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## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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#### COVENANT LAW AT SINAI (19:1–24:18)

##### Introduction

God communicates His covenant law to Israel at Mount Sinai, and the people heartily embrace their renewed covenant relationship with Him. Now that God has delivered Israel from slavery and provided for them on their journey through the wilderness, the stage is set for God to solidify His covenant relationship with them at Mount Sinai. These chapters record the giving of the law at Sinai (Exodus 20:1-23:33), surrounded by narratives describing the people's preparation for and confirmation of their covenant with God (19:1-25; 24:1-18). At both the beginning and the end, the Israelites commit themselves to living according to God's word (19:8; 24:7), and God tells them that if they are faithful, they will be richly blessed when they enter the Promised Land (23:23-33).

##### Gospel Glimpses

**GRACE BEFORE LAW.** Throughout this section, God's gracious acts on Israel's behalf consistently precede His calls for them to keep His covenant law. Before communicating His legal requirements, God twice recounts His recent deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Furthermore, God promises that His angel will pave the way for Israel to enter the Promised Land before He exhorts them to obey (23:20-21). This pattern of grace preceding law reflects the gospel, as we are saved by faith in Christ solely by God's unmerited grace, only after which, as a response to this, are we then called to obedience and good works.

**CONCERN FOR THE OUTCAST.** A core concern of the Sinai legislation is special care for the marginalized and outcast of society. Several statutes outline the rights of slaves (Exodus 21:2-11) and sojourners (22:21; 23:9), as well as widows, the fatherless (22:22-24), and the poor (23:6, 11). Similarly, in His earthly ministry Jesus displays a special concern for the outcast. He heals lepers and a woman who was ceremonially unclean, dines with tax collectors, and shows compassion to prostitutes and adulteresses. Such care for the marginalized is a foretaste of the personal and social wholeness that will exist when Jesus' kingdom comes in its fullness (Revelation 21:4).

**THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.** At the conclusion of the giving of the law, Moses confirms the covenant that God made with Israel by sprinkling "the blood of the covenant" on the altar (Exodus 24:8). Moses, the priests, and the elders then enjoy a fellowship meal with God (24:9-11). This event prefigures the Last Supper, another divine-human meal where Jesus says that the cup is "My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".

**KINGDOM OF PRIESTS.** God tells Israel that the whole earth belongs to Him (Exodus 19:5), and that if they obey Him and keep His covenant they will be for Him “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:6). One of the main functions of priests was to teach people about God. This suggests that for Israel to be a “kingdom of priests” meant that they would teach the nations about God by their faithfulness to His Word. While this concept of an “international witness” is evident elsewhere in the Old Testament, it takes full form in the church’s call to take the gospel to the nations. Alluding to Exodus 19:6, Peter says of the church, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9).

**DIVINE COMMANDMENTS.** Dominating this portion of the book is God’s communication of His commandments to Israel. At no point are these commandments portrayed as burdensome; rather, they are presented as clear parameters for enjoying the gracious privilege of living in relationship with a holy God. Throughout the rest of the Pentateuch God will continue to reveal His will through commandments, and it was by keeping these commandments that Israel was to show their love for God. Although the psalmists later commend the wisdom of the law (Psalm 1:1-2; 19:7-11) and proclaim their love for it (Psalm 119:97, 113, 163), ultimately Israel’s unrepentant heart prohibited them from keeping it. When Jesus came, He affirmed the continual applicability of God’s commandments (Matthew 5:18-19), yet He graciously fulfilled them on our behalf (Matthew 5:17) so that we who are united to Him through faith are credited with His righteousness (Romans 5:17). Although Christians receive this righteousness solely by faith (Rom. 3:22), like Israel we too are called to show our love for God by seeking to keep His commandments (John 14:15; I John 5:3; II John 6).

**THE CHARACTER OF GOD.** The giving of the law at Sinai not only communicates God’s will to Israel but also reveals several aspects of His character. Israel’s arrival at “the mountain” (Exodus 19:2) fulfills God’s promise to Moses at his call that He would “serve God on this mountain” (3:12), thereby showing God’s faithfulness. The various commands to put limits between the people and the mountain reflect God’s holiness (19:12, 14, 21-24). Two major concerns of the laws themselves are care for the outcast (as noted above) and the maintenance of justice within the community. These correlate respectively to the elements of mercy and justice that are central to God’s character. Therefore, in this section, Israel is not being called to follow these commandments as an arbitrary, legalistic framework, but rather to live in a manner that is consistent with the very heart and character of God himself.

**THREE USES OF THE LAW.** Historically, Protestant theologians have distinguished three different uses of the law. First, the pedagogical use teaches us about God’s righteousness and how we fall short of it. In this way the law functions to make us aware of our sin (Romans 3:30). Second, the civil use restrains evil by prescribing punishments for wrongdoing (Deuteronomy 13:6-11). Third, the moral use provides guidance for how we are to live in a way that pleases God (Matthew 5:19).

## **Glossary of Terms**

Pentateuch: The first five books of the Bible.

**Please answer the following questions:**  
**Exodus Chapter 19**

1. What does God mean that He carried them on Eagles' wings? (v. 3)
2. In prefacing the law, the first thing God does is remind Israel that when He rescued them from Egypt, He brought them to himself (19:4). Why might this be significant for understanding the laws and requirements that follow?
3. What is God's covenant that He wanted them to keep? How was the covenant to be kept? (v. 5)
4. What does this tell us about how we are to treat God's commands?
5. Which part of the covenant were they to keep? (vv. 5-6)
6. What does this tell us about how we are to keep God's commands?
7. What promises did God make to them if they obeyed Him? (v. 5)
8. What does it mean that they are His possession? Isn't everyone His? So, what is the difference?
9. Why does He call the people a "kingdom of priests."? A holy nation? (v. 6)

10. How did the people respond to God's instructions? (v. 8)
11. What if anything is significant about the fact that they responded together?
12. What were God's reasons for coming to the people in a dense cloud? Do you think this would help the people believe and follow Moses? Why or why not? (v. 9)
13. What was the point of purification? Why give them three days to prepare? Why wash their clothes? (vv. 14-15)
14. What was the purpose of putting boundaries around the mountain? (v. 16)
15. Why would anyone who touched the mountain die? (v. 12)
16. Explain in your own words "purification" and "consecration." Are there any special events that we as believers need to consecrate ourselves for?
17. What was the symbolic significance of washing their clothes? (v. 14)
18. Why all the spectacles of thunder and lightning? What does the fact that it was the third day, just as Moses said do to show it was not just natural? (v. 16)
19. Where do you think the trumpet sound came from? (v. 16)

20. What is the significance of the trumpet? Why did the people shudder? Do you shudder in fear when you see a lightning storm? What does this show us about the nature of the storm? (v. 16)
21. Why the smoke and fire and earthquake? How do you think you would have felt if you were there? What would your impression of God be? What would your impression of yourself be? How might having seen this powerful display change how you view God and how you live your life?
22. If God is love, why would God kill the people who came on the mountain?
23. What does it mean that He might “break out” against them? What does this show us about God’s character? (v. 24)
24. What does it mean to you that God is transcendent?
25. Imagine if you are in the middle of a display like this. What would your impression of God be? What would your impression of yourself be? How might having seen this powerful display change how you view God and how you live your life?

## **Exodus 20**

1. When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment is, He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39). How are these two emphases—love for God and love for neighbor—reflected in the Ten Commandments?

2. Why is it significant that God spoke these words? How did He validate Himself to them when giving the commands? Why is this important? (vv. 1-17)
3. In introducing the Ten Commandments, God recalls what He has done for Israel (20:2) before calling them to obey Him (20:3-17). Based on this, how should we understand the role of obedience in Israel's relationship with God? How does this parallel the role of good works in relation to the Good News of Jesus?
4. God gave this command for them to follow and here it seems He is showing them the proof that He has the power and authority to give these commands. It is as if He is answering the question "Why should we obey?" or "Who are you that we should listen to you?" He tells them that He is the one who saved them from Egypt. They were saved by His power and His miracles. These were the proof that He was true. It is important for us to realize the authority behind the Word of God. We should obey it because God spoke it. In this instance, how can we know God spoke it? (vv. 2-21)
5. Why do people often worship more than one god? What does the first commandment show us about the exclusivity of following Yahweh? (v. 23)
6. Why do you think people made idols and worshiped them? What do people believe the idols can do for them? Many Christians today would interpret "idols" kind of figuratively and say this includes things like money, pleasure, etc. Is this a valid interpretation? What should we do about the idol worship that goes on all around us?

7. What does it mean that God is jealous? Why can God be jealous, but we can't? What does it mean that God punishes the descendants of wicked people? Is this fair? What does it mean that He shows faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love Him? (v. 5)
8. What does it mean to take God's name in vain? What kinds of things does this include? Do you think it is wrong to say "Oh my G--?" Why or why not? How about using Jesus' name like this? Why do you think people use God's name in this way? Looking at the flip side of this command, if you shouldn't take God's name in vain then how should we use God's name? What does this tell us about how we should view God? (v. 7)
9. When was the Sabbath day each week? What was the purpose for the Sabbath day? What was the model for the Sabbath day? Should we still keep the Sabbath day today? How should we treat Sundays? Should we work on Sundays? Or not? (v. 8)
10. What do you think it means to honor your parents? What is the difference between honoring and obeying? What does the Bible say about how following Christ might affect your relationship with your parents? (v. 12)
11. What benefit is associated with honoring your parents? Why? (v. 12)
12. Define murder. What is the New Testament standard on this issue? (v. 13)

13. What does the Bible classify as adultery? What is normally the world's definition of this? What is the New Testament standard? (v. 14)
14. Define steal. Have you ever stolen anything? What are some methods of stealing that are common in society, but which a lot of people might not consider is stealing? (v. 15)
15. What is normally the motivation for lying? What will lying normally lead to? What are the consequences of lying? What do you think of "white" lies? (v. 16)
16. What does it mean to covet? What is the problem with coveting if it is doesn't hurt anybody (after all it is not stealing)? What are some side effects of coveting? (v. 17)
17. How did the people react to the thunder/lightning? Why were they afraid to hear God speak to them? What similarities can you see here and with Adam/Eve in the garden? (vv. 18-19)
18. What does Moses say is the purpose for God coming to them in this way? How can we increase our fear of God so that we will not sin? (v. 20)
19. Why did God focus on telling them not to have any other gods? So, they weren't to have any other gods. What were they supposed to do? How were they supposed to worship God? (vv. 24-26)
20. Why do you think He gave them these specific criteria for building an altar and offering sacrifices? (vv. 23-26)



## Chapter 21

1. The word translated “rules” in 21:1 may also be translated “judgments.” What quality did Israel’s leaders need to govern God’s people well? How might this insight help those who lead God’s people today?
2. What specific rules for slavery are mentioned here? In what ways are these statutes different than most cultures’ view of slavery? (vv. 2-4)
3. In essence, what did this 6 years of slavery accomplish? (v. 2)
4. Why might a man not want to leave his master? (vv. 4-6)
5. Why might a person sell his daughter as a slave? (v. 7)
6. Why is she not allowed to leave in the 7th year like the male slaves? (v. 7)
7. What was the unstated purpose of this type of slave?
8. How did verses 10-11 protect these women?
9. Why did you think God allows slavery instead of abolishing it? What is the root cause of slavery? Do you think God’s ideal plan allows for slavery?

10. What was the penalty for murder? So what would you say to a person who claims that capital punishment is outdated, cruel, or inhumane? (v. 13)
11. Did God make any differentiation between levels of murder? What? What was the penalty for accidental murder? (vv. 13-16)
12. How serious is it to strike or curse a parent? (v. 15)
13. What was the penalty for injuring another person in a fight and causing that person to miss time at work? (vv. 18-19)
14. What was the penalty for striking a pregnant woman? Taking the context into account, what would the penalty be if the unborn child was harmed or died? (v. 22)
15. Explain the phrase “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound.” (vv. 23-24)
16. Is this punishment too strict? How do you think enacting these laws in society might change a society? What effect would these laws have? Why were God’s standards so strict?
17. Did masters have the right to kill their slaves? How about striking them? What was the penalty for causing permanent bodily harm to the slave? How do these laws protect the slaves? (vv. 28-33)
18. Why should the animal be killed although they have no moral concept? Is this a good standard to apply today? (v. 28)

19. Why do so many laws here focus on animals? What does this show us about God's laws?
20. What does verse 29 tell us about the owner's responsibility towards caring for his animals? What is this concept of redemption in verse 30?

## **Exodus 22**

1. Why must a thief pay more than what he stole to begin with? Isn't it enough to just give back what he had stolen? (v. 1)
2. Why is a person not punished if he kills a thief during the night? What does this tell us, if anything, about God's thoughts toward self-defense or protecting one's own property? Why is it important if the sun is up or not when this happens? (vv. 2-3)
3. In what case was a thief to be sold? How does this relate to what we learned in chapter 21 about the laws of slavery? What do you think of this law to deal with thieves? (v. 4)
4. What kind of modern day applications can we make from the principles in these verses?
5. Why would someone allow their animals to graze in somebody else's field? What was the punishment for this? What principle can we glean from this? (v. 5)

6. Explain the law in verse 6? What was the purpose for this law? How would this law help to prevent similar occurrences? Is it reasonable for someone to be punished for an accident? What does this law show us about God's opinion of accidents?
7. Explain the concept of restitution. Why do you think restitution is given so frequently as the punishment for crimes? How does this type of law punish the criminal and deter crime? How does it protect the victim and ensure that their cases are dealt with appropriately? Do you think that restitution should be more common in modern day laws? (vv. 6-15)
8. Explain the purpose for the laws in verses 7-8.
9. Do you think there is any relationship between restitution and repentance? If so, what?
10. Is restitution a universal principle or a cultural principle for that time and place? How might it differ in application than back then?
11. What was the penalty for a man sleeping with a woman prior to marriage? How did this help protect the woman? What role did the father have after this kind of situation?
12. Why might the father let his daughter marry a man like this after doing this? (v. 16)
13. Why might the father refuse giving his daughter to a man like this? (v. 17)

14. What does this law/punishment show us about God's thoughts towards sex?
15. Why was the punishment mentioned for the sins in verses 18-20 so severe?
16. Do you think these laws (if enforced) were strong deterrents to engaging in these revolting behaviors? How would these laws protect society today?
17. What is the reason for the command in verse 21? What principle does this demonstrate?
18. Why do you think God makes special laws for protecting the widow and orphan? What does this show us about God's heart towards societies' outcasts?
19. What does this show us our attitude should be towards those less fortunate than ourselves? How can we reach out to these types of people? (vv. 22-27)
20. Why might somebody curse God? How should we treat rulers/leaders? Who put these leaders/rules over us? What can we learn from verse 29?

## **Exodus 23**

1. What is the normal motivation for bearing a false report? (v. 1)
2. What does it mean that "you should not follow the crowd in doing wrong"? (v. 2)

3. What would most people do if they saw their enemies ox or donkey lost or in trouble?  
What is the principle in these verses? (vv. 4-5)
4. What can we learn from verse 6?
5. What does it mean to “keep far from a false charge”? (v. 7)
6. What is the problem with taking bribes? (v. 8)
7. What is the principle taught in verse 9? How does this verse relate to the “so called” Golden rule found in Matthew 7:12?
8. Why do you think God set this law for leaving the land fallow in the 7th year? What effect did this have on the land? How about the poor? Since in one year they would have no crops, what should do in the previous years to prepare for that? (vv. 10-13)
9. What were the three feasts? What was the purpose of each feast? (v. 14-19)
10. What were they supposed to do for each feast? (v. 17)
11. What were they supposed to bring? What kind of gifts were they to bring to God (v. 18)?  
What can we learn from this about giving?

12. What is special about the angel in verse 20? Do you think anyone might get the concept of “guardian angel” from this passage?

13. Who was going to destroy the Canaanites? (v. 21)

14. If the people listened and obeyed what would the Lord do in return? (v. 22)

15. Who was the Lord going to wipe out? (v. 23)

16. What were they to do to the other gods? (v. 24)

17. What four things did the Lord promise if they worshipped the Lord? (vv. 25-26)

18. How were the Hivites, Canaanites, Hittites to be driven out? (vv. 29-30)

19. What would be the borders of the land established by the Lord? (v. 31)

20. What were the Israelites to not make with the inhabitants of the land and why? (vv. 32-33)

## **Exodus 24**

1. Who was to come up to the Lord, according to verse one? (v. 1)
2. Who alone could approach the Lord, according to this verse? (v. 2)
3. What was the people's response to the Lord's laws? (v. 3)
4. Why did Moses write down what God said since he had already recounted it to the people?  
What is the advantage of written Scripture as opposed to just oral? (v. 4)
5. What was the purpose of the altar? How about the purpose of the 12 pillars? (v. 4)
6. What does it mean the "blood of the covenant?" Why sprinkle the people with blood? (v. 8)
7. What kind of offerings were made and by whom? (v. 5)
8. What did Moses do with the blood? (v. 6)
9. What did Moses read to the people? (v. 7)
10. What did Moses do with the blood he had saved? (v. 8)



11. What was under God's feet? (v. 9)

12. Why could the elders and Moses now go up to meet with God? What was the purpose of this event? (vv. 9-11)

13. Who saw God, according to these verses? (vv. 9-11)

14. What was God going to give Moses? What did they contain? (v. 12)

15. Who went up on the mountain? Who was left in charge while Moses was on the mountain? (v. 13)

16. Who was to settle disputes while Moses was gone? (v. 14)

17. What covered the mountain and how long? (vv. 15-16)

18. When did God call to Moses? (v. 16)

19. What did the glory of the Lord look like to the Israelites? (v. 17)

20. How long was Moses on the mountain? (v. 18)