**BCM Bible Study: November 11/12, 2020**

**Exodus 19: Chosen People**

Chosen People: **Read Exodus 19:1-6**

* What is God say in v.4? Why is this important?
  + God is about to give Israel a law, but it is critical for them to remember that they had already been rescued. Redemption comes before law; obedience follows grace. “We should never forget that what is required of us, *precisely because we are saved by grace*, is a high moral standard of thought and action that for many outside the kingdom of God is incomprehensible”
  + Do you find yourself trying to earn favor from God or other people?
  + How has God’s grace towards you changed the way you live?
* There are three key phrases in this section: treasured possession, kingdom of priests, holy nation.
  + What is the meaning of these descriptions of Israel?
    - These phrases together indicate something powerful. Though every people group on earth is his, God has chosen Israel to be his (treasured possession). This means that they will be his representative to the nations (kingdom of priests) by the distinct way they live. (holy nation)
* **Read 1 Peter 2:9-12.** Peter uses the exact phrasing of Exodus 19 to describe the church! Why is this significant?
  + Why is it important to live a God-honoring life rather than simply speak about Jesus?
    - To be unrepentantly disobedient to God is a serious issue in the Old Testament (and today) because it profanes God names. In other words, we say with our mouths “we are Christians” and people rightly expect our lives to show what God is like – to be a Christians means that you are his representative. People get the wrong idea about who God is, and this is a serious problem! How have you seen Christian disobedience impact nonbelievers?
  + What does it look like for you to live in a way that is holy/distinct from the unbelieving world in both big and small things?
  + **Read Matthew 20:24-28.** How does the idea of serving the world impact how we answer the previous question?
* **Read John 15:5-8.** Being obedient to Christ does not happen overnight. What does it look like to grow in obedience to Christ by abiding/remaining in Christ?

God’s Presence: **Read Exodus 19:9-15**

* Leader Note: We don’t know the details of what Israel did to consecrate themselves or why they are asked to wash their clothes and abstain from sexual relations. To press into these things is to miss the thrust of the text – meeting a holy God requires some sort of preparation and cleansing.
* Israel is preparing to meet her God in a more complete way than she had previously. What instructions are given to prepare for this meeting?
  + Modern readers find this preparation to be strange – we don’t do this kind of thing to approach God. Why not?
  + **Read Hebrews 10:19-25, 12:18-24.** How does the blood of Christ make our situation different from that of the Israelites?
  + How do these passages shape the way you understand what Jesus has done on the cross and why he has done it?

**Read Exodus 19:16-25**

* Leader Note: The order of events and appearance of priests in verses 20-25 is very strange. Try not to get wrapped around these details of trying to figure out how everything fits together. Admit that it is confusing and try to focus on the message of the passage. When I get confused by the text, I always remind myself that these issues didn’t seem to bother the biblical author – perhaps I’m the one who is missing information that would have been obvious to the original audience.
* The happenings in verses 16-19 are seen throughout the Bible in connection with the Lord’s coming to meet his people. These were frightening natural phenomenon that God no doubt used to demonstrate his holiness to Israel.
  + We have seen that we should approach God boldly, but we are also told to fear God. **Read 1 Peter 2:17.** What does it mean to fear God?
  + There is a spectrum of how people relate to God. Some are afraid of Him, worrying about his judgment. Others see Jesus primarily as their friend and lack much reverence towards Him. Where do you tend to fall on this spectrum?
  + What are the dangers of each extreme? What is a healthy middle ground?
* God is very concerned that Israel obey him – he reminds them three times! God has reason to be concerned based on their past behavior.
  + How do you see God’s goodness in his repeated reminders to the people?
  + Like Israel, we are people who have short memories. What reminders do we have to remain obedient to God?

Challenge

We too are a kingdom of priests who carry with us the message of reconciliation to God through Christ. Make it a point to talk to someone about Jesus this week. Look for opportunities to talk about what God is doing or has done for you.

Nerd Notes:

* Some background information for this whole chapter is that ancient peoples believed that gods dwelt on mountains and in gardens. Each god has its own territory or people. We understand that the earth is God’s, but it would have been remarkable to them that Yahweh could exert his authority no matter where he went. However, it is also worth noting that God is said to dwell in certain places that are *not* the whole earth – Eden, Sinai, the tabernacle, the temple, in Christians. In this chapter, God’s dwelling place is Sinai.
* This chapter begins a 1-year stay at Sinai where God will prepare his people for what is ahead. This extended time of preparation makes Israel’s failure all the more heartbreaking.
* Eagles and wings are common images in the Old Testament. An eagle was a bird that protected her young and was a fierce warrior. It is also remarkable that when Boaz covers Ruth with the corner of his clock, the Hebrew word for “wing” is used.
* If space permitted, I would have loved to demonstrate how being a kingdom of priests connects to mediating God’s presence to the world. While God is omnipresent, he is also specially present with his people.
* The church’s union with Christ is particularly important as we think about effective witness to the world. Whereas Israel disobeyed, Jesus is the perfect Israel. Through faith, we are joined with him, joining his witness as a light to the nations.
* The cloud image continues and will continue as the Bible progresses. See especially the end of Exodus.
* We will see later that the tabernacle is structure resembles that of Mt. Sinai with different levels of access to God.
* Aaron’s accompaniment with Moses is a nod to what we will see later – only the Levites (Aaron’s descendants) will have access to the Most Holy Place.