



THE JOURNEY

from Creation to New Creation

Part 7 A Wedding in the Wilderness

Introduction

These notes give some guidance on how to lead the group through the questions and discussion. *The additional Bible references in the notes give more details that you may find useful. You may like to ask group members to read out a few of these, as appropriate.*

You may want to begin by asking if anything particularly struck people as they watched the video. However, it would be wise to limit this part of the discussion to ten minutes at most.

Read **Genesis 3.8, Exodus 40.34, 1 Kings 8.10-11, John 1.14, 1 Corinthians 6.19, Ephesians 2.19-22, Revelation 21.1-3.**

Question 1

These passages are all linked by a single theme. What is that theme? What's the significance of this theme for us as God's people (especially in **1 Corinthians 6.19** and **Ephesians 2.19-22**).

At this point in our journey through the Bible, it's helpful to see one of the key themes that links the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The theme is this: God living on Earth with His people.

- ▶ **The Garden of Eden** This was God's first home. This is suggested by the fact that God used to walk there "*in the cool of the day*" (Genesis 3.8).
- ▶ **The Tabernacle** But sin spoiled this world. So God had a sanctuary made where He, the Holy God, could live here in this world soiled by sin. That sanctuary was the Tabernacle. The Most Holy Place was His special room, where He lived on Earth.
- ▶ **The Temple** Centuries later Solomon built a Temple that replaced the Tabernacle. This Temple was rebuilt after the exile although (interestingly) we don't read that God filled it with His presence.
- ▶ **Jesus Christ** Jesus "*tabernacled*" or "*lived in a tent*" (John 1.14, literal translations) on Earth. God was present here on Earth in the Person of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ **The Church** God poured out His Holy Spirit on the

Day of Pentecost and God's people became "*a holy temple in the Lord*" (Ephesians 2.21). And individual believers are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6.19). *You may want to discuss how this should impact our corporate life as a church, and our own individual lives.*

- ▶ **The New Heaven and Earth** Finally, in God's new creation, God will have no need for a special sanctuary. There'll be no evil in the new creation to make that necessary. His presence will fill the entire Universe. *God's people will live in God's presence in God's paradise for ever.*

Read **Matthew 22.35-40, Leviticus 11.45.**

Question 2

The Hebrew word for 'law' is *torah*, meaning 'instruction' or 'guidance'. Why did God give the Law to His people? How is it relevant for us believers today?

God gave His Law to Israel:

- ▶ **To reveal His nature and character** - His holiness, goodness, righteousness, justice, graciousness and mercy and love.
- ▶ **To show His people how to live.** The Law shows what sin is (see Romans 7.7). Sin defiles people. Jay Sklar comments: "The results of sin are always catastrophic, Sin is an acid that mars and destroys whatever it touches. The Lord is not being a killjoy by forbidding sin; he is being a loving Savior". The Law showed God's people how to avoid sin, and how to live properly – and so enjoy life to the full.
- ▶ **To teach about holiness** God said "*You shall . . . be holy, for I am holy*" (Leviticus 11.45). God's holiness is more than His moral purity; it is the sum of His divine attributes that sets Him apart from everything that He has made. God is uniquely holy in a way that is totally unattainable by any created being. He is uncreated, eternal, transcendent, glorious in majesty, infinitely perfect, immaculately pure, faultlessly righteous, completely selflessly

and sacrificially loving. So God is uniquely holy in a way that no created being can be.

But people, things, places and periods of time (such as the Sabbath) can also be holy. What does it mean for them to be holy? *It means that they are set apart for God in a special way.* The Tabernacle was holy (Exodus 40.9), because God was present in its innermost room. The priests were holy (Leviticus 21.6) because they were appointed to serve God in a special way. The whole nation was holy (Leviticus 19.1-2), because they belonged to God. The Sabbath was holy (Exodus 31.14) because God had set it apart from the other days of the week for His purposes.

Jay Sklar imagines an Israelite asking this question: "How in the world can the holy and pure King of the universe dwell among his sinful and impure people? How can he live here, in our very midst, without his holiness melting us in our sin and impurity?" The Law showed God's people how to keep His Tabernacle, the camp (and later the Promised Land), and their bodies in a state fit for God to live amongst them - *in other words, how to keep them holy.* It also provided the sacrificial system to deal with sin and impurity.

► To restore relationships broken at the Fall. Sin shattered our relationships. The Law showed how these relationships were to be restored. (1) *With God* The Law showed God's people how to worship and serve God properly. They were to love Him with all their heart, soul and strength (Deuteronomy 6.5). And the Law instituted the priesthood. A key function of the priests was to lead the nation in their worship and service. (2) *With other people* The Law taught people how to behave toward each other. The undergirding principle was this: *"you shall love your neighbour as yourself"* (Leviticus 19.18). (3) *With creation* The Law required people to care for their animals. Oxen weren't be muzzled when threshing corn (Deuteronomy 25.4); livestock, as well as people, were to rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 20.10).

Jay Sklar writes: ". . . the book of Leviticus . . . casts a vision that takes the Israelites back to the Lord's intent for humanity from the beginning of the world: to walk in rich fellowship with their covenant King, enjoying his care and blessing, and extending throughout all the earth his kingdom of justice, mercy, kindness, righteousness, holiness and love."

► To prepare His people to meet Jesus And the Law prepared God's people for Jesus's coming (see

Luke 24.27). Allen Ross says, ". . . when Christ came God did not have to teach people what atonement was, for they had been taught this for 1400 years in the Law and the drama of the ritual."

Read Exodus 20.8-11, Colossians 2.16-17.

Question 3

One of the Ten Commandments was to keep the Sabbath? Why did God give this commandment? In what way is it relevant for us believers today?

On the seventh day, after He had created everything, God rested (Genesis 2.2-3, Exodus 20.11). His creation was complete. All was in perfect harmony. But humanity's rebellion shattered that harmony. It fractured our relationships. And God judged Adam and Eve. Now they would both endure pain. And God said to Adam *"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread"* (Genesis 3.19).

God's people were to observe the seventh day of each week as *"a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly."* (Leviticus 23.3 NIV). This suggests that God's people were to meet together to worship God on that day. God's people were to do no work on the Sabbath. It was a day of freedom from toil – *a day of release from this effect of the Fall.* So, released from toil on that day, God's people could gather together to worship Him and learn from His Scriptures.

The Sabbath was a signpost to the future, *"a shadow of the things to come"* (Colossians 2.17), a foretaste of what life would be like on the New Earth, when the effects of the Fall would be no more. *Life on the New Earth would be like a great unending Sabbath* – a time of freedom from toil and pain and sweat, when God's people would worship and serve Him perfectly.

As Christians, we're free not to observe the Sabbath (Saturday) (Colossians 2.16-17). Given this was one of the Ten Commandments, this may seem astonishing. In fact, the early Church seems to have gathered regularly on the first day of the week, Sunday, not the Sabbath. Why? Through Jesus, God gives people true rest in their innermost beings (compare Matthew 11.28-30 and Hebrews 4.3,9-11). We believers can enjoy that rest all the time. Is that, perhaps, why it's customary for us to meet on the first day of the week? Rather than *ending* each week in rest, as the Old Testament believers did, we *begin* each week in rest to show that we may now enjoy God's spiritual rest *the whole week through.*