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Sermon Title: God is Holy

Bible Reference: Exodus - Deuteronomy

**A disclaimer from Pastor Stuart**

*My role in the church here is to feed and care for God’s people the best I can. Key to that, in my opinion is teaching and preaching from the Bible; but that is not all a pastor has to do! In fact after the emails, staff admin, hospital visits, community visits, leadership meetings, etc, etc, there sometimes seems to be little time for sermon prep! Years ago I used to agonise over trying to come up with two, often three, totally original sermons each week. But I’ve found that, for me at least, that is impossibility. I’ve learned to be grateful for and to use the gifts God gives to help me – not only the Holy Spirit, but other Bible teachers and preachers.*

*Over the years I’ve discovered that if something teaches, inspires and excites me it’s likely to do the same for those I speak to. So I admit that sometimes I find myself depending heavily on other people’s ideas, at least to ‘prime the pump’ and therefore I claim originality for very little in these sermons. If you look hard enough and wide enough you’ll probably find who I’ve been reading and learning from! I never knowingly plagiarise, but if you find I have, then I apologise. It must have been that what was said was just too good not to use!*

*I am particularly indebted to the likes of John Piper, Sam Storms, Wayne Grudem, John Ortberg & Rick Warren. The Lord regularly uses them to get my spiritual pulse racing. I’m also indebted to many who kindly make their sermons available on the likes of sermoncentral.com and preachingtoday.com. Others who help me include ‘The Doctor’ (Martyn Lloyd-Jones), C.H Spurgeon and any of the Puritans.*

*These sermons are not made available because I think they’re good but in the hope and with the prayer that they may be used by the Holy Spirit to bless others as they have blessed our own church here in Ipswich, UK.*

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**Master Plan #6**

**God is Holy** (Moses – Joshua; Exodus – Numbers)

Slavery in Egypt – just as God had said in Gen 15

Cried out to God – who said he heard their prayers and would help. (Remember – these are his people, the family he has chosen).

He needs a man on the ground to be their leader – he chooses **Moses**.

* One of the Israelites, but miraculously preserved and raised in the palace and the Pharaohs own grandson. Every privilege, no expense spared – education, training, experience, etc. But he’d left that behind to ally himself with his own natural flesh and blood.
* At the time God called him he was actually living 100’s of miles away – basically in hiding both from Pharaoh and his own people (Long story!) Burning bush and God promises to take the people to ‘the Promised land’ the place where Abraham had first settled – fulfilling the promise God made him
* ‘Let my people go!’ ‘NO!’
* 10 plagues saga – God wins the battle of the wills!
* Last plague – shelter under the blood of a sacrificed animal. Sets a very important precedent.

They leave – experience the miracle of the Red sea (God doing the impossible for his people).

**This huge mass of people pause at Mt Sinai and here one of the most important, events happens in the history of this people.** *Miss this and you just won’t get much of the rest of the story! It’s up there with Genesis 1 and God’s call of Abraham*.

At Sinai, having witnessed and experienced for themselves the incredible power of God in so many ways (plagues, red sea miraculous food supplies on the journey so far) **God puts it to them that he will officially adopt them as his people and make them into a ‘Kingdom’.**– here’s the word for the first time in relation to this family group. He sets out his plan for them – **Ex 19:4-6**. ‘*From all the nations YOU will be MY treasured possession’*. Wow what an offer, what a priv. This is creator God, powerful and great setting out to this family the most wonderful offer imaginable. He’s setting before them a unique relationship and role and purpose – they would be his, he would be working through them; they would be the people through which he spoke and worked on earth – a kingdom of priests (priests brought God to people and people to God); they would be a set apart nation (holy); means pure and set apart for God’s use. What an incredible privilege.

**There was one proviso** – you have to let me be king, and let me rule and be Lord, you have to obey me. If you want the blessings and the priveleges then this is the way it is.

* After all they’ve seen him do who is going to reject that offer! *Would you? If you were in their position?*

And that’s the thing – you are!!! He makes you the same offer! You too can come and be part of that people, God’s kingdom, with a unique and prived role, with his protection, with his provision; you can become one of God’s special people with the prospect of enjoying blessings beyond your wildest dreams.

Well, not surprisingly the people Moses relayed this message too said yes!

And so, officially and as one they willingly and voluntarily become the God’s people, they enter into an agreement. Bible word is ‘**covenant’** – remember the word because it comes up again and again and is the basis of everything God does with and for the people in the future.

These events at Sinai are crucial to the story, the Master Plan – they are the context to so much of the rest of the story – what God does, why he acts as he does, why he treats the people as he does, etc, etc.

What follows immediately after this are **instructions from God as to how the people in the kingdom are to live as God’s people**. Shows they are to be a worshipping people – detailed instructions on how they relate to him. In all this he builds up a picture of his ‘otherness and his grace. He’s not just a God who can be treated as they wanted or felt like. His was not a casual relationship – their God was a God so pure, so holy, so ‘other’ that they had to treat him with the appropriate respect. So in one sense they needed to be protected from him and he shows what they need to do. On the other hand he shows them that he is a God who wants to be friends, a God of kindness and compassion, unshakably faithful. This is what to look for as you read Ex - Deut.

**First then we have the house rules!** If they were going to be God’s special people then there were certain non-negotiable house rules.

**You find these in Ex 20, we know them as** ‘The 10 Commands.’ [Pic] Not too many, nice and easy to remember. ‘*Now you’re my people this is how we do things – a few things you need to do and some things that you absolutely are not to do’* Basically rules about the way they were to treat God and the way they were to treat each other.

* Not a series of random rules – they are actually a great window into the character of God. Not just a **keyhole** – *rather a very clear and easy to see through* ***window*!** He is holy and to have unrivalled devotion. But also note – he is a God who *delights in thoughtfulness, fairness, honesty, faithfulness, kindness and who hates pain and selfishness and pride rudeness and lying and fickleness and disrespect, etc*.

**This is *our* God, friends. Isn’t he just great!** Why ever wouldn’t we want to let him rule? Why ever wouldn’t we shelter under such a God as this?!

**After this not surprisingly we have God’s solution for when people broke the rules!** Remember what God had said to Adam? *If you eat the fruit, if you disobey me, you will die*. Well, different setting, different times, but the principle still remained. God’s standards didn’t alter! When Adam sinned it had catastrophic consequences. God didn’t want that to happen again in this new kingdom he was setting up, and so from the start he had a plan.

They could not just say sorry and pretend not much had happened. He was pure and holy and any breach of his standards put a wedge between them and him; He didn’t want this so he has this plan on how this could be avoided and the relationship be maintained. The next section, Ex 20-Leviticus and Numbers, sets out how an imperfect people can remain friends and in relationship with a perfect God.

The plan was wonderfully simple – *‘Instead of you dying because of your sin I’ll accept the death of an animal in your place!’* [Animal sacrifice]. Sacrifices were never to win or curry God’s favour (as in other religions) - they were dealt with sin, they dealt with God’s holy justice and wrath. Sin was serious and needed a high price to cover it and so bring the sinner and God back into friendship.

**So this is really these early books are about –** and woven into this is the journey the people take to what God calls the Promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. A journey which on foot should have taken just a few months, maybe a year. But (cartoon Pic) they ended up staying in the desert for 40 years before they finally went into the land. You find the story of these events recorded in the book of Numbers.

**What went wrong?** Simple – the people wouldn’t trust God. Tell how at he last moment they chickened out when the saw the size of the obstacles they faced.

As a result God said ‘*OK – you had your chance, you’ve blown it. No one currently older than 20 will go into the land; you’ll wander around in the desert until all the over 20’s have died off and then I’ll take you in*’ Num 14

And that’d what happened. And poor old Moses is left leading this people for all this time. He did have a helper – Joshua who eventually took over as leader and it was under Joshua’s leadership that they finally crossed the river Jordan and went into the Promised Land. That’s where we’ll pick up the story next time.

**What have we learned today?**

1. God is Holy - His standards were and still are absolute, and membership of his kingdom requires keeping the house rules completely; no picking and choosing.
2. God’s kingdom is a wonderful privilege to be part of – we’re invited to join too! He made the offer which was simply too good to refuse – it was a no brainer though really. It still is!
3. He provided a way to deal with the consequences of breaking the rules. Animals then, now Jesus
4. Failure of faith results in failure to enjoy the blessings

**Are you part of God’s kingdom?** Then friend, it behoves you to live like it. And when you fail, be thankful for Jesus.

**If you aren’t yet –** why not join today? Yes the demands are high, but the privilege and the future far out ways. Life of peace, help, rest, God’s help, God’s protection down here, and life unblemished and untainted for all eternity afterwards. Why would you not want to be part of that? Come and bow before the King, King Jesus today. Tell him you are sorry, ask him to forgive you, trust him to do it and commit to follow and serve him always and you will be welcomed in to his kingdom forever.