

Teachings

First Seen in a Basket, Last Seen on a Mountain Top The Extraordinary Life of Moses

PART 13. AN APPOINTMENT WITH GOD

At the end of Book 1, we left Moses leading the Israelites on the last leg of their journey to Mount Sinai. In the third month after their dramatic departure from Egypt they finally arrive and camp before the mountain to keep their appointment with God, which will set them apart from all other nations (Exodus 19:1-2).

From Slaves to a Kingdom of Priests

When Moses ascended the mountain for the first time, God revealed His momentous plan for the future of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6):

“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. 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.”

They would be a special nation under God as King, set aside to serve as priests to bring the knowledge of Him to all other nations, provided they kept His covenant, which the people agreed to do (Exodus 19:8):

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

The Ten Commandments

God was leading the Israelites to Canaan to fulfil the promise He made in His covenant with Abraham and his descendants which was based on Abraham’s faith in God’s promises (Genesis 15:6 & Romans 13). As a sign of the Abrahamic covenant, every male Israelite child had to be circumcised (Genesis 17:10-11).

During their sojourn at Mount Sinai, God added the requirement to keep of a system of laws which became known as the Law of Moses. The expanded covenant is generally referred to as the Mosaic Covenant, commonly called the Old Covenant by Christians. More of this in Part 14.

Exodus 19:16-20 records God coming down upon Mount Sinai to lay the foundation of the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments, to the Israelites in an audible voice, perhaps the most dramatic event in world history since the Genesis flood!

“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. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 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. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain.”

Who Heard the Commandments?

The iconic 1950s Cecil B. DeMille movie showed that only Moses alone actually heard God speak on the mountain; but the actual Bible account is vastly different. Firstly, Moses was accompanied by Aaron (Exodus 19:24):

“Then the Lord said to him, “Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you.”

Teachings

and secondly the Israelite people gathered at the foot of the mountain and also heard God speak (Deuteronomy 4:10-13):

*"Gather the people to Me, and **I will let them hear My words**, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.' Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. **And the Lord spoke to you** out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice. **So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments**; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone."*

This is the only recorded time in history when God spoke to an entire nation! God wanted the people to hear first-hand that they may learn to fear Him and teach the commandments to their children. However, there was another reason. Exodus 20:19 tells us:

"Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

It resulted in the people appointing Moses to act as a go-between them and God, which was undoubtedly God's will. It would have been unpractical to assemble the people for the time needed for Him to communicate all the detailed civil laws, instructions for building and operating the tabernacle, and the priesthood, offerings, feasts and Sabbaths which comprise the Mosaic law.

God or Angel?

Exodus 19:3 states that **God**, spoke on Mount Sinai:

"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: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.'"

while Acts 7:38 refers to **the Angel** who spoke to him:

"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai"

So how can "God" also be "the Angel"?

The answer is that the Greek word "aggelos" translated angel also means **messenger**, as in Luke 7:24 "When the messengers of John had departed".

In fact, the YLT (Young's Literal Translation) uses "messenger" rather than "angel" in Acts 7:38:

"This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the messenger who is speaking to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers who did receive the living oracles to give to us"

In Part 5 in Book 1 of this series "Called from a Burning Bush", it was concluded that the Angel of the Lord who spoke from the burning bush was a Messenger sent by God the Father, and that the Messenger was God the Son who came down to deliver God's people from the power of Pharaoh and lead them into the Promised Land. Thus the Messenger who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai was also God the Son, which is why He is called "God", and "the Lord" in Exodus 19:3. Further evidence is found in Genesis 16:7-13 and Judges 6:11-23 where the Angel of the Lord as called the Lord.

The Cultivated Olive Tree

The Bible tells us that while they did fulfil their duty as custodians of God's word, as a nation they failed to obey His voice and keep His covenant, and eventually forfeited the Kingdom and Priesthood when they rejected Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 21:42-44:

Teachings

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

This came to pass when the Church was birthed on the Day of Pentecost and the Kingdom and Priesthood were given to the Church, as confirmed in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

However, Paul, in Romans 11:5 tells us that not all Jews rejected Jesus, and a remnant remained in the Kingdom and were joined by the incoming Gentile believers:

"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

He went on to reveal, in Romans 11:25-26, that Israel's forfeiture was not final, and that the nation as a whole will eventually rejoin the Kingdom:

"blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved."

In Romans 11:16-24, Paul used the illustration of a cultivated olive tree, which the believers at Rome would be a very familiar with, to illustrate the continuity of the Kingdom of God despite Israel's rejection of Jesus and the introduction of Gentiles. The majority of Israelites are likened to broken-off branches who will be eventually grafted back in, and Gentile believers to branches from a wild olive tree who are grafted in to join the remnant branches in the cultivated olive tree.

Luke 21:24-27 reveals that the national salvation of Israel will occur at the time of the end just prior to the return of Jesus:

"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

In **Part 14: "The Law and the Covenant"** Moses receives more laws and promises and leads the Israelites into the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant culminating in a celebration feast in the presence of God on Mount Sinai.