

Session 7 Questions

Egypt and Exodus – Part 2

THE BIBLE
TIMELINE
The Story of Salvation

(We encourage you to review your notes and the *Responses* from last week before beginning this new lesson.)

A. Review the Context

In Part 1 of Egypt and Exodus, God called Moses to deliver his firstborn son, Israel, from Egyptian slavery to serve him. In the process, he revealed his name to Israel—YHWH, “I AM”—and freed them in such a way that the full impact of that name was displayed before Egypt as well. In a series of plagues, he exposed the gods of Egypt to be the imitations they are and showed himself to be both the source and the sustenance of all life and power. God brought his people safely through the Red Sea and drowned the enemy behind them—a picture of our baptism, by which we are freed from the power of sin and reborn through water to a new life in Christ.

The “red” of the Red Sea gives us a color by which to remember this period. If Part 1 showed us how God redeemed Israel, Part 2 shows us how God established them as a nation so they could live as the free children of God. This is vital knowledge for us, for Christians are the successors of Israel, members of the kingdom God promised would be a source of his blessing to the world. Freedom from Egypt didn’t mean Israel automatically started to live like God’s children should. In the same way, getting free from the power of sin through baptism into God’s family is a big step, but it isn’t everything. The travels and trials Israel faced en route to the Promised Land—and the way God prepared them to face them—picture our journey to heaven and give us guidance on the way.

As you read through the rest of Exodus, notice that God didn’t free Israel from slavery and then send them off as individuals to make their way to Canaan as best as they could. He formed them into a people, gave them laws to guide their behavior and worship, and provided them with a leadership structure to guide them. They were to march forth together, not under their own power but with the power of God. That is why we have a Church. We’re all in this together.

B. Read the Story

In the second half of Exodus, God’s people become a nation and are given the Law, the Tabernacle, and the Levitical priesthood. Read **Exodus 19-20, 23-25, 32-34, and 40** for the highlights of this time, which are covered in the questions. After reading, trace the action on the center section of your *Bible Timeline Chart*. Identify the main characters and notice the flow of key events and where they take place. Any questions? Write them down.

Going deeper (optional): To get the entire story of this period, read **Exodus 19-40**.

As always, pray before you read.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Answering these questions will draw you into the heart of the story. If you don’t understand something, make a note of it to bring up in the discussion.

Rules to Live By (Exodus 19-24)

If the question in Egypt and Exodus – Part 1 was “Who will you serve?” then the question in Part 2 might be “How will you serve?” The children of Israel spent an entire year at the base of Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt. During that time they met God, they heard his voice, and they became his people.

1. Previously, God promised to make of Israel a nation and a kingdom. In **Exodus 19:1-6**, what kind of nation and kingdom does he say they will be, if they obey him and keep his covenant? What impact does he plan for his “firstborn Son” Israel to have on the world?
2. Mount Sinai is thought to be the same mountain on which Moses met God in the burning bush. This time the whole top of the mountain is burning with God’s holy fire. Moses meets God there and receives what we know as the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God on two tablets of stone. These are commands that liberate. They tell the newly freed slaves how to live as redeemed people, to keep from falling back into bondage.

The Ten Commandments

The following listing of the Ten Commandments is from Deuteronomy 5:6-21, from which the traditional Catholic numbering is derived. The Commandments also appear in a slightly different form in Exodus 20:2-17.

1. “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”
2. “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”
3. “Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.”
4. “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you; that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you, in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”
5. “You shall not kill.”
6. “Neither shall you commit adultery.”
7. “Neither shall you steal.”
8. “Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.”
9. “Neither shall you covet your neighbor’s wife.”
10. “You shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

- a. How do the commands in **Exodus 20:2-11** sum up the lessons of their delivery from Egypt?

 - b. How do the rest of the commandments follow on or relate to the first set?
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3. Exodus chapters 21-23 are called “the Book of the Covenant”—a list of ordinances that apply the basic laws found in the Ten Commandments to everyday situations that Israel will face as a nation. In chapter 24, Israel enters a covenant with God; the law they have just received is in effect the terms Israel agrees to.

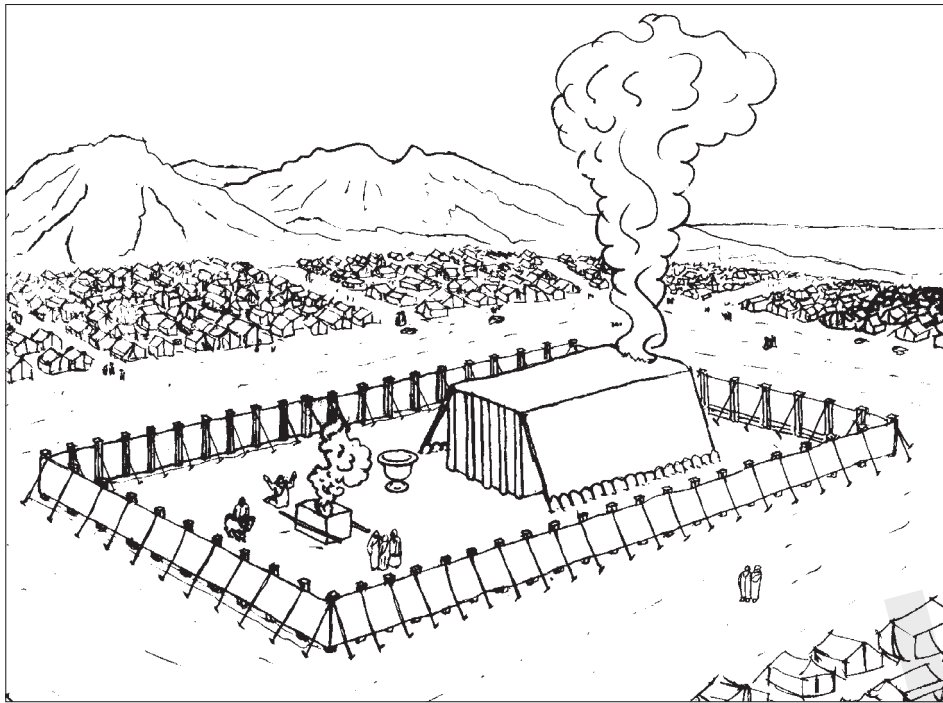
Read **Exodus 23**, which emphasizes the importance of worshipping God alone, keeping the prescribed feasts, and obeying and serving God. What does it say will be the benefit to Israel of doing this?

4. **New Testament Connection:** The Israelites of long ago tended to be anxious about what they would eat and drink and how they would fare against their enemies. After years of slavery, they looked first for human solutions to their needs and problems. But they are to be God’s people, and as such they must learn that if they put God first in their lives, he will watch over them.

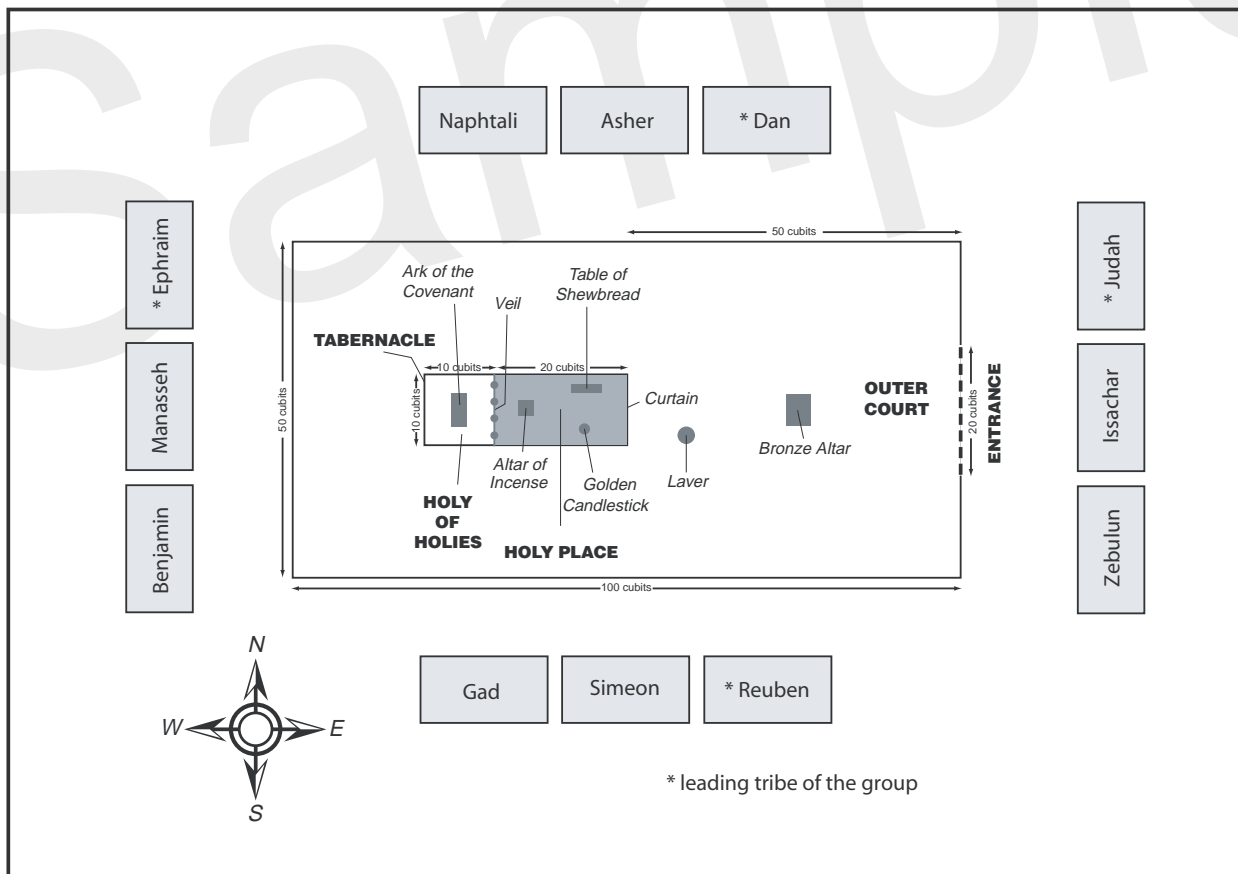
Read **Luke 12:16-31**. How is this concept of giving priority to God preserved in the New Covenant?

Rules for Worship (Exodus 25-31)

5. At the top of Mount Sinai, God gave Moses explicit directions for building a portable tent of meeting called a tabernacle (literally, “dwelling place”) and its furnishings.
 - a. Read **Exodus 29:42-46**. What was the purpose of the Tabernacle, which will distinguish Israel from all nations on earth? (See also **Exodus 33:14-16**.)



The Tabernacle in the Wilderness



Plan of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:16-34) and Arrangement of Tribal Camps (Numbers 2)

- b. Exodus 25 describes the most important piece of furniture in the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, which was given pride of place in the Holy of Holies. This symbolized the throne of God; it was the place where God would come down and speak. Read **Exodus 25:10-22** and **Hebrews 9:4**. What items were to be placed in the Ark?

6. **New Testament Connection:** Read **Revelation 11:19-12:6**.

- a. Describe the woman in this passage. Who does she represent, and how do you know?

- b. **Think about it:** Revelation 11:19 seems to indicate that this woman can also be seen as the New Testament fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant. Is there any way in which the contents of the Ark support that idea?

A New Priesthood (Exodus 32-40)

7. Forty days after pledging to be God's people forever, the people get impatient and construct a golden calf to worship. God intends to consume them (**Exodus 32**). Read this chapter and then review **Exodus 5:22-6:8**, a time when Moses believes the Lord has "done evil" to the people (when Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go and worship, he earned impossible work for the people and a no-confidence vote for himself). **Think about it:** What does the golden calf incident draw out from Moses that he lacks in Exodus 5, and on what basis does he appeal for God's mercy?

8. Up until this time, the firstborn of each family unit acted as a priest for the family. As a result of the golden calf incident, the tribes were in a sense “laicized.” No longer would each family have its own priest, but the priests would come from the tribe of Levi. What attributes do you see in the Levites that qualify them to be priests?
9. **New Testament Connection:** The end of Exodus describes what happened when work was completed on the Tabernacle: “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34). From that time on, the cloud and fire led them on their journeys, a visible affirmation of the presence of God. This is not the first time God’s presence has been shown by fire or cloud (remember the burning bush in Exodus 3; the cloud and fire on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24; and the cloud that descended to Moses’ tent when the Lord would speak with Moses in Exodus 33). Keeping these in mind, read *Catechism* Nos. 696-697. Who later fulfills these Old Testament figures, and how?

D. Application

This question will help you apply one of the key themes of the lesson to your life. After meditating on it, respond to God with a brief written prayer if you choose.

The incident of the golden calf shows that while it was one thing to bring Israel out of Egypt, it was another to get Egypt out of Israel. God’s children would continue to struggle with an attraction to other gods. You might not be tempted to erect a golden calf in your living room, but are there other things or ideas or people you give credit for God’s work in your life? Are there other things you put before him? How can the lessons Israel learned in these early years help you today?

Dear Lord...

E. Wrap-Up

Conclude your study of Egypt and Exodus and fix it in your mind by doing the following:

1. Recall the color of this period and think of it in terms of your reading to help you remember.
2. Quickly review Sessions 6 and 7. Write a one-sentence summary of what Egypt and Exodus is all about or its significance as part of the “big picture.”

Session 7 Talk Notes

Egypt and Exodus – Part 2

A. Introduction to Egypt and Exodus – Part 2

1. God will give Israel their identity (Exodus 19:6 – “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”)
 - a. “Priest” = *kohen*, pl. *kohanim*
2. God will give Israel the Law, a Tabernacle, the Sabbath

B. God enters into a covenant with Israel (Exodus 19-24) – One Holy Nation

1. God offers to make Israel his own (Exodus 19:6)
2. The terms of the covenant
 - a. Law
 - i. Torah: from Heb. root *yarah*, to throw or to cast; to shoot at a target
 - ii. Understand Law in the context of the covenant and relationship
 - iii. To sin: *chet*, “to miss the mark”
 - b. Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)
 - i. The First Commandment: “Have no other gods before me”
 - Our vocation is to manifest God to the world (*Catechism* No. 2085)
 - Prohibition against divination (*Catechism* No. 2116)
 - Prohibition against graven images: changes with the incarnation of Christ (*Catechism* Nos. 2130-2131)
 - c. The Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23) – treatment of sojourners
3. The covenant sealed (Exodus 24)

C. God gives them a pattern for worship and the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-31)

D. The covenant broken and the consequences (Exodus 32)

1. The golden calf
 - a. Moses intercedes for the people:
 - i. On the basis of God’s reputation
 - ii. On the basis of God’s covenant promise

- b. God repents: *shuv* (Heb., “to turn or return”) or *metanoia* (Gk., “to change one’s mind, repent”)
 - c. Why does nothing happen to Aaron?
2. Institution of the Levitical priesthood (verses 26-29)
 - a. Levites like deacons, responsible for furnishings, serving in the Tabernacle
 - b. Priests from family of Aaron (also tribe of Levi)
 3. A system of sacrifice ushered in
 - a. Guidelines for worship and service: Leviticus
 - i. The priestly code (Leviticus 1-16)
 - ii. The holiness code (Leviticus 17-27)
 - b. Liturgical calendar
 - i. Special days and years
 - ii. Special feasts

E. Covenant renewal (Exodus 33-34)

1. The importance of God’s presence among them:
 - a. It makes Israel distinct
 - b. True also of Christians (John 1: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”)
 - c. What makes Catholics different: his Real Presence in the Eucharist
2. New tablets, Aaron’s rod, manna placed before the Ark of the Covenant
 - a. In Revelation 11:19-12:1, the new Ark of the Covenant

F. Building and Blessing the Tabernacle (Exodus 35-40)

1. A microcosm of creation
2. The glory of the Lord filled it (his Presence)

G. Conclusion

Session 7 Responses

Egypt and Exodus – Part 2

THE BIBLE TIMELINE

The Story of Salvation

Facilitators: Read these recommended responses to the questions ahead of time to help you prepare to lead the small group discussion.

Participants: Reinforce what you have learned by reviewing these recommended responses after your group discussion and before you go on to the next lesson.

A. Review the Context

Discussion Leaders: Take a moment to review the context and what was learned last week. If you like, use the following question to encourage discussion:

- *One way of looking at the Exodus is that Israel was freed from the tyranny of work without time to worship to get into a proper relationship with God and worship him. How does this speak to your own life?*

B. Read the Story

Discussion Leaders: If there is time, have someone read each passage before it is discussed.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Rules to Live By (Exodus 19–24)

1. *Previously, God promised to make of Israel a nation and a kingdom. In Exodus 19:1-6, what kind of nation and kingdom does he say they will be, if they obey him and keep his covenant? What impact does he plan for his “firstborn Son” Israel to have on the world?*

God says that Israel will be three things: “my own possession among all peoples,” “a kingdom of priests,” and “a holy nation.” The first speaks of God’s great love for them. Other translations say they will be a “treasure” to God. As a kingdom of priests, they will represent other nations before God and make God known to other peoples. “Holy” doesn’t mean “perfect” but “set apart”—set apart in the same sense that we set apart good dishes or wedding gowns for special purposes. God has chosen or “set apart” Israel to have a special role among the nations. All of this elaborates on what was said earlier, that Israel was the “firstborn” among nations.

2. a. *How do the commands in Exodus 20:2-11 sum up the lessons of their delivery from Egypt?*

The whole story of the Exodus can be summed up in the first three commandments. Israel was saved out of a culture that was steeped in polytheism, that did not know or recognize God, and that kept their attention bound 24/7 as slaves to Pharaoh. In liberating them, God revealed his name and demonstrated his supremacy over creation and all other gods. Not surprisingly, the first commandment directs the people to worship God alone. Put him first; don’t make idols of created things, and don’t reduce the Creator to an image. This protected them not only against falling back into the patterns they learned in Egypt; it protected them from the fault of Adam and Eve, which was to seek to become gods themselves.

The second commandment, following on the precious gift they received of God’s name, tells them

to revere it and not take it in vain. This does not just mean not to use it as a “curse word.” A name represents the person. Invoking God’s name thoughtlessly is tantamount to saying his being is worthless.

Finally, God delivered his people so that they could rest and worship him. The third commandment reminds them to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Their identity as his people, created in his image, is tied up in this.

b. *How do the rest of the commandments follow on or relate to the first set?*

The first three commandments have to do with establishing a right relationship with God. The remaining commandments, which establish boundaries defining right relationship with others, grow out of the first. They are rules describing the way redeemed people live, to keep them from falling back into bondage. Observed, they provide stability, sanctity of life, and a proper balance between work and rest and worship. Broken, the vacuum left by their absence is bondage to self, to hatred, to greed and falsehood: to the false gods of this world.

3. *Read Exodus 23, which emphasizes the importance of worshiping God alone, keeping the prescribed feasts, and obeying and serving God. What does it say will be the benefit to Israel of doing this?*

The benefits to Israel of worshiping and obeying God are many: God will be an enemy to their enemies; he will send his angel to bring them into the Promised Land; they will prosper, have long life, and enjoy good health. God will establish the borders of their new nation. In effect, he will carry out the promises he made so long ago to Abraham.

4. ***New Testament Connection:*** *The Israelites tended to be anxious about what they would eat and drink and how they would fare against their enemies. After years of slavery, they looked first for human solutions to their needs. But now as God’s people, they must learn that if they put God first in their lives, he will watch over them.*

Read Luke 12:16-31. How is this concept of giving priority to God preserved in the New Covenant?

Enslaved by sin and self, our human tendency is still to seek human solutions to needs and problems first and to look to God second, if at all. But as the people of God, we must learn to make seeking God and his kingdom the first priority in our lives (as opposed to allowing our needs and wants to drive us) and to trust him to care for our needs.

Rules for Worship (Exodus 25–31)

5. a. *Read Exodus 29:42-46. What was the purpose of the Tabernacle, that will distinguish Israel from all nations on earth? (see also Exodus 33:14-16)*

The Tabernacle was a portable “tent of meeting” where God would dwell among his people and meet with and speak to them. God had come down to meet with individuals on occasion, but not since the Garden of Eden was there a place for them to dwell together. By accompanying them in this way, God was distinguishing Israel from among the nations as his very own.

b. *Exodus 25 describes the most important piece of furniture in the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, which was given pride of place in the Holy of Holies. This symbolized the throne of God; it was the place where God would come down and speak. Read Exodus 16:33-34, Exodus 25:10-22, and Hebrews 9:4. What items were to be placed in the Ark?*

In the Ark were to be kept a jar of manna, for a permanent remembrance of the bread with which God fed them in the desert, and “the testimony,” or the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments on them. Later on, God would direct them to add Aaron’s rod, representing his high priestly authority (this is recorded in the book of Numbers and will be covered in a future lesson).

6. **New Testament Connection:** Read Revelation 11:19–12:6.

a. Describe the woman in this passage. Who does she represent, and how do you know?

“A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” appeared in the sky. She is pregnant and about to give birth to a male child, “one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” but whom a dragon seeks to devour and who is “caught up to God and to his throne.” This is none other than Mary, Queen of Heaven and mother of the child Jesus, who will rule the nations. (She is often identified with the Church, as well.)

b. **Think about it:** Revelation 11:19 seems to indicate that this woman can also be seen as the New Testament fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant. Is there any way in which the contents of the Ark support that idea?

The Ark of the Covenant is seen within God’s Temple in the sky, and then there suddenly appears a woman who is pregnant with the Messiah. Consider these things:

- The Ark held manna, which was bread from heaven that sustained Israel during its long trip to the Promised Land. Mary held in her womb the true Bread from heaven, Jesus Christ.
- The Ark held God’s words given to Israel as the Ten Commandments. Mary held in herself the Word of God made flesh.
- The Ark held Aaron’s rod, representing his high priestly authority. Mary held the Great High Priest himself, the very Son of God.

The holy Ark where God came down to dwell with Israel provided a graphic image of the day when God would come to earth and live among his people as a man, Immanuel (“God with us”).

A New Priesthood (Exodus 32–40)

7. Forty days after pledging to be God’s people forever, the people get impatient and construct a golden calf to worship. God intends to consume them (Exodus 32). Read this chapter and then review Exodus 5:22 – 6:8, a time when Moses believes the Lord has “done evil” to the people (when Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go and worship, he earned impossible work for the people and a no-confidence vote for himself).

Think about it: What does the golden calf incident draw out from Moses that he lacks in Exodus 5, and on what basis does he appeal for God’s mercy?

Moses has learned a lot since his early days of leading Israel to follow the Lord. In Exodus 5, when his pleas to Pharaoh seemingly backfired and brought more work on the people, Moses blamed God and accused him of not fulfilling his promises. He did not seem to remember the things God had told him. His faith wavered. In Exodus 32, Moses intercedes boldly and fearlessly on behalf of the people. The crisis draws out of him a powerful demonstration of faith. Whereas God previously had to remind Moses of his might, his actions, and his purposes and must promise again to deliver them so they would know he is God, Moses now knows that for himself. He appeals to God not on the basis of the worthiness of the people nor because of their weakness, nor even because they are sorry, but on the basis of three things that are true about God:

- God loves Israel. They are God’s people, not Moses’ people, chosen and brought out of Egypt by God for himself.
- God has a Name to uphold. What would it say about God if he destroyed Israel right after saving them so Egypt would know who he is?
- God is faithful. He promised to multiply Israel, bring them into the Promised Land, and establish them there forever. For God to destroy Israel now would be inconsistent with who God is. Moses knows without a shadow of doubt that God is the Lord.

8. *Up until this time, the firstborn of each family unit acted as a high priest for the family. As a result of the golden calf incident, the tribes were in a sense “laicized.” No longer would each family have its own priest, but the priests would come from the tribe of Levi. What attributes do you see in the Levites that qualify them to be priests?*

When Moses asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” the men of Levi demonstrated their complete devotion and fidelity to God by their immediate, united response. They gathered by Moses’ side and without debate carried out his order to slay those who betrayed God and worshiped the calf. By standing up for God against even their relatives, they ordained themselves for God’s service.

9. **New Testament Connection:** *The end of Exodus describes what happened when work was completed on the Tabernacle: “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34). From that time on, the cloud and fire led them on their journeys, a visible affirmation of the Presence of God. This is not the first time God’s Presence has been shown by fire or cloud (remember the burning bush in Exodus 3; the cloud and fire on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24; and the cloud that descended to Moses’ tent when the Lord would speak with Moses in Exodus 33). Keeping these in mind, read Catechism Nos. 696-7. Who later fulfills these Old Testament figures, and how?*

The *Catechism* tells us “in the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures” (No. 697). The cloud reveals God while veiling his glory so he can be observed by man. Just as God spoke from the cloud on Mount Sinai to proclaim his Word, God speaks out of a cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration to identify his Son. As a cloud revealed God while veiling his glory when speaking to Moses and in the Tabernacle, a cloud carries Jesus away in his ascension and will reveal him when he returns. The Holy Spirit is represented by fire in the New Testament also: as God was present in fire on Mount Sinai at the founding of the nation of Israel, he was present at the founding of his Church on Pentecost, in the person of the Holy Spirit made manifest in tongues of fire on the disciples’ heads.

D. Application

Discussion Leaders: If time allows, have group members share their responses to the following application questions:

The incident of the golden calf shows that while it was one thing to bring Israel out of Egypt, it was another to get Egypt out of Israel. God’s children would continue to struggle with an attraction to other gods. You might not be tempted to erect a golden calf in your living room, but are there other things or ideas or people you give credit for God’s work in your life? Are there other things you put before him? How can the lessons Israel learned in these early years help you today?

Dear Lord...

E. Wrap-Up

1. Remember Egypt and Exodus by its color red, which is a reminder of the Red Sea that God brought the children of Israel across and in which he drowned the armies of Pharaoh.
2. Answers will vary. One possible reply: Egypt and Exodus tells how God heard the cries of Jacob’s family who had become slaves in Egypt. He came down and revealed his Name, delivered them from bondage so they could worship him, and gave them a way to live and worship as a holy nation consecrated to him.

Close with the responsive prayer found at the end of the Study Set Questions. Pray through the Egypt and Exodus Period.

As a follow-up to this discussion, listen to or watch Jeff Cavins’ talk on *Session 7: Egypt and Exodus – Part 2*.