

The Story | Chapter 5

New Commands and a New Covenant



The Exodus is a powerful story where God shows up in extraordinary ways. Captured beautifully in the Prince of Egypt. Actually, it is a pretty accurate portrayal of Moses from the Old Testament. God parting the Red Sea, leading the Hebrew people out of bondage to slavery into the new life, into a promised land, a land as God put it flowing with milk and honey. It is not an easy journey ...primarily because the people are stubborn and have short memories about how God has even in the midst of less than perfect circumstances cared for them. This story is a huge part of God's chosen people and it is a big part of our story here today too! There are some pretty amazing intersections and connecting points our personal stories and this story from almost 3500 years ago.

I AM

This part of the story begins with God reminding Moses who God is and what God has done. God says to Moses "Remember who I am, I am the God of Abraham, remember what I did for Abraham and Sarah and how I blessed them and made them a great nation, then I delivered, I made good on my promise. I am the God of Jacob and I am going to deliver you. Then after he brings them out of Egypt he reminds Joseph I am the God who brought you out of slavery...Moses this is my story, you know me by my stories, these are not fairy tales, or make believe, they are stories that define who God is and how God connects to us. There is power in stories.

Every now and then someone will comment about my preaching that they wish I would just teach verse by verse from the Bible, and not tell so many stories. If I tell a story it is used so that we will remember something about who God is and how God is moving in the story of our life. There is power in your story and in God's story, and where those two stories intersect it is transforming, life changing, life giving, and permeated with a deeper understanding of who God is and how God loves us.

Now some people are skeptical that this parting of the Red Sea actually happened. But most Biblical scholars will agree that the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were all written during the time frame that all this is happening. It is written by people who most likely walked through the parted waters.

Much of this is thought to be a pretty first hand account. And we are not talking about a handful of people, 30 or 40 folks stepping on stones across a stream, It is estimated that about 1 to 2 million Jews were crossing the Red Sea.



The central part of the story in the Old Testament is the Passover and the Exodus. The central event of the New Testament story is the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. And these central events all happened in public, for everyone to see. They did not happen privately, or just to one person experiencing it, and then saying this is what happened so you have to trust me.

The Bible says there 600,000 men involved in this event plus the women and children. It is safe to assume that there were at least as many women and children. Even if each man and woman had only one child, that would be 1.8 million people moving across the desert and through the parted waters of the Red Sea. To give you an indication "The Rose Bowl" in Pasadena seats about 93,000 people that would be like 19 full Rose Bowls moving across the Red Sea, witnessing this miracle.

This is an amazing story of God's power, and when we start to experience our place in God's story, then we start to experience God's power and his presence. When we experience our place in God's story we don't just experience one of these, his presence or is power, it is both. God's presence without his power is limited; his power without his presence is distant.

POWER & PRESENCE

We see God's power and presence in the Red Sea parting...wouldn't that be amazing to see the walls of water on each side, to see the pillar of fire by night and the cloud above by day to lead the Israelites. The people in this place of Mara where the water was bitter turned pure.

The people are grumbling, why did you bring us out to this desert to die, what are we going to eat. Moses you should of just let stay in Egypt as slaves. At least we had food, then the power and presence of God show up again, quail and this manna (the crackers every morning on the ground) always enough to nourish them.

These folks are like we are; they were not always God conscious. They forgot often what God had done for them, They knew God had helped them escape 400 years of slavery, they knew God parted the Red Sea...but now they are hungry and they are grumbling... What have you done for me lately God? Ever been like that? Ever forget what God has done for you in the past...maybe you are in the middle of a crisis and all you want to know is what have you done for me lately God!

God tells Moses to remind the people to be still and that God is fighting for them, remind them of my stories and of my power and my presence, that I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am the God that delivered through the Red Sea. God did not bring them this far to have them die abandoned in the Sinai Desert!

MANNA FROM HEAVEN



So God rains down this manna from heaven, imagine Krispy Kreme donuts that are good for you. Imagine all your daily nutrition in a Krispy Kreme donut, wouldn't that be heaven! It is God's bread for the people to eat, God's presence, and God's power...On and on, they experience his power and presence, and they have faith and then it wanes, back and forth, back and forth. The story continues to grow and continues to move the people closer to God. Find yourself in this story and see how God is showing up in your life, your story with power and presence.

PEOPLE GET HURT CRASHING THROUGH GUARDRAILS



Who knows what this is? A three-vehicle accident with fatalities that happened when the big rig broke through the guardrails. The guardrails are not there to ruin your driving pleasure, they are there to keep you safe, to provide boundaries. When you break through the boundaries, when you cross over the double yellow lines, bad things happen, people get hurt. It is the great analogy of the meaning and the purpose of God's ten commandments that God gave to Moses to deliver to the people of Israel.

One of the most powerful ways that God shows up in this story is when God leads the people to Mt. Sinai. Moses comes down from the mountain, out from the clouds to the 2 million or so people with the stone tablets hand written by the very finger of God. (Exodus 19: 6)

God gave the law to the people to continue to show his presence and to help build their faith. Now a lot of people hear about these Ten Commandments and think this has nothing to do with building the faith. The laws are just joy killers to keep us from having fun, or from living a full life or they are to keep us from being free to do what we want, they are just rules and regulations to control us.

Honestly nothing could be further from the truth. The laws of God are not meant as a punishment, they are a gift to God's people. How are they a gift? God is saying: this is how I am going to keep you safe, how I am going to help you be close to me. How I am going to teach you the joy in caring about and for others. These are boundaries that are going to benefit you in your relationship with me and with other people. So he gives these laws to Moses.

You know them, but lets review them.

- **No other gods before me**
- **Don't mess with God's name**
- **Have a holy day each week**

Read them with me

- 1 No other gods before me
- 2 Don't mess with God's name
- 3 Have a holy day each week

Martin Luther said if you get the first one down, the rest are really pretty easy. You put God first and you want to do the others. But if you don't get the first one, the rest are an uphill climb all the way.

Number one fits in with this story, reminding the people...I am a holy god, I am the God of Creation, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and I am the God that has brought you through the Red Sea, I am a powerful God, and I am a God who is present with you even in this desert.

Don't mess with my name, don't use it as an expression, or out of shock, or to insist to people that you are telling the truth. Jesus said later that if you have a reputation for integrity and honesty, let your yes be yes and your no be no. If you don't have that reputation then start building it today.

So you don't have to say I swear in God's name that it is true. God is saying don't bring my name into that, my name is holy, I am to be revered. God expects to be respected by how why we talk about God and use God's name. You God can part a sea and lead two million people to safety. I am not going to throw your name around like I own it. I am going to save your name for praise and prayer, and study and journaling about you! I am not going to use your name as a casual expression, and God is saying you will

have a better relationship with me if you stay on this side of the guardrail. God is powerful and present and God wants intimacy with us.

Third Commandment.

Have a holy day every week!

Take a break; rest physically and spiritually every week. Worship is to be part of this. It does not mean that we just stay at home and watch football all day long. So far, as a Bronco fan it has been pretty refreshing to watch this, pretty good for you Green Bay folks, not so much for you 49er fans.

Do things that replenish your spirit, come hang out in my sanctuary, come sing songs of praises, hear my word, be with my people, come encourage one another, come and break bread together. Come and be my church! Have a day of rest where you slow yourself down. If you do this you will have a better relationship with me, because we have spent some quality time together. You will experience more of my power and more of my presence in your life. This is why God gives us the law ... for our benefit.

The first three commandments are focused on our relationship with God. The next seven are about our relationship with other people.

- **Honor your parents-**
- **Don't murder**
- **Don't cheat on your spouse**
- **Don't steal**
- **Don't lie**
- **Don't covet houses**
- **Don't covet anything**

4 Honor your parents- and for us as parents this command implies that we live in such a way that our life is honorable. It is not just our kids obeying us. It is living in a manner that is worthy of their respect.

5 Don't murder- has something to do with not just killing someone, but how we talk about people, don't gossip

6 Don't cheat on your spouse- you will have better marriages, better families and better communities when you don't. Remember that picture of the car accident.

What happens when people break through the guardrails? People get hurt— sometimes people we never intended to hurt are hurt. The boundary is there not to take away your fun but to keep your heart, your family, and your soul safe.

7 Don't steal

8 Don't lie

9 Don't covet houses

10 Don't covet anything

Nine and ten are the big covets. Did you ever notice that when you get the house you dreamed always dreamed of, or the car you have wanted so badly, that after a short time you see someone else's house or car and it is bigger and better than yours and somehow yours just is not quite as satisfying anymore. Or have you ever looked at someone who has more than you and begrudged them, you look for things wrong with their life to make you feel better about yours.

When we go there in our minds and hearts we are breaking through the guardrail, it is going to get in the way of how we relate to that person. It is going to poison our attitude; it is going to make us unhappy, greedy, and ungrateful. It will suck the joy out of what we have and who we are. None of which are God's design for our lives or relationships. These commandments are really about our relationship with other people, coveting is really about envying, feeling entitled to something that isn't ours to begin with. Those are not building blocks for healthy relationships. Try being happy for the person has those things. Do you know how much freedom that would give you to be happy for another person that is doing well?

We all do it sometimes, I need that car, that house, that vacation, that job ...don't play that game...be satisfied with what you have. If you think you need to have that house or car, or whatever it is to be satisfied, it is lie. You don't even need me to tell you this, because deep down inside you know it is true, I am only here to remind you. You know you don't need this stuff to be satisfied, or full. It is just so tempting. Don't start thinking those things will give you life, don't start coveting those things because the truth is they make rally lousy Gods.

That is what these last two commandments are about.

So these are the Ten Commandments, and my guess is that every one of us here knows these. It is important to know what the Bible says but knowing isn't enough. Even the devil knows what the Bible says. Question is are we applying it to our lives. It

is great to know religious things but knowledge that is not applied to our lives is pretty much worthless.

Think for a moment about seat belts. You know that they save lives. There are plenty of studies to show that. I have a daughter who is alive because of her seat belt.

SEAT BELTS WORK ... WHEN YOU WEAR THEM



When our daughter Tessa was a junior in high school driving back on the 55 freeway at Dyer Ave, coming back from watching her friends play in volleyball game. The rear tire on our Ford Explorer blew out and she rolled the SUV going about 65 mph. Tessa walked away shaken up and only a couple of scratches. About a week later on the same stretch of freeway, not far from there, a car load of high school kids going to prom rolled their car, three of them died. What was the difference? Tessa was wearing her seat belt and the other kids weren't.

Knowing that seat belts save lives will not help you one bit if you are in an accident and you didn't buckle your seat belt.

Knowing the Ten Commandments and not applying them to your life will lead to you and other people being hurt. It will prevent you from experiencing both the awesome and the loving power and presence of God in your life. It will mean that you will live with less joy and purpose than God desires from you.

Do these things make a difference in your life; do you know the Ten Commandments? Are you living them? I promise, but more importantly God promises, they will not ruin your fun or mess with your life, they will enhance it beyond your wildest dreams.