

Old Testament: The Pentateuch (Part 3)

Selected Scriptures

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Tonight, it is our joy to come back to our overview of the Old Testament. We're looking at the Old Testament and, just to remind you, it's important to begin by reminding ourselves of the overarching theme of the Scripture as a whole. The overarching theme of the Bible is that God is redeeming a people by his Son, for his Son, to His own glory. So, how does the Old Testament fit into that larger theme of the Scripture as a whole? Well, the Old Testament shows us the need for a redeemer. And it tells us He's coming. And in addition, it even shows us how to recognize Him when He arrives. We learn what nation, what tribe, what family He'll be from. We learn where He'll be born. We learn, even in Daniel's prophecy, when He'll be born so that when He arrives, He can be recognized. So, to better understand all of that and how the Old Testament sort of fleshes out this larger theme of Scripture, we're taking a kind of aerial tour of the Old Testament. We're flying over it at a great height, not looking down at all the details which I wish we had time to do but, instead, just trying to get an understanding of the major movements of the Old Testament.

There are essentially nine major movements in Old Testament history. There is the period of universal dealings when God deals with all of mankind as a whole in Genesis 1 to 11. Then you have the patriarchal period when God chooses Abraham and begins to work out through one man and his descendants, putting Himself on display in Genesis 12 to 50. 400 years of slavery in Egypt is captured in a single chapter - Exodus 1. That's followed by the exodus and the wilderness wanderings - most of Exodus, all of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Joshua describes the fifth movement - the conquest and division of Canaan. And then comes the darkest period in Israel's history - the period of the judges, captured by Judges, Ruth, and the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel. And, of course, God then brings into play the monarchy. It begins as a united monarchy described in 1 Samuel 9 through 1 Kings 11 and in 1 Chronicles. And then there's the divided monarchy, when the land of Israel is not under one king ruling all of the land but, rather, it's divided into two kingdoms - the north and the south. And that's in 1 Kings 12 through the end of 2 Kings and in 2 Chronicles. The eighth movement in Old Testament history is the Babylonian exile, when God's people are carried off. And Judah, Benjamin, the tribes - all

of the peoples to the south surrounding Jerusalem - are carried out by the Babylonians into exile in three separate movements, as we'll see. And then, finally, the 9th movement in Old Testament history is the return from exile and, again, that too happens in three separate movements, as we'll flesh out when we get there.

Now we've already worked our way through the first three of these movements, and last time we began to look at the 4th movement - the deliverance under Moses, the exodus, and the wilderness wanderings. Just to remind you, briefly, that the woman who adopted Moses, the Egyptian woman who adopted him, was probably Hatshepsut. Here is a family tree of the 18th dynasty in Egypt of which she was a part. She was, without question, the most powerful woman in Egyptian history. In fact, for 22 years, she proclaimed herself Supreme Ruler in Egypt. That's important to understand because it helps us get a grip on the fact that when Moses chose to associate himself with the Israelites, with the children of Israel, he was definitely giving up a life of ease and wealth and luxury and power and, possibly, the opportunity to become the next Pharaoh of Egypt, as the son of Egypt's most powerful woman. He made this decision, Hebrews tells us, based on his personal commitment to the Messiah. Hebrews 11:26: He considered the reproach of the Christos (of the Messiah) "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." As a result of that, of course, he fled Egypt, spent the next 40 years of his life as a shepherd in Midian. And this was not a nice place. This was desert; this was a barren place. And for 40 years, this man who spent the first 40 years of his life in the courts of Egypt, is now a shepherd - sheep. But God appears to him in the burning bush, calls him to return to Egypt, and to lead His people out. And that brought us to where we finished last time, looking at the ten plagues - Yahweh versus the gods of Egypt.

Now I just want to touch briefly on this again and emphasize the fact, that the point of the plagues in Egypt was not to destroy the Egyptians. Turn to Exodus 9. And this is very clear. Exodus 9:14. Let's go back to verse 13. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord [Yahweh], the God of the Hebrews, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people [now, notice this], so that [here's why] you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.'"" In other words, His purpose is not to destroy

them. His purpose is to teach them. Verse 15 goes on to say, “For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.” You see, the point here is if God had wanted to destroy the Egyptians, it wouldn’t have taken Him ten plagues to do it. He could have cut them off from the earth. And if all God wanted to do was to win the release of His people, again, it wouldn’t have taken Him ten plagues to do it. No! The purpose of the plagues was primarily evangelistic. It was to attack the gods of Egypt, to show that they were not gods at all, and to put Himself on display, to declare Himself to be the one true and living God. God intended to make Himself known and to save (and this happened, by the way. You can read the account of the Exodus) ... to save Israelites (many of them were not yet believers in the true God), to save Egyptians (that were actually Egyptians who left Egypt with the Israelites), and to save people from all over the world, and not just in that time period, but for hundreds of generations to come. God’s purpose was evangelistic. But having put Himself on display, He accomplishes the freedom of His people through one of history’s greatest events. We call it the Exodus.

The Exodus. Here is essentially their route. They left the land of Goshen, where they were primarily kept, and they came down through the Peninsula of Sinai and eventually arrived at Mount Sinai, near where Moses had seen the burning bush. That’s where God had ordered him to return, down in the lower southern end of the Peninsula of Sinai. This was where they came. Now when they left Egypt, here’s what we’re told are their numbers. There were 600 and 3000 males over the age of 20. In addition, there was a mixed multitude, that is, there were those who were not Israelites who came along with them. Some of them, I think, genuinely had come to believe. Others of them came for a lot of other reasons, I’m sure, even as we see in our own times. There were women - estimated 600,000; that’s just an estimate. Normally the populations are relatively equal between men and women. And then there were males and females under 20. Probably, by the time you take all of that into consideration, it’s a pretty conservative number to say that there were about 2,000,000 plus Israelites and, of course, Exodus 12 makes it clear that there were also many flocks and herds. This was a huge gathering of people. God showed Himself strong and brought His people out. Now remember, all of that came from 70 that had

gone to Egypt with Jacob 430 years before. Look at what God had done in those 430 years - from 70 to 2,000,000! And He brings them out of Egypt.

Now beginning in Exodus 13, God begins to lead His people with the glory cloud, the *shekinah*, the glory cloud. What was it? Well, it was simply a manifestation of God's presence. We can call it a theophany, an appearance of God or a Christophany, an appearance of Christ. But it suggests the nature of God's being, light. Probably the best way to think of it is something analogous to a caravan fire that led the people, throughout their journey. They were earthly elements - a cloud surrounding a glowing fire. And it protected the people from heat and sun stroke during the day. There's a cloud. It guided their path and defended them, and it threatened destruction on their enemies. Now the glory cloud first appears in Exodus 13, the end of Exodus 13, specifically, to guide the people out of Egypt. But once the tabernacle is complete, that glory cloud that tracked with them through all of the wilderness wanderings, takes up residence at the tabernacle in Exodus 40, and then eventually, when the temple is built in 1 Kings 8, takes up residence in the temple. So, the tabernacle, of course, is built soon after Sinai. And through most of the wilderness wanderings, the glory cloud takes residence in that tent, wherever it is, and then residence in the temple eventually, when it's built under Solomon in 1 Kings 8. And then, you remember, the rebellion of the people and the glory cloud, the *shekinah*, departs from Israel and from the temple and from Jerusalem in Ezekiel 10 and Ezekiel 11. It comes back, however, in the New Testament. The glory cloud appeared at the Transfiguration; also appeared at the ascension when He's taken up in the clouds, probably a reference to the same phenomena (and the phenomenon, rather) and then it will accompany Christ's Second Coming. And in the kingdom temple, during the Millennium, the *shekinah* glory cloud will again hover over that structure.

Now, once the people began their journey, there was a long journey from Egypt to Canaan. Let me just lay it out for you. In Exodus 13 through 40, you have about a year's time. You have three months, that it took from Egypt to Sinai. That's Exodus 13 to 18. They arrive at Sinai in chapter 19, and then they spend nine months at Sinai from Exodus 19 through Exodus 40. Leviticus is a time period of about a month when those regulations are given to the people, there at Sinai. And then, Numbers covers an expanded period of time - the time of the wilderness

wanderings, 38 years and 9 months. Deuteronomy, the final book of the Pentateuch, covers only two months, if you look at the times given in it, and that makes for a total of 40 years. So, we refer to the wilderness wanderings as 40 years but, technically, it's a little less because they had the time from Egypt to Sinai, they had the time at Sinai (about a year), and then they have a couple of months in Moab, the book of Deuteronomy. So, they arrived, having left Egypt, they go down, as I mentioned, to the southern Peninsula of Sinai. And they arrive at Mount Sinai. This is what that region looks like. It is rocky and barren. This is at the foot of the traditional side of Mount Sinai, down in the Sinai Peninsula. And this is where they came or someplace very much like it.

Now what happens here at Sinai? Why does God bring them here? Well, there is a covenant established at Sinai. You can read about it in Exodus 19. The people arrive at Sinai and, in verses 1-8, God institutes a covenant with them. They were already God's covenant people as part of the Abrahamic covenant, made all the way back in the time of Abraham. But now they are offered the privilege of becoming a covenant nation. But they must accept the privileges that come with that and the conditions. Here's probably the best summary of it - God's plan for Israel. This is from Exodus 19:4-6. Here is the institution of the nation's constitution: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." That's what happens at Sinai. "These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." In other words, what you need to understand, when God institutes the covenant with Israel as a nation, He has a specific purpose for them. God chose Israel to be salt and light in the midst of a wicked world. But in choosing Israel - and this is so important to understanding the Old Testament - in choosing Israel, God was not neglecting or rejecting the rest of the peoples of the world. Israel instead, as you read in Exodus 19, was to be God's witness nation to the world. They were to be, notice what God says, "a kingdom of priests", an entire nation made up of priests, not literally, but in the sense of their mission. They were to represent God to the rest of the peoples on earth. That was their calling. By the way, that exact same mission is now our mission as the church. In 1 Peter 2:9-10, this very expression is given to us. We are now a kingdom of priests for God.

Now Moses was on Mount Sinai two times, as you know, for 40 days broken by the Golden Calf incident. And during his time on Sinai, God gave Moses plans for a tabernacle that was to be built. That's described and the tabernacle is built in Exodus 35-40. Let me just give you a glimpse of what the tabernacle would have been like. These are models of the tabernacle. This is the one that is actually built out there in the area of the Sinai Peninsula, where Mount Sinai is located. But let me give you a little bit closer glimpse from a couple of other pictures. Here's the one from the ESV Study Bible, an excellent rendering if you have that study Bible. Here is a little bit different view. Essentially, you have the curtain that goes around, separating the court, held up by the pillars - the linen hangings supported by the pillars, that encompasses a courtyard a large courtyard. Within that courtyard there is, in the front of it, an altar - the altar of burnt offering where the sacrifices are burned. There is a laver of water where there's cleansing for the priests. And then, you have the tent itself with the holy of holies and the holy place. Here's another viewpoint, just looking sort of back and across it, and then looking from the altar in toward the tent itself. A fairly simple structure and yet commanded by God.

The question is why? What is the significance of this tabernacle? In Exodus 40, when it's completed, the *shekinah* glory cloud comes and takes up residence within it. So, what does this tent represent? It was to go in the middle of the encampment of the Israelites throughout their wilderness wanderings. What does it represent? Well, it is a throne room for Israel's king. In Exodus 25:8: "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them." It is God's throne room among His people as He is their king. He takes up residence there. Exodus 40:34-35: "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." So, it symbolized God's presence with His people.

It also, interestingly enough in light of the passage we read together this morning, it also pictured Christ who would tabernacle among us. It's the word used in John 1:14. Literally, John 1:14 says, "*He pitched His tent among us.*" The word became flesh, and He pitched His tent among us. He did in human form what the glory cloud did for ancient Israel. He pitched His tent

among us. He dwelt among us. Now, after a three-month journey to Sinai (from Egypt to Sinai) took three months with over 2 million people, Israel then remained at Sinai for about a year.

And this is absolutely important because at Sinai God gave Israel two systems that are absolutely crucial to understanding the Old Testament. And these two systems occupy the bulk of the rest of Exodus, of Leviticus, and even some of Numbers. So, let's look at these systems together; two foundational systems in Israel that help us to learn so much about what God was doing. First of all, there is the sacrificial system. There is the sacrificial system. God instituted for the nation, while they were in Sinai, a very complex sacrificial system. But while it was complex, and we'll look at its complexity in a moment, it was on the other hand quite simple because it had one basic point. And if you miss everything else I say tonight, don't miss this, because this is foundational to all of Scripture. What the sacrificial system taught the Old Testament believer is this: there is only one way that sinful man can approach holy God and that is through sacrifice. There is only one way that sinful man can approach holy God and that is through sacrifice. The first half of Leviticus, from Leviticus 1 to Leviticus 17 makes this point again and again and again. In fact, in the directions for sacrifices that are given in Leviticus and in the rest of the Pentateuch, Moses provides us with six foundational truths contained in the Old Testament sacrificial system; six foundational truths about the reality that the sacrificial system pictured. Let's look at them together.

First of all, number one, God commanded sacrifice from every person, God commanded sacrifice from every person. As I said, Leviticus 1 through Leviticus 17 makes one basic point: the way to God is only through sacrifice. And, in fact, in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, God prescribes five specific kinds of sacrifice. Now, listen to this. All five of those sacrifices were to be a part of the worship of every Israelite. In addition, four of the five were to be a part of the national or the corporate sacrifices at the time of the national feasts and at the tabernacle, and later, the temple on Sabbaths and other occasions. The trespass offering was the only one that was for individuals alone. Now each of those five types or five kinds of sacrifices that are outlined in Leviticus 1 to 7, each serves a distinct purpose. Here are the five sacrifices. First of all, there was the burnt offering sacrifice and the occasion or purpose for it was to make propitiation, to satisfy God's justice for sin in a general sense, as well as to demonstrate entire

consecration to Yahweh as all of it was burned up. There was the meal offering. This was to offer the Lord the fruit of one's hands, the first fruits of the harvest to express your gratitude. In an agricultural society, it was an expression of thanksgiving. The third kind of sacrifice was the peace sacrifice. And there were three different sort of branches of the peace sacrifice. There was the thank offering, there was the vow sacrifice, and the free will sacrifice. And the reason to offer these would have been for an unexpected blessing, for deliverance when a vow was made, or just for general thankfulness in the case of the thank offering. The fourth sacrifice was the sin offering. It was to make propitiation or atonement for a sin for which no restitution could be made - something you had done, and it was impossible to make it right. And then there was the trespass offering. This was to make propitiation or atonement for a sin for which restitution could be made and should be made and must be made.

So, all of these, if you lived in Old Testament Israel, you would have offered, over the span of your life, all of these sacrifices. In addition, there were the national sacrifices, that is, not ones offered by individuals, but ones offered on behalf of the nation by the priesthood. There was the continual sacrifice of two lambs every day that the tabernacle and the temple stood - at the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. There were sacrifices on each Sabbath. There were sacrifices, many of them, at the new moon, at all of the feasts of Israel. There would be a number of animals that would be slain - close to 10 national sacrifices at all of those events. In the case of tabernacles, close to 30 animals would be slain on behalf of the nation, each of the seven days of tabernacles. When you look at the whole picture, the annual requirements for the national sacrifices, just the ones offered on behalf of the nation, not by individuals, would have been 1200 animals. And we haven't started talking about all of the five kinds of sacrifices that all of the people of Israel were to be offering on behalf of their sins. So, do you understand that God commanded sacrifice of every person as well as from the nation? Because the only way that sinful man can approach holy God, is through sacrifice.

A second foundational truth that we learned from the sacrificial system is that the sacrifices were not for the worshipper; they were for God. The sacrifices were for God and the language is crystal clear. When you look in the Book of Leviticus and in Numbers as well, you continually find statements like this: "You shall offer [this sacrifice] as a soothing aroma to the LORD." In

other words, this is the picture that when that animal dies, when he dies on behalf of the sins of the people, the smoke of the sacrifice ascends, as it were, into the nostrils of God. And as it ascends into His nostrils, it soothes, it quiets it calms, His just anger against sin. It was to satisfy His justice that had been so greatly offended by the sins of the people, by our sins. If you had lived in Old Testament times, you would have offered sacrifice and this is why you would have offered it - as a soothing aroma to the Lord because your sin and my sin would have justly aroused His just anger, His wrath.

Thirdly, we learn that to be accepted, the sacrifices had to be offered from the heart. In other words, God wasn't happy if you just went through the motions. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel said to Saul, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." He wasn't downplaying the role of sacrifice. He was saying, "*Saul, the fact that you've offered sacrifice means nothing to God because your heart wasn't engaged. You're not obeying Him.*" And so, for sacrifices to be acceptable to God, they had to come from the heart.

Number four: the animal sacrifices were always substitutionary. In Leviticus 1 through 7, one thing about the worshipper's connection to the sacrifice that he offered stands out. It was always offered in his place. The animal died in his place. And all of the events that transpired around the sacrifice were intentionally arranged by God to communicate this. I want you to imagine, for a moment, that you were an Old Testament believer and that you needed to make a sacrifice, a sin offering or a trespass offering. You had sinned against God and you came to offer that animal. Here's what would have transpired in the order of events, as they're described in Leviticus. First of all, you, as the worshipper, would have brought your offering - a physically perfect animal, not something that cost you nothing, not an animal that you couldn't sell, that had no real value because it was maimed or had some flaw but, rather, the very best animal you had, no flaws, perfect, represented something extremely valuable in an agricultural kind of society. And you were to bring that offering to the forecourt of the tabernacle. Now having arrived there, you would have then taken that animal, before it was killed, you would have taken that animal and you would have laid your hands upon its head. And you would have confessed your sins over the head of that animal. There was something symbolic happening here. It was the transfer

of your guilt to that sacrifice. In confessing your sins with your hands on the animal's head, you were saying these sins now have been imputed to, have been credited to, this innocent animal in my place. And then, you, as the one making the sacrifice, would have been handed the knife. And you would have slit its throat. You would have killed the animal. And as that animal died and his blood poured out, the priest would have been there with a bowl. And the priest would have collected the blood from that animal that you have just sacrificed, and he would have walked over to the altar, there in the forecourt of the tabernacle, and he would have splattered that blood across the altar. And then, he would have taken the specified part of the animal, depending on the kind of sacrifice along with portions of the fat, and he would have laid the portions prescribed on the altar to burn. And, of course, in the case of the burnt offering, the entire animal was consumed on the altar. And then the remainder that wasn't to be burnt, depending on the sacrifice, was eaten by the priests or it was eaten by the priests and their families or, in the case of a peace offering, by the priests and the worshipper together. Now, what I want you to see is this: the point of this entire process and especially the laying of your hands on the head of that animal, made it clear that you were transferring your guilt, your sin, to that animal and that animal was then going to die as your representative. It was going to die in your place. And God was going to accept the sacrifice of that life in exchange for your life, which your sin required. It was a powerful, powerful picture. The animal died in the place of the sinner who deserved to die. And if you had lived in Old Testament times, you would not have missed the symbolism.

A fifth lesson or foundational truth that we learn about the sacrificial system in Leviticus is that animal sacrifices were never the basis for forgiveness. How do we know that? Because they continued, "year" ...as the writer of Hebrews said, "day after day, year after year". They never really dealt finally and ultimately with sin. In fact, the writer of Hebrews puts it this way: it is impossible (Hebrews 10:4) - "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Couldn't happen! That's why it had to keep happening again and again and again and again.

And the sixth foundational truth we learn from this system is that animal sacrifices were simply pictures of the coming human sacrifice of Christ. God hates normal human sacrifice. But God

requires the human sacrifice of His Son. Turn to Hebrews 10, Hebrews 10. The writer of Hebrews couldn't make it any clearer. He says in verse 1: "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been [truly, permanently] cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore [watch this], when He comes into the world [when the Messiah comes], He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You have not desired [you don't want animal sacrifices], but a body You have prepared for Me...' In other words, the animal sacrifices were merely pictures of the one sacrifice that truly would deal with sin. It had to be a human sacrifice but of someone who was perfect, who could truly represent us, on whom we could lay our hands, as it were, confess our sins, transfer our guilt, and then God take His life in the place of ours. This was what the sacrificial system pictured. So, every time you read the Old Testament, understand these truths undergird it all.

Now what was the role of priests in all of that system? You know the priests were taken entirely from the tribe of Levi and, specifically, from the descendants of Aaron. They were supported by the taxes of the people. In Old Testament times, those taxes were called tithes. That's why we don't believe in New Testament tithing. They also gave free will offerings which we do as well. That's our giving. It's free will offerings, just as theirs's were, and our tithes are our taxes that we pay to the government. But they were supported by the tithes or the taxes paid by the people. They lived in 48 cities, scattered across the 12 tribes, four within each region. And the priests had two primary responsibilities. One of them was maintaining the sacrificial system. But you didn't do that all year as a priest. In fact, by David's time, there were 24 divisions of priests and that meant that if you were a priest, you only served at the tabernacle, or later, the temple two weeks a year or, there were other times when it would have been one month every two years. So, what did you do the rest of the time if you were a priest? If you're only spending two weeks a year carrying out the sacrificial system, what do you do? Well, your second primary duty is teaching the Bible to God's people; teaching the Scripture to the people. Deuteronomy 33:10: "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel. They shall put incense

before You, and whole burnt offerings on Your altar.” There are the two pieces of the job description of a priest: the sacrificial system and teaching God’s people His word. So, that’s the one system the sacrificial system and it permeates the Old Testament, and it makes its point profoundly clear. The only way that sinful man can approach holy God is through sacrifice. And, ultimately, one sacrifice - the sacrifice of His Son.

Now, the second system that God gave Israel at Sinai was the law of God, the law of God. When you look at Exodus, and there at Sinai, and you want to classify it in some way - this is an oversimplification, I understand that, but it will at least give you a framework. In Exodus 20, you have the moral law of God, the ten commandments. In Exodus 21 to 23, you have the civil laws, the laws governing the operation of the nation. And then, in Exodus 25 and following, you have the ceremonial laws. And, of course, that’s carried through in Leviticus as well - the tabernacle and its offerings. Now when you look at the civil laws, the laws for the nation, those civil laws are expressed in two ways. They are expressed as ordinances, the Hebrew word *mishpatim*. You can see these recorded in Exodus 21:2 through Exodus 22:17. These are the case laws where, normally, it’s something like this. If this happens, then this. If this happens, then this. It’s case law. The other way civil laws are expressed is through commands – the *devarim*. In Exodus 22:18 through 23:19, these are apodictic laws. In other words, they’re expressed not as “if this happens, then this”, but “you shall do this” or “you shall not do this”. And I’ve given you a couple of examples of each of those. Those are the civil laws. Now, the key ideas that you’ll find embodied in the case law when you read the law of God - in the case law the “if this happens, then this” sort of laws, you’ll find these ideals throughout. There must be appropriate punishment. You’ve heard of the *lex talionis* - an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. That sounds, on the surface, like it’s cruel. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you go back and you look at the code of Hammurabi, for example, or other ancient law codes, you will find that the penalty often was grossly matched to the crime. You steal a piece of bread and they cut off both your hands. The law of God was intended to bring proper balance, appropriate punishment that fits the crime. That’s what the law means when it says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If someone punches out the eye of your child, you don’t have the right to kill them. There is an appropriate, measured response. Also, you find the ideals that are embodied in the case law including the sanctity of life and that it’s to be protected. You find the concept of

restitution and compensation. By the way, in God's law, there is no imprisonment. There is death for some offenses, and there is restitution. And then, built into these ideals, is the way to keep from abusing the system, to protect the people of God. The two summary principles I would say about the law would be this: the ethical principles of the ten commandments are still incumbent on the New Testament believer. In other words, it's not okay to murder. It's not okay to bear false witness. It's not okay to worship other gods. Those things are still very much incumbent on the New Testament believer. We'll talk more about that in a minute. And, I would say this: The Old Testament case laws, while they are not directly applicable to us, they certainly illustrate ethical principles from the vantage point of God that still have relevance in their application to today. So, while not requirements on us, they are at the same time wonderful insights into the mind of God about how He thinks about circumstances.

Now there are three basic aspects of the Mosaic law and this is not a neat and tidy division. I can't take you through every verse in the law and say it falls into this category. But these three categories do exist. There is the ceremonial section of law, that is, that deals with things like the national feast, the sacrifices, and those sorts of things. And those are broken out for us in the New Testament. Paul breaks them out as a separate group. Hebrews breaks them out as a separate group and sets them aside because they are fulfilled in Christ. You have the civil or the judicial aspects of the mosaic law. Basically, the laws of the nation. And those, by the way today, have been transferred, not to the church, but to the state - to government. Romans 13 - they are the ministers of God to punish evil doers. So, human government is to carry out that aspect of the law. And then there's the moral law. Now, what do we mean by moral law? Well, let me give you several scriptural propositions. And I'm not going to take time to flesh these out but let me just walk you through them. First of all, when we talk about the moral law of God, it is law that is based on the character of God. These are not things that change like the ceremonial laws for example. These are requirements of us that ultimately reflect something that's true about God. Secondly, the moral of God was written on man's conscience from the very beginning. We saw this in Romans 2. The substance of God's law, the work of the law, is written on the heart. Basically, man gets the essential requirements of God. Thirdly, the moral of God was codified at Sinai, as part of the Mosaic legislation. It was included along with the ceremonial and the civil; it's mixed in there together, but it was written down, codified,

formalized at Sinai as part of the Mosaic legislation. Number 4: it's affirmed by Christ in the New Testament authors. In other words, the moral requirements of God that are cited in the Old Testament are still required of us. These requirements of the moral law of God, number five, were never meant to justify. Galatians 2:16 and other references make that clear. They were never intended to justify us. But they do serve a purpose. First of all, they serve a purpose for unbelievers. The moral of God awakens their consciences. Remember Romans 3:20. It's through the knowledge of the law that we gain a knowledge of sin. Also, the moral of God drives the unbeliever to Christ. Galatians 3:24: the law is our tutor to drive us to Christ. And, thirdly, the moral law of God leaves unbelievers without excuse and condemned before God if they reject the gospel. That's the message of Romans 3:19-20. They stand with their hand over their mouth at the judgment. They have nothing to say.

A seventh scriptural proposition, regarding the moral law, is that it serves a purpose for us as believers as well. It provides as a guide for our obedience. The New Testament, on a number of occasions, talks about the goodness, the righteousness, the helpfulness of God's moral requirements of us. And it produces overwhelming gratitude because we realize we don't have to keep the moral law to earn a right standing before God; that Christ has done that for us. The moral law of God is most concisely summarized by the commands to love God and to love our neighbor. Remember when Christ was asked what is the great commandment? How would you say we are to most pursue obedience to God? He said love God with all your heart and, secondly, love your neighbor as yourself. That's the best summary of God's moral requirements of man. And it is outlined by the ten commandments. It's summarized by "love God and love your neighbor". It's outlined by what we call the ten commandments.

Now, I want to look briefly at the ten commandments. There are three basic principles of interpretation as you approach the ten commandments. First of all, each command is spiritual or internal. How do we know that? In other words, why do we know that it's not just a command that you're not to physically murder someone, but it means more than that? Because one of the commandments, the tenth one, is what happens inside of you: "You shall not covet". We learn from that, that God is interested in more than just our external behavior. So, each of the commandments, then, has a spiritual or internal requirement. Secondly, each command forbids

wrong thoughts and actions and also demands right thoughts and right actions. How do we know that? Well, if you ever noticed the structure of the ten commandments? Most of them are “thou shalt not”. But there are a couple that are “thou shalt”. What do we learn from that? We learn, again, that in every commandment, then, God is interested in its opposite. Not only are you not to do all those ten things, you are to do the opposite of those 10 things that are forbidden. And then, the third principle for interpreting the ten commandments, is to understand that each command has a core theme or message that summarizes many of God’s laws. Think of the ten commandments as ten hooks on which everything else God requires of us can be hung. It’s an outline. Why would that be important? It’s literally, in the end, ten Hebrew words. Why is that important in a culture where there’s potentially no writing? Because you can remember it. It serves, like the Lord’s prayer, as an outline. And, in the case of the ten commandments, an outline of God’s moral requirements of us. Just as an example, by the way, of this interpretation let’s just look at the first command: you shall have no other gods before Me. Obviously, the act forbidden is having any object of worship in addition to, or in place of, the true God. That’s clear from the commandment, right? But, now, what is the thought forbidden? Because, again, remember? It’s not just the act, it’s what goes on in the heart - it’s internal. We learned that from the tenth commandment. In other words, having no other gods not only means that I don’t have another object of worship, but it means I allow nothing within my heart that takes the place of devotion to, or worship of, the true God. What is the act commanded? What’s the opposite of having another God? Well, we’re to acknowledge Yahweh to be the only true God and, that knowing Him as our God, is most important and we are to seek to lead others to the worship of the true God. And what’s the thought commanded in this first commandment? Adoring, loving, desiring, fearing, believing God, trusting, hoping delighting, rejoicing in God, giving Him all praise and thanks, and obeying and submitting to Him, and seeking to please Him. Do you see how, in this one commandment, so much of what God says is encapsulated and outlined?

So, I want to look, then, at the essence of the ten commandments. As an outline of the entire law, these ten commandments identify ten categories or areas of life in which God has revealed His will. I’m just going to walk through these very quickly. And I’m going to... here’s what I’m going to show you. For each of the commandments, I’m going to show you the theme, the area or category of life that it’s dealing with, and then I’m going to give you the basic primary

thought, and then the last thing on the slide is I'm just kind of throwing in for free. When my kids were growing up and I was trying to teach them the ten commandments, for each of the ten commandments, I tried to encapsulate it for young minds, really young minds. What do they need to know about God's requirements of them? And so, I tried to capture it in a basic phrase. Now, here is the sort of structure you ought to think of. You have all the commands regarding God. Those are outlined by the first four commandments and summarized by the command to love God. And then you have all of the commands regarding others. Those are outlined by the last six commandments and summarized by our Lord's command to love others as you love yourself. So, that gives you a picture of what is required.

Now, when we come to the essence of the 10 commandments, here's the first one. First of all, you shall have no other gods before me. This is Exodus 20 if you want to look there. Exodus 20:3: "You shall have no other gods before Me." What's the theme of that command? It's the person of God. And the essence of it is that we are to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God. And what I taught my kids as a way of understanding this first commandment was only one God. They'd walk around the house with their little one finger up: only one God, only one God. That's the essence of this command. The second commandment is found in verses 4 to 6: "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them..." The theme is the mode of worship. And the point is that God is to be worshipped but only in the way He prescribes. And the way I summarized it for my children: He tells us what He's like in the Bible. The third commandment is found in verse 7: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain..." The theme or the focus of this command is our attitude toward, and our treatment of, God and the things connected to God, or you could say the glory of God. And the point is that God is to be feared and treated with the greatest reverence and respect. The child version: respect and honor God. The fourth word, the fourth command, comes in verses 8 to 11: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God..." What is the theme of this command? It's time or the priority of God in the flow of our weekly responsibilities. The basic point is that God is the Lord of our time and He has prescribed that we devote most of our time to working and that we set aside time to worship Him. And the way

I summarized it for my kids as we worship God on Sunday. You say, "What about the Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath?" Well, I don't have time to get there but I did a couple of messages on it from Mark's gospel. If you're interested, you can go there. But I would say this: Colossians 2 clearly sets the Sabbath laws aside because when you look at Colossians 2:16-17 it says, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day." If you look in the Old Testament where those three expressions occur together, it's always the annual feast, the new moon or monthly feasts, and the weekly Sabbath. And Paul, there, says let no man judge you in respect to these things. But the principle in the fourth command still very much in play. Number five, found in verse 12: "Honor your father and your mother..." The theme is authority. God has put people over us in a position of authority and they are to be honored, for children, honor your father and mother. The sixth word comes in verse 13: "You shall not murder." The theme is human life, and the point is that life is divinely given and must be respected and preserved. And, again, for most children who aren't in danger of murdering anyone (they might want to but they usually don't), is take care of other people. Take care of other people. The seventh word comes in verse 14: "You shall not commit adultery." Obviously, the theme is sexuality and the sanctity of marriage. And the point of this command is that God has given us the gift of sexuality and He insists that it be enjoyed in keeping with His design and His intention. And for younger kids, who don't understand all these things, I summarized it as our bodies belong to God. That lays the foundation for explaining this when they're old enough to understand. The eighth command comes in verse 15: "You shall not steal." The theme of this command has to do with personal property. God has distributed material wealth according to His own sovereign purposes and He demands that we respect the property of others and that we be wise stewards of our own. For my children I said, "Take care of your own things and the things of others." The ninth word comes in verse 16: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." The theme is our speech. God demands the maintaining and promoting of truth in our speech. Always tell the truth. And the tenth and final word comes in verse 17: "You shall not covet..." The theme really is life's circumstances, and the point is that God demands that we be content with and grateful for our condition, circumstances, and estate. And with my children it was be happy with what God has given us. That's the law. This, by the way, according to Psalm 1 is to be our delight and we're to meditate in it day and night. Psalm 119:97: "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."

And even in the New Testament, Paul says in Romans 7:22, “For I joyfully concur with [delight in] the law of God in the inner man [in my inner being] ...”

So, after almost a year, Israel left Sinai and, down in the far end of the Sinai Peninsula, and headed up to Canaan. The glory cloud led the nation from Sinai up to Kadesh Barnea. And there, you’ll remember 10 of the 12 spies refused to believe God. Let me just remind you of the two reports that come in Numbers 13. Caleb and Joshua said the land is fruitful, the people are strong, some of them are big, the Anakim are there, but let us go up now. Majority, the ten, said the land devours its owners, the people are stronger than us, all of them are big, the Nephilim are there, we are not able to go up. It was unbelief. God had said they would have this land. It was a rejection of God. And, in fact, after hearing the report of the 10 spies in Numbers 14:1-4, the people rebel and threatened to return to Egypt, to appoint leaders and go back to Egypt. And the result of their disobedience is 40 years of wilderness wandering. The faithless generation died except for Joshua and Caleb after nearly 40 years of wandering in a desert like this one, and the death of over 1.2 million people. Moses led the new generation to Moab on the plains of Jordan. And there, Moses reconfirmed the covenant with them... as there...for two months on the plains of Moab. In fact, look at Deuteronomy 1. We’ll close here. Deuteronomy 1. What does Moses do to prepare the people of God to enter the land that God has promised to them? Notice verse 5. Deuteronomy 1:5: “Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law...” The book of Deuteronomy is the first collection of expository sermons as he unfolds the law of God and he prepares the people of God to enter.

You know, when you think about the wilderness wandering, what are the lessons for us? There are two of them. Don’t forget them. Number one: The New Testament warns us and uses the wilderness wanderings to illustrate two great dangers. First one is the danger of accommodating our sin. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 and again and again he says they pushed their liberty to the edge and invited God’s judgment, and it devastated the people. And the second danger is the danger of unbelief, of being connected to the people of God but not really believing. It’s a great danger. But God was faithful. He had brought His people to the land and the next act is for them to enter. God is faithful. He’s faithful to us as well.

Let's pray together.

Father thank You for our time together tonight. Thank You for the lessons that You have taught us here. Lord, the most powerful lesson that stands out to us is that we can only approach You through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We affirm all that You have taught us about Yourself and we ask that it should make us faithful. Lord protect us from the pitfalls the children of Israel found in the wilderness. And help us to believe You and walk in faith. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!