

## **The Journey**

**by Scott Grant**

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### **The story continues**

The book of Exodus depicts a journey. It begins in Egypt. It ends in a tent. But it's no ordinary tent. It's God's tent, and he pitches it among people. The awesome meaning is clear: The one true God has come to live with man. Egypt represents bondage. The tent represents relationship. God rescued his people from bondage to the Egyptians so that they could enjoy fellowship with him.

The book of Exodus isn't the beginning of the story, nor is it the end. The story begins with the book of Genesis and ends with the book of Revelation.

God created man to enjoy fellowship with God in God's land as a king, prophet and priest. The language in Genesis 1-3 is rife with relationship. Throughout Genesis 1-3 God speaks. One speaks only when one wants to be heard, when one wants relationship. In an effort to draw man to himself, God gives great gifts, including purpose (Genesis 1:28), security (Genesis 1:29), provision (Genesis 1:29), rest (Genesis 2:2-3) and human relationship (Genesis 2:18-25). He plants a garden and places man in it (Genesis 2:8). As a king, man was to rule over creation (Genesis 1:26). As a prophet, he was intimate with God and received revelation (Genesis 2:16-17). As a priest, he served (Genesis 2:15).

The end of the story looks similar, only better. Revelation 21:1-22:5 depicts man once again enjoying fellowship with God in God's land as a king, prophet and priest. These verses are filled with talk of fellowship with God, which happens in a land that God brings down from heaven (Revelation 21:2). As a king, man reigns (Revelation 22:5). As a prophet, he sees God face to face (Revelation 22:4). As a priest, he serves, which is akin to worship (Revelation 22:3).

In between, man rejects God (Genesis 3:1-7). The rest of the story concerns God and his restoration of man. God sets out on his plan of restoration by promising a "seed," which has both an individual and collective meaning (Genesis 3:15). The seed is one descendant, but it is also many.

Genesis 4-11 depicts man's continuing flight from God in the stories of Cain and Abel, the flood and the tower of Babel. But God's seed survives and comes to be expressed singularly in Abraham. God promises to bless Abraham and his seed, both a single descendant and a multitude of descendants. The nature of the blessing was both individual and collective relationships with God, in line with God's original intention for Adam and Eve. God told Abraham that God himself would be his "very great reward" (Genesis 15:1). And God said he would be God both to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:7). Thus in Abraham, the people of God are born and blessed with fellowship with God. The agency of blessing is the seed (Genesis 22:18). The sphere of blessing is the land (Genesis 12:7). The extent of the blessing is all nations (Genesis 12:3).

But the agency, sphere and extent of the blessing seem to gather around the concept of the seed, the personification of which is Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). The blessing - relationship with God - is restored through Christ. But he is also the sphere of blessing, being the personification of the land. Man is not placed in the land, as he was in Genesis 2:15, but in Christ (Galatians 3:27). The blessings are not in the land but in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Rest is not in the land but in Christ (Matthew 11:28). The inheritance is not in the land but in Christ (Ephesians 1:11). All believers in Christ, by virtue of their union with him, represent the extent of the blessing, and together they are also called the seed (Galatians 3:29). So the individual seed, Christ, is both the agency and sphere of blessing, and the collective seed, all believers in Christ, are the extent of the blessing.

God's work of restoring man, then, begins with a single man, Abraham, and his descendants, the collective seed. Although God was still willing to bestow on Abraham and his descendants the blessing of divine fellowship and though the individual seed was still in their loins, they failed to enjoy the sphere of blessing, the land, and they often failed to extend the blessing to others. By the end of Genesis they are not in the promised land but Egypt.

### What about God's people?

The question at the end of Genesis is the one that Exodus picks up: What about the people of God whom God promised to bless? The answer that Exodus provides is another question: Who is God (Exodus 3:13)? God answers that question by rescuing his people from bondage in Egypt and bringing them to himself. God is awesome, and God is good.

It is a picture of what God has already done in believers' lives - rescuing them from bondage to sin and bringing them into relationship with him. It is also a picture of what he continues to do in believers' lives, rescuing them from enslaving sin that is resistant to fellowship with God and continually bringing them to himself. Israel's experience is recorded for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Exodus can be seen in three sections, each of which has a subject and a theological theme, which can further be seen as relating to God's function for man.

Section	Subject	Theme	Function
Exodus 1:1-15:21	Exodus	Redemption	King
Exodus 15:22-24:18	Law	Revelation	Prophet
Exodus 25-40	Tabernacle	Worship	Priest

In the exodus, God redeemed his people - restored them to their intended purpose. In giving them his law, he revealed to them his instructions for living. In giving them the tabernacle, he called them to worship. Each section represents an emphatic statement that God is with and for his people, calling them into fellowship. The themes are related, and they establish a paradigm for our lives. Redemption leads to revelation, both of which lead to worship. God has redeemed us in Christ and he has given us his word. In response to such gifts, what can we do but worship?

It is also possible in these three sections to see God's three-fold function for man. In redemption, God bought Israel out of slavery and made it like a king, exercising dominion in the promised land. In revelation, God made Israel like a prophet, receiving and dispensing his word. In worship, God made Israel like a priest, worshiping God. All three of these functions were fulfilled individually by Moses, who was assuredly a prophet (Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 18:15, 34:10) who came from a priestly line (Exodus 6:16-26) and who functioned as a king, leading the nation politically. No other Old Testament figure fulfilled all three functions. Of course, all three functions were fulfilled perfectly in Christ.

In Exodus, God begins to restore man to his intended functions. Israel is to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:5). Each function is restored in Christ, for we are a "royal priesthood," which has both kingly and priestly aspects, who "proclaim the excellencies" of God, which has prophetic implications (1 Peter 2:9). Each function has the effect of extending the blessing to others as well, who are in bondage and long to reign, who don't know how to live and long for God's word, and who long to worship something outside themselves. The fullest dimension of that restoration won't be experienced until the re-creation depicted in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

God's intent for man, forfeited in the fall but promised once again in the Abrahamic blessing, marches forward in Exodus. As we study Exodus together, let us ask God to advance his intent for each of us. Let us ask God to draw us away from sin and toward himself, and as that happens let us move toward our intended function as kings who more fully reign in life, prophets who absorb God's word and declare his greatness, and priests who serve God joyously.

