

EXODUS 19:1-25—PREPARING TO MEET A HOLY GOD

What is your concept of God? Is He anything like the God of Mt Sinai? We have now come to a very significant part of the book of Exodus. as we approach the third main division of the book

We are at Mount Sinai, or the mount of God. This is where God had promised Moses at the burning bush that He would bring him here to serve God on the mountain, 3:12. That promise is now fulfilled. Now Israel would meet their God and worship Him at this holy mount. Israel had to be properly prepared to do this and with the tests and the battle, there had been some preparation but what happens at the mountain is even more of a preparation as they are to be ready for the holiness of God to be put on display. The people need to know who God is. He has been revealing Himself to them for quite some time, but now , more than ever, He gives a view of Himself they had never seen before. They were to learn to fear God and see Him as the holy other.

This is something, we too, have to keep learning and to ever have etched upon our memories. We are to have a fear and trembling of our holy God. We are to see Him as the transcendent One. This keeps us from seeing Him as a genie God who just exists for our every want and desire. God is high and majestic who deserves our very awe and reverence.

1. THE COVENANT

19:1-8

Reasons for the Covenant—1.To know God, that is where it all starts.

That is eternal life, that we may know Him. When they were in Egypt they learned that god is the world. He could be manipulated by the world. The gods had the character of humans. They did not believe in one God, but many. Their gods were to be approached through human sexual behavior. Their gods would do them harm. Their gods would lie. These are some of the things that the Egyptians believed about their deities. How would God teach the Israelites the truth? "The answer was the covenant. God would call His people to act in certain ways that would be expressive of their relationship with Him." John Oswalt

2 .To share His character—As the people did what the covenant required they would be conforming to God's character.

3.To know self—They didn't know the problem, even though their intentions were good, they were condemned for their inability to conform to the law. They needed to know their utter depravity kept them from being obedient.

The only way they could respond to the law was that there was a prior grace such as Passover and exodus.

A. THE ARRIVAL OF THE PEOPLE

1-2

As they get to the destination, we realize they will camp here for almost one year. It is near the foot of the mountain that was so full of majesty. Just above the floor of the wilderness, were the towering peaks, where God planned to meet the people he had redeemed from bondage There were granite peaks of all hues of deep purple and black. It had to be somewhat ominous even as majestic as it was. This is the awe-ful sight they saw.

B. GOD'S MESSAGE TO HIS PEOPLE

3-6

Moses did not just go up the mountain to commune with God. He was to bring God's message back down to the people.

1. Remember

late. The covenant takes them back to the past and then into the future. They were to reflect on the history that God had given them as of

God defeated the Egyptians. This is what the Israelites are to remember. God brought Israel to Himself—God’s purpose---Note: God always is the one who initiates. It is He who has brought Israel to where they are. God delivers us from sin, in order that He might have a special relationship with us.

Eagles’ wings; Deut 32:9-12 Israel’s deliverance is like an eagle swooping down to hover over it’s young and carry them off to safety. It is said that when the time is right, the parents force the eaglets to fly. The adult eagles stay near them in case they start falling and if one does, the parent catches them on their strong wings until the young eagle learns how to use its wings and ride the air currents as eagles do.

2. Obey 5

Remembering should motivate one to obey. Obedience is based upon what God has already done. The law is based on the prior establishment of the relationship between them by God’s good pleasure. No one can work for their salvation, but once one is saved, they are obligated to act in a manner worthy of their high calling. Everything is predicated on verse 4; what God has done. “Keep My Covenant—Israel is to remain faithful to the covenant made with Abraham, this will be given greater substance in the following chapters.” Peter Enns

3. Results of Israel’s Obedience 5-6

This is the heart of the message Moses is to bring to the people.

a. Treasured Possession—Israel is royal property. They did nothing to deserve this. God can do as he pleases. They are a very special possession.

b. Kingdom of Priests—There have not been priests yet, at least as far as the law is concerned. This is the way God would use Israel with respect to the other nations.

c. Holy Nation-- They are a separate nation from the other nations. God has chosen to work through them to bring together His far reaching plan. They were to be a nation reflective of a unique relationship with God. 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 1:6

To be holy is to live lives that reflect the character of God. 1 Pet 1:13-2:3

C. ISRAEL’S ACCEPTANCE OF THE COVENANT-7-8

Moses goes down the mountain and tells the people. They respond with a resounding yes. As we see as time progresses, Israel falls short of this enthusiastic agreement. They signed on the dotted line but they couldn’t keep their word. Their intentions were good in that they did want to be a part of the covenant but they really didn’t know how holy God was and how sinful they were.

2. THE PREPARATION OF THE PEOPLE 19:9-15

A. GOD AND MOSES SPEAK 9

The people were to listen

The Lord told Moses that not only did He want them to be willing to obey, but they were to be sensitive to hear when He spoke. God is laying the groundwork for communication. They were to be ready to hear. God assured Moses that He would give additional evidences for the people that he indeed was speaking the very words of God.

B. SET APART FOR GOD'S SERVICE 10-15

As God kept revealing more and more of Himself, it was time to show His Holiness. He had shown His power and providence. He is the only holy one. He is absolutely transcendent over His creation and unapproachable by human initiative, and incapable of being manipulated. They needed to know who was inviting them into His presence.

They needed to prepare themselves to get closer to the mountain. They were about to do as no other nation had ever done—to meet their heavenly King and listen to His voice. They were given two days to prepare themselves.

The people were to be consecrated by washing their clothes. This could be compared to Moses taking off His shoes at the mountain in 3:5

The clean clothes were to reflect clean hearts. They were to be clean and pure, outside and inside.

They were to be at a distance---Ex 24:1-2, Heb 12:28

If we were to go to the White House because we had an invitation to a dinner we would probably be kept waiting for awhile. You don't simply walk up in street clothes and walk in. The way is barred. You must first prepare yourself and then wait until you are received.

There is a distance between a holy God and sinful man. God insisted that the boundary be marked off. He has a high, elevated, exalted position. It was like saying to them that they were not to become glib with Him. They were not to be frivolous in the presence of Him. He wanted them to have a high view of God. The Puritans had a concept of God that was truly exalted. They possessed such a respectful understanding of God. Today in the church there is such a shallow view of God and of course that leads to a shallow life. If He is held in highest respect, it will mean deep roots for spiritual growth. God is the only wise God, the Creator, the Maker, the sovereign Lord, the Master. He tells me what to do and I have no option but to do it. We have one command and that is to do His will.

Nadab and Abihu did not follow the specific commands that God had given to the priests at a later time, so He had to take their lives to show how serious He was.

The structure of Old testament worship underlined man's sinfulness and God's otherness: the fence around the tabernacle, the veil at the holy of holies, only the priests ministering on the tabernacle.

The New Testament emphasizes the nearness of God. There has been the death and resurrection of Christ.

The new way—Jn 1:14, Heb 10:1-25

They were to abstain sexually, also.

C. THE SUMMONS THAT WOULD BE GIVEN

To go up, they were to wait for the blast of the ram's horn. God invites the people but keeps them at arm's length. At the trumpet sound, and only then, could they approach God.

3. THE TERRIFYING, MAJESTIC DISPLAY 19:16-25 FEAR OF THE LORD

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

A. THUNDER, LIGHTNING, CLOUD, LOUD TRUMPET

Deut 33:2, Acts 7:53

Their nerves must have been on end. When they heard the blast and looked out their tents and saw the mountain in smoke and fire, they realized that God had come down on the mountain. How fearful this must have seemed. How critical of a point in time in history this was. They were going to have some

kind of encounter with God who was inviting them in to covenant

B. SMOKE, FIRE, QUAKING, LOUDER TRUMPET

The awesome presence and power of God—Ps 18:1-15

The greatness of God—Deut 5:22-23, 27

What a magnificent display of God's awesomeness. The whole area is shaking. A whole granite mountain is shaking while there is constant thundering, lightning, clouds of smoke and fire and horn blasts that keep getting louder. How could they have forgotten this awful scene?

In some senses they did, for they rebelled against God, not too much later.

Come up Moses. Can you imagine how he must have felt when told this?.

Even Moses trembled—Heb 12:21, Deut 9:19 Moses had to go up closer than the others. The burning bush was nothing compared to this.

C. A FURTHER WARNING BY GOD

God knew there would be some people who would not want to obey and approach the mountain in their own way. Moses had to warn them again.

Moses had to go back down the mountain to give this serious warning.

The next time he went up he was to take Aaron. He would later play a key role in being the high priest. This is kind of like a precursor with him being the high priest and entering the holy of holies. The other priests could not go there.

God gave a warning three times. Vv 12-13, 21-22, 24 He knows they are prone to rebellion. This is why we need to keep in the Word everyday or we are prone to rebellion.

The penalty for them was death, so therefore, the triple warning.

Why did God arrange this kind of meeting? Ex 20:20 says it was a test in order that the fear of Him may remain in you, so you do not sin. A healthy fear of God can help deter us from sin.

God wanted a holy, righteous, pure, and respectful concept of His presence.

God wants us to realize what He has done for us, and what kind of privileges He has given us. We are exhorted to know what he has done for us to be in the covenant. At the same time, he is holy other and we are never to presume upon Him but desire to be holy. As we do this we enjoy the privileges of being priests, God's special treasure His holy nation.