

God's Plan for a Kingdom of Priests

Opener: What's an example of a covenant we make today?

Scripture: God's Covenant with Abraham. The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ²"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:1-3

God's Covenant with the Israelites on Mt. Sinai. On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. ²After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. ³Then 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 descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now 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, ⁶you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." Exodus 19:1-6

God's Covenant with the Church. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. I Peter 2:9-10

Discussion Questions

1. In Exodus 3:12, God said to Moses, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." They had arrived at Mt. Sinai just 3 months after escaping Egypt and would camp there for nearly a year. How does what's described in Exodus 19:1-2 fulfill God's promise to Moses?
2. God has a plan. Look at the 3 covenants described above. How was what God was calling the Israelites to in Exodus 19:1-6 a major development in that plan? How did it affect their identity and role in His Kingdom? How did it prepare them to receive the 10 Commandments and other law?
3. How did this covenant set Israel apart from all other nations? Why would God single them out? Ex. 19:3-6
4. God reminded them that He had delivered them, carried them on eagles' wings, and brought them to Himself. What does all that imply or symbolize? Exodus 19:4
5. How is the covenant described in Exodus 19:5-6 conditional? Was it "obey and you will be accepted," or was it "you are accepted, therefore obey"?
6. If they obey Him fully and keep His covenant they will become (i) His treasured possession, (ii) a kingdom of priests, and (iii) a holy nation. What do each of these mean and how do they fit into God's plan for the world?
7. Peter applied these words from Exodus to the early church—the community that had formed around the person of Jesus—which clearly included Jews and Gentiles. How is what God spoke to them fulfilled in us?
 - God gave the Israelites freedom from the Egyptians to do what? Exodus 19:5-6
 - Christ has given believers freedom in His righteousness to do what? I Peter 2:9-10

Wrap Up: God's plans were far bigger than Israel initially realized. He established a covenant with them that would set them apart from all other nations as God's chosen people. Everything else in the OT—in fact, everything else in human history—can be explained in terms of the covenant relationship described in Exodus 19:1–6. It has no parallel in any other religion. It assures us that God is unwaveringly committed to accomplishing His purpose for this world. And in Christ, that plan is guaranteed.