

Exodus 19

Preceding Text

(Where are we? Chapters 16-24 **Covenant – Ten Commandments**)

We've been reading about the road out of Egypt, and it was long and complicated. The people rejoiced after coming through the Sea of Reeds, but then they came face to face with the reality of the harsh environment of Sinai. They ran out of water, food, water (again!), and they were attacked by the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19 recalls it as unprovoked and especially horrible in picking off the weakest and most vulnerable).

The months long journey to Mt. Sinai has come to an end, and we reach the climax of the story. The Israelites have been redeemed, but now they enter into a covenant with God.

Current Text: Themes and Background

We've been to this mountain before. The future sign (3:12) is now a present reality. Go back and read Exodus 3, and you will find many parallels in this chapter (i.e., fire, sacred ground). The nearness of God is immeasurable but also presents imminent danger. This should frame the importance of what happens in this chapter.

Redemption from Egypt is not the end of the story. There is more at stake here. In this moment after the excitement of the story so far, we get to engage *purpose* of the story. Throughout the previous chapters God keeps referencing the covenant he had with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the *continuation* of that covenant story. Do not forget that one aspect of God's promise to Abraham was that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). That universal dimension of God's intentions is echoed here in this chapter (verses 3–6).

There are a couple interesting aspects of the conversation: Looking back on God's past actions becomes the foundation for all that follows. God calls the people to have a new identity. The people need to respond to God's summons (see also Deut 26:17–19).

But to be prepared for the covenantal event, the people need to be consecrated – it is basically protection for them. God and the mountain (because of God's presence on it) share a holiness that can be lethal when encountered irreverently. Notice that God did not simply "appear," but he *came down* (verses 18, 20), and what happened impacted creation for a short time. The people saw an amazing sight...Moses talking to God and the sound of God answering him (vs. 19).

Engage the Text: Discussion Questions

1. What did you hear as the main point of the sermon? Or what was your primary takeaway?
2. Read out loud 19:3–8 and answer the following:
 - a. What is revealed about God's character here?
 - b. The people's changed identity is changed from an enslaved people to a treasured people and a kingdom of priests. The establishment of the Levitical priesthood in

Israel is not formalized until Exodus 28 (cf. Lev. 8–9), but the concept of priesthood and its fundamental functions would have been familiar to the Israelites. The priest was an intermediary between God and the people. What would this mean for them to be a kingdom of priests?

3. God called, shaped, and sent Moses on a mission (ch 3–4) and now God calls, shapes, and sends his people on a mission. Jesus too, called, shaped, and sent his disciples (see Matt 28:18–20). What do you think the mission of God is for us now? In other words, what is our identity and role as God's people in the world?
4. What is the text telling us about God's character, God's revelation, and God's mission in the world?

Read for Next Week: Exodus 20