

Exodus 19: "On Eagles' Wings"

- I. "I brought you to myself on Eagle's wings."
 - a. This is highly personal—Israel's deliverance is not a program or natural occurrence, but a personal matter between God and his people.
 - b. God was present at Sinai
 - c. Curiously, Moses doesn't have to go up to be with God. He doesn't have to go up to the eagle's nest. God comes down to dwell with the people.
 - d. This descent from the mountaintop culminates with God's descent into the world in the incarnation.
 - i. The residence of God turns out to be with the people themselves.
 - e. How will God dwell with a sinful people?
 - f. Note that obedience to God will go beyond simply observance of written laws.
 - g. Notice that the reality of the God-people relationship is not being brokered here. This is about a new quality of that relationship.
 - i. The law is not a contract or formal agreement.
 - ii. Relationship is the core issue.
- II. "You shall be my treasured possession"
 - a. The language of the love is here.
 - b. The Sinai covenant does not inaugurate God's adoption of Israel. Their adoption happened more with Abraham.
 - c. These people are already God's covenant people that he is remembering.
- III. "If you obey my voice and keep my covenant."
 - a. The view here is that the Sinai covenant is conditional.
 - i. Israel's future is conditional.
 - ii. Israel's distinctiveness depends on moment-by-moment listening to God's voice.
 - b. "Walking on egg shells" is not what God has in mind.
 - c. Obedience is a way that the people can exhibit their trust of God.
 - i. The laws and statutes include the 10 commandments and what is given not only here but along the way.
 - ii. Sinai doesn't exhaust Israel's covenant obligation.
 - d. To keep covenant is not a new concept
 - i. The Abrahamic covenant was unconditional. (see 2.24, 6.4-5)
 - ii. Commitment at 19.8 is a commitment to obey all future directives as well.

1. This is really a commitment personally to God rather than to the specific laws.
- e. Israel is to keep covenant for the sake of the world. (They're already accepted by God.) The Sinai covenant is giving of vocation in the world.
- f. The Golden Calf incident doesn't overturn the Abrahamic covenant. (32.13)
 - i. The unconditional covenant is visible (see Deut. 4.31, 30.1-5, Judges 2.1, I Sam 12.22)
- g. However, a generation that rejects God postpones, and may not see, the promise fulfilled
 - i. God's basic acceptance is always present.
- IV. "A kingdom of priests, a holy nation..."
 - a. We're moving past just a people or tribe towards a national entity.
 - i. The calling here is to be a people of God in God's world.
 - b. Inclusivity. The people's spoken response is made by all members of the community.
 - i. Women have a decisive role in Exodus' early chapters (see 1.15-22, 2.1-10, 3.22, 4.24-6)
 - c. The Priesthood of all believers has its roots in this passage.
- V. "Because the earth is mine."
 - a. Note that the personal language is used with respect to all creation.
 - b. Exodus is creation-wide in its scope (9.16)
 - c. Redemption of Israel is not an end in itself.
 - d. This includes the non-human created order
 - i. Throughout Exodus the natural order (wind, waves, sea, frogs, etc.) advance God's purposes.
 - e. Once out of anti-creational Egypt, the wilderness begins to bloom (7.24, 15.23, 17.5-6, 9.18)
 - f. God's gift of the Law is a means by which God's cosmic victory might be realized in all spheres.
 - g. When the tabernacle is built it too will reveal a creational essence.
- VI. Discussion Questions
 - a. What is the Christian equivalent to the pledge in verse 8?
 - b. Describe what you know about how an eagle cares for her young.
 - c. Is this where Israel becomes the "chosen" people?
 - d. Why does God ask for generalized commitment before giving the actual laws?

- e. Is there a difference between obeying God's voice and obeying the Ten Commandments?
- f. "For all the earth is mine." What does this phrase add to our understanding?
- g. Why is all the earth-shaking phenomena important here, but doesn't appear very much elsewhere in the OT?
- h. What is it like being in the crowd that ratifies the proposed covenant? Where are you standing? What is it like for you as you undertake the three day preparations? What do your neighbors say? How do you feel about Moses?