

**Exodus 19**  
**September 7, 2014**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

It's been exactly three months since the Israelites have been led out of Egypt by the hand of God. God is getting ready to make a covenant and present the Law. Today's chapter, though it appears small, is filled with dynamite. As God speaks to His people, we will learn of His redemption and its blessing: (v.4) "You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and *brought you to Myself*." He will speak of holiness as His purpose in redemption: (v.6) "You will be for me a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*." The link between being redeemed and being a holy nation is in (v.5): *obedience*.

So Chapter 19 ends up being a beautiful picture of God reaching out to the Israelites. He tells them that "*if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be my treasured possession*." Because there are so many parallels to the New Testament, I am approaching this lesson differently by exploring these parallels so that you see the relevance of Chp 19 in your own walk with Christ today. The foundational principle of obedience is just as true today for us as it was for the Israelites.

**Transition:** So the one thing I want you to know is that God still desires obedience that leads to holiness. In fact, I believe this lesson will beg a couple of questions: "How obedient are we being?" "Are we fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit to hear God's voice and do what He tells us to do?" I want us to struggle with those two questions as we go through this short chapter.

So here's the process for today: I want someone to read all 25 verses to hear Chp 19 in its entirety, but then on the DEB I have drawn two columns entitled "OT and NT" to focus on key phrases and passages found in verses 4, 5, 6, 8, 10. There will be plenty of cross-references to explore parallels to the NT. Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [ Read the whole chapter first]**

Observations/Process Qs-

V.1:

- In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai.

V.2:

- After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

V.3:

- Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel:

V.4:

- 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and **brought you to myself**.

- **Q:** Trivia – Do you know how young eagles learn to fly? [The mother eagle flies under them with her wings spread out to catch them]
- DEB: Key theme **REDEMPTION (“Brought you to Myself”)** –
  - OT X-Ref: Deut 7:6-9; I Chron 17:21-22
  - NT X-ref I Cor 6:19-20 [Bought at a great price]

V.5:

- Now if you **obey me fully** and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my **treasured possession**. Although the whole earth is mine,
- DEB: Key phrase **OBEY ME FULLY**
  - OT X-Ref: Num 15:40; Lev 20:8; I Sam 15:22
  - NT X-Ref: I Pet 1:22 (We are “purified” by obeying God)
- **Observation: Obedience is indispensable to holiness – it cannot exist without it. Obedience ≠ Holiness, but rather obedience cultivates holiness. In other words, it is not enough to understand what God’s commands are. It is not enough to “approve” of His commands, or to even desire to do His will. God wants His Will DONE!!**
- **Q:** How does one successfully obey Him? Read Ezek 36:26-27 – we’re empowered by the Holy Spirit!
- DEB: Key phrase **TREASURED POSSESSION**
  - OT X-Ref: Deut 26:17-19
  - NT X-Ref: I Cor 3:16-17 (We are God’s temple - This is how entirely we belong to the Lord)

V.6:

- you will be for me a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”
- DEB: Key phrase **KINGDOM OF PRIESTS/HOLY NATION**
  - OT X-Ref:
  - NT X-Ref: I Pet 2:9
- **Q:** How do we become holy? X-Ref 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 10:10 – *we are made holy* through the sacrifice of Christ’s body once for all!
- **Observation: God intended Israel to be a nation of priests. They were to be stewards of the oracles of God, channels through whom God’s knowledge and blessing were to be communicated. We, too, are a part of His holy nation. We are a part of royal priesthood. Thus, our goal should not be “safety” in Christ, but “holy” in Christ. (I Pet 1:15-16)**

V.7:

- So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.

V.8:

- The people all responded together, **“We will do everything the LORD has said.”** So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.
- **Q:** Do the Israelites know yet what they are saying “yes” to?! [No!] They are a people of great intentions.
- **Q:** Do you think we have dumbed down the supreme importance of obedience in the Christian life? Can we really pick and choose the commands we want to follow?

V.9:

- The LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

V.10:

- And the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and **consecrate** them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes
- DEB: Key word **CONSECRATE**
  - OT X-Ref:
  - NT X-Ref: 2 Cor 6:16-17; Rom 12:1-2
- **Observation: Entire consecration is the beginning of a truly holy life. To be consecrated is to come out from the world and be separate. It is the idea of *full surrender*.**
- **Q:** Think about Rom 12:1-2 and the idea that we are a living sacrifice and that we are consecrated by choosing not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Picture yourself choosing to lay your life on the altar of God. What does altar-life look like? How fully surrendered are we?

V.11:

- and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

V.12:

- Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.
- **Observation: Notice that Moses was asked to sanctify the Mount. The holiness of God is death to all who are in contact with sin. [See Ex 19:23]**

V.13:

- He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.’ Only when the ram’s horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain.”

V.14:

- After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes.

V.15:

- Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.”

V.16:

- On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled.

V.17:

- Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

V.18:

- Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently,

V.19:

- and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

V.20:

- The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up

V.21:

- and the LORD said to him, “Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish.

V.22:

- Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must **consecrate** themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.”

V.23:

- Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘**Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.**’ ”

V.24:

- The LORD replied, “Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them.”

V.25:

- So Moses went down to the people and told them.

### **LOOK:**

I suggested at the beginning of class that this study will beg a couple of questions:

- “How obedient are we being?”
- “Are we fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit to hear God’s voice and do what He tells us to do?”

Are you getting the picture that it is daily decision to fully surrender ourselves to the Lord? We have to deliberately choose obedience. I would ask you to consider that you make the words of the Israelites at Mount Sinai your own words: “All that the Lord has spoken ***I will do.***” Let us in faith yield ourselves fully to a life of obedience.

Q: Let me check in with you. What are you thinking or feeling? [Observe how the Spirit is moving and encourage class members as they share.]

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 19–20)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## **I. Introductory Notes: The Law's Importance**

No topic has been more misunderstood among Christians than the Law of Moses and its application to the NT believer today. To confuse the covenants of God is to misinterpret the mind of God and miss the blessings of God, so the believer is wise to examine the Word to determine the place and purpose of the whole Mosaic system.

## **II. Name**

Beginning with Ex. 19 and continuing to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14), the people were under the Mosaic system. This is called “the Law of Moses,” “the Law,” and sometimes “the Law of God.” For the sake of convenience, we often speak of “the Moral Law” (referring to the Ten Commandments), “the Ceremonial Law” (relating to the types and symbols found in the sacrificial system), and “the Civil Law” (meaning the everyday laws that governed the lives of the people). Actually, the Bible seems to make no distinction between the “moral” and “ceremonial” laws, since the one was definitely a part of the other. For example, the fourth commandment about the Sabbath Day is found in the Moral Law yet is certainly a part of the ceremonial system of Jewish holy days as well.

## **III. Purposes**

To understand the Law, we must remember that God had already made an everlasting covenant with the Jews through their father Abraham (Gen. 15). He promised them His blessing and gave them the ownership of the land of Canaan. The Mosaic Law was “added” to the Abrahamic Covenant later, but it did not disannul it (Gal. 3:13–18). The law “entered in alongside” God’s previous covenant (Rom. 5:20) and was but a temporary measure (Gal. 3:19) on His part. It was given only to Israel to mark them as God’s chosen people and His holy nation (Ex. 19:4–6; Ps. 147:19–20). God did not give the Law to save anybody, because it is impossible to be saved by the keeping of the Law (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20). He gave the Law to Israel for the following reasons:

- A. *To reveal His glory and holiness (Deut. 5:22–28).*
- B. *To reveal man's sinfulness (Rom. 7:7, 13; 1 Tim. 1:9ff; James 1:22–25).*
- C. *To mark Israel as His chosen people, and to separate them from the other nations (Ps. 147:19–20; Eph. 2:11–17; Acts 15).*
- D. *To give Israel a standard for godly living so that they might inherit the land and enjoy its blessings (Deut. 4:1ff; 5:29ff; Judges 2:19–21).*

*E. To prepare Israel for the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:24).*

The “schoolmaster” was a trained slave whose task it was to prepare the child for adult living. When the child matured and entered adulthood, he received his inheritance and no longer needed the schoolmaster. Israel was in her “spiritual childhood” under the Law, but this prepared her for the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:23–4:7).

*F. To illustrate in type and ceremony the Person and work of Christ (Heb. 8–10).*

The Law is compared to a mirror, because it reveals our sins (James 1:22–25); a yoke, because it brings bondage (Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1; Rom. 8:3); a child-trainer, because it prepared Israel for the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:23–4:7); letters written on stones (2 Cor. 3) in contrast to the law of love written on our hearts by the Spirit; and a shadow in contrast to the reality and fulfillment we have in Christ (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:14–17).

#### **IV. Weakness**

It is important to note what the Law cannot do. It cannot accomplish these things: (1) make anything perfect, Heb. 7:11–19, 10:1–2; (2) justify from sin, Acts 13:38–39 and Rom. 3:20–28; (3) give righteousness, Gal. 2:21; (4) give peace to the heart, Heb. 9:9; and (5) give life, Gal. 3:21.

#### **V. Christ and the Law**

“The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). There is obviously a contrast between the legalistic system of Moses for Israel and the gracious position the Christian has in the body of Christ. Christ was made under the Law (Gal. 4:4–6) and fulfilled the Law in every respect (Matt. 5:17). His Person and work are seen in the Law (Luke 24:44–47). He is the end of the Law for righteousness to the believer (Rom. 10:1–13). He paid the penalty of the Law and bore the curse of the Law on the cross (Gal. 3:10–14, Col. 2:13–14). The Law no longer separates Jew and Gentile, for in Christ we are one in the church (Eph. 2:11–14).

#### **VI. The Christian and the Law**

The NT makes it very clear that the Christian is not under the Law (Rom. 6:14 and Gal. 5:18) but lives in the sphere of grace. In Christ, we died to the Law (Rom. 7:1–4) and have been delivered from the Law (Rom. 7:5–6). We must not become entangled again in the bondage of the Law (Gal. 5:1–4), which means falling out of the sphere of grace and living like a servant, not a son.

Does this mean that the Christian is supposed to be lawless and ignore the holy demands of God? Of course not! This is the accusation Paul’s enemies threw at him because he emphasized the believer’s glorious position in Christ (Rom. 6:1). Second Corinthians 3 makes it clear that the glory of the Gospel of God’s grace far surpasses the temporary glory of the OT Law, and that we Christians go “from glory to glory” (3:18) as we grow in grace. Actually, the NT Christian is under a more demanding way of life than was the OT believer; for the OT Law dealt with outward acts, while the NT law of love deals with inward attitudes. Being free from the Law does not mean being free to sin—liberty is not license. We have been called to liberty, and we must use that liberty for the good of others and the glory of God (read Gal. 5:13–26). We are

under the higher law of love, the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We do not try to obey God in the energy of the flesh because this is impossible (Rom. 7:14); the flesh is sinful and weak and cannot submit to the law. But as we reckon ourselves dead to sin (Rom. 6) and yield to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8), the Spirit fulfills the law in us and through us (Rom. 8:1–4).

To go back to the Law is to exchange reality for shadows and liberty for bondage. It is to forfeit the high calling we have in grace. Law means that we must do something to please God; grace means that God works in us to fulfill His perfect will.

**Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 137–138). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## 1. THE SETTING FOR THE REVELATION OF THE LAW (CHAP. 19)

The Mosaic Covenant or “contract” is similar in form to the suzerainty treaties of the Near Eastern kings with their vassals. Many of the parts of those treaties were included in God’s Mosaic Covenant with His people. Apparently this was a common literary structure in those days. (See the chart “The Mosaic Covenant Compared with Suzerainty Treaties.”) Here God is the absolute Sovereign and His people were the vassals.

### *a. The encampment before Mount Sinai (19:1–2)*

19:1–2. Exactly three months **after** the Exodus from **Egypt**, the Israelites **entered the Desert of Sinai** and **camped by the mountain**, Mount Sinai. The term “desert” does not always mean a dry wasteland but sometimes uninhabited grazing country. The exact location of Mount Sinai is unknown, but traditionally it is identified as Jebel Musa in the southern portion of the Sinai Peninsula. This is the same as the mountain of God (cf. 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13), also called Horeb, where God appeared to Moses in a burning bush.

### *b. The benefits of the covenant (19:3–6)*

19:3–4. As the Israelites were camped by Sinai, **Moses went on the mountain** and there God spoke to him about the pact He would ratify with the **people** (**Jacob** and **Israel** were synonyms for the nation).

God compared His delivering the people out of **Egypt**, across the Red (Reed) Sea, and to Sinai to His carrying them **on eagles’ wings** (cf. Deut. 32:10–11). When young eagles are learning to fly, the mother eagle flies under them with her wings spread out to catch them.

19:5–6. This proposal made by God (**My covenant**) would give Israel an exalted position among the **nations** in view of their acceptance of God’s righteous standards. If they accepted and obeyed the covenant stipulations, God promised to make them His **treasured possession** (cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17). They would be His own people, highly valued by and related to Him. Also they would become **a kingdom of priests**, that is, each member of the nation with God as his King would know and have access to Him and mediate on behalf of each other as did priests. Also they would be **a holy nation**, a nation morally pure and dedicated entirely to the service of God. God redeemed Israel so that she might be in touch with and separated to Him.

c. *The preparations for the covenant (19:7–25)*

19:7–15. **Moses** then informed **the elders of Israel** and **the people** about God's covenant and His plan to possess them uniquely. **The people** heartily **responded** by promising to obey His laws strictly. In anticipation of the covenant God ordered **the people** to separate themselves from impurity and to **consecrate** themselves to God. The three-day purification ritual included washing their garments and abstaining from **sexual** intercourse. Also during the three days no person **or animal** was to contact **the mountain** or he or it would **be put to death**. Such careful preparation underscored the significance of the event that was about to transpire. The God of the heavens was about to make a covenant with His people. Unlike pagan deities who supposedly dwelt in the mountains, the God of Israel descended from heaven (1 Kings 8:30, 49) *to* the mountains to converse with His people. Only when summoned by the blast of a **ram's horn** (cf. Ex. 19:16, 19) were the people to **go toward the mountain** (v. 13).

19:16–25. Then on **the third day** of preparation the **God** of heaven descended to **Sinai** in a display of power and majesty. God demonstrated His holiness and awesomeness; little wonder that the people **trembled**, standing **at the foot of the mountain** (v. 16; cf. 20:18). The people heard crashing **thunder** and a **very loud trumpet blast** (cf. 19:13); they saw flashing **lightning... fire**, and dense billowing **smoke as from a smelting furnace**; and they felt the **mountain** trembling in a violent earthquake. The “black cloud” of smoke brought “darkness” to the sky (Deut. 4:11; cf. Ex. 20:21).

Only **Moses** (19:20) and **Aaron** (v. 24) were permitted on the mountain; **the priests** and **the people** were to stand before it. If they in curiosity saw **the LORD** they would perish (cf. comments on 33:11, 20; John 1:18). Though the Levitical priesthood had not yet been established, the elders (Ex. 3:18) or some young men (24:5) served as priests. **Moses** made three trips to the mountaintop and back (19:3, 7; vv. 8–9; vv. 20, 25). These instructions vividly reminded the people of the immeasurable chasm between the divine and the human, as well as the miracle of divine revelation.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 113 – 115). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**19:1–2** The meeting in chapter 18 between Moses and his father-in-law Reuel took place at “the mountain of God,” which is elsewhere understood to be Mount Horeb/Sinai. Yet it is not until 19:1–2 that Israel is said to arrive at that location. Probably this section of the book of Exodus is an instance of materials being arranged thematically rather than chronologically. While events are usually told according to the order in which they occurred, sometimes it suits the writer's purpose to join materials together according to topic instead. Other biblical writers certainly did this, as can be seen in the arrangement of narratives and prophecies in the book of Jeremiah and in Matthew's presentation of the life of Jesus. The writer wanted to connect the events associated with God's giving of the Law, so he told the important but unrelated account of Moses' meeting with his father-in-law first.

**19:2** Although scholars do not agree on the location of Mount Sinai, this is no reason to conclude that the events said to have taken place there never occurred. While the Bible records the names of many places where the Israelites stayed in the desert following their exodus from Egypt, those places are notoriously hard to identify. They camped only in tents or temporary huts during their

years in the wilderness, and there is no record that they built roads or permanent structures or prepared fields for agricultural purposes. The mention of an oasis with twelve springs (15:27), while helpful, does not provide definitive information about which route the Israelites took to reach Mount Sinai. Thus scholars have suggested various sites in the northern, central, and southern portions of the Sinai Desert, as well as at least one site in western Saudi Arabia.

**19:11, 18** Was the Law given at Mount Sinai, or Mount Horeb (Dt 4:10–13)? Horeb and Sinai are two names for the same location. Early in the book of Exodus the Lord appeared to Moses at Horeb and promised him that the Israelites would worship God on that mountain (3:1–12). That promise was fulfilled in chapter 19 when Israel came to Mount Sinai. Perhaps Horeb and Sinai were names given to the same site by different people groups. Numerous other locations mentioned in the Bible were known by more than one name (cp. Gn 28:19; 31:47; Jos 15:9, 10, 13, 25, 49, 54, 60).

**19:22** Since God had not yet established a priesthood for Israel (see 28:1), the priests mentioned here were probably those who would later become the Levitical priests. The priestly role of offering sacrifice was not limited to men specifically set apart as priests. Cain and Abel. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all acted as priests during their days. Israelites living after the time of Jacob may also have acted as priests on behalf of their families. Moses had previously told Pharaoh the Israelites were commanded to offer sacrifices (5:3; 8:27; 10:25), indicating that he knew some of his countrymen were authorized to perform priestly rituals at that time. Such action would be permissible until the family line of Levi, especially the line of Aaron, was officially designated for priestly service (28:1; Nm 3:6).