

Exodus 19:1-9 | On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

Exodus 19:10-12 | the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.

Exodus 19:16-20 | On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. ²⁰ The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Exodus 19 | Mt. Sinai

Here in Exodus 19 the sign is fulfilled. The people of God are gathered together in the very place Moses was called to rescue them. And just as Moses was called to a fearful place through the fire, so too is the nation called to a fearful place through the fire. It is here the Exodus is complete, they have returned to the mountain of God’s calling.

Exodus 3:12 | He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

There are three phases of this, the first is making their vow to the Lord. Consecrating themselves to the Lord. And finally seeing the revelation of the Lord.

1. Vows

Exodus 19:3-4 | while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.

Moses goes up the mountain where the Lord and the Lord gives him instruction on what he is to relay to the people. The first thing he is to tell the people is a reminder of the good works that God has accomplished for them. He states three things. 1. What God did to the Egyptians. He humiliated their great power by demonstrating his greater power. 2. How I bore you on eagle’s wings. To be born on eagle’s wings is being plucked out of a place you could not get yourself out of. 3. Finally the Lord did not merely pluck them out of disaster but brought his people to himself. For their obedience the Lord promises that they will be to him a kingdom of priests and a Holy nation.

Exodus 19:8 | All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

The people respond, not having heard the conditions, but having remembered their position. What they will hear after this is the ten commandments, the pattern of worship, the furniture of the tabernacle, and laws regarding morality and cleanliness. All conditions of covenantal fidelity. Some have asked, why did the people commit to obedience before having heard the contract? I think it is very simple. They understood he had bought their lives. Remind them, what did God do to the Egyptians, how I rescued them, how I brought them to myself. What type of loyalty does God deserve after his rescue of you? It is of course absolute.

Exodus 19:9 | And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

The Lord tells Moses that he is coming to him so that the people might hear God and understand Moses’ words are to be believed forever. Moses is the authoritative prophet of the Lord. Just as he was to Pharaoh who did not listen, so he will be for God’s people.

2. Consecration

Exodus 19:10 & 12 | the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments...

...¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.

Before the Lord speaks directly to the people he commands them to consecrate themselves. That is their hearts must be prepared to see the Lord and rightly respond to him in worship. There is a distinction here between the ordinary things of the world, the ordinary clothes that would be worn, the ordinary level of acceptability is not sufficient for their meeting with God. Likewise the Lord establishes a boundary. The mountain itself from which the Lord will reveal himself is off limits. Just as the burning bush was not to draw any closer to the burning bush. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. God is like fire. Fire will kill you.

3. Revelation

Exodus 19:16-17 | On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

Thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, a loud trumpet blast, and trembling. A while back there was a little publishing craze of heavenly tourism books. *Heaven is for Real, 90 minutes in Heaven, Proof of Heaven*. I didn’t read any of those books because I’m not an aunt on Facebook. But I did notice that there were no horrifying volcanoes on any of the covers.

Exodus 19:18-19 | Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

How horrifying to come into the hands of the true God. To encounter God at the revelation of his presence. The Glory is overwhelming. How we have forgotten who we’re talking about, who is worthy of our praise. How we have forgotten the God of the Bible. When God makes his covenant with Abraham it is in a “dreadful and deep darkness.” And God reveals himself in Fire and Smoke. When Jacob reflects on seeing the face of God he says, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered.” When Isaiah is called up into a vision of the throne room of God he cries out, “Woe is me! For I am man of unclean lips and I come from a people of unclean lips.”

This is a sacred event. It is out of this terrific flame, and with a voice of unbearable thunder, God relays to his people the ten commandments. Which we will cover through the remainder of the fall. But we must see what is right on the other side of these ten commandments. The response of the people. Who say:

Exodus 20:18-19 | Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

What is fear and trembling? It is a double knowledge. It is a shock of vulnerability and a discovery of immense uncontrollable power. It is a monster and you're a child. But it is even more than that. It is the exposure revealed by a perfect holiness. You see this is the setting of the ten commandments. Like a diamond set in a ring. The ring is unthinkable power and the diamond is absolute clarity of who you ought to be. It is fear and humiliation to the uttermost. Remember what he did to Egypt? Have we forgotten who were talking about? Do you honestly think you will be able to get through this life without giving an account? Do you honestly think that?

Exodus 20:20 | Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”

The test on the mountain is a test of obedience. God tested his kingdom of priests on the mountain. We've seen a test on the mountain before?

Genesis 22:1-2 | After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Abraham walked by faith on the mountain up into unimaginable horror, confident in the goodness of the Lord to even bring back Isaac from the dead. On the mountain the Lord provided a sacrifice. On the Mountain Moses will receive the instruction for how to worship God by providing alternatives to human sacrifice in a tabernacle patterned after heaven. But these all point towards one day when on the mountain of God it will be provided. One day God the Son will become incarnate as a man and will walk up a mountain. He will receive the treatment of a sinner encountering a Holy God. And he will rise again as the hope of all sinners to be brought to God. Because we are covered in the blood of a new covenant established by the sacrifice of Christ, we come to a better mountain.

Hebrews 12:18-29 | For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.”²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in

heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” ²⁷ This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.