

This week is the second installment of an unusual series.¹ Moses gets three glimpses of God at Sinai (Exodus 3; 19; 32-34). As we encounter these texts in The Gospel Project, we will stop and consider what they show us about God. The series will be spread out by the events of the Exodus story (January 26; February 23; March 8). If you have any questions, email me at benjamin.j.williams@gmail.com

Sermon Outline

“The Second Revelation” EXODUS 19

Introduction

1. Recall the first revelation (**Exodus 3:1-6**).
2. The Second Revelation (**Exodus 19**)
 - a. After the Exodus
 - b. Before the Covenant
 - c. Same Mountain

Quick Summary of Ancient Cosmology

1. **Two Places**
 - a. The biblical cosmos is made up of two places: heaven & earth. Earth is “this world” and heaven is “the other world.”
 - b. “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind.” (**Psalms 115:16**)
2. **Cosmology**
 - a. *Naturalism: There is no “other world.”* The material world we inhabit is the only world. There are no angels, spirits, demons, gods, or souls. This is close to the view of the Sadducees (**Acts 23:8**).
 - b. *Deism: The other world is distant.* Most people, including Christians, are functionally deists. We typically believe that a spiritual realm exists, but we do not expect it to intrude on our ordinary life.
 - c. *Pagan: The other world is near.* Ancient pagans took an opposite extreme. They thought a deity or spirit was lurking behind every tree and a demon behind every shadow. This was the prevailing view through most of world history and still is in many regions.
 - d. *Biblical: The other world is near & far.* The ancient Hebrews (and later Christians) believed that God and his realm was near, but morally separated by human sin. The two realms were meant to overlap, but sin created distance. Humanity’s exile from Eden – a place where God and man walk together – represents this concept well.
3. *Sacred Space:* One result of the biblical view as well was the belief that *there were some places or events wherein heaven and earth overlap*. Sinai is one of those place/events. Others would include Bethel and the temple mount in Jerusalem.

Four Things We Learn About God

1. **Initiation**
 - a. The LORD called to him out of the mountain ... (**Exodus 19:2-6**)

¹ Primary source for this series and the commentary quotations which follow: Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, Library of Biblical Theology (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008).

- b. "Behold I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." (**Exodus 19:9**)
- c. God initiates the meeting. You don't find God. God is looking for you.

2. Obedience

- a. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." (**Exodus 19:8**)
- b. Obedience is a response to God's saving action.
- c. The choice to obey precedes the commandments.

3. Consecration

- a. The LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them ..." (Exodus 19:10)
- b. v. 11, "*be ready*": Meeting God takes first priority.
- c. v. 12, "*set limits*": Meeting God is dangerous, so meeting God requires limits.
- d. v. 12, "*take care*": Meeting God warrants attention and intentionality.

4. Intrusion

- a. "All the people in the camp trembled. ... And they took their stand at the foot of the mountain." (**Exodus 19:16-17**)
- b. v. 17, "*they took their stand*": This is Alamo language! This is apocalyptic!
- c. v. 19, *Trumpet & Thunder*: This reminds us of the return of Christ, as it should, as that will also be God crashing into our world.
- d. v. 20, "*The Lord came down*": This is a meeting of Heaven and Earth, of God and Man.
- e. v. 24, "*lest He break out against them*": The concern here is actually that we might get a little more of God's presence than we could handle. This is no user-friendly God!

Conclusion: Our Sinai meeting happens at the cross (Matthew 27:51-54)

As always, feel free to skip any of this you want and just cover the parts you find interesting.

Sermon Questions for Classes:

1. INITIATION:

- a. Is it true that God always acts first in our relationship?
- b. Why is it important to remember that God always “initiates” our relationship with Him?
- c. What are some examples of us forgetting that God acts first?
 - i. “God helps those who help themselves.”
 - ii. “Don’t we save ourselves like Paul said?!” (Philippians 2:12, don’t forget v. 13!!)

2. OBEDIENCE:

- a. Do we agree that obedience is a response to salvation, meaning in this sense that obedience comes after?
- b. Consider Ephesians 2:8-9. Does obedience play any role in our salvation? What?
- c. Can you agree to obey God before you know what He asks (like Israel did at Sinai)? Why do we typically insist on understanding a rule before we obey it? Should we have to understand a rule to follow it?

3. CONSECRATION:

- a. One part of consecration in this story was observing the limits around the base of the mountain. What role should “boundaries” or “limits” play in our relationship with God?
 - i. One version of Christianity thinks of nothing but the “limits” and rules.
 - ii. Another version of Christianity tends to think of nothing but the meeting, the experience of God, heedless of any boundaries. “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”
 - iii. Probably, both are flawed. The boundaries have no purpose except to help us meet God. Meeting God will never end well without acknowledging the boundaries.
- b. What happens when we ignore boundaries? See Genesis 3 and the boundary concerning the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- c. What happens when we focus too much on rules? See Matthew 23:23-24.

4. INTRUSION:

- a. Does God still “intrude” in the world today or does He remain distant? Why or why not?
- b. Isaiah says sin has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2), but Paul says God is near to all of us (Acts 17:27-28). How can both of those things be true? What do they mean?