



Lesson 9 / May 7, 2017

COVENANT WITH MOSES

Exodus 19-20

Key Verse

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Exodus 19:5-6

Discussion Questions

1. Can you imagine what it would be like to suddenly be free after generations of knowing only slavery? What difficulties would you face?
2. Read Exodus 19. Why do you suppose God descends in this way?
3. What are the ten commandments in Exodus 20? Can you memorize them?
4. Where do you see grace in the law?
5. What is the significance of the tabernacle?
6. What do the sacrifices accomplish for Israel? What do they fail to accomplish?
7. How has Jesus fulfilled the law God gives to Moses?
8. How do we as Christians apply the law to our lives?

Question 17: How do we worship God?

Short Answer: *We worship God by confessing that He alone is God.*

Full Answer: *We worship God by confessing that He alone is God, by approaching him with praise and reverence, in purity, through his mercy, and with the consecration of our very lives.*

Question 18: What covenant does God make with Moses?

Short Answer: *God covenants with Moses that Israel will be his treasured people.*

Full Answer: *God covenants with Moses that Israel will be his treasured people who will obey his laws, worship him in the tabernacle, and make him known to all nations.*

Summary

What happens the day *after* a heroic rescue? Now that God has led his people out of Egypt in miraculous fashion, a great challenge presents itself to the people of Israel. They have only known slavery in Egypt for generations; now that they suddenly have freedom, where will they go and what kind of people will they be? They may be scared, helpless, and even longing to return to slavery (Exod 16-17), but God has big plans for establishing them as a kingdom of priests who will worship him, and it all begins with a year spent camping in the wilderness at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

Here God covenants (a DTR!) with Moses that the people of Israel will be his special people, much like God's covenant with Abraham, but now God makes his expectation of obedience explicit – they must obey his voice and keep his laws (Exod 19:3-8; 24:1-8). Remember, however, that God has *already* redeemed them from Egypt, so his laws are about how they will live *as* the people he has redeemed by his grace, not how they can *become* his redeemed people by their obedience!

In Exodus 19, God's presence descends on Mt. Sinai in a dramatic fashion that overwhelms all human senses. The people smell smoke, feel the earth trembling, hear a piercing trumpet blast, and see bright flashes of lightning. Naturally, they are terrified by this supernatural display. God speaks to them the ten commandments (Exod 20) and he delivers to Moses the full scope of his law, as recorded in Exodus 21-40, Leviticus, and Numbers 1-10. These extensive and detailed laws begin with the central theme, that Israel is to have one – and only one! – God, the LORD *their* God who brought them up out of Egypt (Exod 20:1-11).

The rest of the law may be divided into three basic categories of laws: moral, civil, and ritual. The moral laws create a code of ethics for how God's people ought to treat one another. Think, for example, of the commandments to honor our parents and not to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet. Jesus teaches that these moral commands are summed up in the command to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt 22:39; cf. Lev 19:18).

The civil laws instruct Israel in how to function as a nation, and God establishes their governance as a theocracy (= ruled directly by God) rather than a monarchy (= ruled by a king) or a democracy (= ruled by the people). For example, God himself directly reveals the laws for government issues such as sanitation,

interment of the dead, financial dealings, land management, consumer protection, social welfare, and judicial systems (Exod 21-23).

The ritual laws provide detailed instructions for the construction of a tabernacle and for the rituals of worship Israel is to observe within it (Exod 25-40). The tabernacle represents the very presence of the God whose glory inhabits it (Exod 40:34-38) and it serves as a constant reminder of both the way sin separates people from God and the way God opens the path for people to enter his presence. Worshippers must first purify themselves so that they will be *clean* and thereby prepared for entering the presence of God. They must then offer sacrifices and offerings of various kinds, both as a form of thanksgiving and as a means of putting away their sin. Further, in these sacrifices, blood represents life (i.e. the "lifeblood") so that the animal dies the death the worshipper deserves to die and symbolizes the consecration of the worshipper's life before God. These cumbersome rituals teach us about the immense grace of God by which he forgives sinners and welcomes their worship – even sinners who have previously rebelled by manufacturing and worshiping a golden calf as their god (Exod 32-33)!

For us as Christians today, when we consider how the law does (or does not) apply to us, we must remember that the law was given *before* Jesus and in *anticipation* of his coming, but we now live *after* Jesus came and *fulfilled* the law in various ways (Matt 5:17). He has fulfilled the ritual laws by becoming our permanent high priest who lives and serves forever in the heavenly tabernacle, having sacrificed himself for our sins and thereby initiated a better covenant by which we can be saved (see Heb 7-10). He has fulfilled the civil laws by ushering in a new era in which God's people are constituted not as a nation, but as a church that transcends nationalities and therefore does not observe the civil laws (see 1 Pet 2:9-10). And he has fulfilled the moral laws by heightening them to their fullest intention and then calling us as his disciples to obey them (see Matt 5:21-48). In the end, as Christians, the law of Moses still has great value for us because it teaches us about God, exposes our sin, leads us to Christ, and vividly illustrates the saving work Christ has accomplished so that we can draw near to the LORD our God through him.