

Two Year Bible Trek

Week 9

Exodus 32-40

Key Concepts: The key concept is that the relationship between God and God's people is one that, like all relationships, has its downs and ups...but God is faithful to the covenant.

Stories: The stories in this section include, the golden calf incident, God desiring to destroy the people, Moses intervening, Moses breaking the tablets, Aaron getting off scot-free, Levites killing their apostate brothers, Moses praying and God plaguing, Moses chatting with God on the one hand, then not being able to see God on the other, Moses making two more tablets, God announcing God's identity, God commanding the people to drive out those inhabiting the land, God making a new covenant with Moses, a reminder to keep Passover, Moses having to wear a veil because he has seen God, a reminder to the people that they need to help make the Tabernacle and everything in it, the people giving up their gold and goods in order to make the tabernacle, all of the items for the tabernacle being made, Moses receiving final instructions to put the Tabernacle together, doing so and then everyone watching as the cloud of the Lord descends upon the Tabernacle.

Brief Summary: This last section of Exodus is a fascinating one because it begins with faithlessness, draws together concepts from earlier stories, appears to repeat a couple of stories and ends on a happy note. This section begins with the famous golden calf incident where the people, tired of waiting for Moses, completely abandon God and make their own golden calf god. God is so angry that he wants to wipe out the Hebrews and replace them with children from Moses...exactly like the Noah story, only on a smaller scale. Moses talks God out of it...like Abraham tried to do as regards Sodom. Moses response to the apostasy is to break the tablets on which the law is written (though much of the law is already in place). Moses then has the Levites kill all of those who followed the golden calf god (except Aaron who is ignored).

This incident is then followed by two incidents between Moses and God. In one story we are told that Moses and God talked face to face, whereas a second story explains that if Moses sees God's face he will die. What we have here are two very different traditions dealing with the God and Moses relationship. Nonetheless Moses makes new tablets and returns to Sinai in order to receive the law again (which is obviously a warning to always back up your data). At the same time God enters into a covenant with Moses (which means we now have three covenants: Noah, Abraham and Moses). Moses brings back from Sinai laws similar to the Ten Commandments and a glowing face, for which he has to wear a veil.

In response to all of this, the people are encouraged to give up their jewelry in order to make all of the items necessary for worship at the tabernacle. The people are also encouraged to assist in the construction of the tabernacle and its components. The people agree to both of these requests and do so with gusto. As the book draws to a close we witness the tabernacle and its pieces being completed by the people under Moses direction, the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests and then the coming of the cloud of the Lord upon the tent. The movements of this cloud tell the people when to go and when to stay. It is one more way in which we watch God providentially caring for as well as guiding the people.

1. What would you say are our golden calves today?
2. Which tradition do you like best: the one in which God and Moses speak face to face or the one in which Moses cannot even look upon God?
3. What are the similarities of the three covenants?
4. How do you see God leading you in your life?