

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

9-23-20

Exodus 19

God reaffirms His covenant to the Israelites through Moses - Verses 1-6

¹On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. ²After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. ³Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

19:2-3 Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb) is one of the most sacred locations in Israel's history. Believed to be located in the south-central Sinai peninsula, this mountain is where Moses met God in a burning bush, God made his covenant with Israel, and Elijah heard God in a gentle whisper. Here God gave his people the laws and guidelines for right living. They learned the potential blessings of obedience (34:4-28) and the tragic consequences of disobedience (34:7).

19:4 God had a reason for rescuing the Israelites from slavery. Now he was ready to tell them what it was: Israel was to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation where anyone could approach God freely. It didn't take long, however, for the people to corrupt God's plan. God then established Aaron's descendants from the tribe of Levi as priests (Leviticus 8-9), representing what the entire nation should have been. But with the coming of Jesus Christ, God has once again extended his plan to all believers. We are to become holy, “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). The death and resurrection of Christ has allowed each of us to approach God freely.

19:5 Why did God choose Israel as his nation? God knew that no nation on earth was good enough to deserve to be called his people, his “treasured possession.” He chose Israel, not because of anything they had done, but in his love and mercy he chose Israel in spite of the wrong the nation had done and would do. Why did he want to have a special nation on earth? To represent his way of life, to teach his Word, and to be an agent of salvation to the world. “All nations on earth” would be blessed through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 18:18). Gentiles and kings would come to the Lord through Israel, predicted Isaiah (Isaiah 60:3). Through the nation of Israel, the Messiah, God's chosen Son, would be born. God chose one nation and put it through a rigorous training program, so that one day it could be a channel for his blessings to the whole world.

The people commit to obeying God - Verses 7-8

⁷ So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. ⁸ The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

19:7 In *Genesis 15 and 17*, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising to make his descendants into a great nation. Now that promise was being realized as God restated his agreement with the Israelite nation, the descendants of Abraham. God promised to bless and care for them. The people promised to obey him. The covenant was thus sealed. But the good intentions of the people quickly wore off. Have you made a commitment to God? How are you holding up your end of the bargain?

19:8 In the same way God chooses us out of the whole earth to be His very own possession. Once He chooses us, we are His. We belong to Him in a special way. God also wants us to be His priests. All believers are priests because we represent God to the people and people to God AND because we go directly into God's presence without any barriers. Just like in *Romans 12:1-2*, God wants us to be different than the world, to commit ourselves to Him fully and not be tainted with evil. IF we are sanctified like this, God will use us mightily. But if we allow sin to reign like the Jews later did, God may choose other ways to accomplish His work.

19:8 This covenant was conditional. What was the condition? It was conditional upon their obedience. Notice it says that they were not only to obey, they were to CAREFULLY obey. This is a reminder to us that we need to pay careful attention to God's Word. Make it a priority. Think before we act, speak or make a decision to make sure it is in line with God's commands.

God tells Moses His plans to come to the people in a dense cloud - Verses 9-13

⁹ The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said. ¹⁰ And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹ and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. ¹³ They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain."

19:9-11 Moses was told to consecrate the people. This meant getting them physically and spiritually ready to meet God. The people were to set themselves apart from sin and even ordinary daily routine in order to dedicate themselves to God. The act of washing and preparing served to get their minds and hearts ready. When we meet God for worship, we should set aside the cares and preoccupations of everyday life. Use your time of physical preparation to get your mind ready to meet God.

19:12-13 God told Moses to set barriers around the mountain so they would not touch it. We as sinners are separated from God. That is because God is holy and we are not. In some way it is also

for our protection because if we were to actually see God we would die immediately because of God's glory and our sinful state. These restrictions would be a physical reminder to the people of God's transcendence and holiness. The penalty for breaking God's clear command was severe, instant death. In fact, this is the most just penalty for any sin (wages of sin is death).

The people prepare to meet God - Verses 14-15

¹⁴ After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵ Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

19:14-15 Here it mentions another way to consecrate themselves and that is to have no sexual relations. It is like the concept in 1 Cor 7:5. That is that for some special events a couple can/should abstain for a period of time in order to focus more on God. This is similar to the concept of fasting. Eating food is not wrong just as sexual relations with a spouse is not wrong. However, sometimes you can fast for a period of time to devote yourselves and your mind more fully to God. This is exercising self-control and self-discipline to have less pleasure yourself to worship God more.

God's holiness contrasted with the sinfulness of the people - Verses 16-24

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. ¹⁹ As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. ²⁰ The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up ²¹ and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. ²² Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them." ²³ Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'" ²⁴ The LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them." ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.

19:16-24 Because God's glory and power were so strong, and because God is completely holy, the people could not come to him. God did this to show that he was not like the idols of Egypt that could be seen and touched. Now, however, we are invited to approach God because of what Christ has done for us (Hebrews 12:18-24). Jesus is superior to Moses because Jesus opens the way for us to come to God with great joy. Be holy as God is holy. Consecrate ourselves. Hate sin as God hates it. Thank God that although He is transcendent and over all the earth He still loves us. Also remember that God chose us out of all the world to be a holy nation and priests before Him to reach all the people for Him.