



EXODUS - CHAPTER 19
Mount Sinai & Mount Zion:
Contrast & Continuity

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Frank Shelter and Anthology Church.

Closing prayer

Introduction:

In this chapter we're going to begin to see how the law and the gospel work together, how Mount Sinai (where the law was given)

and Mount Zion (where grace is received) have both contrast and continuity.

Big Idea: The Law and the Gospel work together.

There is both contrast, continuity and cooperation in the law and the gospel.

Exodus 19:1-3

19 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.

1. They're in the wilderness, right where God wants them to be.

And it's a great blessing, because this is the fulfillment of God's promise to Moses:

Exodus 3:12

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.”

So, Moses had to walk by faith to see this promise of God fulfilled. And I bet most of Israelites forgot about this promise.

We've made the point in another message that most of the Christian life is lived in the wilderness, because that's where we learn that God can be trusted. The Exodus story illustrates the Christian life as a journey. Here they are waiting on God. In the Christian life, this is one of the most difficult things to endure — waiting, especially when that

waiting is in the wilderness, this place that feels barren and distant and dry. The kind of place that makes us ask, “Is the Lord with us?” Even though He has promised to us, “I will never leave you or forsake you,” we begin to doubt that promise in the wilderness.

The exodus wasn't just about escaping the bondage in Egypt; it was about entering into a close relationship with Living God.

Exodus 19:3-4

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:

God speaks through Moses to the people of Israel. Moses is acting as a mediator, one who represents the people of Israel before God.

4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.

This is what they failed to realize and it’s what we often fail to realize —

2. God doesn’t just deliver us from something, He brings us to Himself.

What becomes disconcerting (even troubling) about the Christian life is when we realize that we don't actually desire God for Himself, but we desire something God can give us, like joy or peace of mind or power for service. Now, God does give these good things, but the hard lesson is that they are byproducts of finding our contentment in Him.

Exodus 19:5-6

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.”**

Notice this was given to people who were already saved. They had been delivered from the bondage of Pharaoh by the blood of the Passover Lamb. This is how the law works in the Christian life. First, there is salvation. First, there is deliverance. First, there is the gospel,

the changed heart that says, “What would you have me do, Lord?” Then the will of God, the law becomes a delight. God teaches us how to live for His glory after we are saved. The Christian who is born again asks from their heart, “What is God’s will for me?” And here is where we find it.

How glorious the New Covenant by the blood of Christ, who makes us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation by His unconditional grace. But that is actually secondary in New

Testament teaching. We are first children of the King. We are His children first, then we are a kingdom of priests. The Apostle Peter took these words of Moses and applied them directly to the church, the body of Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-12

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you

were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The Apostle Peter here speaks of this glorious entity called the Church, the body of Christ, the children of God. This is why we strive for the visibility of the Church before the watching world. This is why we rejoice that Christians gather all over the world on Sundays, the new Sabbath for Christians because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

to proclaim His excellencies. We see this same pattern in Peter, first he tells us the gospel — you are a chosen race. Then he tells us how to live.

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your

good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Notice, they don't see your good deeds and give you credit now. They give you credit on the day of visitation, the return of Christ.

But the Apostle Peter makes this point, the way we live is part of God's plan for bringing salvation to people. It's part of the plan so that we can declare the excellencies of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 19:7-9

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.

Notice the two-way communication. God gives His Word to the people and the people

respond to the Word of God. How we respond to the Word of God reveals our hearts.

This is another way the law and the gospel work together. For the person who doesn't know Christ as their Lord and Savior, the law condemns them because they don't want to do God's will. They fight against the Word of God. For the Christian, God's Word is His will, the very thing the Christian wants to do. So, God has revealed His mind to the Christian and yet...

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.”

3. At the same time God reveals Himself, He also conceals Himself.

So, while we experience God's immanence, His nearness, we also experience His

transcendence, His being far beyond our understanding and our nature and our character. Just by nature of Who He is, aspects of God will always remain a mystery to humanity.

This thick cloud is what we theologically refer to as the manifest presence of God, meaning the felt presence of God. We become aware of the invisible God Himself. The presence of God makes all the difference when we speak. When God is present, people hear the gospel.

When God is present, people believe the gospel. When God is present, we are changed. Yet, we continually strive to get closer because He is yet so far beyond us. So, in the cloud we have both His immanence (His nearness) and His transcendence (His mystery).

Exodus 19:9-16

When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord,¹⁰ 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.

These boundaries were symbolic of the vast difference between God and humanity, between God’s purity and our depravity. We

are too sinful to come into God's presence by our own righteousness. So, God came to us in the Person of Christ and opened the way for us to approach Him.

This idea was unheard of in the ancient world. Other ancient covenants appealed to the gods as a witness, but these gods never made a covenant with humans. This was a remarkable thing, God initiating a binding relationship with human beings.

Because God has come near us in the Person of Christ (His immanence), we tend to forget how dangerous He is (His transcendence). These boundaries displayed His transcendence.

¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the

people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

So, we see some symbolic acts of consecration. The word consecration means to be set apart. God was having Moses prepare them mentally and spiritually to become a nation of priests. They washed their garments as a sign of needing to be cleansed from sin. They fasted from sexual intimacy to

show that earthly cares are not the only things to be concerned about in life.

Moses again is acting as a go-between, a mediator. We need the same thing Israel needed — a mediator. A mediator is a go-between, someone who bridges the gap between two distant parties. In both cases, the distance that needed to be gapped was the distance between a holy, transcendent God and His finite, sinful people. God used Moses in this case who foreshadowed

Christ's death and resurrection which bridged the gap once and for all. There is now One mediator between humanity and God and that is the Person of Jesus. No one else fits the bill. No one else can stand between God and humanity and represent both sides, unless he is both fully God and fully human.

¹⁶ 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.

These natural elements reveal something about the God of the universe. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans that various attributes of God can be seen in creation itself.

Romans 1:20

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been

clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Exodus 19:16-19

¹⁶ 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.

Realize this is happening before all the people. Because it's important that people understand who they are meeting when it comes to God.

Lightning bolts are around (54,000°F), which is roughly five times hotter than the surface of the sun. Lightning kills around 2,000 people each year. Astraphobia (the fear of thunder and lightning or being struck by lightning) is the third most common phobia in America. Lightning flashes more than 3 million times a day worldwide (about 40 times a second).

- Thunder is a sound caused by lightning.
What does thunder tell us about God?

Thunder is a powerful sound, so it's a sign of His power.

- The dark cloud was a sign of mystery, showing us there are aspects of His Being we cannot penetrate.
- The fire was a sign of God's holiness. Fire both attracts and repels. We are drawn to the warmth and beauty of fire, but at the same time we are kept away by the danger of its burning. In the same way, we're attracted to the beauty of God's holiness

but we're fearful of His power to destroy us.

- The trumpet signified the coming of a sovereign king.

Has God changed? No. This means He still possesses these same qualities of glory. All these same characteristics are His right now. We're just not witnessing them in visible form. Though, one day the whole world will witness the Lord again in such a manner as this.

Matthew 24:30-31

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

4. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:31)

Exodus 19:20

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.

Now, what was all this about? Was all this necessary? First, the people hear God call Moses to the top of the mountain. (Deut. 5:22) Imagine none of this happening, none of the lightning and thunder or the thick cloud and fire or God's audible voice. Imagine none of that happens and Moses goes up the mountain and comes back down with what he calls the law of God. How would they know it wasn't just Moses who made up these laws?

All these physical signs mattered because they needed to know it was God speaking. They needed to know these were the laws of God and not the ideas of any man. If God did not speak to Moses, He has not spoken to us. It was because they heard God's voice that we hear God's voice today.

- What sign do we have? The gospel is God's power for salvation... The resurrection is proof that God's presence is with us.

Deuteronomy 4:33

³³ Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?

Moses who foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ goes up to the top of the mountain, but the people cannot get to the top of the mountain. They will perish in the attempt.

Exodus 19:21-25

21 And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish.

The people cannot come near God.

22 Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.” 23 And Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself

warned us, saying, ‘Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.’”

It is emphasized a second time that the people cannot approach the Lord on their own.

²⁴ And the Lord said to him, “Go down, and come up bringing 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.”

Here it is told to us a third time that the people and the priests could not come up to the Lord.

²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.

- The tabernacle has the same spiritual structure as Mount Sinai

- The contrast and continuity between Mount Sinai (where the law is given) and Mount Zion (where the gospel is received)

Hebrews 12:18-24

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ 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.**