*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 27 – August 1

*Exodus Chapters Nineteen and Twenty*

**Monday, July 27 Exodus 19:1-15**

*“Out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession”*

The Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai and set up camp. Immediately Moses climbs the mountain to speak with God, the first of three such trips in this chapter. Moses ascends the mountain not simply to commune with God, but to bring God’s message back down to the people. He is the one through whom God is going to teach the people about who he is.

God’s first speech to Israel is a simple message: remember and obey. First, think back to what God has done in destroying Egypt and bringing them to himself. Second, abide by the commands that God will give them. That Israel’s faithfulness to God’s laws is required should in no way be understood to mean that Israel worked for her salvation. This entire scene at the mountain and the subsequent laws are predicated on what God has already done. They have been saved by God – he has brought them out of Egypt – now, obedience facilitates their relationship with God. The people do not earn their salvation, but once saved, they are obligated to act in a manner worthy of their high calling. This is true in the New Testament as well.

*Having saved us from our sin, Lord, we respond with obedient lives. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 28 Exodus 19:16-25**

*“Moses led them out to meet with God”*

Our passage records Israel’s first encounter with God as a nation. True, they have seen God at work in bringing them out of Egypt, and he has been leading them with pillars of cloud and fire and providing for their physical needs. Still, it is here on Mount Sinai that the Israelites are formally “introduced” to their God. Judging by their reaction, they may have gotten more than they bargained for.

Approaching God is a serious matter. This is why it must be done only on God’s terms. Even the Israelites, whom God has just delivered from Egypt, whom God calls his “son,” cannot simply walk up to him as they please. There are certain rules and regulations that must be followed. Here, these rules are essentially two: consecration and waiting for the trumpet. Precisely what consecration involves in this context is not clear, although it does include the washing of clothes. Back in chapter three, Moses had to do something by way of consecration before he could approach God: he had to remove his sandals (3:5).

*Christ has become our consecration, Father, enabling us to approach you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 29 Exodus 20:1-2**

*“God gave the people these instructions”*

We come to one of the most widely known portions of Scripture, the Ten Commandments. Even outside Christian circles, the average person on the street has at least some passing acquaintance with what these laws contain and from where they originated. Verse 2 is not a commandment itself, but is a prologue that properly sets up the frame of mind from which all the commandments, indeed all of Israel’s existence, should be viewed. It reminds Israel who God is and what he has done. This God has brought the Israelites out of Egypt. The relationship between them has already been established in the covenant God made with their ancestor Abraham. Now they are to learn what a redeemed life should look like.

The law, in other words, is connected to grace. It is based on God’s gracious act of saving his people; it is not a condition of becoming God’s people, for that has already happened in the Exodus. They now receive rules for holy living, so that they can become more and more God’s holy people. This is what God wants for them.

*Because you first loved us, Lord, we love you by living obediently. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 27 – August 1

*Exodus Chapters Nineteen and Twenty*

**Thursday, July 30 Exodus 20:3-11**

*“The first four commandments”*

*The first commandment (v. 3).* This command follows naturally the prologue (v. 2). Because God is the Savior of Israel, Israel is to have no other gods.

*The second commandment (v. 4-6).* This command goes into greater detail than the first, and it seems to follow it logically. Given that the Israelites are to have no other gods (the first commandment), they are not to make and worship any idol of any kind, whether as a representation of another nation’s god or as a representation of the Lord God of Israel.

*The third commandment (v. 7).* The name of God, represented in Hebrew as *YHWH*, belongs to God. It is the name whose significance was explained to Moses in chapters 3-4, and it must be treated with the highest respect.

*The fourth commandment (v.8-11).* The command is given in three parts: the command itself (v. 8), specifications of what it means to keep the commandment (vv. 9-10), and the reason for the commandment (v. 11). The length of the command points to the importance of keeping Sabbath.

*These four commandments, Lord, teach us how to better love you. Amen.*

**Friday, July 31 Exodus 20:12-17**

*“The last six commandments”*

*The fifth commandment (v. 12).* The first people with whom we learn to interact are our parents, and to honor them is to look to them to teach us how to treat others properly.

*The sixth commandment (v. 13).* The prohibition against murder reiterates what has been true since the beginning of creation when Cain murdered his brother Abel.

*The seventh commandment (v. 14).* The relationship between husband and wife is of highest importance to God who wants the physical intimacy of the marriage bond to be maintained.

*The eighth commandment (v. 15).* As further developed in chapters 21-22, stealing includes kidnapping, and taking animals and material things.

*The ninth commandment (v. 16).* The particular application of this commandment is usually legal, prohibiting bearing false testimony in a court of law.

*The tenth commandment (v. 17).* Coveting refers to an inward desire that, if fanned, will lead to action that breaks earlier commandments that prohibit adultery and stealing.

*These six commandments, Lord, teach us how to better love one another. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 1 Exodus 20:18-21**

*“They stood at a distance, trembling with fear”*

Having heard the voice of God, the people beg Moses not to have God speak to them again. It is apparently such a frightful experience that they fear for their lives. Moses’ answer to the people is that such fear and trembling in God’s presence is an improper response: “Do not be afraid.” Moses does not say, “Yes, O Israel, quake and tremble. You have met your God and he should terrify you.” Yet note the reason Moses gives to allay their fears: “God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” In other words, verse 20 can be paraphrased: “Do not be afraid. God is giving you a taste of himself so that this memory will stick with you to keep you from sinning.”

God is giving them this experience for a reason. An overwhelming fear will give way to a healthy fear, one that will result in faithfulness on their part. “Don’t be afraid of God so you can fear him.” God doesn’t give his commands in order that we become terrified of him when we disobey, but rather that out of a proper respect (“fear”) of God we obey his laws.

*While I am not afraid of you, Lord, I fear the consequences of my disobedience. Amen.*