



Old Testament Core Seminar

5

EXODUS 19-40

Introduction

Good morning again. We are in the 5th week of our Old Testament Core Seminar, and we are only half way through the second book of the Old Testament. We are really moving! But it's okay. Like I mentioned a couple weeks ago, we are intentionally going slowly through these first books because they lay down some very important foundations for understanding the rest of the Bible. So we really need to get as much out of these books as we can. And since we have such important material to cover, let's get right into it.

[PRAY]

Context

We are still in the mid-15th century BC, and Moses is still our author. Moses is the man that Yahweh appointed as His prophet, His spokesperson, and the earthly leader of His people. Yahweh has just rescued His people out of brutal and crippling slavery in Egypt. Yahweh judged the nation that oppressed His people and brought His people, the nation of Israel, out from under their yoke with great signs and wonders. In it all Yahweh caused His great name to be magnified in all the earth. Now the people are out of Egypt and heading toward to land that Yahweh had promised to their ancestors long ago. And on the way, they have come to a place called "Mount Sinai" where they are to worship Yahweh before they go any further.

In the scope of God's greater plan to redeem a people for Himself out of all the nations of the world, and return the world to it's original Edenic state, we are at a real highpoint. God had promised to send a Savior into the world and reverse the effects of sin as soon as that first sin occurred. Then we saw that He promised one man, Abraham, that that promised Savior would come through the line of *his* descendants. Well, it's in today's story where we will see Abraham's descendants becoming a real nation. They are no longer slaves, and they are about to get laws and a national religion to organize their nation around. The re-creation of humanity is slowly creeping forward, and God is beginning to dwell with and have fellowship with His people again!

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Theme

A thematic sentence for the second half of Exodus might sound like this:

Yahweh is establishing the covenant terms to direct His people in how to live in fellowship with Him since He will now dwell with them.

So in this part of God's word we will see the covenant laws that Israel was to live by. And we will also see the construction of something called "the tabernacle," which was a portable tent that represented Yahweh's very presence with His people. In it all we will also see how well the people kept the terms of the covenant (the laws), and Yahweh's response to the covenant breakers. Again, biblically speaking, a covenant is an inviolable bond between two parties that involves promises and blessings to each other, and the curse of death should it be broken. Yahweh will here give the terms of the covenant (the laws) to His people. And will Yahweh enforce the full wrath of the covenant curse should they break it? We shall see...

[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Exodus 19-23
Covenant Obligations
 - Ch. 19-20 Decalogue as standard for all of life
 - 21:1-22:15 Social life
 - 22:16-23:9 Moral life
 - 23:10-23:33 Religious calendar
- II. Exodus 24
Covenant Ceremony – and the promise to be with them
- III. Exodus 25-31
Covenant Meeting Place Described – how to build the tabernacle
- IV. Exodus 32-34
Covenant Disobedience and Covenant Grace
 - Ch. 32 - The people break the covenant and Moses intercedes
 - Ch. 33 - Moses "sees" the glory of the LORD
 - Ch. 34 - Covenant is renewed
- V. Exodus 35-40
Covenant Meeting Place Built – tabernacle is built
- VI. Exodus 40:34-38*
Covenant Presence of the Lord – climax of the book

*Notice the mirroring effect (a "chiasm"). Sections II and VI are related by a relationship of promise and fulfillment, and sections III and V are related by a relationship of directions and obedience. That puts section IV in the middle of this chiasm, making it a central and crucial part of the book. And inside Section IV there is another chiasm. Chapters 32 and 34 are related by a relationship of covenant broken and covenant restored, with chapter 33 being highlighted in the middle. What is interesting about chapter 33 is that that is where we most clearly see the gospel in this second half of Exodus: Moses intercedes for the sinners, and Moses himself is hidden in the cleft of the rock so that he won't be destroyed by the glory of the LORD.

Theme texts

19:1-20:21

Let's get right into the text. Turn to **chapter 19**. [READ VERSE 1] And here is the message that Yahweh has given to Moses to tell the people: **verses 4-6**. [READ] We are going to talk a lot more about this later, but notice that Israel is a specially chosen people to be a kingdom of priests to the rest of the world. That means that they are to occupy a very crucial position between Yahweh and the rest of the world. They are to pray for the world and also to take the words, laws, teachings, and commands of Yahweh to the world. They are to be like intermediates, worshipping the LORD and helping an ignorant world know the truth about the LORD. So Israel has great privilege in being Yahweh's special possession, but also great responsibility. Did you notice in verse 4 that all this is premised upon Yahweh's rescue of them? Like I said, we'll think more about this later, but it's worth asking now: Do you think of your salvation as bringing you to the LORD so that now you can take up a unique role of being a part of a people who are priests to the rest of the world? Do you see your life and salvation in terms of the obligation to pray for the world and take the truth about God and His Son Jesus Christ to the unbelieving and dying world? Maybe we need to really think about what our salvation means.

Well anyway, let's get to the laws that Yahweh expects His people to uphold. Yahweh is going to give these laws to the people Himself. Let's take a look at the scene at the mountain as Yahweh descends from heaven to give these laws. Look at **chapter 19, verses 16-20**. [READ] I don't think any comment needs to be made here. That is one *awesome* scene!

Let's now read the law that Yahweh gave them. These are the "10 Commandments," or "the Decalogue." They start in **Chapter 20**. [READ VERSES 1 THROUGH 17] And notice the people's reaction to such a display and demand of ethical holiness. [READ VERSES 18 THROUGH 21]

Okay, a number of things need to be said here if we are to understand the place of this Law in God's economy of grace. Remember, God's promises to Abraham are what are being fulfilled here, and those promises were of pure, one hundred percent, vintage grace. A free gift. **Where, then, do these commands fit into such a covenant of grace?**

So we are asking the question: Why does God give these commands, which we are going to call "the Mosaic covenant," to his people, when the covenant was already made with Abraham by grace? What role does law play in a relationship premised on the grace of God? (Can you hear in these questions the ramification that the answers will have on us today?)

To answer these questions, let's go **back to the Garden of Eden** and remember what happened there. God had made man in his image, to image forth God to the world as a sort of priest-king by exercising dominion on behalf of God. When Adam and Eve sinned, they ceased to image him perfectly. They portrayed a distorted image, and so they were banished from God's presence. But God, in his mercy, did not leave humanity banished forever. He remained intent on accomplishing his purpose in creation: displaying his glory and beauty *to* and *through* his creatures. But, as we saw in our study of Genesis 12 to 50, he planned on doing this in a peculiar way. He's going to do it through a particular people. So he makes this promise to Abraham: I will bless you, your descendants, and all the nations on earth through you (Genesis 12:1-3).

Okay, great! Is that the end of the story? Is humanity redeemed from the Fall? Well, that would be the end of the story if our only problem of alienation from God could be overcome by God's simple declaration that it is overcome. Tragically, there is still this **problem of sin** and rebellion to deal with – the very reason the alienation exists in the first place. Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob may have received God's promise, but we saw a couple of weeks ago that those guys were a bunch of rascals. They weren't beautifully imaging and displaying God like they were supposed to. God's promise of redemption was in place, but there was still this problem of sin. And that brings us to the Mosaic covenant.

Let's read what Paul says about it in Galatians. Turn to **Galatians, chapter 3**. Look at **verses 17-18**. [READ] So the first thing we learn is that the giving of the law did not nullify the promise. The promises to Abraham are still secure. If Israel fails to obey the law, and fulfill their end of the covenant, there will be *real consequences*. Basically, what we'll see later, is that Israel will lose land and Yahweh's wonderful presence with them. However, they will not ultimately and finally be cut off, because even if they break their end of the covenant, Yahweh will still uphold His end of the covenant. He made the promises first and He is intent of fulfilling His plan of redemption, through "the Seed of the woman," through the Savior who is to come through Abraham's line.

But Paul goes on. Look at **verse 19**. [READ] Now the phrase "because of transgressions" could mean a lot of things. At the very least though it means that because of sin, a law was needed. And this law pointed out the sin in people, and reminded them always of their need for "the Seed" to come,¹ their need for Someone to rescue them from their sin. It is only once sin is atoned for that the alienation from God can end.

I want to make sure this is very clear. First you have the promise. Then you have the law. Why is the law added to the promise? It's added because of transgression; because sin must still be dealt with in order for God's creation purposes for man to rightly image him. Do you remember reading Exodus 19:6? Turn back there. God wanted to have "a kingdom of priests and a *holy* nation." What kind of language is that? That's creation language. That's "man created in the image of God" language, as we considered in our first study of Genesis. But look again at verse 5: they will only fulfill this purpose and be these people *if* they obey him fully and keep his covenant. God seems to be saying, "If you keep my word, if you keep my commandments, then you will rightly image me once more. And I'm giving you the law as a blueprint for what this looks like! If you live according to this blueprint, you will be my kings, exercising dominion; you will be my priests, mediating my character to the world. In so doing, you will be a holy nation—a set apart nation amidst this fallen world." They are told to be perfect as God is perfect, because they are to represent him.

In other words, the people of Israel were saved out of Egypt to be a nation that points back to Eden and points forward to the New Heavens and the New Earth, where God's redeemed people will again image forth their Creator and Redeemer. And so the people needed direction about *how* to image forth the Creator, their God, Yahweh. And so the law. But sin was still with them, and thus the law served the purpose also to remind the people that the people need Another to come and rescue them from their sin.

One last point of clarification needs to be made concerning the Law. And it is this: Israelites were not saved because they kept the law. Rather, you'll notice that Exodus 20:2 says that **the Israelites were *already* saved** out of their bondage *before* they were given the law. No

¹ The word "until" in Galatians 3:19 does not have a temporal meaning (in the sense that it is no longer needed now that Christ has come), but a directional meaning (in that the law points *towards* Christ).

one has *ever* been saved by keeping any kind of law. Salvation has always been by grace through faith.

Again, the law is a pointer to our need for a Savior, and a guide for holy living. Even right here, at the very first giving of the Law, the Israelite know they can't keep it and need someone to intercede for them. Look at **verse 19** again. [READ] The people want someone else, in this case Moses, to intercede between God and them. So they know what salvation comes from outside of themselves and not from their own behavior. Nonetheless, God still expects conformity to this law, as Moses tells them in **verse 20**. [READ] He's given it to them so that they can follow it and not sin.

The application for us here should be obvious: don't use the Law as means to establish your own righteousness, as though God will approve of you if you keep it well enough. Rather, use the Law to remind yourself of your own sinfulness and drive you to Christ! Then, endeavor, by the grace and strength that God provides through His Spirit, to keep the law – again not to establish your own righteousness, but – to image forth your God more accurately to the world.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

I wish we could go through each of these 10 commandments, but again, we are constricted by time. Let me just say this though, a good way to think about the Law and how you can use it to image forth the Creator more accurately can be found in Jesus' summary of the Law in Matthew 22, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

32:1-34:35

Well, let's move on now to see how the covenant is lived out. Do you remember the covenant ceremony we read about in Genesis 15? Only God took upon Himself the oath and the symbolic curse should He break His promises. But this time the people do have obligations, and so they too are bound by a blood-oath to keep their end of the covenant. Look at **chapter 24, verse 3**, [READ] and **verses 7-8**. [READ] This ceremony is meant to symbolize that the penalty for breaking the covenant will be death.

Let's see how they did, and let's see how God responded to them. Turn to **chapter 32**. This is not a very happy chapter. While Moses was up on the mountain receiving stone tablets upon which the 10 commandments were written, this is what was going on among the people at the bottom of the mountain: look at **verse 1**. [READ] Well, there go commandments numbers 1 and 2! You'll see in the following verses Aaron made these gods, and they worshipped them.

How does Yahweh respond to this covenant disloyalty? Look at **verses 7-10**. [READ] He is about to disown them isn't He? Did you notice that He doesn't call them “my people” anymore, but he says to Moses that they are “your people!” And He's ready to blot them out and start over with Moses! Well, they did break the covenant after all.

But look at what Moses does. Moses is *truly* a type of Christ here. What Moses does here is a beautiful picture, in God's sovereignty, of what Christ will do on a greater scale when He comes. Look at **verses 11-13**. [READ] Moses intercedes on behalf of the people, so that God might have mercy on them. And look at what Moses appeals to in God: God's desire for His own glory. Did you see it there? Look again at verse 12. Moses is saying, "Oh, Yahweh, don't let the Egyptians make a mockery of Your name by saying that Your intent was always evil against Your people. Don't let them say 'Yahweh is evil towards His people.'" And look at verse 13. Moses appeals also to Yahweh's faithfulness and covenant trustworthiness. He says, "Remember the promises you made to your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Keep your promises oh Yahweh! And do it for Your own name's sake!"

And do you think it worked? Do you think such an appeal to Yahweh's glory and faithfulness resulted in mercy – *undeserved* mercy – for the Israelites? You bet it did! Look at **verse 14**. [READ] This is but yet another demonstration that God's mercy and favor is entirely unearned and undeserved. Grace, grace, all is grace. And did you notice there in verse 14 that they are called "God's people" again? His anger is for but a moment; His mercy endures forever.

Now, if you read the rest of the chapter, you'll see that there were serious consequences for the people's action. But as I mentioned earlier, Yahweh is still gracious to the people as a whole and does not cast the entire lot off completely. His plan of redemption presses forward. And in chapter 34 we read that God has renewed the covenant with people, even after what they did, and gave them new stone tablets with the 10 commandments carved on them.

What we are going to see **throughout the Old Testament** is that such behavior will be paradigmatic for the life of Israel and their treatment of Yahweh. They will time and again turn their backs on the covenant. And Yahweh will time and again send His wrath upon them. However, time and again, Yahweh's wrath will always bring mercy in its trail. He will always take the people back and restore their relationship with Him. He is the constant pursuer of His people. He is their God and He is very jealous for them. He is jealous that they be holy, and so His anger. But He is also jealous that they be exclusively His, and so His grace to always welcome them back. However, He welcomes them back only to have them rebel again. It's as though the Old Testament relationship between Yahweh and His people is a long drawn demonstration of His great grace, and their exceeding sinfulness. It's as though the Old Testament covenant is crying out over and over again that these people are sinners through and through and that if the Savior to come is going to restore anyone to eternal fellowship with God, He is going to have to deal radically and decisively and finally with the sin that is so wickedly lodged in their hearts. But I dare not run too far ahead. It's enough for today to praise God for His great grace in the covenant. And, if we are being at all honest with ourselves, we see a lot of Israel in ourselves too. Thus, we ought praise the LORD for His unfailing and constant grace towards us!

[TAKE QUESTIONS]²

² Questions may arise concerning God's "relenting" and "turning." We can't say everything that deserves to be said about that now. But on just the simplest level it may well be pointed out that ultimately Yahweh actually does *not* change His mind here. He keeps quite to the original plan laid down in Genesis 15. Nothing changes. While the threat of destruction was very real, so was Moses' intercession – which God foreordained in His plan to have Moses prefigure Christ. The intent of the whole seen was to point us toward and teach us about Christ. In the end, Yahweh's plan is not changed, and we learn of the Messiah.

33:12-23

I think it's also important to point out, even if just briefly, the interchange between Yahweh and Moses in **chapter 33**, verses 12-23. We learn here that to Moses, the covenant was not just a lot of rules to be kept in exchange for some blessings. Rather Moses was concerned that he and the people of Israel have a relationship with God. That is the ultimate goal right? The covenant is not an end in itself. It is the means to a greater end: knowing and enjoying God. Look at **verses 15-16**. [READ] Moses doesn't want to travel any further unless Yahweh be with them. And He doesn't care that Israel is special and distinct from other nations unless that special status and distinction brings with it the presence of Yahweh.

To know, love, and enjoy the fellowship of God is rightly on Moses' agenda. If that is not our goal too, then this is all a wash. Church, Bible studies, gospel, etc. are not just religious artifacts to bring us social acceptance, or make us feel pious, or take away worldly stress. or order our otherwise chaotic lives. Rather, they are instruments to bring us to the greatest good: knowing, loving, enjoying, fellowshiping with God – and the rest of His people, for the sole reason that they are just that, *His* people!

But we are not done with Moses' request just yet. Look at **verse 18**. [READ] God's glory is the manifestation of all His internal perfections and beauty – the full realizations of His dazzling brilliance in who He is. Moses wants to see that. But look at what Yahweh says. Look at **verses 19-23**. [READ] Yahweh is saying that, "You cannot see My face Moses. You cannot see the full display of my holiness, and beauty, and perfections, and radiance. You cannot see my full glory. You're a sinner – it would destroy you!" So what is Yahweh's solution, so that He could grant at least part of Moses' request? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] He protects Moses from the weltering blast of His glory by placing him in the cleft of a rock. It's like a small cave, or cove in a rock.

While there is no explicit New Testament reference that teaches this, theologians for a long time have, nonetheless, argued that we have another type of Christ here. Does anyone know how this event is typological of Christ and His work for sinners? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] Christ's death on the cross was the event by which His sinful people are protected against the holy out-lash of God's glory against their sins. Now, because we are "in Christ," if we have put our full trust in Him, we are brought into the presence of God without being destroyed by the overwhelming weight of glory.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

28:38-46

Now, speaking of God's glory and how that causes a problem for sinful people, we need to conclude our time today by looking at the "tabernacle." The tabernacle was a tent which Yahweh instructed His people to build so that Yahweh could dwell with His people, even though they were sinful. As we just considered, sin necessarily has to be punished in God's presence. The judgment of sin is part of what makes God holy and glorious. So how can Yahweh dwell with His people, and "go with them" as Moses asked, if they are sinful? Well, the tabernacle offers the solution for that.

Turn to **chapter 29**. Again, the problem is that God is holy and His people are sinful. How are they going to live together without God's righteous judgment breaking out against them? Let's look at seven things concerning the tabernacle that make this relationship between God and His sinful people possible.

1. Look at **verse 38**. [READ] This offering is to make atonement for sins. Verse 36 and other places in the Old Testament make it clear that sacrifices are for the atonement for sins. And notice that they have to be carried out *every day*!
2. Look at **verse 42**. [READ] These offerings need to be made at the entrance to the tabernacle. This tells us that it is only through forgiveness of sins that anyone meets with God.
3. You'll also notice in verse 42 that the tabernacle is the place where Moses receives revelation from God.
4. Look at **verse 43**. [READ] The tabernacle is where God will meet and reconcile with His people.
5. Verse 43 also tells us that the tabernacle is holy because of the presence of God's glory.
6. Look at **verse 45**. [READ] The tabernacle is the physical place where God will dwell in the midst of His people.
7. Look at **verse 46**. [READ] This will sound familiar if you were here last week – not to mention the fact that I've already said something like this earlier today. The purpose of all of this is to know the LORD their God. That God be known, in all the beauty and glory and power of who He is is the goal.

These seven things that describe the tabernacle, and make it possible for God to dwell with His people, and for His people to know Him...do they sound familiar at all? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] What if I told you these same seven things about Jesus?

1. Jesus makes atonement for sins, once and for all.
Hebrews 9:26 [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
2. It is through this atonement for sins, found only in Jesus, that anyone can come to the Father.
John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
3. Jesus is the full revelation of God, the place where we learn the most about Him.
Hebrews 1:2 ...in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...
4. God meets and reconciles with His people in Christ.
Romans 5:11 ...we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
5. Jesus is the manifestation of God's glory.
John 1:14 ...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
6. Jesus is God in a physical body, dwelling with His people.
Colossians 2:9 ...in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...
7. Only through Jesus does anyone know God.
John 14:7 "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

Do you see the point I'm trying to make? The tabernacle is a beautiful picture of how God condescends to be with His people. They don't deserve such a blessing. But God in His wisdom and grace has found a way to give them this blessing of His presence. And it was all meant to point forward to an even greater revelation of God, a greater experience of God an even more immediate access to God – **the Lord Jesus Christ**, as in Christ God dwelt as intimately as He could with man, in man's very nature, only without sin.

But again, we get ahead of ourselves. The Israelites only got to look forward to this greater dwelling with man. For them, however, they had to settle for the tabernacle. But don't get me wrong. Just because Christ is more glorious doesn't mean that the tabernacle wasn't wonderful in itself too. It suited the purpose for the time until it was replaced by a temple, and then by Christ who, as should be no surprise to us, called Himself One greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6).

Conclusion

40:34-38

Let's conclude our time with the climax of all of redemptive-history so far through the end of Exodus. Let's read **Exodus 40:34-38**. [READ] It's the climax so far because Yahweh is again dwelling with His people as He did in the Garden of Eden. It's not the full manifestation of God, and the plan of redemption is not done yet. But we are well on our way here are the end of Exodus.

Application

We have already thought about some application today, but we can certainly do so again before we depart.

1. Don't use the Law as a way to establish your own righteousness, as though God will approve of you if you keep it well enough. You will never measure up. Rather, the Law should drive you to Christ. If you really study the Law, you will not come away with the idea that you could possibly live it out entirely. Instead, you'll be struck with just how poorly you keep it, and like the Israelites, you'll shudder with fear and run away. Be wise, be biblical, be Christian in your use of the Law. Use the Law to see the greatness of Christ, and be driven to Him in your great need! Then, endeavor, by the grace of God, through His Spirit, to keep the law – again not to establish your own righteousness, but – to image forth your God more accurately to the world.
2. And, on that same note, help each other in this use of the Law. There is no place in the Christian life for any kind of arrogance that we can go it alone. Let others into your life to help you see your shortcomings all the more, and then help you conquer sin in your life, to the glory of God. And in turn, you'll help them too.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

[PRAY]