

The Covenant in the Wilderness  
(Sinaitic/Mosaic)  
Sermon Prepared for WellSpring Church  
July 24, 2011  
Exodus 19:1-9a; 20:1-21

Subject: The Covenant at Sinai  
Complement: Shows that God is always working through grace.  
Big Idea:

1. Introduction
  - a. Engage: When did God begin to work with People on the basis of Grace? When did God decide that a relationship with man based on works wasn't going to work?
  - b. Review: Series on the Covenant
    - i. What is a Covenant
    - ii. Why the Covenant
    - iii. When and where do we see God entering into a covenant with his creation?
  - c. Preview: Begin to cut through the confusion that makes the Law of the OT as summarized in the Ten Commandments.
    - i. If we don't understand the 10 Cs properly we will see that God demanded works for salvation—grace is something new
    - ii. When we understand who the 10 Cs worked in the life of Israel we will better understand how they are to work in our lives today.
      1. Alan Cole writes that the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments is the focal point of the whole of the Old Testament. In other words, going wrong here will put us on a wrong path throughout our understanding of the rest of the Bible.
      2. Another writer, William Dumbrell, goes back to Genesis 19 and says “A correct understanding of these verses which summon Israel, as a result of Sinai, to its vocation, is vital. The history of Israel from this point on is in reality merely a commentary upon the degree of fidelity with which Israel adhered to this Sinai-given vocation.”
  - d. Big Idea: The Covenants of God are all of Grace. The Ten Commandments must be understood from this perspective.
2. Stage One: Continuity (19:3a-9a)
  - a. God Speaks—We must guard against the danger of forgetting the wonder of this statement.
  - b. When God speaks here he is identifying the present situation that Israel has in the wilderness not a desert, not an uninhabited place) with His past history with them.

- c. "You have seen: this is a part of the Covenant Formula, the Historical narrative
- d. "If you keep my covenant" there has to be continuity here or the covenant would be identified as a something new. Lets Work backwards from this point
  - i. Exodus. 6:2-8
  - ii. Exodus 3: 7-9
  - iii. Exodus 2:23-25
    - 1. Brownlow North: ...you can have no deliverance till you feel your bondage: for until you feel [your bondage] no cry will go up from you to God, and God ahs said, 'I will be enquired of' (Ezk. 36:37)."
  - iv. Gen. 50:24-25
  - v. Gen. 35:9
  - vi. Gen. 38:13
  - vii. Gen. 26:15
  - viii. Gen. 12:1-3
    - 1. "And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
    - 2. "Even before the vision of the burning bush, the narrator sets the deliverance from Egypt squarely in the context of the patriarchal promise. So Israel of old, the whole course of the history salvation could be summed up as being 'promise and fulfillment.'" (Alan Cole, Commentary on Exodus)
- e. When God tells Moses to speak to the people of Israel and refers to his covenant he is saying that there is an unbroken continuity between what he began in the Ur of the Chaldees with Abram until that day on the third moon after they were taken from Egypt
- f. Even more so this Covenant Continuity extends even further back to the day of the first rebellion.
  - i. May I talk about sin for a moment?
  - ii. Calvin Coolidge "Silent Cal"
  - iii. There is none good.
  - iv. The issue of sin is not actions, it is attitude. It is not so much the hand as the heart.
  - v. It is rejection of God as God and rebellion against God's authority and against God as rightful ruler. It is not merely acting out, it is acting against.
- g. God is not starting something new at Sinai, he is showing his long tern faithfulness to his promise. (Psalm 105)
- h. God never forgets
- 3. Stage Two: Condescension. Michael Williams writes: "Without God's initiation, involvement and condescension to dwell with his people and to reveal Himself to them, there would be no story to tell.
  - a. God "comes down"

- b. God lifts up—
  - c. God acts according to his own mind and purpose.
    - i. Why Israel?, Indeed Why Little Israel?
      - 1. Deut. 7:6-11—his free choice and active love, God is free to act as He chooses.
      - 2. To confound people—I Cor. 1:27-29
      - 3. To teach us each one humility. there is no one worthy, no one who can claim the goodness of God.
      - 4. To show us each one that no matter how low we are, we may be recipients of God's grace.
        - a. Example: Jacob over Esau
          - i. "By any worldly appearance Esau would seem the better choice as the larger and stronger of the twin boys, the elder, and thus the natural inheritor of Isaac's estate. Yet God chose Jacob—Jacob the liar, Jacob the loser—rather than his brother Esau. Like Jacob, Israel was, as nations go, a loser, homeless and powerless." (Michael Williams)
        - b. Example: Paul
        - c. Israel has already shown that they are not worthy. They are slow to listen, slow to learn, they gripe and complain...
  - d. God gives the people a special identity and mission
    - i. Treasured possession—privately belonging to God.
    - ii. Kingdom of Priests—
      - 1. free access to his presence
      - 2. representing him to the nations-
      - 3. Here is the missional call to the nation
      - 4. Note the similarity to I Peter 1:9-12
    - iii. Holy Nation
      - 1. a nation set apart to God
      - 2. Holy = dedicated
      - 3. God's holiness, that is his moral purity and perfection of character becomes a compelling moral demand on his people.
  - e. Here is Grace--
4. Stage Three: Constancy
  - a. What God begins he carries through to the end
  - b. What God promises he fulfills
  - c. Whatever our circumstances we can be certain that God has not forgotten.
5. Stage Four Covenant Conditionality
  - a. The Covenant was not based on Israel's faithfulness, but God's choice to bestow his goodness on them. Note well. The Covenant is not based

on Israel's faithfulness—they never cease to be the chosen nation of God,

- b. The if/then statement refers to the conditionality of blessing and privileges.
- c. When we read the rest of the OT it is always a call back to the obligations of the covenant in order to return to the fountain of God's promised goodness.

#### 6. Implications

- a. Take care of a naïve and facile response
  - i. Gen. 19:8
  - ii. Josh 24
- b. revel in the goodness of God in granting his covenant faithfulness to all who will believe
- c. think carefully about how your life reflects the holiness of God
- d. think carefully about the areas of your life that suggest that you have not accepted the covenant of God.
- e. Thank God that all of the requirements of the holiness of God have been fulfilled by Christ.