

EXODUS 19

CLOSING THE GAP

Evel Knievel (show slide)

- Hinge point of the book.
- At Sinai, a Theophany where Israel will learn more about God's holiness and the great gap between God and them.

We tend to think of holiness as being a moral person, but there is more to it than that. God's uniqueness, His other-ness as creator and giver of life are part of this holiness.

- Think of the Sun. It is a life-giver, but if you get too close it will kill you.
- This is why Moses was told not to come any closer when he approached the burning bush.
- You need to be pure in order to approach God. Not just morally pure, as we normally think of it, but ritually purity was an idea the Israelites would learn.
- Ritual impurity – touching dead animals,

diseased people or even certain bodily fluids. This could cause death if someone was found to be ritually impure when in the presence of God. It wasn't necessarily wrong to be ritually impure, but you weren't to just waltz into God's presence if you were ritually impure. Hence the instructions in Leviticus – this way the Israelites could know when they were impure and remedy the situation.

- Israel will learn this today and it is part of a greater part of God's plan.

1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

3 And 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 children of Israel: 4 "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and

keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; 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 which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

We have some language here that hearkens to a portion of scripture that I mentioned last week. That is Deuteronomy 32, particularly verse 11.

Dt. 32:11

Deuteronomy 32:11

**11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,**

So we have another link between Sinai and the cosmic geography of Dt. 32.

Dt. 4: 19,20; Dt. 17:3; Dt. 29: 23-26

Dt. 32:8

Deuteronomy 32:8

8 When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,

**When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the sons of God.**

As I've said before and I will say again, this harkens back to the dispersion at the tower of Babel, after the flood, when God gave over the other nations to the "sons of God." Out of all the nations on the earth, God chose Abram, eventually Abraham from whom to start His new family. He had to start somewhere and from this man, the father of Isaac, God is about to plant a nation from which He has a people and a base of operations from which He will one day bring all the nations back under His umbrella. I keep saying this because it is the overarching theme throughout the entirety of the Bible. And if you aren't aware of it, you are missing a large part of the story. Without this there are many things that don't seem to make sense in both the old and New Testament. It will soon be Israel versus the other nations and God versus the "gods" of the other nations.

Psalm 82

1 God stands in the congregation of the mighty;

He judges among the gods.

**2 How long will you judge unjustly,
And show partiality to the wicked?**

Selah

**3 Defend the poor and fatherless;
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.**

**4 Deliver the poor and needy;
Free them from the hand of the wicked.**

**5 They do not know, nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are unstable.**

**6 I said, "You are gods,
And all of you are children of the Most High.**

**7 But you shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes."**

**8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.**

When Abram is called and Abraham and Sarah have a child, when she's past child-bearing age—that's intentional on God's part because he's going to supernaturally raise up a population to be his own people. That people now has been delivered from Egypt, showing that "you're still my treasured possession." Calling them out of Egypt, judging the gods of Egypt, all of this is part of the

same worldview, the same matrix of ideas.

In verse 6 we see part of God's plan for Israel. They are to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Priests represent God to the people. And Israel, once they are a nation, is to be THE nation among all the other nations that accurately represent God and His character to all the others. Israel is to have a mediatorial role to the other nations.

7 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. 8 Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. 9 And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

10 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. 11 And let them be ready for the third day. For on

the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base.

Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain."

14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives."

16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended

like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. 20 Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

21 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. 22 Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them."

23 But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.' "

24 Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them." 25 So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

Now we get a picture of some other imagery with

which we need to be familiar. Israel is camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai. And what did mountains and gardens represent in that context/ day and time? They were the abode of God. In Ezekiel 28, Eden is referred to as both a garden and a mountain. The imagery of Eden was woven into the interior of the tabernacle and the temple. And there are some parallels between the tabernacle, temple and Sinai.

First of all, boundaries were set up at the base of the mountain to keep the people from approaching it. We may ask why that is. That is because it can be likened to the outer court of the temple where the laity was to remain. But God told Moses that only the priest could come with him onto the mountain. This is likened to the inner court. And finally we see that Moses was the only one who could ascend to the top of the mountain where God's presence was manifested. This is like the holy of holies, which housed the Ark of the Covenant. Only the High Priest was permitted to enter there once a year.

The people were to wash their clothes and abstain from intimate relations, preparing for the third day when God would manifest.

- Be washed so as to be set apart.
- The loss of bodily fluids was seen as a loss of “life force” and would make someone ritually unclean.
- Thunder and lightning: Storm language/ theophany
- Why couldn’t they get close? Because there was always the idea of sacred space.

We’ve talked about sacred space before. (Namaan, the burning bush). Once Israel enters the Promised Land, all of that will be considered sacred space.

Regarding the mountain and the temple, only those who were ritually pure, only those who were consecrated, set apart for God’s service could approach God. Israel is learning this lesson. God showed up in a storm cloud and the people feared Him. That was intentional. God was to be feared and seen as so holy, that no one could approach Him. Adam and Eve could do this before the fall. All of this would have had an enormous effect on them and would have been a lesson that they should all remember.

And we still serve a holy God! We are still to fear Him and not take it so lightly that we are now able to enter into His courts.

Hebrews 4: 14 - 16

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We cannot become so “chummy” with God that we no longer fear Him. And we cannot become so familiar with Him that we take Him for granted!

It is clear from the storied history of Israel that if God’s plan was to be successful, that God was going to have to carry the burden. Israel repeatedly failed in her vocation as a priestly nation. And we are no different.

Rom. 3: 21 – 26

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

I believe we have a tendency in our culture to take things more lightly than we ought. (Leonard Dean's avionics guy) Respect for titles, offices, adults, elders and humans in general, is at an all-time low. It has been said that, "Familiarity breeds contempt." That can be true. But it need not be.

- Isaiah in the temple. He knew he shouldn't

even be there, but then a cherub came and touched his mouth with a burning coal. (Symbol of purity) Then he was told that his guilt was taken away and his sin was atoned for.

- Normally sin or impurity would have been transferred to the person who had come in contact with the impure thing, but this time a reversal of the transference took place and it was holiness that was transferred to Isaiah. God's holiness didn't kill Isaiah. It transformed him.
- Ezekiel had a vision of a river of living water flowing out of the Temple into the Dead Sea that transformed the normally arid area into a lush paradise like Eden.
- In this vision, it wasn't that one had to become ritually pure before entering the Temple, the holiness of God came out of the Temple, God's abode and transformed those and the area outside of the Temple.
- Jesus went around touching the unclean people around Him. And instead of their uncleanness being transferred to Him, they were transformed and made clean because He was the earthly manifestation of God's

holiness. Jesus said that those who believed on Him were His temple and that they could now go out into the world bringing life, hope and healing. This is why Jesus described His followers as having streams of living water flowing out of them, like Ezekiel's vision.

- **Rev. 22: 1 – 5**
- **1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.**
- Revelation 22 is the culmination of God's plan and we are to model this now until He comes.

When Jesus came to earth, He broke down the barriers that were set between God and us. That was evident in the curtain being rent in the temple at His crucifixion. So the barriers are gone. But God's holiness and power has not lessened one bit. That hasn't changed and it never will. The only thing that has changed is how we are now seen by God. Those of us who are His children are seen to be as righteous as Jesus Himself, though we still fail Him on a daily basis.

Now I want us all to think of our relationship with God in this context. Try to place yourself in their shoes at the foot of the mountain that was ringed by clouds and lightning - a quaking mountain at which you are standing at the base. What would have been described as a "storm god" was at the top of the mountain. And you have nowhere to go. To fear him is the right response. But now that same God has made it so that you, just as Moses can climb to the top without fear of judgment. There is still the healthy fear of a Holy God, but there is no more fear of His wrath. You, if you're a believer are now a part of His family. And you, if you're a believer are part of a holy priesthood, an imager of God. You are to represent God to those

around you. And you, like Israel could not have earned it, you have to believe.

Just as it was said of Abraham when God gave him the covenant that has lead to where we are in Exodus:

Genesis 15:6

6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.