



Week 15: Understanding the Old Testament: God's Covenant with Moses

MV: *"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the 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 sons of Israel.*" (Exodus 19:5-6)

So Israel is standing on the other side of the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his army are destroyed

Who is this God who rescued us and claimed us as His own?

Remember Israel had been under Egypt and its gods for 400 years; they had forgotten the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob largely because they thought He had forgotten them.

Who is He? Where is He leading us? What does it look like to live as His people?

The proceeding journey is filled with turmoil and complaints

- we need food and water
- we don't like our diet
- we don't like Moses

At Mt. Sinai God reveals Himself and enters into covenant with them

"3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons 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 then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the 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 sons of Israel." 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him." (Exodus 19:3-7)

God defines Israel

- rescued from slavery
- bought them for Himself
- treasured possession
- protected by God

Now the people had to prepare themselves and SET THEMSELVES APART from all other people for a specific purpose (the definition of HOLY)

Holy God and a Sinful People—Gen 12:1-3

- They were the nation
- They would inherit the promised land
- They were to be a blessing to the nations
- God was their God and they were His people

But how do you put together a HOLY God and SINFUL people???

The covenant of Moses was different than the covenant with Abraham

The covenant of Moses was a code of conduct. It had God's expectations in civil, religious and moral laws

There were the 10 Commandments; then there were 100 laws that followed to provide judicial precedent for the judges that were legally binding

Jesus fulfilled these laws (Matt 5:17), so they are no longer "binding" on Christians.

But they are not to be discarded. These laws give us insight into God's character and intentions for people

"When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 "When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. 21 "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow." (Deut 24:19-21)

We don't do that with our fields today literally, but we should provide for the poor, and notice they worked for this provision, it was NOT a handout

God has the right to dictate how His created beings should act. He CAN tell people what they can/can't eat, touch, do, etc. He has the right because he is the CREATOR.

We are saved by grace not works.

ASK: So why did God give all these laws they had to follow to be in right relationship with God?

Nothing in all the laws say they will get salvation if they keep all the laws perfectly, does it?

In fact, the laws assume they will fail. Why? There is a system of sacrifice, atonement, and forgiveness.

The laws do not promise blessing for following and curse for not following. God does bless for obedience and we suffer consequences when we disobey.

The law was never intended to give them a moral ladder to climb to earn God's favor. They were already God's chosen people, through no act of their own.

The law was about maintaining a relationship between a HOLY God and SINFUL people
This was about them living out their identity as the people of God

It taught them to relate to God and each other appropriately.

With Abraham the covenant was unconditional. The promise to Abraham was not dependent on his actions. God would do it no matter what.

With Moses, a conditional element is added:

- Bless Israel
- Bring them safely to the promised land
- Bless them in the land
- Make them a blessing
- IF they were faithful to observe God's laws

The promise to Abraham would always be kept, but the promise made on Mt. Sinai was conditional upon faithful obedience

The blessings were not dependent on sinless perfection but to faithfully uphold their end of the covenant to obey (remember there was a system of sacrifice, atonement and forgiveness for disobedience)

Deut 28 lays out if Israel was faithful God would bless them unimaginably. But if they rebelled, God would curse them instead

It was all about blessing the nations through Israel

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the 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 sons of Israel." (Exodus 19:5-6)

ASK: What does a priest do?

- Represent a HOLY God to sinful people
- Represent a sinful people to a HOLY God

As a kingdom of priests they were to represent God to the nations around them. They were to show who God was and what he demanded of the world. They were to also pray for nations asking God to bless them.

- They were to stand out from other nations
 - They were to minister on God's behalf
 - They were to show God's holy character
 - They were to be a light to the nations
- (Sound familiar???)**

Israel was largely unfaithful to do this

That didn't change God or His heart. Israel was still His "treasured possession). **It still is!**

God chose them for a specific purpose—to show the world the Lord is God and to call them into a relationship with Him **(Sound familiar???)**