

The Compass

Week 5

OT Readings – Exodus 10:1-23:13
NT Readings - Matthew 20:1-24:28

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- God's actions to win Israel's heart and confidence; and Israel's response to God. Winning Israel's heart and confidence is the basis for all God is seeking to do in the future.¹
- Notice how in 15:22-17:16 God uses the basic necessities of life – food, water and security to teach them how to trust Him (“disciple” them).
- Exodus 19 is a key passage; Israel is invited into *relationship* with God (see below) and given a *mission* to the world.
- The danger of idolatry, adopting the gods of the people's around them, was very grave. What are the many ways that God seeks to keep them from this destructive path?²
- Following the giving of the Ten Commandments or “Ten Words” comes Exodus 21-23, the “Book of the Covenant,” a compilation of various laws. This “Book of the Covenant” “gives specifics as to what the Ten Words mean in practice.”³

New Testament

- Continue to watch for the mixing of the story (narrative) and Jesus' teaching; notice how Matthew develops his themes. Note the changes in location; 19:1 region of Judea and then 21:1, Jerusalem. The story now moves resolutely toward Jerusalem and the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry.
- His teaching on discipleship set against the background of the ongoing resistance to Jesus.
- The people acknowledge Him as King (21:1-11) and then reject Him (27:19-26) – all within a week's time.
- God's heart is revealed in Jesus' grief over Jerusalem (23:37-39) – events are set in motion that will bring about Jesus' death and ultimately Jerusalem's end in AD 70 (24:1-28).

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

Exodus 19:1-8. Having revealed His great heart to His people, and His power to bring about what He promised, He now asks for their hearts in return. His deliverance, His provision, His protection all reveal how much YHWH, the “God who is with them,” loves and cares for them (Deut. 1:30-31). Ex. 19:4 presents a wonderful image of a mother eagle tenderly caring for her young; teaching them to fly, yet protecting them if they fall or grow tired.⁴

Ex. 19:5-6 is God's invitation to relationship; but what *kind*? Jer. 31:31-32 reveals God's perspective on the kind of relationship He wanted with His people – and wants still! Marriage! Why this metaphor?

Metaphors are powerful ways to communicate. God chose the most personal, intimate and tender of human relationships to describe the kind of relationship He wants with His people – amazing! It is as though God got down on one knee at Sinai and asked Israel to be His wife. She said yes (Ex. 19:7-8).

Application: “What about me? How does this apply?”

Matt. 20:20-28. This passage was as counter-cultural when Jesus said it as it is today. Yet, servant hood is one of the primary reasons Jesus came! It is to be the *modus operandi* for all of Jesus' followers and

not an option. In fact, it is how the kingdom of Jesus moves forward in the world. Importantly – it is an attitude of heart, not simply an action. You can “serve” without ever really being a servant like Jesus.⁵ Are you one? Do you seek to serve others in every opportunity? Or do you put yourself, your needs, and your wants to the “front of the line?”

Difficult Question of the Week

Question: *Why does God give His people a “law?”*

To understand the why, we need to draw together several threads. First, YHWH invites His people into a covenantal love relationship, which He sees as marriage, with *Himself*. However we see the law, we must understand that it is an expression of this love relationship, NOT the way to get into this relationship.⁶

Second, the law is the “torah,” the “instruction.” God knew His people did not yet *know* how to live *out* this love relationship. How were they to relate with God and one another and become His “special treasure” in fact? By living according to the truth; and that truth (for them) was to be found in the Torah or law contained in these first books of the Bible.

The law was to be a blessing to them as they obeyed it – an expression of their love for God and an expression of His love for them. In obeying, they would be shaped in their individual lives and in their interpersonal relationships to *represent* God to the world around them (Deut. 30).⁷

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¹ The cycle of plagues will end with Pharaoh’s reluctant willingness to let Israel go. Pharaoh’s pursuit, and God’s miraculous deliverance at the Sea of Reeds, prompts Israel to trust God and worship (Ex. 15). God’s Name, YHWH, “I am the God Who is With You,” represents God’s heart and character. This God, “YHWH,” is the one who has revealed His great power in crushing Egypt and delivering His people – they have every reason to trust and love Him! God will continue to reveal His love and tenderness as He leads His people to a decisive moment at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

² It is no surprise that the first commandment is to forbid the worship of other gods. God has brought his people into this very special relationship to bless them; He realizes if they pursue other gods it will destroy them. Unfortunately, despite God’s best efforts, the worship of other gods will be a stumbling block to them throughout their history until after the Exile in BC 6th c.

³ Stuart & Fee, *How To Read the Bible Book by Book*, 40.

⁴ See also Deut. 32:10-12 for an elaboration of this image.

⁵ Jesus is a servant still – God is a servant God.

⁶ See the NT equivalent – Jn. 14:15. Love is the reason we obey – because of His love for us, we love Him and express that love as our desire to trust Him in everything.

⁷ It is a Biblical and theological error, in my opinion, to say that God gave them a law that they *could not obey*. There is no evidence of this in the OT. It is a defamation of God’s heart and character to make such a charge against Him. The Torah was to be “life” to them and God wanted their obedience so that they could experience His blessings. However, they could only keep it if they continued to walk in the love relationship with God. Read Deut. 30 for the clear presentation of this position.