

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 14**

**EXODUS**

**CHAPTER 19**

**INTRODUCTION**

We have come to an important point in the history of Israel. In this chapter, God revealed His purpose for His chosen people Israel. God revealed how man may rightly worship and serve Him. God also demonstrated that He would speak to Israel from now onwards not directly but through a mediator. Israel's place in history as the chosen people of God finds its point of reference in her relationship to God and that of the other nations.

**OUTLINE**

**A. THE LORD REMINDED THE ISRAELITES TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS (19:1-9)**

1. The Israelites encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai (19:1-2)
2. The Lord spoke to Moses (19:3-6)
  - a. The Lord reminded the Israelites how He had

delivered them from the Egyptians (vv.3-4)

- b. The Lord reminded the Israelites that they should keep His covenant (v.5a)
  - c. The Israelites are a special people to God (vv.5b-6)
3. The response of the Israelites (19:7-8)
    - a. Moses spoke all the words of the Lord to the people (v.7)
    - b. The people pledged to obey the Lord (v.8)
  4. The Lord would exalt Moses so that the people would believe him (19:9)

**B. THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES ON THE TOP OF MOUNT SINAI (19:10-15)**

1. The need of the people to sanctify themselves (19:10-11)
2. The restrictions the people must observe when they present themselves before the Lord (19:12-13)
3. Moses instructed and prepared the people (19:14-15).

**C. THE LORD APPEARED AND SPOKE TO MOSES BEFORE THE PEOPLE (19:16-25)**

1. The announcement of the appearing of the Lord (19:16)
2. Moses brought the people before the Lord at the foot of the mount (19:17)

3. Mount Sinai was aflame (19:18-19)
4. The Lord descended on the mountain and called Moses up (19:20)
5. The Lord told Moses to go down and warn the people against stepping into the restricted boundary (19:21-25)

## COMMENTARY

### God's Covenant at Sinai

True to His promise, God led Moses and the Israelites to the mountain in the wilderness of Sinai.<sup>1</sup> The Israelites encamped at the foot of the mountain after having journeyed from Egypt for three months. They spent eleven months at this place.<sup>2</sup>

Moses went up to the mountain, possibly the highest mountain in Sinai to commune with God. The LORD God had a word to tell to the children of Israel

through Moses. Israel must remember that they had seen how God had borne them “on eagles’ wings” and brought them unto Himself. The use of the eagle by God as a symbol of His image is interesting. The eagle is both impressive in size and power among all the other birds; and it displays a fearsome beauty. It is most appropriately used here by God to project His image of One who delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt and carried them through their journey in the wilderness to Sinai.

God made a covenant with Israel here in Sinai. God commanded them to obey and keep His covenant, and if they did so, they would be blessed. They would be “a peculiar treasure” unto God above all the people of the world, “for all the earth is mine,” says the LORD (v.5). In addition to that, they would be “a kingdom of priests” and “an holy nation” unto God (v.6). This covenant must be clearly understood in the context of the covenant God had made with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-8). The covenant in Sinai is not a new covenant, which God made with the nation Israel. God had already declared that Israel is special to Him, even His first-born (Exodus 4:22)<sup>3</sup>. The covenant made here was an extension of the Abrahamic covenant. Note that the call of commitment on the part of Israel was not a pre-requisite qualification for God’s choice of them as His chosen people. Israel was not chosen on the basis of the merits of the

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. The wilderness of Sinai would be the area surrounding the mountain. It must not be confused with the wilderness of Shur (Exodus 15:22—the stretch of desert on north western part of the Sinai peninsula, east of Egypt); and the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1—that stretch of desert between the wilderness of Shur and Sinai)..

<sup>2</sup>Numbers 10:11 And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. 12 And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

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<sup>3</sup>Exodus 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

people. On the contrary they were chosen not because they were great and powerful. If these were the qualifications, Egypt would be the best candidate. But Israel was very small in number, in fact “the fewest of all people” (Deuteronomy 7:7).<sup>4</sup> The LORD God chose them simply on the basis that He loved them! Therefore, the conditional “if” clause is not a requirement for Israel’s status as God’s chosen people. The conditional clause served to describe what the relationship to God necessitates. In other words, *what does it mean to be God’s redeemed people in the world*<sup>5</sup>?

Now Israel would be a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, provided they obey and keep His Word. This promise to Israel is conditional upon their commitment and obedience to God’s covenant and voice (word). This entails not only circumcision but all subsequent commands that God would give as they go along. If Israel obeys God, God would bless them and Israel would be called upon to bear witness for God to the rest of the world. As a kingdom of priests, they would serve in a mediatorial role between God and the other nations. They were entrusted with the knowledge of the LORD God to teach all nations. They were to be a holy nation. They were to be set apart unto God for an example of

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<sup>4</sup>Deuteronomy 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

<sup>5</sup> Fretheim, 213.

God’s intended purpose for man in the world. How the LORD has dealt with Israel when they disobeyed Him, the same would be true for all the other nations. This purpose of God for Israel to be ensample to the other peoples of the earth is strongly suggested by the phrase “for all the earth is mine” (v.5b). God’s sovereignty and rule encompasses the whole earth. Israel is called to be the special witness of God for God’s intended purpose for the entire inhabitants of the earth.

Similarly, we, in the New Testament, receive the same injunction. Peter, writing to Jewish believers in particular and to all Gentile believers in general, reiterated this portion of Scripture. Our special status as God’s elect is unquestionable because it is not based on the merits of our morality or good deeds. We are made the chosen people of God solely by unmerited grace of God and our childlike sincere faith in the finished redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. But God has called and chosen us for the purpose of showing forth to the world “the praises of Him who had called us out of darkness into His marvellous light”. If we are to become witnesses of the marvellous transforming work of God in Christ in our lives, we must be committed and obedient to God’s Word. This is the way that we may be used as fit vessels for the work of the LORD our God (2 Timothy 2:21)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto

### Know the LORD Our God

The appearance of God as described in this chapter is a *theophany*.<sup>7</sup> One should not have the idea that an appearance of God must be confined to the physical and visible. Although God did not appear in a physical form, it should not be thought less of a *theophany*. The presence of God was paramount rather than the details of His physical form that men often crave to see.

God instructed Moses to prepare the people three days before His appearance on the mount by sanctifying themselves and by the washing of their clothes (v.10, 11). This requirement to be consecrated and to wash their clothes before they meet God tells us about the nature and character of God. God is holy. He demands that His people be holy even as He is holy. The idea taught by some that God is “chummy” is utter contempt. Similarly, God should not be taken for granted. Although the love of God has been emphatically preached and taught, the holiness of God is an equally true and important doctrine. God made it clear that He should not be approached by men in a casual, careless and contemptible manner. Thus we should take care of our dress-code whenever we come into His Sanctuary. By

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honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

<sup>7</sup> Greek, *theophany*, a compound of two words: “*theo*” which means “God,” and *phaneros*’ which means to “reveal, make known.”

sanctifying or consecrating themselves, the people were required to formally set themselves apart from their daily affairs, and be prepared to meet God reverently. Not only were they to sanctify themselves, there were limits to which the people could draw near the mountain. If they broke these limits, death will be the result! The message was clear, that “men ought to fear God”, and reverently worship and honor Him by humbly obeying His every Word as Christ Jesus did whilst He was on earth.

How many of us today come with such prepared hearts and minds to worship God on the Lord's Day. Here is a lesson we ought to learn well. Although we are called by God to approach Him with confidence (Hebrew 4:16), this does not remove the necessity as required by God to come to Him with “clean hands and a pure heart”. We should set aside all work and focus our heart and mind on presenting ourselves on the Lord's Day to worship and serve Him. Getting up early and preparing ourselves to go to church before the appointed time of worship would indeed be pleasing in the sight of God. But it is sad to see that such is not the case for many Christians. If we cannot even honour God by such a simple commitment that does not require great sacrifice on our part, do we not condemn ourselves when we call Him our God and LORD? What is even worse is that when we pray to Him, we expect God to bless us in our workplace, to bless our family and children, to give us safety in travel, and to endow us with

good health and strength. We should be like the people of Israel when Moses told them the word of God, they made a commitment to obey all that the LORD had spoken (vv.7- 8).

### **God Chose His Spokesmen**

God spoke to Moses that He would come to him and speak with him so that the people would be convinced that he spoke the word of God, and not his own (v.9), unlike many charismatic leaders today who deceptively declare their own words using God's name and make merchandise of many. Moses was chosen by God to be His spokesman. God could have spoken directly to the Israelites. But He chose not to do so. Instead He chose a mediator, Moses, their leader. This is clearly evident in this chapter. For a number of times Moses had to go up the mountain to hear the word of the LORD and then come down to tell the people the word of God (vv.3, 7, 8, 14, 20, 21, 25).

The appearance of God on the mount of Sinai was awesome, glorious and majestic. God appeared in the midst of thunder and lightning, in a thick cloud, in the great sound of trumpet, and in fire, and the foundations of the whole mount shook under it. Only Moses could ascend to the mountain to meet with God. This certainly accentuated the leadership of Moses. This is the way God has determined to relate to His people. God chooses to be dependent upon individuals whom He raises from time to time to convey His word to His people rather than to speak directly to

them. God works in and through specially chosen leaders, whom He would endow with gifts for this purpose. Therefore, it is no surprise to us that God would work to enhance the standing of these leaders within the community of believers. Like Moses, these leaders must not be proud and arrogant, but be meek and humble. Like Moses, they must be faithful and loyal to God. If these leaders have to repeatedly remind the people of the word of God, they ought to do it obediently without complaining. For example, God reminded Moses to warn the people again not to proceed beyond the permitted perimeter of the mountain lest they be struck dead (v.21). Moses replied that the LORD had already said this and the people knew and would not do so (v.23). We can understand Moses' response. Maybe Moses thought the LORD is unnecessarily repeating Himself. But the LORD insisted that Moses go down to warn the people again. God showed that He is being merciful and would not that any should perish for the lack of warning. God meant what He said. The soul that sins must perish. But God does not take pleasure in the death of a wicked person, rather God desires that the wicked repent of his ways.<sup>8</sup> So Moses

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<sup>8</sup> Ezekiel 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

<sup>2</sup> Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

obediently went down to warn the people again so that they would be adequately forewarned and not die unnecessarily because of their disobedience (v.25).

### **SUMMARY**

This chapter records a significant moment in the history of Israel since the call of Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldees. God first called a man and his family. Unconditionally, God cut a covenant with Abraham and promised him that his descendants would be many and that He would also give the land of Canaan. God predicted that his descendants would live and suffer in a foreign land, but they would be delivered after 430 years. Now the descendants of Abraham were more than two million. In a great and mighty way, God delivered them out of Egypt. God led them through the Red Sea on dry ground and sustained them through the wilderness until they reached the mountain of Sinai. There, God declared to them His purpose for His chosen people the Israelites, that they were to assume a mediatorial role between God and the rest of the world. As such, they were to become God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. This is God's purpose for them. There is a condition attached to it. They must be committed and obedient to God at all times. God then chose a leader through

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whom He spoke His word to the people. This leader for now was Moses. God lifted him up so that the people would be convinced that he was God's spokesman, who spoke the words of God and not of himself. We learn all these about the LORD our God. Ought we not to love Him more and do His will?

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Exodus 19:1-6 (\*vv.5, 6); 1 Peter 2:1-10 (\*v.9)

**TUESDAY:** Exodus 19:7-9 (\*v.8); 1 Peter 1:13-21 (\*vv.14, 15)

**WEDNESDAY:** Exodus 19:10-15 (\*vv. 10, 11); Psalm 24:1-5 (\*v.4)

**THURSDAY:** Exodus 19:16-19 (\* v.18); Hebrews 12:18-29 (\*vv.28, 29)

**FRIDAY:** Exodus 19:20-25 (\*v. 22); 1 Timothy 2:1-8 (\*v.5, 6, 8).

**Discussion Questions**

1. What three specific promises did God make to Israel? Explain what they mean.

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2. How do you see the fulfilment of this promises in 1 Peter 2:9?

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3. Why do you think God makes reference to owning “all the earth” (v.5)?

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4. Why would the Israelites be inclined to believe God's promises and obey His commands?

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5. What preparations did the Israelites have to make for God's appearance?

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6. What impression does God want to make about Himself upon the Israelites?

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7. How do we sanctify and "wash our clothes" when we meet God?

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8. Describe in your own words God's appearance to Israel, and what the Israelites saw and heard.

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9. How can we hold God's Word in holy awe?

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10. What do you learn most about God in this chapter?

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