

SESSION 3

THE SINAI REVELATION CH.18-24

PROVIDING THE WORLD WITH A GLIMPSE OF GOD AND GOOD LIVING

A. THE PURPOSE CH.18-19

Putting Off and Putting On.

The Passover and Red Sea experience was a putting off of the old life of Egypt. The gift of the Commandments was to enable the people to put on God's new and distinctive way of living. It's about living life well now, on the earth, not just hanging on for heaven! The people have shown, in the wilderness, that they do not have a clue about how to do this. They need to be "shown the way to live" (Jethro - 18:20).

So Israel comes to the foot of Mt Sinai and God invites them to enter into a covenant relationship with him 19:3-8:

1. I carried you (v.4)
2. An agreement (v.5)
3. A kingdom of priests (v.6)
4. People agree (v.8)
5. Consecration (v.10-15)
6. God's dramatic presence (v.16-19)
7. Moses prepares to speak with God (v.20-25)

B. THE COMMANDMENTS AND LAWS CH.20-24

The Ten Commandments are the basic and universal terms of the Covenant that God makes with Israel (Ch.20). These are followed by another set of commands and stipulations which fill out in detail how Israel is to live distinctively, with justice and generosity (Ch.21-23). The Covenant is then ratified (Ch.24).

The "Ten Words" - Decalogue

Attitudes to God (1-4)

1st. Only Me (v.3)

This command deals with one of the dangers of living in a polytheistic world.

2nd. Don't enslave yourself to idols (v.4-6)

The consequences of idolatry are serious.

Note: Understanding Idolatry

The first two commands speak of sin in terms of idolatry. It has a far reaching context in the Bible where humans were called by God to responsibility and authority over the creation but rejected this vocation by giving worship and allegiance to powers within creation itself. We hand over power to the idols (eg. money, sex and power) which use this power to tyrannize and destroy. We tend to get stuck on a narrow moralistic view of sin whereas idolatry reveals a bigger picture.

3rd. You know my Name (v.7)

You have seen who I AM through your rescue from Egypt.

4th. Honour Me in your Sabbath (v.8-11)

God's rhythm and rest in our lives honours him and benefits us.

Attitude to Others (5-10)

5th. Parental Honour (v.12)

The family is to be the training place for learning respect for human authority.

6th. Sanctity of Life (v.13)

Jesus probed the hidden seeds of murder (Mt. 5:21-26).

7th. Sexual Fidelity (v.14)

It finds its basis in the true nature of marriage (Gen. 1:27,2:24).

8th. Respect for the Property of Others (v.15)

Stealing can be oblique as well as direct.

9th. Reputation and relationships in the Community (v.16)

Giving a false testimony can destroy a neighbour.

10th. Freedom from Greed (v.17)

Coveting what we don't have takes us back to the story of the Fall.

EXERCISE. For thought and discussion.

God's culture and the culture of the world clash. Maybe the remoteness of the OT is one of its greatest values - that it comes to us from an unfamiliar angle and surprises

us with assumptions it does not share with our generation. Do we have the love, courage and humility to let God direct us, rather than our culture? How might we strengthen moral teaching (in our homes and church) in a way that can be heard?

C. THE LAW AND THE NT

Is the NT for or against the Law?

GALATIANS

1. Getting the New Exodus Clear. Ch.1-2

Paul went to the ultimate place of revelation. (1:15-17 cf.11-12)

What he saw was that God's story and Israel's story had merged. The promises to Abraham had been globalised into one worldwide community through Jesus the Messiah.

The Gospel was the fulfilment of God's original promises. A majestic *second Exodus* had brought Jesus through death to resurrection thereby declaring him to be David's true son, Israel's true Messiah and the world's true Lord.

2. Using God's Law as Intended. Ch.3-4

Gospel freedom was under threat. (3:1-5)

So Paul clarifies that the gospel is not a new doctrine. "Abraham believed God" (3:6). This is the way relationship with God has always been.

The Will Illustration

The original intention of the will is not annulled by the later addendum of the law (3:17). It was just a thoughtful addition to keep people in the way of freedom "until" (v.19) Christ the beneficiary came, inheriting and distributing the promises.

The purpose of the Torah (commands and stipulations) was to make Israel distinct until the new age of Jesus the Messiah arrived. It was given to lead us to Christ (3:24). Now "we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (3:26)

The faith basis of relating to Jesus is reinforced, figuratively, through Hagar and Sarah representing two covenants: Mt Sinai (Hagar) and the Heavenly Jerusalem (Sarah) where captivity is contrasted with freedom through promise and the power of the Spirit (4:21-31).

3. Putting on God's New Life of Love. Ch.5-6

The freedom of a new life comes through trusting Jesus and expressing that trust in true love (5:1-6). Life by the Spirit in this world will have its struggles (5:16-21) but it

is able to grow and flourish (5:22-26). We put on Jesus' life by obeying his commands (see Mt. 5:17-20).

How?

1. I plant a Kingdom seed daily to please God (6:7-8).
2. Allow the Spirit to grow his fruit (5:22-25).
3. Let others harvest/benefit from the fruit (6:9-10).