

Exodus:
The Redemption of God's People,
a Covenant with God's People,
the Renewal of the Covenant for God's people,
and the Worship Center of God's People.

IV. Comment on the Writing

A. The Redemption of God's People from Egypt, 1:1-18:27

B. The Revelation to the God's People at Mount Sinai, 19:1-40:38

This large portion of the book is composed of the giving of the law to God's people (19-20) followed by the ordinances, the application of the law to specific cases of conduct (21-23), and the agreement of the people to obey (24). Moses, then, entered the mount to receive instruction for the tabernacle (25-31). When Moses returned with the token of the covenant, the people were worshipping an image (32-33). After fellowship is restored (34), the tabernacle was constructed (35-40).

Several preliminary things: (1) the people arrived at Mount Sinai some 90 days after the Exodus (19:1) though Moses earlier indicated that it was a three-day journey (3:18, circumstances had radically changed). Moses had logistical problems and the people complained likely causing stoppage along the way. (2) Moses did not receive the Law on the Mount; God spoke the Commandments to the people (Moses did receive the Commandments in stone on the mount later). (3) Moses ascended the Mount seven different times; Charlton Heston once (movies compress things). (4) The people remained at the Mount for about one year and one month (Num. 10:11-13). They left Mt. Sinai one year, three months after the exodus event.

It must be understood that the law was given to a people that had been delivered from bondage through the shedding of blood and grand miracle. Israel is a shadowed picture of the people of God. The law was given to the people after their redemption from Egypt, a symbol of oppression and bondage. The function of the law for Israel was the same as it is for us, the more recent people of God

The law can be categorized by three types: (1) those concerning criminal actions within the community, such as murder or kidnapping, and were to be punished publicly being a corporate travesty. (2) those concerning civil wrongs committed against a member of the community by another, such as assault or theft, punishable by the payment of damages. (3) those concerning adjudication required within the family circles, such as adoption, divorce, or slave treatment. These were not settled in a court, but within the family by the head of the household.

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1. The revelation of the Mosaic covenant, 19:1-23:33

a. The preparation of the people for the giving of the covenant, 19:1-25

Moses acts as ambassador between the people and the Lord (the priesthood had not been established) ascending the Mount three times to prepare the people for the giving of the Law. It is a holy, dreadful occasion and the people had to prepare themselves.

1) The disclosure of God's promise: the nation would be a kingdom of priests, vv. 1-8

a) The arrival before Mount Sinai, vv. 1-2

The location of Mount Sinai continues to be a subject of debate. Three options entertain our scholars. (1) The traditional site since the fourth century, Jebel Musa, in the southern Sinai. In the sixth century, St. Catherine's monastery was constructed there. The major argument against this location is that it was under Egyptian control and there is no evidence of volcanic activity. Jethro, the Midianite, made a considerable journey to see Moses (the nomadic Midianites roamed land from the Arabian Peninsula to the Sinai) (18:5). (2) The northern Arabian

Peninsula, southeast of Aqaba where mountains show volcanic activity. Also, Sinai, Mount Seir, the region of Edom are grouped together (Judges 5:4, Deut. 33:2). (3) The region around Kadesh-Barnea. This site contradicts Deut.1:2.

- b) The disclosure of God's promise to Moses about the nation, vv. 3-6
 - c) The promise of the people to follow the Lord, vv. 7-8
- 2) The disclosure of Moses as mediator of the covenant, v. 9
- 3) Instructions for preparation to receive the covenant, vv. 10-25
 - a) The instruction of the people, vv. 10-13
 - b) The preparation of the people, vv. 14-15
 - c) The foreboding presence of God on Sinai, vv. 16-19
 - d) The second warning of the people, vv. 20-25
- b. The covenant delineated, 20:1-23:33
 - 1) The essence of the Mosaic revelation: The Ten Words, 20:1-17
The Ten Commandments were given to the people from the Mount. Moses was with the people. They feared for their lives and asked Moses to receive God's word and convey it to them (20:19). See also Hebrews 12:18-19 for a description of the people's terror.

There is a debate concerning the division of the Ten Commandments. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions (Augustine also) combine verses 3-6 making one commandment then divided the tenth commandment into two. Jewish tradition (Philo and Josephus), and most Protestants, separate verses 3-6 into two and keep the tenth commandment as one.

Several observations about the Ten Commandments:

Eight of the commandments are stated negatively (1-2, 5-10); two are stated positively (3-4).

Duties to God (1-4) take a priority over duties to mankind (5-6). The latter flows from the former.

Nine of the commandments deal with external actions (1-9); one with an attitude (10).

Obedience to the commandments is based on a profession of a relationship with God (20:2).

These commandments, as well as the ordinances, can be summarized in two principles: to love God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40).

The content of the commandments can be summarized as follows:

1st: deals with religion, the recognition of one God.

2nd: deals with worship, no physical images.

3rd: deals with reverence, God is to be honored. It prohibits the use of God's name in a manipulative manner.

4th: deals with time, there is to be a special day. In Exodus the basis is the creation ordinance; in Deuteronomy it is the redemption from Egypt (5:12–15).

5th: deals with authority, honoring of parents. This is the only commandment with a promise.

6th: deals with life, it is sacred. Jesus said anger is murder.

7th: deals with purity, moral uprightness is a necessity. Jesus said lust is adultery.

8th: deals with property, it is to be respected.

9th: deals with the tongue, reputations are to be preserved.

10th: deals with contentment, we must learn to be satisfied.

Some questions to ask:

Was the law meant to redeem?

This was clearly the view of many in our Lord's Day (Matt. 19: 16–22). The role of the law was a major issue in the early church as is evidenced by Paul's comments in Galatians and Romans. The Law was given 430 years after Abraham; the Law did not displace the promise. The fundamental covenant in the Bible is the Abrahamic (Roman 4, Gal. 3). In the sense of salvation, Law and grace

are opposites. We are saved through faith as was Abraham, not works.

If the law was not meant to redeem a people, why was it given?

The Law was given to a professedly redeemed people (the miracle of the Passover covering and deliverance from the land of slavery) to show them how to live before a holy God. It was also meant to reveal shortcomings so that the Old Testament people would long for the coming Messiah, a final redeemer.

Is the Law for the people of God today?

In the sense that the essence of the Law is to love God and neighbor, the answer is yes. It remains a standard of God's holiness (Gal. 3:21). In the sense of sacrifices or social customs, the answer is no.

Does the Law forbid pictures in worship?

It does not prohibit the use of pictures or other things as educational tools; it prohibits the substitution of the physical for the spiritual. Adoration and worship of an image is wrong (Golden Calf, Ex.32).

Has Saturday worship been abolished?

If nine commandments are inviolate, why are not all of them? The nine commandments are repeated in the New Testament, not the fourth. Paul's answer would be that a special day had not been abolished, but to mandate a particular one has. In the early church, the centrality of the Resurrection made Sunday the preferred day. Others would say that the Sabbath was fulfilled in Christ, who brought the rest it promised. The idea the seventh-day rest was a creation ordinance before it was commanded. What is commanded in the fourth commandment was fulfilled so any day will meet the requirement.

While the worship of the Golden Calf was a violation of the second commandment (an idol or "any likeness of what is in heaven" [Ex. 20:4]), is it wrong to have representational art or icons? It would seem to me that religious images in the home or church are not a violation of the second commandment unless the image replaces the object it figures as the thing worshipped.

The word "icon" is our word for image. Christ is the image of God. The incarnation itself was representational. It is not wrong to have a picture of Christ in the home or a cross in the church. Other examples of "images," outward things that point us to deeper realities are the creation ("the heavens declare the glory of God" [Ps. 19:1]) and the tabernacle with its furniture and rituals). Art is a wordless book that points us to God whether it is pictures of biblical scenes or statuary. What words speak to ears, images bring to sight; it gives us understanding.

The Greek language makes a careful distinction that Hebrew, Latin, and English do not. The word "proskunesis" means to venerate; "lateria" to worship. An early council of the church, Nicaea [787], equated the two terms and it has since brought confusion into the churches. The simplest way to distinguish the terms is to picture two circles with a common center. The large circle contains things to venerate, the smaller one things to be worshipped. A wonderful illustration of this point is the event of building an altar by the Transjordan tribes following the conquest of Canaan. The tribes West of the Jordan threatened war because the altar was thought to have been erected for worship. Reuben made it clear that it was an "Altar of Witness," not a violation of the second commandment. The tribes accepted this distinction and the crisis passed (Josh. 22).

- 2) The response of the people, 20:18-21
- 3) Instruction for proper worship, 20:22-26

- 4) The elaboration of the covenant: the ordinances, 21:1-23:33
 The Law is divided into two parts: the ten words (20) and the application of them into case law, or application to issues (21-23). Moses makes thirty-nine case-law applications to social and civic life. Sometimes referred to as Israel's "Bill of Rights," the ordinances explain the rights of those living in the nation. The laws are not a complete listing, but merely representative.
 - a) Rules governing conduct toward Hebrew servants, 21:1-11
 - (1) The male servant, vv. 1-6
 The notion of "slave" is not accurate. It is more along the line of indentured servitude. A person in debt-default could offer their services for boarding. Such servants had legal rights as other citizen and for a limited duration.
 - (2) The female servant, vv. 7-11
 A female servant is to be indentured by her father with a view to becoming a wife or concubine for a son.
 - b) Rules relative to personal injury, 21:12-27
 - (1) Premeditated murder, vv. 12-14
 - (2) Striking a parent, v. 15
 - (3) Kidnapping, v. 16
 - (4) Dishonoring parents, v. 17
 - (5) Bodily injury, vv. 18-19
 - (6) Servant abuse, vv. 20-21
 - (7) Injury to a pregnant woman causing a miscarriage or premature delivery, vv. 22-25
 The focus in this case law is the mother. However, does the lesser penalty for the destruction of the fetus suggest that it is not a person? If the attack results in a premature birth there is punishment, but if there is loss of life the fetus is killed. It would be murder to take the life of a fetus.
 - (8) Injury to a servant, vv. 26-27
 - c) Rules concerning animals, 21:28-36
 - (1) The case of an ornery ox, vv.28-32
 - (2) The case of animal injury, vv.33-34
 - (3) The case injury of an animal by another animal, vv.35-36
 - d) Rules concerning property thief, 22:1-15

- (1) Animal thief, v. 1
- (2) Household invasion, vv. 2-4
- (3) Illegal grazing, v. 5
- (4) Property negligence, v. 6
- (5) Borrowed property loss, vv. 7-15
- e) Rules concerning moral misconduct, 22:16-31
 - (1) Rape of a virgin, vv.1 6-17
 - (2) Sorcery, v. 18
 - (3) Bestiality, v. 19
 - (4) Idolatry, v. 20
 - (5) Care of foreigners, v. 21
 - (6) Care of widows and orphans, vv. 22-24
 - (7) Lending, vv. 25-27
 - (8) Blasphemy, v. 28
 - (9) Giving of first fruits, vv. 29-30
 - (10) Prohibition against eating animals improperly killed, v. 31
- f) Rules concerning truthfulness and integrity, 23:1-9
 - (1) Witnessing in court, vv. 1-3
 - (2) Returning another's property, vv. 4-5
 - (3) Justice for the poor, vv. 6-7
 - (4) Bribery, v. 8
 - (5) Care of Foreigners, v. 9
- g) Rules concerning religious events, 23:10-19
 - (1) Sabbath rest for land and man, vv. 10-12
 - (2) Invoking other gods, v. 13
 - (3) Observing three annual pilgrim feasts, vv. 14-17
 - (4) Blood/bread sacrifices without yeast, v. 18
 - (5) First fruits of the land to the Lord, v. 19a
 - (6) The goat and its mother, v. 19b

This is likely a prohibition connected to Canaanite worship. It had to do with casting an evil spell in that culture. It became the basis of Jewish kosher laws.
- h) Promises concerning the land to be inherited, 23:20-33
 - (1) The necessity of obedience, vv. 20-23
 - (2) The path to prosperity, vv. 24-26
 - (3) The surety of success, vv. 27-30

(4) The dimensions of the land, v. 31

(5) The necessity of dispelling the Canaanite, vv. 32-33

2. The Ratification of the Law, 24:1-15

This is a central chapter in Israel's history. Moses recounted to them chapters in 20-23, the Law and the ordinances. They heartily entered covenant with God to obey (24:3, 7). It is a sacred moment of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood (only instance in the Bible). Sprinkling was symbolic of being set apart; it is a legal transaction. The sprinkling of the stones and the people foreshadows the day in the New Covenant era when Christ would sprinkle hearts of stone turning them into hearts of flesh (Luke 22:20, I Cor. 11:25-27). The chapter ends with Moses ascending the Mount to receive the law written in stone and remaining there forty days and nights.

a. The call to worship, vv. 1-2

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seven elders are invited to ascend the mountain and seal the covenant in eating a meal before the Lord (see v. 9).

b. The consecration of the worshippers, vv. 3-8

Moses serves in a priestly capacity in the inauguration of Israel's covenant with the Lord, a progressive fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (Gen. 17). Twelve men representing the tribes each offer sacrifices.

The "Book of the Covenant" (20-23) was received and written before Moses ascended the mountain; he read it to the people (v. 7). Moses received the essence of the law or covenant in stone from the Lord ("tablets of stone" [v. 12]; "tablets of the testimony" [Exod. 13:18]; "tables of the covenant" [Deut. 9:9]).

c. The confirmation of the covenant, vv. 9-11

d. The approach to the mount and the Law in stone by the Lord, vv. 12-18.

1) The instruction to the elders, vv. 12-14

The purpose of the written law, which is the commandments, is to teach it (the task of parents and the Levites) [v. 12].

2) The ascent of Moses to the mountain, vv. 13-15

Moses again ascends the mountain, this time with Joshua. The length of time would be considerably longer, 40 days, and

Moses would receive the law written by the hand of God. The covering cloud reflects God's presence. Interestingly, Moses took six days climbing the mountain before entering the divine presence.

Applications:

1. Before God gave His words to His people at the mountain, He first rehearsed His kindness and grace to them. "...I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself (19:4)." Before God commands His people, He reveals His grace to them. Obedience is a consequence of a relationship (remember the nation had been delivered by blood covering and miracle from the land of bondage and, thus, is a shadowed picture of God's people at any time or era). Grace is the basis of required obedience; obedience is the evidence of God's favor and not the cause of it. Are you still seeking to earn favor with God? Are you resting in the fact that He has been gracious to you through Christ? Is obedience a merely duty or is it a heartfelt manifestation of appreciation?
2. *To receive God's word in any ear is to have hearts prepared to receive it. Preparation for worship is serious business (20:10-13). While God does not speak through foreboding darkness, smoke, fire, and a shaking of the earth, He is nonetheless serious that we approach God with humility and reverence. When you attend the gathering of the saints to worship God, do you prepare your heart and mind to do so in reverence and quietness? Do you treat God on Sunday morning as you treat your boss on Monday morning with a glib halo, how was your day? When God speaks, we should stand in awe and fear because of His holiness and our unworthiness. Is this not a lost perspective in our churches?*
3. As you read the ordinances one thing becomes clear, God is concerned that His people conduct themselves circumspectly in societal and civic relationships. He does so with the realization that we live in a fallen world where relationships are not ideal either in the animal kingdom or among us. Regulations have been given by God with a two-fold purpose: first, to delineate proper conduct in certain social situations and, second, to declare consequences for dereliction to curb inappropriate actions. Our God is a God of righteousness and order! Do you view God's law as simply negative things restrictions? Do you see the care of God for us displayed to protect us with rules to limit the unruly propensities? God manifests His great love

for us by constructing laws that protect us from evil, making social relations possible.

4. While law is for our good, protecting us from ourselves, what does it tell us about our very natures? Without threat of punishment the human heart becomes criminal, and the result would be anarchy in society. It seems that you do not need the Bible to know that there is something wrong with us; you need to learn how God has moved to correct our errant ways. If you do not grasp the reality of human sin, there seems no way to explain the things we see happening around us.
5. In reading the ordinances, you must realize that these directives were given in a specific social context, a context that has certainly shifted over the centuries (I am not saying that it has improved or progressed, just changed). How do you read legislation relative to concubines or slaves (21:1-11); death for cursing a parent (21:16), sorcery (22:18), bestiality (22:19), or false worship (22:20)? I think the issue is the sanctity of life, human dignity, and right to possessions. We live in a society that increasingly has become secularized. Are you adopting the values of our culture or of our God?
6. God made a covenant with his ancient people, and He has God has made a covenant with us through His Son. The ancient people failed to treat their relationship with God with appreciative obedience. Do we treat our New Covenant promises with reverential and appreciative obedience to Him? Do you find at times that you think lightly of God's grace to you supposing that your way is better than His?
7. The Law was given to a people called and redeemed out of slavery to show them how to live their lives before a holy God. The Jews of Jesus' day had forgotten that it was a gift to show appreciation for grace and, instead, thought they could earn His favor through it. Is this not true of people today? Do you find yourself wanting grace, but at the same time think that you can cause God to reward you because of some good thing you have done for Him or others? That is a relationship based on merit, not grace! Can you grasp the implication of a grace relationship with God?
8. Since the law is the revelation of the divine character, His absolute holiness. and since God's character is the ground meaningful ethics (His character is His standard of right and wrong), it is in a sense the way of salvation. The law is the way of salvation for those who keep it perfectly in motive and action. Because it is an impossible standard for us, Christ came

to perfectly fulfill the law for us and to die for every violation of the law we ever or ever will commit. Salvation is through obedience, but Christ has become our obedience! This means that human perfection on our part is not the ground of acceptance before a holy God; it is an impossible standard for imperfect people. Christ is our perfection; God sees us only through the perfections of His son! We are as secure in God's grace, as Christ has obtained God's favor; it is absolute!