

# 18-19 Bible Study #14

12/18/18

# Exodus 19

The Israelites Reach Mount Sinai

# Exodus 19

- **Exodus 19:1-4**

- The “third new month” does not mean that exactly 3 months had elapsed
- It indicated that this event occurred some time within the 3<sup>rd</sup> month
- If the people of *Israel* left *Egypt* after the Passover (which was half way through the first new moon), then they arrived at *Mt. Sinai* within the third new moon
- Depending on how we count it that would have been between 50 to 60 days

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- Later, this feast will be celebrated as ***Pentecost*** (50 days after *Passover*)
- This will also eventually regulate the Church liturgically within her festival cycle based on the *Jewish* regulations in the **Books of Numbers** and **Leviticus**
- Fifty days after Passover was identified as the Old Testament feast of “Weeks,” or “Pentecost”
- Finally, the feast of **Sukkot** (Tabernacles, Tents or Booths)
- Each are tied to an agricultural harvest: the barley harvest arrives at *Passover*, the wheat harvest at the *Feast of Booths*, and the fruit harvest at the feast of *Sukkot*

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- The phrase “on Eagle’s wings” is the source for the modern hymn by that name and is an image of “speed” in the ancient world
- This simply meant that God brought the people out of *Egypt* very quickly\*

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- **Exodus 19:5-6**

- The phrase “obey my voice” and “keep my covenant” is another example of “synonymous parallelism”
- God was saying that “if” the *Israelites* kept His covenant they would be His covenantal people
- This would make them different than all other people
- God called them out of *Egypt* for the same reason He called *Abraham*, so through them all the nations could be blessed

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- Further, God says that they shall become a “kingdom of priests”
- In the ancient world, the role of the priest was to be a mediator between God and the people
- The priest would pray to God for the people and he heard the word of God which he then delivered to them
- He was the source of God’s blessings

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- Later in the New Testament, *St. Peter* will refer to the Church as the “Priestly Kingdom,” or a kingdom of priests to the nations set apart
- Thus, the purpose of the Church was not to be isolated by itself, but to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world
- It was to be the source through which God blessed the nations and brought them to Himself \*



# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- **Exodus 19:7-15**

- The phrase “all the people” is the beginning of a framing device for the *Sinai* Covenant
- It will close with **Exodus 24:3**

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- God was basically saying “Look here and believe”
- This was in response to *Moses’* statement to God in **Exodus 4** that the people would not believe that God had appeared to him
- Next, we see a reference to the “third day” over and over
- Some may wonder why God gave the men the requirement to avoid going near women for three days
- Once again, this was because the *Israelites* had been living in *Egypt* for 400 years and were polytheists (very much involved in fertility rituals)

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- They were like the *Egyptians* in every way
- When *Moses* rescued the daughter of *Jethro*, they told their father that he was an *Egyptian* (**Exodus 2:19**)
- Thus, the power of God was revealed through the plagues to convince both *Pharaoh* and the people of *Israel* that he was the one true God
- When the people arrived at **Mt. Sinai**, they appeared to still be carrying their *Egyptian* baggage (including their religious beliefs)
- The ancient pantheons would typically contain many fertility cults

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- Among the many *Egyptian* gods, there were at least two fertility cults with the god *Apes* being worshipped as the god of fertility
- The people believed that if they wanted fertility in their families, animals and crops they had to pray and offer sacrifices to the god *Apis* in the form of a bull calf
- We will see this clearly in the story of the “Golden Calf” in **Exodus 32**
- Therefore, God was telling them to avoid relations with women for three days because this worship was going to be very different than what they were used to in *Egypt*

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- The first prescription for the preparation to worship the one true God was to wash themselves and be clean
- Again, the use of three (days) was because three represented perfection
- If one was to wash for three days, they would be thoroughly clean
- Look at the beautiful baptismal image here \*

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- **Exodus 19: 16-19**

- These images of God on the mountain will be important when we get to the point in the story when the people believe that *Moses* was dead (leading to the “Golden Calf” incident)
- Think of the intensity of this event as the people were looking up from the foot of *Mt. Sinai* and saw it wrapped in smoke and fire while they heard ear splitting trumpet blasts getting louder and louder
- This must have been pretty intense and frightening\*

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- **Exodus 19:20-25**

- Father said that this repetition was necessary because if we have ever dealt with someone experiencing great excitement (especially children) they will repeat the event over and over again
- In this case, addition details are provided by *Aaron* concerning the priests
- Since this was before the “Golden Calf” incident, *Aaron* was not part of the *Levitical* priesthood
- *Aaron* was going up the mountain with *Moses* because (as *Moses*’ brother) he was the prophet to the people

# Exodus 19 (Cont)

- The priests who were told to stay at the base of the mountain were most likely the first-born sons of every family who had been saved by God during the “Passover”
- We can discern at this point that *Aaron* and the priests were two different groups



# Exodus 20

The Ten Commandments

# Exodus 20

- **Exodus 20:1-2**

- This is the first time that we are introduced to the **10 Commandments**
  - **Exodus 20:2-17**
  - **Deuteronomy 5:6-21**
- Look carefully at what God said to *Moses*
- Father Sebastian substituted the work *Yahweh* for **LORD** to ensure that we understand the force of what is being said in the text
- When we read the English text, “I am the LORD your God, we hear something like a “title” for God (the LORD God) rather than the “Holy Name of God”\*

## Versions of the Ten Commandments Vary by Tradition

### JEWISH VERSION

1. I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.
2. You shall have no other gods besides Me.
3. You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God.
4. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or . . . anything that is your neighbor's.

*Based on the Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures (Jewish Publication Society, 1985). Numbering varies by tradition.*

### CATHOLIC-LUTHERAN VERSION

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

*"A Traditional Catechetical Formula" in Catechism of the Catholic Church (U.S. Catholic Conference, 1991).*

### PROTESTANT VERSION

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make yourself a graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or . . . anything that is your neighbor's.

*Based on the Book of Confessions (Presbyterian Church USA, 1991).*

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- **Exodus 20:3-6**

- Look at how God demonstrated his monotheism
- He did not say that no other gods exist
- Instead, He pointed out that because there were no other “true gods” in existence, He was the God they should worship

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- He told them that He was a jealous God
  - In English this sounds very negative
  - But, here “jealous” was used in the sense of His not wanting them to worship other gods
  - Father pointed out that many see the purpose of mankind to be to give glory to God (which is true)
  - But the primary purpose of glorifying God was to have a “relationship with God”

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- God created *Adam* (and mankind) for this relationship
- This was like the relationship between a father and child
- Thus, God was “jealous” because He loved His people and wanted them to grow up in “His image and likeness”
- Father Sebastian asked “what father wants his son to grow up and be like a rock star or movie actor?”
- Most fathers want their children to grow up and be like them (imperfections excluded)
- Thus, worshipping the true God, who is without imperfections, allows us to grow closer to Him
- Only then can we be happy

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- Sadly, what happened throughout history was that men worshipped “pagan gods”
- Today, for many people, their god is technology (cell phones have become addictive to many)
- Father reiterated that **Exodus 20:1-6** should be seen as one commandment, which unfortunately was divided into two commandments during the “Protestant Reformation”
- This would not have become a problem had they retained the relationship between the two parts “no other gods and graven image”

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- In the ancient world, the people made an image of their god and then worshiped that god through its image
- God was calling Israel to be unique by not only being monotheists, but also by not making images of their God
- Thus, **Exodus 20:1-6** was all about whether *Israel* would worship the one true God who brought them out of *Egypt*, or the false gods through their images (monotheism vs polytheism)



# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- Father spent a great deal of time with this passage since it has, since the Protestant reformation, been misread by many as a condemnation of “religious imagery”
- *Calvin* (who apparently was an iconoclast)\* read this as a condemnation of every sort of religious imagery in church
- On the other hand, *Luther* and most *Anglicans* did not see this passage in the same light and maintained a great deal of religious art in their churches
- The English word “graven” means something like “carved” (a carved image)
- The *Hebrew* word for “graven” is *pesel* simply meaning “image”

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- Every use of the *Hebrew* word “*pesel*” in the Old Testament referred to a “pagan idol” (an image of a false god)
- Its translation into the *Greek Septuagint* was “*eidolon*” also meaning “idol”
- This can be further clarified by looking at it in its biblical context
  - **Exodus 20:3** refers to “monotheism versus polytheism”
  - Therefore, this verse (**Exodusn20:4**)also must refer to the same issue

# Exodus 20 (Cont)

- Obviously God was talking about not worshipping the pagan Egyptian gods
- Later in **Exodus 20:23**, He will say *“You shall not make god of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold”*
- Thus, in this passage, God was telling His people not to make pagan gods (of gold) and stick them in the “holy of holies”\*