

# What Is God's Intended Purpose For Humanity ?

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have a Bible, please turn with me to Exodus chapter 34.!

Exodus chapter 34.

The Lord said to Moses, Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. Be ready by the morning and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain.

No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite the mountain. So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first, and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him and took in his hand two tablets of stone.

The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

[ 1 : 59 ] And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.

And he said, Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people, I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation.

And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I commanded you this day.

Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst.

You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their ashram, for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

[ 3 : 08 ] Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land. And when they who are after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons.

And their daughters who are after their gods, and make your sons who are after their gods. You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib. For in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt. All that open the womb are mine.

All your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep, the firstborn of a donkey, you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed.

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe the feast of weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

[ 4 : 17 ] Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders. No one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover remain until the morning. The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. And the Lord said to Moses, Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Amen. This is the Lord's word, and we pray his blessing to us as we read it. Well, for what did God bring Israel out of Egypt?

[ 5 : 26 ] Why did he bring them out of Egypt? In Exodus, Yahweh brought them out of Egypt not just to make them non-slaves, free people to do whatever they wanted.

He rescued them to be his people, and the kind of people he intended for all of humanity in the beginning. A people who would know him and who would remember his ways and who would reflect his glory.

And so there's been a pattern since the beginning of creation and the Garden of Eden where God is making a new creation. If you read in Genesis 6-9, again, like creation, the earth is dark and void in relation to evil.

And then there's a creation event with the flood, and the waters recede, and God makes a covenant with Noah. And again, with the Tower of Babylon, the earth is in darkness in relation to evil.

And then there's a creation event with Abraham, who's called out to bless all the families of the earth. And then again, with the slavery in Egypt, it's like the darkness before creation.

[ 6 : 33 ] And Israel is rescued and brought through the waters, and the tabernacle is full of Eden imagery. And so at this moment in time, Israel, as a new nation, is a creation event.

There's all these redos of creation. Yet in every single one of these creation do-overs, immediately following the giving of a covenant, there was a corresponding fall.

Just like Adam was given a covenant, and then there was a fall, so too in Genesis 9, Noah is given a covenant, and then Noah became drunk and shamefully naked. And then again in Genesis 12, Abraham's given a covenant, and immediately following that, Abraham goes to Egypt and lies about Sarah being his sister.

And then again in Exodus, Israel is given a covenant, and then Israel broke the covenant with the golden calf when they worshipped it. So God is not doing all of this just to make people religious, or just to make a certain group of people different from everyone else.

God is actually always working to bring humanity back to its intended purpose. So what is humanity's intended purpose?

[ 7 : 50 ]     What does God intend for humanity? Well in our passage, it's Israel that he's dealing with because at that point, Israel was chosen to show the world who God is and what God intends for humanity.

And so this creation type event, although the nation broke the covenant with the golden calf, in this chapter, God is renewing the covenant with them. And if you were to divide this chapter into three sections, we can see three ways that God is shaping people to be the kind of people that humanity was designed and purposed to be.

And so God is making for himself a people who would firstly know him, his name and character, that's verses 1 to 17, making a people who would remember him, his ways and works, that's verses 18 to 28, and then a people who would behold him, see and reflect his glory, that's verses 29 to 35.

And so we're going to look at the first two today and we'll look at the last one next week. So God intends that humanity would know him. And we see that in this chapter, that we would know his name and we would know his character.

Back in chapter 3 at the burning bush, Moses asked God, if you remember, he says, when I go to the people and I say the God of your fathers sent me, they're going to say, what is his name? And so Moses asks what God's name is and God said, I am who I am.

[ 9 : 27 ]     And then throughout the plagues and Exodus, he has been learning what that means, who God is and what God is like. And even then, he asks to know more of God.

He wants to see God's glory. And there's something about God's glory that's revealed in his character. Think about all that Moses has known so far up to this point.

Think about how close Moses has been to God and yet Moses wants to know more and there's more to know. In fact, there is infinitely more to God to know than you presently know right now.

No matter how long you've been following Jesus, there's infinitely more to know about him than you know right now. Yet, how do we get there? How do we know God?

It's like in this chapter, Moses is the only creature at this point allowed anywhere near the mountain. And so who will ascend the hill of the Lord?

[ 10 : 32 ]     We get this sense when God says, nobody else is to go up with you, nobody else is to go on the mountain, not even any animals are to go even across from the mountain. There shall be no one around, only you, Moses.

Who will ascend the hill of the Lord? We get this picture that God is holy and he's not to be approached lightly. Not even animals are allowed near the mountain.

No one in this passage is fit to see the Lord's glory except Moses. Yet, Moses is merely a servant and Sinai is merely a mountain.

Only Christ, the faithful son, can ascend into heaven since he himself came from heaven where he had the same glory with his father before the world existed.

And so, God made us to know him, to know his name, to know his character, and yet we will see in John chapter 1 verse 18 that only Christ will truly make him known.

[ 11 : 40 ]     Think about all that Moses knows so far and then think about this revelation of glory and God's name and character that Moses gets. Yet, it won't be until Christ comes that people will truly know God.

God. And so, in our chapter, verses 6 and 7, God, in his revealing of his glory, has something to say about himself.

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

I don't know if you know this, but what do you think the most quoted Old Testament verse in the Old Testament is? What do you think the Psalms and the prophets quote the most in the Old Testament?

It is these very words. It is God's self-disclosure of who he is. And so when the people stray throughout the Old Testament, the law and the Psalms and the prophets call them back to God on the basis of these very words, that God is faithful and merciful, that he forgives, yet at the same time he is holy and just and he will not allow the guilty to continue in rebellion.

[ 13 : 14 ] And it's strange, on the one hand, you have this self-disclosure about God, that he is merciful, that he is slow to anger, yet on the other hand, it seems like it didn't take Israel long to get God to lose it.

I've often wondered about this self-disclosure, that God used this moment in time to disclose that he is slow to anger when it seems like he just flew off the handle to Israel.

what is it about this? Well, two things come to mind. Firstly, if God is genuinely slow to anger, then when we read about God's anger being kindled and being hot, it must be really serious.

If God is slow to anger, yet we see his anger burning hot, then whatever is happening must be very serious. And then secondly, God actually really is slow to anger.

And we know that for two reasons, because this chapter exists and because you and I are still breathing. God is slow to anger. Last chapter, we saw Israel repenting and God relenting.

[ 14 : 29 ] And likewise, has God not been patient with us? You know yourself. Do you deserve to be living presently? Probably not. I don't.

And so we are real living evidence that God is slow to anger. And so, we see from this self-disclosure how God is merciful and gracious.

He forgives sins, yet he will not clear the guilty. And yet this whole business about the children's children and the fourth generation, what does that mean? It might be hard to look at on the surface, but what it means is simply this, that those who repeat the rebellion of their parents and do not repent will not be forgiven.

And so let me say two things on that. Firstly, when it says children in this passage, it doesn't mean kids. It means the next generation. So for example, after Solomon, when the kingdom split into Israel in the north and Judah in the south, there was not one single good king of Israel and the children did as their fathers did.

And that doesn't mean that kids are doing it. It just means the next generation repeat the sins of their fathers. And so, you see that with Ahab and so on and so forth.

[ 15 : 51 ] All the kings of Israel just repeat the sins of their fathers and they never repent. And so, firstly, when it talks about children, it's not just meaning kids, it's meaning the next generation.

And secondly, their guilt will not be cleared simply because they refuse to repent and turn to God for forgiveness. Which again is evident in the evil kings and the people because they resisted the prophets and Jesus said, your ancestors killed the prophets.

The prophets wanted to call them back to God that God might forgive them because God is merciful and slow to anger but he is not indifferent to evil.

And so, we'll see some of this in our passage. It can be hard to understand why God would drive out these other nations but we don't realise just how evil they were.

In verse 10 when it talks about marvels never seen before, it's probably referring to the awe and fear inspiring wonders of drying up the Jordan and stopping the sun in the sky and tearing down the walls of Jericho and things like that.

[ 17 : 02 ] Things that would cause the other nations to know God and fear God. His name shall be known in all the earth and part of that will be verse 11 how he drives out the evil nations from the lands.

But he says in verses 12 to 16 the people must take great care not to make a covenant with any of these other evil nations because they'll draw them away into evil practices.

They must remember who God is and that he rescued them. We've got all these weird little details about boiling goats in its mother's milk and stuff like that but really these things were the kind of evil practices that the Canaanites and other nations would do.

They would do that kind of stuff using the life giving milk from the mother to kill the baby goat and so all of these things are!

In verse 17 Israel are reminded not to do what they did before in creating a golden calf because God cannot be represented in a statue made of metal like the idols of other nations.

[ 18 : 33 ] God is invisible infinite immortal yet God is very real and a fraction of his presence was seen in terrifying splendor on the mountain.

All the way from Egypt his presence provision and protection was undeniable and this tension in his character that he is merciful and forgiving yet just and does not clear the guilty is not a contradiction.

Let me tell you why it's not a contradiction. Mercy can only be understood in terms of justice. How can mercy even be a thing if there is not justice?

And so if there is no justice there's no need for mercy. So God is both just and merciful. He's just and the justifier.

Would it not be equally awful to have a God who is not just as it would be to have a God who is not merciful? It would be awful. Can you imagine a God who was not merciful and gracious?

[ 19 : 40 ] A lot of people think that God would not have made it into Egypt in the first place never mind the promised land.

Yet can you imagine a God who is not just and who does not deal with sin? A lot of people want that kind of God. A lot of people in the world want a kind of God who does not deal with sin.

And they would say that that was a loving and tolerant God. But what that really means is indifferent. A God who would either need consent before addressing sin.

Excuse me please can I talk about your sin? No because I'm a victim. Or they would want a God who doesn't bother about sin at all. People want to do evil and then want to play the victim.

Is that not what we see in our world? And have you not felt that own desire at some point in your life in your own heart? We want to do the evil and then we want to play the victim. Poor me. It's not my fault.

[ 20 : 47 ] Yet how terrible would it be for a God to do nothing and feel nothing when evil happens. Can you imagine that? A God who stands by and feels nothing and does nothing when terrible!

things happen that would be a terrible God. If God was not merciful and just the Son of God would not have descended from heaven let alone go willingly to the cross.

Yet he did come down not in a cloud to a mountain to pass by one faithful man but he descended from heaven and became flesh to walk among a sinful people as light in the darkness.

He didn't just pass by he dwelt among us as John said and we have seen his glory glory is of the only son from the father full of grace and truth and John talks about what we see in our passage in John 1 17 he says the law was given through Moses yet the law could neither save people nor give people a proper revelation of who God is so John goes on to say grace and truth came through Jesus Christ the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ in fact the Greek literally says it this way for the law through Moses was given grace and truth through Jesus Christ became became you see Moses only saw a glimpse of the back of God and gave people commands written on a stone but

Jesus who was at the father's side in glory came down in flesh to be God with us not to tell us about a God who is gracious and merciful but he came as the mercy and grace of God gentle and lowly slow to anger Jesus is abounding in steadfast love he is the abounding steadfast love of God in flesh he is the forgiveness of God as Romans 5 says for God showed his love for us in this that while we were still sinners Christ died for us yet he didn't die for us so that we could be forgiven and get on with our lives and do whatever we wanted he took us out of slavery to sin so that we could know him and by knowing him have eternal life Jesus said this himself in

[ 23 : 29 ] John 17 this is eternal life that they would know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent and so we were made to know him in him is life says John 1 4 and 1 John 5 says this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son whoever has the son has life whoever does not have the son does not have life without the son you cannot know God and you will not have life no matter what your religion is no matter how devoted you are look around whether it's devout Jews or Muslims or whoever if you do not have the son you do not know God and you will not have life and Jesus said in John 14 I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through me yet to know

God is not just to know his name Yahweh but it is to know the name of his son and this says this way back in Proverbs chapter 20 in the words of Agur it says this who has ascended to heaven and come down who has gathered the wind in his fists who has wrapped up the waters in a garment who established all the ends of the earth what is his name and what is his son's name surely you know do you know do you know him do you want to know him more you see like Moses who knew God yet wanted to know him more we see the same with Paul the apostle Paul who saw the blinding glory of Jesus and yet even after many many years of following Jesus he writes in Philippians 3 about the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord he says that I may know him that's my goal that

I may know him and I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own and so we were made to know God to know his name and his character and one way that helps us to press on to this and to get rest in him and remember him are the patterns that he gives us and so the second point is that we were made to remember God his ways and his works we have this section and this is going to be a short section here but we have this section all about the patterns and the feasts yet I think it's helpful to see in this context that Israel has just very quickly forgotten God and so they're given these patterns again to remember God to know his ways and his works every single week a Sabbath in ploughing time take a rest in harvest time rest three times a year go on a journey go before the

Lord to remember no matter how busy life gets we need to stop and remember God to think on all his ways and works all that he has done to bring us to this point in our lives and all that he is presently providing and doing to save us isn't it true we can get busy we can get so busy that we forget to stop and remember God and so here are these patterns every week a Sabbath even in ploughing time rest even in harvest time rest three times a year make a journey to remember God it's easy to pray for God to help us when we are desperate but when we are ploughing we rely on our own efforts I need to keep working I need to keep working and for the Israelites in the Bible for ploughing there was the spring rains we can't stop now the weather is favourable the time to plant seed is now and God says no remember where you get it from stop rest and remember and then in harvest we need to get this harvest in before the weather turns bad no stop remember who gave you the harvest stop and rest and remember

God keep gathering we should stop and remember God his ways and his works remember has Christ ever failed you ever in your life stop and remember what Christ has done for Israel back then that looked like all these sabbaths and feasts but now that Christ has come and fulfilled these things we have a different pattern to remember him it's not with a Passover lamb that we remember coming out of Egypt that was Israel's story but it was a shadow of the true story for all humanity that he would bring us out from being slaves to sin and that and by the cup because it was his body broken and his blood poured out that rescued us and so we gather every week we gather to rest that's why we're here this morning now it might not seem like rest easy like a

[ 29 : 11 ] Sunday morning was written by someone who never went to church it might not seem like rest but it's rest for our souls because we need to gather to turn our eyes upon Jesus together should we stop coming to church because life gets busy and I don't just mean this church any church just to be together with God's people to stop every week to remember should we stop coming together to rest in Christ's care and remember him together in the bread and the cup and in the songs and in the prayers and in God's word and in the love and presence that we have together Moses was with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights without bread and water and he received the covenant that God made yet Christ himself is the bread from heaven the bread of heaven and the living water and he makes a covenant by his body broken and his blood poured!

for us and not for us only but as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world so let me pray Lord we thank you so much that we can read your word love and sing songs of praise to your name that we can approach you approach the throne of grace with confidence and prayer we thank you that you have brought us together in Jesus name and that together we are in Christ we thank you because these things are good for our souls and they glorify you and they help us to remember who you are and who we are and so Lord would you bless us and be blessed by us in our time this morning and would you prepare our hearts as we take this time to remember by the bread and cup together that we would see who you are and rejoice in your glory and your grace and your salvation in Jesus name we pray! I