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***God of Freedom,* Week 2a**

**Exodus 19:1–25**

**18-19 September 2023**

**A People Freed To Serve God –** We saw last week that God sent Moses to Pharaoh *seven times* to tell him to let His people go so that they could serve Him. We have also seen a birth narrative surrounding the nation of Israel. There was a period of “gestation” in a dark, narrow place (literal meaning of Mizraim, the name for Egypt), followed by a deliverance into a broad land through blood and through water. The first thing the newborn baby nation did was cry out for food. And now that His people have reached Sinai, God is going to train up His child, the nation Israel, in the way it should go.

**A Prototypical Justice System –** Exodus 18 records the advice that Jethro gave his son-in-law Moses regarding how disputes should be settled. Acting on that advice, Moses instituted a hierarchy of judges. We are told that these men judged smaller matters themselves, but any difficult cases they brought to Moses for final judgment. So a system has been set up for justice to be administered among the nation of Israel. The *judges* are in place, but they now need a *set of laws* to guide their judgment.

**The Law –** Note that the first half of the book of Exodus deals with how to get Israel out of Egypt, while the second half of the book shows us **how** **God intends to get Egypt out of Israel.** Israel has been delivered from slavery, but they still carry an Egyptian mindset with them about how to “do life”. In any given situation, they are very prone to follow Egyptian thought rather than the ways of Yahweh. God wants to use His Law and the leaders He has put in authority over them to ensure that they don’t go back to the way things were done in Egypt.

**The Wilderness –** Moses mentions the “wilderness” many times in this narrative. He wanted to stress that the people have not come to a place of order and certainty, but of disorder and uncertainty. When God gave the Law, He intended to give the Israelites both law *and* *order*. And He did so quickly, just 50 days after they had left Egypt.

**God’s Message to the People –** God called Moses up the mountain several times to deliver a series of messages to the people. In the first encounter God says three very significant things. 1) He says, “You have seen how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself.” **The terminus of the exodus is not a *location;* it’s a *Person*.** And this person, God Himself, intends to dwell with His people in a very tangible way. 2) God also tells them that they have the opportunity to be **His treasured possession**. They currently possess a great deal of treasure given to them by the Egyptians, but they need to understand that their value does not lie in what they own or what they can do, but in their relationship with the one true God. 3) **They are to be a *kingdom* of priests**, not just a community of priests. In other words, they are under the authority of someone to whom they will bow. And they are to be a *holy* nation, set apart for a particular purpose by God. They are not just any nation, but one set apart for the Lord.

**“All That the Lord Says We Will Do” –** The people’s response to God’s first message is unanimous agreement. They all say together, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” We may be tempted to judge them for these words, since we know that they actually failed to obey Him many, many times. But at this moment, they are expressing the deep desire of their hearts to follow God. It is similar to what happens when a couple exchange wedding vows today. When they say, “I do” to each other, they are indicating that “I will do that” or “I am willing to do that.” They may fail at times, but the desire of their heart is to fulfill their promises.

**Going Up to God and Down to the People –** God calls Moses up the mountain several times. Moses’ role is to tell the people what God has told him, and to report to God what the people say in response. God says that He is going to come “in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe you forever.” In other words, **the purpose for what is about to unfold is to validate *visibly* and *audibly* that Moses is the mediator God has designated for the task.** Something very similar happened at the baptism of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit rested upon Him in the *physical* form of a dove and *a Voice spoke from Heaven* saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” And we see the same thing again at the Transfiguration of Christ.

**Back to the Burning Bush –** This experience must have been very poignant for Moses. Remember, he had been in this very spot before, when God spoke to him from a burning bush. Now the entire mountain is on fire and all the people are hearing His voice. But he is a changed man, very different from the one who first saw the bush on fire. He has been refined by all that God has done in and through him since then.

**Encountering God on the Third Day –** Exodus 19:16 literally says, “On the morning of the third day there were sounds and dazzlement and a glorious heavy.” This is similar to what occurred the night Jesus was born, when the angels appeared to the shepherds out in the field. There were sounds and dazzling light and the glory of the Lord (the “glorious heavy”), shone all around.

***Parallels to 1 Peter***

*As we saw when answering question #9 for this week, Peter picks up on some of the phrases God used when Moses went up the mountain the first time:*

*EXODUS 19:5, 6 1 PETER 2:9-10*

*- a kingdom of priests 🡒 a royal priesthood*

*- my treasured possession 🡒 a people for His possession*

*- a holy nation 🡒 a holy nation*