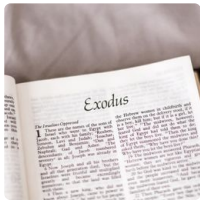


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Exodus 18 - 19



Exodus - Steve Gregg

The chapters of Exodus 18 and 19 narrate the story of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advising him to delegate the responsibility of handling people's disputes to other able men to take some burden off him. Moses follows Jethro's suggestion and selects leaders at different levels based on their complexity. God calls Moses to the mountain and tells the people that they will become a kingdom of priests, a special treasure above all people, and prepares them to receive His law. However, during Moses' absence, the Israelites build a Golden Calf, violating the first and second commandments.

Transcript

So we now come to chapter 18 of Exodus, and it's really the last incident that we read about prior to the arrival of the Israelites at Mount Sinai. And as I said in the last lecture, I'm not 100% sure that it really belongs to the chronological time before the arrival at Mount Sinai. If it is, if it is reported here in its proper chronological place, then there must have been some revelation of God's law to Moses prior to coming to Mount Sinai, which is possible, but seems somewhat strange.

Now, what may be the case is that God was prophetically revealing on a case-by-case basis what His heavenly law would dictate in the cases He was talking about. That is, God has a law in His own heart that He had not yet codified or written down or given to anyone in writing, but that His law, we could say, is eternal in the sense that it simply embodies His very nature of justice and so forth. So that it's possible that as people needed to know how to settle their legal issues and needed to know what the just solution would be, that God may have revealed to Moses on a case-by-case basis what His law would be on such a thing.

And then when they came to Sinai, that God actually had it written down so that they wouldn't have to have Moses continually getting this piecemeal. That's a possibility. But the other possibility is that perhaps this occurred while they were at Sinai, although it's recorded earlier in the record.

It says in Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done

for Moses and for Israel, his people, that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. Now, I don't know how he heard of it, although it may have made big news throughout the whole region and he may have heard the report. Remember when Moses had begged his leave of Jethro, he had not mentioned that he was planning to go and free the children of Israel from Egypt.

He just said, I want to go visit my brethren and see if they're still alive. It's possible that he felt like Jethro would think it was a harebrained idea to go and try to confront Pharaoh. And so he didn't let on that that was going to be his mission.

Now, however, whether Jethro learned of it from Moses earlier or not, he now realizes what has happened. He's heard about that and he's impressed, actually, with his son-in-law and with what has happened. And so then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he'd sent her back, with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom.

For he said, I have been a stranger in a foreign land. And Gershom means a stranger here or a stranger there. And the name of the other was Eleazar, for he said, the God of my father was my help.

Eleazar means help. And he says, or God is help. Of course, El is God.

God is help. He says he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. Now, that's interesting because we do not know when Eleazar was born.

Gershom was born and it was recorded before Moses left Midian to go confront Pharaoh. But we do read when he left Jethro's house, he put his wife and sons, plural, on a donkey. And we saw that when they came to the encampment where the incident occurred, where it was necessary to circumcise his son, singular, that Zipporah did that.

And then appears to have made a complaint about it. And it says here in verse two that Moses had sent her back to her home. We did not read of her again after that one incident in Exodus chapter four.

And so it would appear that after that thing happened, this maybe opened old wounds between Zipporah and Moses, who had previously had a difference of opinion as to whether their son should be circumcised. And Moses may have felt like, well, you know, I've got him. I can't fight battles on two fronts.

I have to confront Pharaoh. I don't want to be fighting my wife at home, too. So you go back and stay with your father-in-law.

Actually, to send her back is the root word that is in the Hebrew word for divorce. To divorce in Hebrew means to send the wife away. And so some feel that Moses had divorced her, though it's not necessary to say that because there's also the ordinary root

for sending.

He could have just sent her back to be at her father's house because it was not going to be convenient for her to travel with him. The problem here is that only one son and the circumcision of only one son was the issue in chapter four. Though sons had been on the donkey with the wife.

And so we seem to have the picture of three people riding on a donkey, Zipporah and two sons. One of those sons gets circumcised. The other does not.

And so it raises questions. Well, when was Eliezer born? It has crossed my mind that one solution would be that Zipporah was pregnant with Eliezer. And therefore, his circumcision had not come up as an issue yet.

But he was riding the donkey with her in the womb. And then we had just two people in the donkey plus a baby in the womb. And that would explain how it could be said that Zipporah and Moses' sons made the journey.

But that only one son was, you know, considered necessary to circumcise. And also, we've only really read of the birth of one son prior to that. We found that back in Exodus chapter four, or actually earlier, chapter two.

In chapter two, it says in verse 21, Moses was content to live with the man Jethro and gave Zipporah. He gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses, and she bore him a son and called his name Gershom. For he said, I have been a stranger in a foreign land.

And then the story goes on. And almost the next thing we read about is the burning bush and the departure of Moses from Midian. Now, obviously, this birth of Gershom could have happened at almost any time during the 40 years that Moses lived there.

If he married Zipporah early in his stay, then one would expect that Gershom would have been born rather early in that stay. And by the time of the burning bush incident, would have been almost 40 years old. On the other hand, if the pattern prevailed in Moses' case, as did with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

Namely, that their wives were barren for a lengthy period of time after getting married. Then maybe Zipporah was not able to have children for the first 30 years of their marriage. And maybe Gershom may have been born and just been a baby, or at least very young, at the time of the burning bush incident.

And the next baby might have been in the womb. The fact that we are not told of the birth of a second baby, and yet we are told of two sons that rode the donkey. But the circumcision of a son only applied to one son makes me think that though Moses had a second son, it was still in the womb.

The issue of circumcising that son did not come up while Zipporah and Moses were together. And the child may have been born after they parted. So if that is true, then Eleazar, the second son, has never even been seen by his father previous to this.

One thing that is interesting is that unlike any of the other heroes of the Bible before Moses, his sons never figure prominently for anything. When Moses died, there never was the consideration that his sons would take over his position. Instead, Joshua did.

And although Moses was the undisputed leader and founder of Israel, his sons never really seemed to have any particular status in Israel after that. Perhaps they were raised after that in Midian. This visit of Zipporah with her father might have only been a visit.

It might in fact be that Moses and she were essentially divorced. And that she and the sons of Moses remained in Midian with her father and Moses was doing what he was doing, you know, leading the children of Israel. We're not told enough to know the answer to those questions, but but I point out that there are those issues to be considered.

Now, verse five, in Jethro, Moses father-in-law came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the Mountain of God. Presumably that means Mount Sinai. But they've not yet been recorded as reaching Mount Sinai yet.

So this is one of those things that makes me wonder whether this might be mentioned out of chronological order. Now, he had said to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her. So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down and kissed him.

And they asked each other about their well-being and they went into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way and how the Lord had delivered them. Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

And Jethro said, Blessed be Yahweh, who has delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly. He was above them.

Now, there's no evidence here that Jethro was a monotheist like Moses was. He talks about all the other gods. Now, a monotheist can talk this way, too, because monotheists know that although there's only one real God, there are other false gods.

And sometimes the gods of the heathen are spoken of as gods in the Bible, although there's no suggestion that they are real gods at all. So the pre-Semitic and might talk this way, but there's also no reason to believe that the pre-Semitic was monotheistic.

After all, it was at this point when he heard about the exodus and of God's deliverance of Israel from their troubles.

This is now I know that Yahweh is above all other gods. If he didn't know that before, he might have known there was a Yahweh, but he didn't know that Yahweh was above the other gods. And therefore, he must have believed other gods were real, too.

And now he's not even coming to a monotheistic faith necessarily. He's just saying, I recognize Yahweh is supreme over the other gods. He's demonstrated it, and he says, for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, he was above them.

Now, the very thing in which they behaved proudly, it either means the Egyptians or the gods of the Egyptians, the other gods. You need to be aware that in those days, every nation had their national gods. The Bible said they were demons, but the people thought of them as gods.

And they understood their gods as to be the ones who gave them good fortune or not. If there were crop failures, they assumed that their gods were unhappy with them. If they're prospering, they believe their gods had smiled upon them.

And if they went to war with another nation who had other gods, the people believed that the outcome of the war would reveal whose god was the most powerful. That if we win against our enemies, that means our god is stronger than their god. And if they defeat us, then our god appears weaker than their god.

This was the mentality of the ancient monotheistic peoples. They did know that other nations had gods besides theirs, but they worshipped their own tribal gods, their own national gods. It was a matter of loyalty.

They felt they had to do so. And by the way, when Israel was defeated by Babylon in 586 BC and the Jews were carried away in the Babylon, or actually earlier than that, when the northern kingdom was defeated by the Assyrians, this gave the pagans reason to believe that the gods of the Assyrians and the gods of Babylon were stronger than Yahweh, the god of Israel. And God even said that in Isaiah, said, for your sake, my name is blasphemed among the heathen.

What he means is because I have disciplined you by sending you into captivity, the heathen has given the impression I'm weaker than their gods because I delivered you up to be disciplined. They interpret that as their gods were stronger than me. And so my name is blasphemed among the heathen because of you, for your sake, he says.

And so the Egyptian gods clearly were in a conflict with Yahweh. But the power of the pagan gods was most seen in the victories of their people in battle. And the Egyptians were proven to be powerless in battle.

God defeated them and Israel did not fight a battle. It was when Israel were slaves, unarmed, helpless, that Yahweh showed himself superior to the militaristic gods of Egypt. That is to say, it was not through Israel's military victory in this case that God showed himself to be greater than the gods of the Egyptians who were defeated.

But God just single handedly defeated the Egyptians without the Israelites even participating. And so Jethro sees this as a manifestation of God's obvious supremacy, though not necessarily uniqueness. Not that he necessarily is saying that Yahweh is the only God.

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat the bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. And so it was on the next day that Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood before Moses from morning till evening.

So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, what is this thing that you're doing for the people? Why do you alone sit and all the people stand before you from morning till evening? This would be inconvenient, especially out in the desert for people to be lined up at the tent waiting to talk to Moses about their issues. If they're standing there from morning to night out in the sun, that could be very unhealthy. And certainly a better arrangement could be imagined.

And Jethro imagined one. Moses said to his father-in-law, because the people come with me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me and I judge between one and another.

I make known the statutes of God and his laws. So again, God's laws and statutes had never been written down. But it is possible that this occurred before God gave the laws in writing.

Since they are coming to inquire of God and Moses is a prophet of God and he can tell them what God's statutes and laws are. Perhaps that wouldn't be as necessary if the law had already been written down. They could just consult it themselves.

But that's not necessarily a fair statement either, because even after God gave the law, it's not like every Israel had a copy at home they could study. They still had to be taught by the Levites and so forth. So people who had disputes, they couldn't possibly be as familiar with the law as we are with our Bibles.

We have Bibles at home. We can read them whenever we want to. They had to, on special occasions, hear the law read to them.

And that's about the only exposure they would have. And so as many Christians, even now, though they have Bibles, they don't know the biblical solution to their problems. They don't know that when they have a conflict, there's a certain set of biblical principles

to be applied to resolve those problems.

And that's people who have Bibles. So even if the law had been given in writing, the Israelites still might be sufficiently ignorant of its application to their cases that they'd have to come to Moses about it. There's really hardly, hardly any dispute between Christians that could not be resolved if both of them are willing to search the scriptures and to submit to what the scriptural judgment is on it.

Because the scriptures do basically give God's ways and God's laws and God's principles for. For clearing up conflicts and issues that come up between God's people. But since the people didn't know them, then they come to Moses and he tells them.

So it was like he was the judge and they were coming to court. One Israelite had a complaint against another one. You know, he stole this from me or he borrowed this and it got damaged and he returned it damaged to me.

Or he was negligent and my animal died or even my son died because of his negligence. And these are the kinds of things people say, you know, some kind of redress has to be here. But Moses said, well, you'll have to come to me.

I'll tell you what the right redress would be according to God's statutes and laws. Number 17, so Moses father-in-law said to him, the thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out for this thing is too much for you.

You are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice. I will give you counsel and God will be with you.

Stand before God for the people so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws and show them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do. Moreover, you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them to be rulers over thousands, rulers over hundreds and rulers over fifties and rulers over tens.

And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, that every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you for they will not.

They will bear the burden with you if you do this thing. And God so commands you, then you will be able to endure and all these people will be able to go to their place in peace. So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens. So they judged the

people at all times. The hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

Then Moses led his father-in-law to part and he went his way to his own land. Now, the advice that Jethro gave is generally considered to be really good advice, and it probably was. I've heard only one time a preacher suggested that this was not God's counsel, that Jethro was a pagan.

He was not the prophet of God as Moses was. He was given human wisdom, and Moses was wrong to follow it. Because that would put other men who didn't have Moses' prophetic anointing and gifting into positions to make judgments that Moses himself alone could really safely make.

But I don't really read anywhere that this caused problems. If anything, it probably did have the good result that Jethro said. After all, if every complaint of the people is coming to one judge, he's going to hear the same complaint a lot of times, the same kind of complaint at least.

Certain problems just occur a lot of times. And it could be a very simple thing, but if you have to listen to everyone individually, you know, it gets to be, you know, a waste of your time and theirs when there could be some trained men who know how to handle a case like this. You've got this kind of case, go to these men.

Now, what Jethro said to do seems to be very good counsel. And he said, if you do this and God commands you so. In other words, Jethro is saying, don't do this unless you feel like this is what God is commanding.

But first you teach all the people the laws, he said. So that's the first thing. Because if all the people know the laws, then a lot of these matters won't ever have to come to court.

They can settle them according to God's law, just among themselves. So a good percentage of these people will never have to bring it to a court. They'll know what the law says.

If they're obedient, they'll handle it. Now, the people who don't know what to do, they would be under different leaders. There'd be leaders of 10, leaders of 50, leaders of hundreds and leaders of thousands.

What that apparently means is that for every 10 Israelites, there'd be a low-ranking judge. So those 10, if they had a problem, they'd go to that one guy. And presumably, he could handle the easiest matters.

He'd be trained by Moses. And these rulers of 10 wouldn't be the most competent, the most intelligent, or the most discerning. They would simply be able to handle very easy cases.

But over them would be leaders of 50. Presumably, the leaders of 50 would have five leaders of 10 that answered to them. That is, the leaders of 50 don't have 50 people coming to them.

But they are responsible for the harder cases for 50 people. Those 50 people first go to the leader of 10. If he can't handle it, he can take the case to his supervisor, as it were.

And so the leaders of 50 would have five different guys coming to them with the harder cases. And then there'd be leaders of hundreds who would have two leaders of 50 that would answer to them, presumably. So they'd be getting harder cases still, because all the easier cases we handled, every time you go to a higher-ranking guy, it's a harder case to solve.

And so while the low-ranking guys, they attend to the cases of 10 people, the next guy up handles the cases of five people. And the next guy up handles the cases of two of those, because those are going to be the really considerably more difficult cases, but presumably few in number. And then there's rulers of thousands.

Now, probably almost all the cases would be handled at least by the level of the ruler of the hundreds. But the ruler of thousands would have 10 of these other guys who have 100 each answering each to him. There would still be 600 of those guys, 600 rulers of thousands, because there were 600,000 men.

So this is a pretty big judicial system. And those 600 people, if for some reason they couldn't handle the cases, they'd go to Moses. And there were cases where it had to be brought to Moses, even after this.

For example, I think it's Leviticus 24. There's a case of a man who blasphemed God, and Moses had to talk to God and say, what do you do about a guy like this? And in Numbers, I think it's chapter 15, there was a guy who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath, and that had to be brought before the Lord, too. There had not yet been a decision made about what the penalty was for those things.

So Moses himself had to go to God about it. In Deuteronomy, or no, in Numbers, in the very end of the book of Numbers, there's a case of some daughters of one man, a man who had no sons, and there was a question about the inheritance rights of the father's inheritance, because usually the inheritance went to sons, not daughters. And so Moses had to inquire of the Lord about that, and the Lord gave a ruling on that subject.

So there are times when Moses had to get the ruling directly from God. But so many things people have problems with are so simple that it shouldn't be necessary for one man to have to handle them all when a lot of people at lower ranks could easily do the job. And so that's what Jethro set up, and it probably did set Moses free from a lot of burdens.

I mean, for him to sit and judge people all day long, and no doubt hearing the same kind of case ten times in a day, would wear him out, burn him out. And of course, obviously a lot of corporations and even churches and stuff have recognized that this kind of ranking, this kind of delegation, is necessary in order to run an efficient corporation. Israel was not a corporation, and therefore setting it up like this becomes a little more questionable, especially since the suggestion was not made by a prophet of God, but by a priest of Midian.

But we have to assume that Moses, who was a prophet of God, moved on it and did it because he sensed that God really was speaking through his father-in-law. In which case, it illustrates that even though Moses was a man of God who heard directly from God, he was not above taking advice from an older man, or even a man who was not technically a believer in the same religion, but recognizing that wisdom may come from other mouths besides that of Christians. You have to be careful about wisdom that comes from non-Christians, because they usually have non-Christian presuppositions.

But there was nothing about Jethro's advice that went against anything that Moses believed or stood for. So it seems like he just recognized that as the voice of God speaking to him through Jethro. Chapter 19.

In the third month, after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai. Now, in the third month, we're assuming this is the beginning of the third month, it was the middle of the first month that they came to leave Egypt. According to Jewish tradition, this was 50 days after the Passover.

The Jews believed that Pentecost, which is 50 days after Passover every year, was the anniversary of the giving of the law. Not so much just the anniversary of their arriving at Sinai, as we read out here, but of the actual giving of the law, which we will read about in chapter 20. The Bible doesn't clearly say that that is true, but the timing could work out the way it's recorded, so that the giving of the law was 50 days after they'd left Egypt.

Anyway, it's now the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of Egypt, for they had departed from Rephidim and had come to the desert of Sinai and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped before the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel, You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

Now, in teaching the series on the kingdom of God, we've had occasion to consider this

verse quite a few times already, because this is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Israel was to be his kingdom, a kingdom of priests. And to say a kingdom of priests, what that means is that among the kingdoms of the world, Israel would be a kingdom that mediates with the rest of the world as a priesthood does to its own people.

See, even in Israel, and in every nation, there was a priesthood within Israel. And the priesthood's role was to mediate between God and the people, both to represent God to the people and represent the people to God, to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people to God and to teach the people the laws of God. So the priest was a mediator.

That's what a priest is. Now, Israel and all nations had their priesthoods. There were no secular nations in the world.

There wasn't a nation on the planet that was secular. They all had their gods, and they all had their religions, and they all had their priesthoods. But what God is saying is Israel, when they function as they should, as God's kingdom, will be a kingdom comprised of priests entirely.

That doesn't mean that it would eliminate the priesthood in Israel, because there was one, but it means that the nation as a whole would function to the rest of the nations of the world, something as a priesthood. And in the New Testament, Christians are called a kingdom of priests and a royal priesthood and so forth. And the idea is that we mediate between God and the rest of the world.

We teach the world about God, and we intercede to God for the world that his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven and so forth, and that we therefore, as Israel was supposed to, was kind of God's agency on earth through which the rest of the world could have some kind of access to God. If you wished to come to God in those days, it was pretty much a given. You go through Israel.

Jesus even said to the woman that, well, salvation is of the Jews. That is, God had chosen the Jews to be the conduits of God's salvation to the world. Now, it says here also that if they're obedient to his covenant, that he said, you'll be a special treasure to me.

This expression, special treasure, interestingly, is the same Hebrew expression that you find in Malachi chapter three, which is clearly talking about the remnant of Israel. In Malachi chapter three, verses 16 and 17, Malachi 3, 16 and 17 says, Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who fear the Lord and who mediate, meditate on his name.

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts on the day that I make them my jewels. The word jewels here actually is the Hebrew expression translated special treasure. In Exodus 19, 5. He says, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves

him.

Now, this is in the context of God's threatening to judge apostate Israel. In fact, the next chapter describes God judging Israel, as I believe is fulfilled in AD 70. He has already alluded to it earlier in Malachi chapter three, because in Malachi 3, 1, it says, Behold, I will send my messenger, which is, by the way, John the Baptist, and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord, which is Christ, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. It says, however, in verse two, but who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears, for he's like a refiner's fire and a fuller soap. And when the Messiah comes to the temple, he's going to come with a fiery judgment.

And that is a reference, I believe, to the destruction of Jerusalem. It's even connected to revelation in the way that I was speaking of in an earlier lecture, because it says in Malachi 3, who can endure the day of his coming? And that question is asked in Revelation chapter six, when the judgments are found to be coming upon the people. It says in Revelation chapter six that the people hide from God, and they say to the rocks, hide us, fall on us, hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and the lamp.

And Revelation 6:17, they say, for the great day of his wrath has come. And who is able to stand? The question who is able to stand suggests not many will, although the next chapter of Revelation answers the question by showing that God has his hundred forty four thousand Israeli believers that he will spare from that Holocaust. But the question who is able to stand is an echo of Malachi chapter three.

When the Messiah comes to his temple, who will be able to endure? So Malachi is talking about the judgment that will come upon the land of Israel. But he says there in Malachi 3, 16, 17, there are some in Israel, a remnant who fear the Lord and who meditate on his name. And he says they will be mine.

At the time where he judges the nation, the remnant will be his. He says, I will make them my special treasure. I'll spare them as a man serves his own son.

Like, you know, when your house is on fire, you grab the things that you value and take them to safety. They say, I'm bringing my fiery judgment upon Israel, but there are some in it who are my special treasure. I'll get them out of the house before it burns down.

And he did, by the way, the Christian Jews did flee from Jerusalem before it was destroyed in 70 AD and they escaped. But it's interesting that Malachi, in Malachi, God says that that remnant within Israel will be his special treasure. Where in Exodus, the whole nation of Israel is offered the opportunity to be his special treasure.

The same term is used on purpose. The whole nation of Israel is urged and challenged to be loyal to God, to keep his covenant and to obey his voice. In which case, the whole

nation can be God's special treasure, can be a kingdom of priests, can be a holy nation.

But the nation didn't do that. But there were some in Israel who did. The remnant of Israel were always those in Israel who were, in fact, what the whole nation was supposed to be.

And God's prophets always spoke about how he would deliver the remnant when he would judge the nation. And Malachi actually says it is that remnant that will be the true Israel, the true kingdom of priests, the true carriers on of the promises made to Israel. It will not be the whole nation.

It'll be those who fear my name and meditate on me and they will be the ones I will spare from this judgment. And, of course, who were they? They were in 1870, the Christian Jews, the Jews who had come to Christ. Peter in First Peter, Chapter two, is writing to the Christians, of course, as the epistles all do.

And in First Peter, Chapter two, verses nine and 10, Peter says to the believers. First Peter two nine, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. So these terms that are used of Israel conditionally in the Old Testament are used of the church now.

Why? Because Israel did not meet the conditions of obedience and faithfulness to the covenant. But those who did, God spared them and continued his relationship with them. But they happen to be the ones who are called the church today.

And therefore, the promises God has made to Israel are fulfilled in that remnant who have followed Christ, who is the church. Now, when I said that the church is Gentiles, not Jews, but that's not true. The church is both Jew and Gentile, but the original church were all Jew.

The Gentiles were grafted in later, but what they were grafted into was the remnant of Israel. God locked off the unbelieving branches of that tree called Israel. But there were still branches that were not locked off because they were not unbelieving.

They were believing Jews. So that tree ended up having fewer branches initially. The Jews who did not believe were removed from Israel.

The Jews who did believe in Christ remained attached to Israel, the olive tree. But then Gentiles were added on, and when they were added on, it was still the same olive tree, it was still Israel. It's just that they were grafted in among the believing branches.

And so we think of the church perhaps as a Gentile institution, but it's not. It's just that we have become proselytes to that new Israel. We have had our hearts circumcised, and circumcision is what it takes to become part of Israel.

It's a spiritual Israel. We receive a spiritual circumcision, and we're now part of Israel. And so Paul says in Philippians 3.3, We are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.

So what God offered to Israel here now belongs to the church. He said to Israel, if you obey and keep my covenant, then you'll be a kingdom to me. But Jesus said to Israel in the 21st chapter of Matthew, The kingdom of God is taken from you and will be given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

So there was a transition there where the nation of Israel had had the chance to be the kingdom of priests. They had pretty much disqualified themselves by their disobedience, and especially by crucifying Christ. So the remnants of them were brought into a new covenant, into the new Israel, which is the phenomenon that we now find ourselves parts of as Gentiles.

OK, now back to Exodus 19, verse 6. We read verse 6, but it says, You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now, we are a nation, but it's a spiritual nation. We saw in 1 Peter a moment ago, we are a holy nation.

That term is used by Peter in speaking of us. So clearly, Peter sees these promises as now belonging to the church. Verse 7, So Moses came and called for the elders of the people and laid before them all these words which Yahweh commanded him.

Then all the people answered together and said, All that Yahweh has spoken, we will do. So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. This was essentially a marriage.

This was a covenant. God is saying, I'm making a promise to you on the conditions that you keep my covenant. This is exactly like a man proposing marriage to a woman.

He's saying, I will do these things for you. I will be this to you and you will be that to me if you keep my covenant. If you come into a covenant relationship with me, in other words.

At this point, Israel had not come into a covenant with God. There was, of course, the covenant that God made with Abraham. And many of these people were Abraham's seed.

Not all, because a mixed multitude had come out of Egypt. So there were Gentiles and Jews there. But most of them were probably Israelis.

And they were Abraham's seed. And promises had been made to Abraham and his seed. But you will remember that the New Testament tells us these promises that God made to Abraham and his seed were really to Christ.

They did not apply strictly to people who have nothing more to commend them than that they are physically, biologically descended from Abraham. After all, as Paul points out in Romans 9, Ishmael had that kind of claim. He was biologically descended from Abraham.

Esau was from Abraham and Isaac. And they were Abraham's seed in the sense of being physical seed of Abraham just as much as anyone else's. Just as much as any Jew is.

But it was different because the promise was not made to people who were physically the seed of Abraham exclusively. After all, these promises we read about here were made to all those that God had brought out of Egypt. That included Israel.

That included probably some Egyptians among them who had left. And perhaps slaves from other nationalities that had been in Egypt who took the opportunity to escape at the same time. In any case, anyone who wanted to could be circumcised and be part of this Israel.

It was not defined by their ancestry. But it is true that those who had biologically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were now being given the offer of being the true Israel. They were given an offer as no other nation anywhere else was offered.

And they could be, if they would keep the covenant, they could be the seed through which all this would be fulfilled. Of course, that would involve them not only bringing the Messiah into the world, but also following him when he would arrive. And Israel did bring Messiah into the world, but mostly they didn't follow him when he arrived.

And therefore, they were cut off like branches off the olive tree, Paul said in Romans 11. Anyway, that's the outcome of all this. But this is where it begins.

And the people, they said, we will do it. And I was just like a, you know, at a wedding ceremony. Will you be this man's wife? They say, yes, we will.

God has proposed a covenant, a marriage covenant. Now, I say it's a marriage covenant because that's what the Bible refers to it as later on. Marriage among human beings is the closest thing that God has instituted to a true picture of the relationship that he established for himself and his people.

And that is why in the Old Testament, God always spoke about Israel as if she was his wife. And when she would worship other gods, he would speak as if she was a wife committing adultery, cheating on her husband. In the New Testament, of course, we have Christ represented as the bridegroom and his people collectively as the bride.

This image is old and New Testament. Marriage is a picture of God's relationship with his people. And that's why Paul even uses the paradigm of Christ in the church as the model for instructing husbands and wives.

Wives submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Because God intended that human marriage be a true reflection of God's relationship with his people.

It's a covenant relationship. And marriage is the only covenant relationship that continues to exist in our modern world in the Western civilization. There were other covenants in ancient times.

David had a covenant with Jonathan. Nations made covenants with each other. Usually they were more like kind of political or military, mutual non-aggressions treaties, but they were covenants.

We don't have those kinds of covenants we make with people anymore, but we do have covenant of marriage, which will be forever. That is an institution that God is not going to cancel out because it will forever be intended as a picture of Christ in the church. It's a great mystery, Paul said, but I speak of Christ in the church.

And that being so, this arrangement that God entered into with Israel has got to be seen as a marriage. And in speaking about it at a much later date, in the time of Jeremiah, in Jeremiah chapter 31 and verses 31 through 32, Jeremiah has God saying this, Behold, the days are coming, says Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them out by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant, which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.

I was a husband to them. I made a covenant with them. I was faithful to them, but they broke the covenant.

So the new covenant is going to be a different kind than the kind I made with them when they came out of Egypt. But what we're reading about next is that chapter 19 is the covenant he made with them when they came out of Egypt. And as a result of it, God said he was a husband to them.

They were a wife to him. That's how it was to be understood. And so God has brought them there and he's proposed marriage to the people of Israel.

And they've said, Yes, we will. We agree to this. And so the covenant was to be sealed.

And verse nine says, The Lord said to Moses, Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with you and believe you forever. So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. Now, when God is saying, I'm going to speak to you, Moses, I'm going to speak audibly so the people can hear it.

And that way people will know that you're not just making stuff up. They will believe you because they will have heard with their own ears what I said to you. As it turns out, the

people didn't like that arrangement and God modified it at their request.

But it was originally God's plan that the whole of Israel would hear the things that he said to Moses coming right out of the mouth of God himself. Then Yahweh said to Moses, verse 10, Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes and let them be ready for the third day.

For on the third day, the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, Take heed yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.

Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow. That is, the mountain is holy. Now, something that is that holy is almost treated with the same policies as something that's unclean.

The holiness of the mountain is infectious. If somebody touches it who doesn't deserve to, then that separateness of it attaches them. And when they are put to death for that, you can't even touch them because it'll transfer to you too.

But what is transferred is a curse, the curse of having illegitimately had contact with that which is holy. So if even an animal would touch the mountain, it was supposed to die. And if a person touched it, they had to die, but not not by being touched with humans.

They had to be stoned or shot with an arrow so that no human hand would come into contact with them. Just like you wouldn't want to come into contact with an unclean thing because you'd be contaminated by the touch. It says whether it's a man or a beast, he shall not live when the trumpet sounds long.

They shall come near the mountain. Now, the trumpet sounding long was apparently a supernatural trumpet, because I don't believe that there's any suggestion that Israel was blowing trumpet. I believe the sound of the trumpet came from the cloud in the mountain.

You know, Paul talks about the second coming of Christ as Jesus coming with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, as if there's a known trumpet, the trumpet of God. And apparently when Jesus returns, that trumpet blast will be heard as well. Apparently the same one that summoned the people of Israel to the mountain to receive the terms of the covenant and the law.

That same trumpet will summon the people of God to the presence of God at his coming and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It says in verse 14, Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, Be ready for the third day.

Do not come near your wives. Now, too fast from even sexual intimacy with one's wife was considered to be necessary at times for extremely sacred events, which does not mean that sexual intercourse between a man and his wife is immoral any more than eating food is immoral. You fast from food, too.

It's a legitimate pleasure, but it is a pleasure. You deny yourself when you're trying to focus on something other than your fleshly appetites. And so there were times, rare times, when because of the sacredness of the special occasion, people were actually supposed to interrupt their normal marital relations and probably abstain from food at the same time.

Fasting and abstinence from sexual relations with one's wife were considered to be kind of two of the same kind of thing. Paul treated it that way in 1 Corinthians 7, because there Paul is instructing husbands and wives not to deprive each other of the normal physical intimacy that belongs in a marriage. But he says, Don't deny each other.

Don't deprive each other. He says, Except briefly by mutual agreement for the purposes of fasting and prayer. You can see this in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 5. He's urging Christian couples to have normal intimate relations.

But he says in 1 Corinthians 7, 5, Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer. And then come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. So Paul even sees there to be times that husbands and wives would agree that they want to fast and pray.

And they would fast from food as well as from their normal marital relations. When David was fleeing from Saul and he came to the tabernacle asking for food and the priest said, We don't have any common food here. We only have the showbread that only the priest is supposed to eat that.

And David was not a priest. David said, Well, I'll take that anyway. And the priest said, Well, if you and your men have not come near a woman.

And David said, We haven't seen any women for days. And so the priest gave him the bread. It's like the abstinence from marital relationship was kind of a kind of a cleansing thing.

Even though he was not a priest, he was not a Levite. He nonetheless was able to eat the holy bread because of this special provision of having been separate from their wives for so long. And so that was a provision here for preparing them for the receiving of the law.

Then it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain. And the sound of a trumpet or the trumpet was very loud so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God.

And they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire. It's smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him by voice. Now, initially, God spoke to him with an audible voice as we saw that the people could hear. Then Yahweh came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mountain and Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain.

And Moses went up and the Lord said to Moses, go down and warn the people, lest they break through and gaze at the Lord. And many of them perish. Also, let the priests who come near the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.

Now it mentions priests here, though there was no priesthood that had been established. That would be established after this point with Aaron's family. However, in a patriarchal society, the heads of the households served like Job did as a priest of the household.

So no doubt at this holy site, the heads of households were functioning as priests offering sacrifices and so forth. And so to refer to them as priests was a legitimate way to speak of them. And now Moses said, Lord, the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai for you warned us saying set bounds around the mountain and sanctify it.

In other words, God said, these people may touch the mountain and I have to wipe them out. And God must know we told him not to do that. Yeah, like that's going to help told him not to go out and gather on the seventh day.

Also told not to keep the man overnight. Everything they were told to do, they disobeyed. And God knew the people better than Moses did, I guess.

And God said, no, away, get down and then come up. You and Aaron with you, but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them. So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

OK, so we are now prepared for God to give his law. And we'll wait until next time to begin that. But we have not only the Ten Commandments here, but we have also a whole lot of laws that are to be given.

Initially, it'll be chapters 20 through 23 will be the main body of the of the initial laws that are given. And then there will be stuff about the tabernacle to occupy most of the rest of Exodus. But the giving of the law then was given at the mountain.

And it's not clear, really, whether the Ten Commandments, it would appear that the Ten Commandments were thundered verbally from the mountain. And the people heard them with their own ears, because after the Ten Commandments were given verses 18 through 21 of chapter 20, the people said to Moses, you go up and talk to God for us and

tell us what he says. We don't want to hear the voice of the Lord anymore.

So it sounds like the only part of the law that Israel as a nation actually verbally heard the voice of God speaking was the Ten Commandments. But that should be enough. That should be impressive.

And yet, interestingly enough, once Moses went up in the mountain to talk to God, they built a golden calf, which is a violation of the first and second commandment, which they heard God say with their own ears. I mean, these people were spiritually dull and I suppose no more than or less than the average Gentile would be in similar circumstances. But these people were continual trial to God and to Moses.

But he kept giving them a chance and giving him, giving them his laws was his way of giving them a chance to be better. But they didn't keep his laws. And that's why he eventually had to replace written laws on stone with laws written on hearts, which is what he did in the New Covenant, as we read in Jeremiah.

Well, we'll stop there because it's a natural stopping point. And also the clock indicates this is a natural stopping point also. And so next time we'll get into the law in chapter 20.

I'm