is

repeated at least 32 times in scripture. When life is hard, when we lack something, it is helpful to see it as a test of our faith. But the positive words for our relationship with God—blessing, joy, rescue, deliver, save, peace, love, protect, prosper, heal, provide—occur ten times more than testing. The goal is faith, repeated 500 times.

Despite complaints and lack of faith, God provided abundant water, but the lesson was not learned and did not prevent more faith failures. The lesson for us is not to follow this bad example, hardening our hearts and forgetting God's miracles.

*Do I remember and celebrate how God has worked on my behalf when faced with a new challenge?*

### **Judging the Amalekites — Exodus 17: 8-16, Psalm 83, Matthew 5:43-45**



*Nicolas Poussin, Joshua fights Amalek*

God judges sin by taking life, and Christ warns us of the possibility that we can lose our lives if we do not ask for mercy. In this story God says he will blot out the Amalekites, thus elevating them to an archetype of those who oppose God. They were descendants of Abraham, yet had become enemies.

The judgment was for Amalek's cruel treatment of a wandering people, striking down the weak stragglers. Here we see God's strong rejection of cruelty which will repeatedly be used as a reason for judgment against nations. It was Saul's decision to preserve the life of the Amalekite king that caused him to be replaced by David who, in fact, did pursue the Amalekites, though even then, some escaped.

The word "genocide" was coined after World War II, but we can see the concept here that nations should cease to exist, and in this case, God authorized it. I wrestle with this. A web search yields numerous sites documenting and critiquing violence in the scriptures, and I feel empathy for the angry websites, particularly when Christians advocate violence. Stories in the Hebrew scriptures have justified violence through history, a contradiction of Christ's teachings of nonviolence and

love of enemies. It is particularly painful to discover that this story was used to justify war against Native Americans. With the level of cruelty they received, it could have been a more accurate analogy to see Native Americans as the Israelites, and settlers as Amalekites.

In Christ, we are called to love all, even enemies. In recent history we see wars against cruelty as some of the most justifiable cases, for example, World War II. Some Christians justify a split between the actions of nations and those of individuals, saying we are only called to operate with forgiveness on an individual level. But other Christians insist we must find a way to apply love of enemies on all levels, working for peace, and engaging in dialogue with nations with whom we are at odds. In either case, Christ has introduced a challenge to the relationships between nations.

*Do I take seriously the sin of cruelty and abhor it?*

**Jethro — Exodus 18, Luke 10:1-2**



*Bol Ferdinand, Moses and Jethro*

Jethro demonstrated similar organizational wisdom to that of Christ. On his visit to Moses and his daughter and grandchildren, he was pleased to see his son-in-law's

success. He acknowledged that God is greater than all other gods, and made sacrifices, joined by Israel's leaders.

God's wisdom came in a practical way to Moses through another person, as it so often does for us. Jethro saw how overworked Moses was in resolving conflicts, and offered advice to delegate. Leaders for groups of 10, 50, 100, and 1,000 could manage among themselves leaving less to report to Moses' core team of Aaron and Joshua, leaders of the twelve tribes and a group of 70 elders. We see a similar structure in Christ's choice of three intimate friends, twelve disciples and 70 sent to preach. Five-hundred came to see him after the resurrection, 3000 joined them on Pentecost, and they continued to grow as apostles and Paul planted more congregations.

The concept of circles of intimacy has been a great help to me in my own relationships. Who are my three closest friends? Who are in my circle of twelve? Who are the seventy? By noticing this I can stay balanced in connecting with people in my life. From that healthy core of people I know, there is a chance to reach out in prayer and service beyond that group without being overwhelmed.

*Are my relationships and work in balance?*

**Mount Sinai—Exodus 19, Matthew 5:1-3**



*Yoram Raanan, Har Sinai II*

As the covenant was given, the call to love and worship God prefigured Christ's call to a relationship of forgiveness and love. Obedience was to flow from gratitude for God's liberating work, his rescue from their oppressive slavery. They were to become God's kingdom of priests, just as Christ would call people into the Kingdom of Heaven. The law foreshadows Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, where he took what was given at Mount Sinai and went deeper.

The people arrived at Mount Sinai two months after leaving Egypt. Moses ascended Mount Sinai seven times, four of them in this chapter, obtaining the constitution of the new kingdom. These ascents have parallels in Christ as he announced the Kingdom, called for purification through baptism, was raised from the dead on the third day, and was seen in glory at the transfiguration.

This is a story of God's powerful presence. At the giving of the law there was smoke, fire, and a trembling mountain, which sounds like the active volcano and *The Message* uses volcano in this passage. Though the location of Mount Sinai is uncertain, for 1500 years our tradition has placed it in the Sinai Peninsula as a non-volcanic mountain. However, there are volcanoes in Midian where Moses lived after fleeing Egypt, and some Bible encyclopedias say this could be the route. When Moses saw the burning bush he was promised that he would return to that mountain to meet God.

This was a climactic moment for Israel, an archetypal mountaintop experience. When we have such moments of intense spirituality and encounter with God they sometimes come through the natural world and its wonders.

*What have been some of my mountaintop experiences?*

**Covenant — Exodus 20, Romans 10:4**



*Jan Norton, The Ten Commandments Poster*

Christ rescued us from the slavery of sin, and God reminded the people that he rescued them from slavery in Egypt. Because they were his people, no other gods should be worshiped, no idols should be made, and his name was not to be misused, all of which applies to believers today. No false image of God could be tolerated, because it was distorted and empty compared to the true image of God in Christ. The inability to obey this law became Israel's downfall, thus becoming an overarching theme for the rest of the Hebrew scriptures.

If they disobeyed, the consequences would last four generations. If they obeyed, God would lavish his love on them for a thousand generations.

God taught them goodness. The primacy of the Ten Commandments is highlighted by the text, and Christians acknowledge the importance of obeying this moral law today. Unlike the rest of the instructions, God spoke these directly to all the people. The people responded fearfully, asking not to hear God's voice, but rather asking for Moses to serve as a mediator.

A solution for any failures is built in to the chapter, for us and for the people: a sacrifice to forgive sins. Sacrifice, or substitutionary atonement, is one important image for the meaning of Christ's death. The later part of this chapter describes a

simple earth altar and the sacrifices to be made on them, a way of seeking forgiveness for any infringements of the law. Christ made the connection between sacrifice, covenant and himself in the Last Supper.

This is the call of faith in Christ, to repent, confess our sins, allow Him to change us, and to then walk in new life. For many of us, we can point to a date and time when we first did this. From that time on, there may be repeated confessions, but always with the understanding that Christ covers all our sins.

*Which of these sins is a possible temptation in my life?*

### **Freedom and Refuge — Exodus 21, I Peter 2:16**



*Rembrandt van Rijn, Two Negroes*

Before examining connections to Christ, it is important to think how differently these laws about slavery would have seemed at the time, compared to how they seem to us now. We know the terrible history of exploitation and oppression of slavery in our country and even that it was theologically justified. We also know the large number of people today in slavery situations who need to be liberated.

At the time, however, these must have seemed like progressive laws to people who had come out of centuries of hopeless life-long slavery only two months previously. The idea that there could be limits, that there could be choices, and that women who were taken as wives must be treated as equals must have been so much better

than what they had known that they would nod their heads. Over time, the complete repudiation of slavery arose from those who knew that in Christ we are neither slave nor free.

Just as Genesis exposes problems with polygamy, it exposes problems with slavery. Abraham had an Egyptian slave wife, Hagar, who suffered. In turn his descendant Joseph suffered injustices as a slave to an Egyptian, and the Israelite descendants suffered under oppressive slavery in Egypt. The limits on slavery introduced in the law made it a form of bonded servitude rather than what became chattel slavery in our culture, the actual ownership of others as property.

Freeing slaves is later used as a metaphor for Christ's work. A slave's choice to stay with the master recalls New Testament passages of our choice to serve God, and Paul's choice to call himself God's slave. A slave girl taken as a wife must be treated as a full wife, and reminds us that we, as slaves to sin, are taken as the bride of Christ. A detail of the value of a slave who has died is that the repayment is 30 pieces of silver, the amount Judas received for betraying Christ, thus identifying him as a dying slave. The gospel encouraged masters to be just and fair and recognize equality between master and slave. Paul appealed to his friend to free the slave Onesimus in a short but important book, Philemon. Thus the gospel's message of equality began changes we continue to work on today.

The provisions for accidents and injury not only created legal precedents we still observe, they serve as yet another metaphor for Christ's work. We have injured others and violated boundaries and so deserve the death penalty, but He takes the penalty for us. Cities of refuge were places of those who had accidentally murdered another. Their imagery is analogous to Christ as a place of protection from the punishment that we deserve.

Neither Jews nor Christians accept slavery today through centuries of reinterpretation, reminding us that these are ancient texts, part of the culture of their day, and not always rigidly applicable now. Interestingly, Jewish commentators have used the compensation laws in verses 22-23 to decide that the fetus is not a human until birth, thus giving a different view on abortion than that of most Christians. A text like this should give us the grace to be humble about how to apply scripture in our world today, and give us a willingness to acknowledge and repent of ways scripture has been used to treat others with cruelty.

*Am I able to simultaneously celebrate that Christ has set me free and engage in practical efforts to oppose slavery today?*

**An obedient life — Exodus 22-23, Romans 13:9-10**



*Maximino Cerezo Barredo, Emaús*

Christ taught us that love for neighbor covers all the details of the law. In this section the Ten Commandments are elaborated in more detail:

Do not murder	Exodus 21:12-36
Do not steal	Exodus 22:1-15
Do not commit adultery	Exodus 22:16-17
Do not covet	Exodus 22:21-27
Do not worship other gods	Exodus 22:16-20, 28-31; 23:13
Do not bear false witness	Exodus 23:1-9
Honor the Sabbath	Exodus 23:10-12
I, the Lord, rescued you	Exodus 23:14-19
Do not make idols	Exodus 23:20-32

Covetousness is the sin that can lead to oppressing foreigners and other vulnerable people. The exhortation is repeated twice here and six more times in the law with sixty more exhortations to be inclusive of foreigners among them. We are also warned against being swayed by a crowd to do evil, twisting justice against a poor person, or putting an innocent person to death, all of which were done to Christ.

The New Testament tells us that the law is summarized in loving our neighbor. In Colossians 3 there are instructions that parallel these instructions of what to avoid: sexual sin, greed, angry behavior, lying, and treating the vulnerable without equality. We now have the Holy Spirit in our lives, enabling us to love as we are called to do.

Participation in three annual festivals was required and each festival was prophetic of Christ. The Festival of Unleavened Bread prefigured the crucifixion. Pentecost prefigured the giving of the Spirit and start of the church. Tabernacles prefigured the second coming.

The call to conquer Canaan, led by God's messenger, seemingly the pre-incarnate Christ himself, was the climactic command in the covenant contained in these four chapters. God's command to kill the people of these idolatrous nations raises difficult ethical and interpretive questions we will look at in the conquest narratives. But for Christians, our relationship to idolatry has changed. Paul was deeply troubled by the idols he saw, but used them as a springboard to call people away from them to the true God. He advocated witnessing to the true God when one associated with those worshipping idols, not violence. We can honor the call to

abolish idolatry by being repentant of placing anything above God in our own hearts and in that of others.

The qualities of character we are to have are not only those of avoiding sin, but are the positive ones laid out in Colossians 3: holy, tenderhearted, merciful, kind, humble, gentle, patient, making allowances for other's faults, forgiving offenders, full of love, harmony, and peace.

*Am I both avoiding evil and seeking good?*

### **Ratifying the Covenant — Exodus 24, John 1:16-17**



*Yoram Raanan, The Blood Covenant*

Both the covenant with Israel and Christ's new covenant called people to obedience. But obedience followed deliverance from slavery. In the old covenant Christ's work occurred as images, foreshadowing, a prediction of a future reality.

Once the covenant was given, the people formally accepted it and agreed to obey these provisions. We can see an analogy between Moses writing the covenant, and the gospel writers providing us with Christ's teaching. Moses said the blood confirmed the covenant God had made, and Christ spoke of the cup of wine as a sign of his blood making a new covenant.

God showed his glory to the leaders of the people, sharing a meal together in the divine/human unity we see in Christ sharing the Eucharist with his disciples. Perhaps the covenant meal was with the pre-incarnate Christ. It raises interesting questions, since elsewhere it says we cannot see God and live. The brilliant blue lapis lazuli floor sounds similar to the crystal glass sea in Revelation. After this, Moses and Joshua again ascended the mountain for 40 days and nights, and after

the resurrection Christ taught his followers about the Kingdom of Heaven for 40 days before his ascension.

This is a beautiful and mysterious story, one that speaks of an intimacy with God that one supposes could have kept Aaron, his sons and the seventy elders full of faith and obedience. Yet before forty days passed, they were worshipping an idol they had made. The disciples also, after seeing Christ's glory in miracles and the transfiguration and having eaten a covenant meal, then denied and abandoned him. How can one go so quickly from such a mountain-top experience into disloyalty? If we are honest, we know we can do the same. We are so fragile, so unable to stay in faith on our own.

*Can I look back at failures in my life after being close to God?*

**The Ark of the Covenant — Exodus 25, Revelation 11:19**



*Ark of the Covenant, He Qi*

The Ark of the Covenant prefigures the Trinity: the presence of the crucified and resurrected Christ, the reigning Father, the invisible presence of the Spirit. The Ark

in the Most Holy Place was the symbol of God's throne, or his footstool on earth. In the instructions Moses received, the Ark was the first and most important part of the Tabernacle.

The Hebrew word for Ark, *arown*, means chest or coffin, fittingly symbolizing Christ's death. Two angels with outspread wings adorned the cover, thus pre-figuring the resurrection where angels announced the living Christ. They are described as sitting on either side of where Christ's body had lain, almost in perfect imagery of the Mercy Seat. The lesson of the Ark and of the tabernacle as a whole is that God lives among us.

Combined with imagery of God's throne in Ezekiel and Revelation, the Ark became a medieval artistic motif. The Father on the throne held Christ crucified or dying, with a small dove of the Spirit linking them; it became a symbol of the Trinity known as the Gnadenstuhl, or Mercy Seat. This powerful image of the Father's compassionate engagement in Christ's suffering demonstrated his love and power in the face of our pain and suffering.

We are told to come boldly to God's mercy seat, now that Christ has opened the way into God's Holy place. Recognizing that every aspect of the tabernacle was intended to be a holy place and visualize God's presence with His people, we can apply the symbols to our life of prayer today. The Ark represents a place of worship, awe at God's holiness, and communion with a living Christ.

*Do I daily come to prayer at God's throne?*

**Plans for the Tabernacle — Exodus 26, John 1:14**



*Rembrandt van Rijn, Twelve year old Jesus in front of the scribes*

The Tabernacle is an image of Christ's presence. God had explained that he wanted them to build this holy tent so that he could live among them. At the time Jesus came, John explained that he was God tenting among us. We continue the metaphor by being filled with the Spirit as his holy temple. This representation of God's presence with us was also preparing a place where Jesus himself would go and acknowledge it as "His Father's house."

The tabernacle continued for 300 years after the people lived in the land, and then Solomon built a temple. Though destroyed and rebuilt, eventually Christ himself came to that temple, filling it with his glorious presence both as an infant and as a man.

The holy tent symbolizes that God is with us through our particular journeys. He is not far away, but always at hand, living close to us. In fact, we become a tent for God moving through the world.

The goat skin covering recalled blood sacrifice, and the wooden frame and its crossbows recall the cross. But the inside had cherubim or angels embroidered in vivid colors. They remind us of the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension.

Angels give a glimpse of a world beyond our world. thus, as we journey through life, both cross and resurrection are part of our lives, and we are accompanied by angels.

*Do I see myself as bearing God's presence in the world?*

**The Menorah — Exodus 27, John 8:12**



*Yoram Raanan, The Temple Menorah*

The tabernacle lamp prefigures Christ as light of the world, burning continually. In this chapter we are introduced to the altar which we are aware symbolizes crucifixion, and to the courtyard, symbolizing a sacred space for worship. Inside the Holy Place was the lamp, along with a table for bread, and an altar with incense.

The tabernacle light was lit around 1400 BC and was part of worship until the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC. Seventy years later it shown once more when the Temple was rebuilt. Another interruption is the story behind Hanukkah. Jewish priests revolted in 167 BC against Antiochus IV Epiphanes who had massacred many Jews. For eight years he forbade Jewish religious practices and

ordered Zeus worship. He sent an Athenian senator to dedicate the temple to Zeus who covered the altar with prohibited offerings.

The Talmud says that after the forces of Antiochus IV had been removed from the Temple, the Jews discovered that almost all the holy oil had been profaned. They found one sealed container, enough for the Temple lamp for one day, yet it burned eight days, enough time to make more oil. Because of that, today's Menorahs have room for the eight days of the miracle and a ninth for a candle to light the others, in contrast to the Temple candlestick of seven branches. The historian Josephus says that the restoration of sacrifices lasted eight days and was called the "Festival of Lights." The leaders instituted this as an annual festival, and the Menorah, reminiscent of the tabernacle lamp, shines in homes annually to this day.

This was called the Festival of Dedication when Christ attended and declared that he was one with God. The instruction was that the light should be constant, but in 70 AD the Temple was once more destroyed. Now it is us, the people of God, who are called temples because the Holy Spirit is in us. We are exhorted to let the light of Christ shine into the world through us.

*Is Christ shining through me?*

**Plans for the Priesthood — Exodus 28-29, Hebrews 2:17**



*Rembrandt van Rijn, Study of a high priest*

Christ is our High Priest and the role pre-figured him. Garments described in these chapters reflect the color, style, and artistic motifs of the tabernacle. The High Priest has been described as a small tabernacle carrying God's presence. Clothing added dignity, was to be glorious and beautiful, a uniform that would distinguish him, made of fine linen, gold, blue, purple and scarlet thread.

Names of the twelve tribes were carved in onyx on his shoulders, and represented carrying these names before the Lord. Priests were dressed analogously to the spiritual armor of God. The breastplate, covered with twelve jewels for each of the twelve tribes, are also in Revelation as the jeweled gates of the New Jerusalem. These beautiful jewels also represented carrying each tribe before God. The priests also had a woven belt (like the belt of truth), and a turban with a gold plate

attached (like a helmet of salvation) which said they were set apart as holy to the Lord.

The sacrifices for their dedication served to set them apart as well. They were to serve in a place made holy by God's glorious presence. We are also called a kingdom of priests, and so can set ourselves into the picture as well: to be dressed beautifully as righteous people, to constantly carry with us the names of those for whom we pray, and to be set apart. Our calling is to live at all times as people who are holy, aware of God's glorious presence. We have a role that makes us distinguished, and is full of dignity.

*Am I living a priestly life of intercession?*

**Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh — Exodus 30, Matthew 2:9-12**



*Rembrandt van Rijn, The Adoration of the Magi*

When the Wise Men came to see the Christ child, they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In the tabernacle these three things played an important part in priestly prayer, and this chapter explains their roles. The incense altar in the Holy Place was covered with gold. The priests washed and anointed themselves with oil containing myrrh and other spices. They burned incense on the altar which included frankincense. The formulas for the oil and incense were exclusive for worshipping God. Consequently, it seems particularly fitting that they were brought as gifts to Christ.

They remind us of the crucifixion: gold for a king, and myrrh and frankincense for suffering. Myrrh is a resin which bleeds from a tree when pierced, and is medicinal. Frankincense is resin obtained by slashing the bark of the tree, and is used for healing wounds.

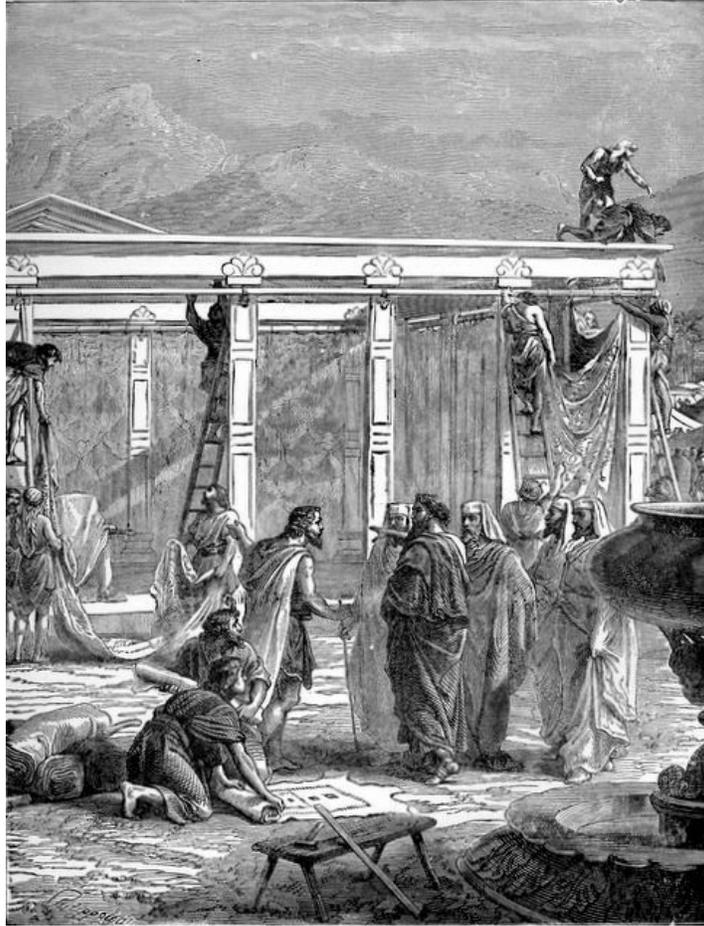
In the Holy Place there were three pieces of furniture, and between them they appealed to all the senses: the light from the candlestick made it possible to see the beautifully woven curtains; the bread and drink on the table appealed to touch and taste; and the incense appealed to the sense of smell. It also could become a cloud of smoke by adding coals and the result simulated the Cloud of God's presence. A census tax on all men provided funds for this place of worship, and is once more called a ransom, reminding us that God owns our lives.

In Revelation we are told that incense represented the prayers of God's people. That is reiterated as the incense is mixed with fire from the altar and the result is thunder, lightning and a terrible earthquake. This image of prayer as reversed thunder was taken by the poet George Herbert to emphasize that God honors us as active partners in the world. Our prayers matter.

Our forgiveness from sin as we approach God in prayer matters also. Through history priests and kings were anointed with oil to set them apart and make them holy. Christ came fulfilling these roles, and has passed them to us, making us priests and royalty. We now carry on his work as anointed, holy, and worshipping people empowered by his Holy Spirit.

*Am I living anointed by God's Spirit?*

**Creativity — Exodus 31, Ephesians 2:10**



The artists, Bezalel and Oholiab, are images of Christ as artist. In this chapter artists are commissioned by God's direct selection and instruction to Moses, showing their importance. These artists were given skills as designers and the ability to teach others their crafts. Creativity is honored.

The second half of the chapter gives instructions regarding the Sabbath. Israel was given two reasons to observe this: God's rest on the seventh day after creation, and the liberation from slavery. The point is made that employees are to rest as well. Jewish culture benefited from sacred time devoted to reflection on God and his commands, becoming more reflective, analytical, and ethical as a result. We are told that we should enjoy and delight in the Sabbath, and that we should gather with others.

Art is a way of living in the image of the creator, and Sabbath rest has a beautiful side-effect of enhancing our creativity. Today we know, that no matter how minimal our talent, engagement in art gives us a sense of accomplishment, enhances brain function, increases our empathy, and is a great way to reduce stress. Art can even improve our health. Music, visual art, dance, writing, theater, even

cooking—we can all benefit from choosing to try things to the glory of the greatest Artist. It is a great way to rest.

*How much do I value rest? What is my greatest source of enjoyment of art?*

**Aaron — Exodus 32, Luke 13:3**



*Aaron and the Seven Branched Candlestick, Marc Chagall*

Christ is our High Priest, a perfect one, in contrast to imperfect Aaron. Aaron started out well, helpful to Moses in his negotiations with Pharaoh, using his rod to do miracles, helping to organize the people. Things deteriorated badly at Mount Sinai. When the people complained about Moses' long absence, Aaron made the infamous golden calf for them to worship.

Moses returned and was furious. The “god” was ground up and drinking the gold demonstrated its powerlessness as a deity. The Levites took on the role as executors, giving us a firm theme that idolatry deserves the death penalty. “Have no other gods” and “don’t make idols” were commands numbers one and two in the list of Ten Commandments to which they had agreed, and so quickly violated. While some of us accept the death penalty for something like murder, we really cannot grasp this punishment for something as abstract as idol worship. We, too, worship things other than God, but Christ took the death penalty on our behalf. Paul said we can be crucified with Christ, but what dies is our sin, and we live. There is no call for violence against idolatry after Christ, only a call to repentance and following him.

Moses had to plead for Aaron’s life to be spared, and we make the same plea today if we realize we are putting something above God. Despite this failure, Aaron was chosen as high priest. The striking theme of the overall story is that God will forgive our sins. His blatant sin was forgiven and he was clothed with dignity and given a special role as a leader of the people. In fact, while Aaron was making the golden calf, the beautiful garments he was to wear to mediate between God and the people were being described to Moses.

This theme, the failure of human priesthood, threads through scripture as the preparation for a perfect priest. Bad priests, false prophets, arrogant warriors and incompetent kings serve as foils for someone much better to come.

What a dramatic demonstration of God’s grace to take a failed leader who led people into idolatry and make him the primary representative of his holiness. There was no cover-up since all the people who had to acknowledge him in his new role knew about the failure. Aaron did not have an image of righteousness, but rather the reality of being forgiven.

How encouraging for us who seek to love and serve others in priestly roles of listening and focusing people on God to know that our own failures are part of the story. Honest sharing of our own woundedness and God’s healing is good—we do not need to worry about maintaining an image of super spirituality.

*Am I quick to repent of putting things other than God first in my life?*

**Grace and Forgiveness — Exodus 33-34, Ephesians 2:4-9**



*Pietro Novelli, Moses and the Israelites following the pillar of fire*

Moses' mediation for the people before God parallels Christ's mediation for us. The people failed so quickly. Moses received the covenant, the people and elders ratified it, he left again, and in a little over a month they broke their agreement, and many died as a result. This story highlights the grace that was so much a part of the law since God forgave them and continued his life with them. God's unfailing love and forgiveness are for us as well.

God's first response was to say he would not travel with the people. Moses called for repentance and the people responded with mourning. Moses' intimacy with God continued, and he pleaded for God to accompany them, and he asked to see God. For the seventh time he went up the mountain, now with a replacement stone tablet, and he saw God's glory. God responded with grace, promising to accompany the people, and then for forty days reiterated aspects of the law.

Ceasing to worship God and turning to no-gods, to idols, brought death. Paul points out that this is mankind's foundational mistake, but Christ is the solution. This point is hammered home over and over in the Hebrew scriptures, which are brutally honest about the people's failure to avoid worshipping idols. Because it is repeated so much, we need to take it seriously for our own lives and examine ourselves and our priorities. Often it is our worries that are an indicator of what we are worshipping instead of God.

God's glorious presence had been with them in a pillar of cloud and fire, and now descended on a tent serving as a precursor to the tabernacle. There God spoke to Moses as to a friend. But God acquiesced to Moses' request to see him, showing all but his face. Perhaps this was the face of the pre-incarnate Christ. In II Corinthians 3 and 4 Paul wrote that the old covenant was full of glory, but the glory of the new covenant is far greater. He writes that the glory of God can be seen in Christ's face, since he is the exact likeness of God.

*Do I recognize how seeing Christ in everything is very different from creating a god from something?*

**Details of the Tabernacle — Exodus 35, Hebrews 8:5**



*Yoram Raanan, Gathering to build the tabernacle*

The structure, furnishings, materials, and rituals of the tabernacle connect to Christ. Scriptures present symbolic meanings for elements used in the tabernacle. For example, gold for God's city, silver for redemption, bronze for judgment, blue for God's throne, scarlet for purification, white linen for righteousness, and wood for the cross.

Christ's work correlates to places in the tabernacle: reconciling us to God at the altar, cleansing us at the large wash basin, inviting us into his presence in the holy place with bread/light/incense, and welcoming us into the sacred throne room of the most holy place. The four sides had structural wooden supports with cross beams covered in gold, making five crosses on each side.

Curtains were particularly beautiful. Images of angels were woven into the sheets of fine linen in blue, purple and scarlet. When my children were small we found instructions for making a miniature tabernacle. Our process paralleled the scripture story: a set of plans, collecting materials, constructing pieces and setting it up. As we enjoyed our project, I could not help but think of the scriptural comparison that the real tabernacle was a model, a miniature of heaven.

Clearly, places of worship are intended to be beautiful, and the historical church has constructed many such spaces and filled them with remarkable works of art. Our homes can also be places of worship with beautiful things that remind us that God is with us.

*What are the things that I particularly appreciate in my place of worship?*

**A Worshipping Community— Exodus 36, Luke 2:37**



## *Fra Angelico, Paradise*

Images of worshipping Christ in the tabernacle are highlighted by repetition. Seven chapters give plans for the tabernacle, and six chapters describe building it. The sheer quantity of material should alert us to the importance of this theme for the overall story of scripture: worship in a beautiful place honors God.

Exodus has five chapters of guidelines and thirty-five chapters about relationship to God, and that proportion parallels our spiritual experience. At the beginning of the book, the people were oppressed. A Deliverer was raised up who led them through the death and resurrection of the Red Sea just as we are liberated from sin through Christ's death and resurrection. (Exodus 1-14) As the people began their lives in freedom, they were shaky complainers, as we tend to be. (Exodus 15-18) Once they arrived at Mount Sinai, they had an opportunity to become grounded in God's word and to develop in their relationship with him. (Exodus 19-24)

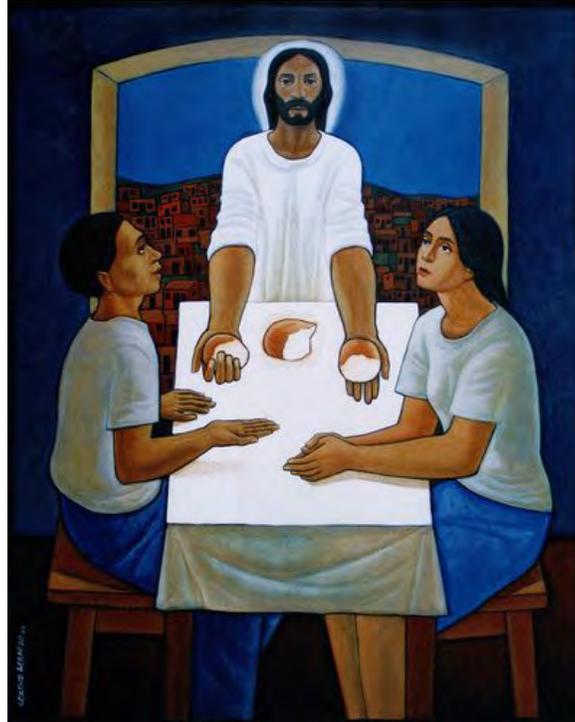
When Moses received instructions for ongoing spiritual life in the imagery of the tabernacle—repentance, cleansing, fellowship, worship—the people could have been patient, obeying what they knew. (Exodus 25-31) Instead, they became frightened and turned to idolatry. (Exodus 32) which required repentance and God's mercy. (Exodus 33,34) Then they turned to crafting a beautiful tabernacle, and dedicated priests and the place (Exodus 35-40), starting to learn a life of worship.

In this chapter we see that they showed changed hearts with their generosity. Metalworking craftsmen, carpenters, jewelers and weavers were needed. The weavers' work on 6 feet by 42 feet pieces could have been done in the Egyptian style of two women working on a horizontal loom. Then the embroidery of blue, purple and scarlet cherubim would result in a bright, lively design representing the angels at worship.

These worshipping angels looked ahead to the angels announcing Christ, and to the angels of heaven we see worshipping God through Revelation. The beauty and glory of the tapestries lifted the imagination to a future reality, and still today reminds us we live in a world where there are unseen spiritual beings among us.

*What are beautiful things that prompt me to worship?*

**Bread of the Presence — Exodus 37, Luke 22:19**



*Maximino Cerezo Barredo, Emaus*

Bread in the holy place is an image of Christ's body, and in this chapter the table for the bread is made as well as the Ark, lampstand, and incense table. The detail of making containers—bowls, ladles, jars and pitchers—for wine offerings makes the connection to the Eucharist even more clear.

Luci Shaw's poem, *The Partaking*, connects this holy bread, Christ, and us.

Bread of the Presence was  
in Moses' day  
served on engraved gold plates  
to you and your select few.  
And in exclusive glory  
one alone and lonely man  
sprinkled, with fear,  
the ceremonial drops that pleaded  
failure for another year  
to you, known then  
as only high and holy—  
heavens apart  
from common men.

Often we taste the  
granular body of wheat  
(Think of the Grain that died!)

and swallow together  
the grape's warm bitter blood  
(Remember First Fruit!)  
knowing ourselves a part of you  
as you took part  
of us, flowed  
in our kind of veins  
quicken cells like ours  
into a human subdividing.

Now you are multiplied—  
we are your fingers and your feet,  
your tender heart—  
we are your broken side.

Take now and crumble small and  
cast us  
on the world's waters—  
your contemporary showbread.  
Feed us  
to more than five thousand men  
and in our dark daily flood of living  
pour yourself out again!

John 6:53-56 —Luci Shaw

*How can I find deeper meaning as I take the bread and wine of communion?*

### **Building the Tabernacle — Exodus 38, I Corinthians 3:16**



*Jan van Eyck, Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*

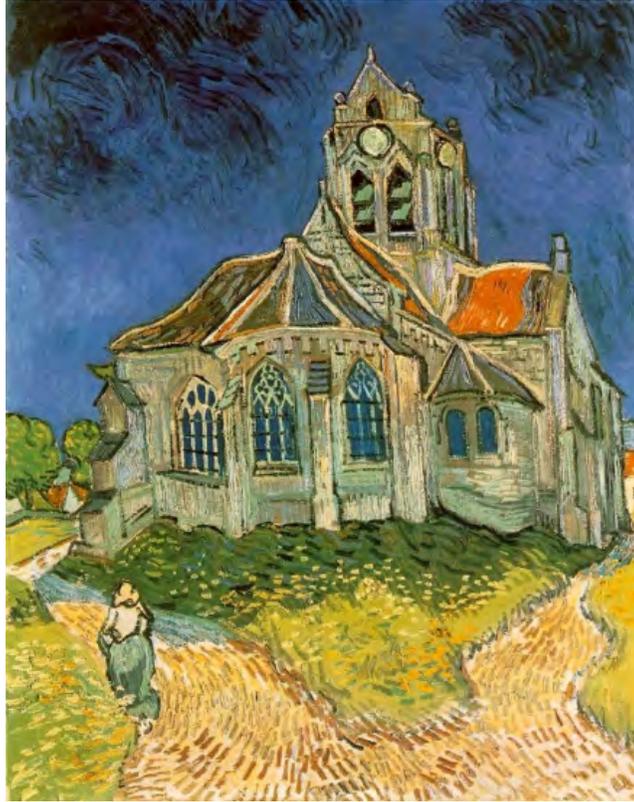
John's gospel shows how Christ is like the tabernacle. In this chapter the fabric enclosing the space is described, and simply by setting up this boundary as they camped, this became a holy place. Similarly, Christ incarnate in human flesh became the boundary in which God was present. The remarkable thing is that we are called to become like him in this way.

The first piece of furniture was the altar, and in John 1 Christ was identified as the Lamb of God who takes away sin. Next came the washbasin, and in John there is baptism. Inside the tabernacle is a table with bread, and Christ identified himself as the bread of life in John 6. There is also a candlestick, and Christ identified himself as the light of the world in John 8. The incense symbolized prayer, and in John 17 Jesus prayed to the Father for us. The veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn apart at the moment of Christ's death when he opened the way for us to approach the Mercy Seat and to live in God's presence.

A sacred process of becoming like Christ is represented for us in this place of worship. We first repent of sin, are baptized, and then learn to live in communion with him. If we follow Christ, over time it changes who we are, and the moment will come when we stand before God's throne.

*How can this ancient place of worship help me as I pray?*

**Holy to the Lord — Exodus 39, Hebrews 4:14**



*Vincent van Gogh, Church in Auvers-sur-Oise*

The High Priest wore a medallion on his turban engraved “Set apart as Holy to the Lord.” Similarly, Christ said that the Father had set him apart and sent him into the world. The priests were clothed and anointed to fulfill their role, just as Christ, the anointed one, was commissioned to fulfill his priestly role by the Spirit. The clothing for carrying out this office is similar to that of Christ in Revelation 1.

We can apply each aspect of the priest’s garments not only to Christ’s priesthood, but also to our own priestly role in the world.

- The rich colors—gold, blue, purple, scarlet—remind us that the care of souls is a beautiful and honored task.
- Jewels on the breastplate and the stones engraved with the names of Israel remind us of constantly carrying those we care about into God’s presence. Their beauty and value is not forgotten.
- The bells on Aaron’s garment were a musical proclamation of worship.
- The woven pomegranates symbolize life. As a Christian symbol of resurrection, including in paintings of Christ as a child holding the fruit, they celebrate the joy of eternal life.

The high priest is the main representative, but we recall that Israel was told they would become a kingdom of priests able to carry out a reconciling role for the world. The same call is on us in the New Testament to be royal priests.

There is continuity between this ancient tent of worship and the many Christian churches of today. The church has continued through the centuries to use tangible things to create sacred spaces, has used special sacred clothing, and the bells on the garment that called people to worship evolved into church bells that still sound throughout the world today.

*Am I engaged as a priest in the world?*

**The Cloud of God — Exodus 40, Acts 1:9-11**



*Lewis Bowman, Transfiguration*

The bright cloud of God prefigured Christ's glory. When the tabernacle was dedicated, the cloud was a sign of God's presence. Moses and 70 elders climbed the mountain for a meal in God's presence. Then God's glory in the cloud on Mount Sinai remained six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud. To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit like a consuming fire.

Christ's ascension, the second coming, and the transfiguration connect his glory with clouds. The disciples saw Moses, Elijah, and Christ together and a bright cloud came over them and God spoke, saying Christ was his beloved Son.

Most of the chapter consists of people carrying out divine instructions to set up the space for God's glory. Once the glory became part of the space, its movement served to guide them. For us, the analogy is that as the temple of God, we are to be filled with his glory. This first happened with the filling of the Holy Spirit first with God's glory described as tongues of fire. From that time on, the Spirit within them guided them, just as he does for us today.

Christ said he had given glory to his disciples, and we are challenged by this to become like them, bright with goodness and love that draws others to God.

*Am I living in the glory of God's presence?*