



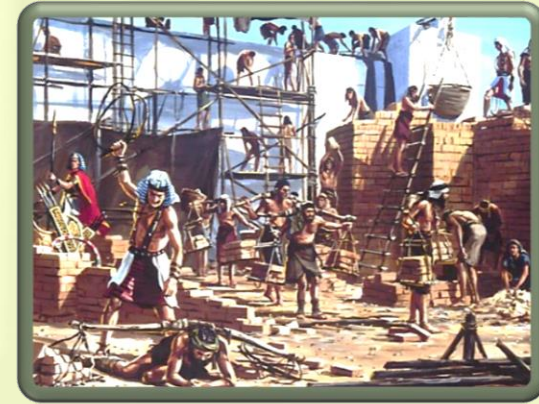
COVENANT AT SINAI

Lesson 7 for May 15, 2021



The relationship between God and Israel had deteriorated due to 400 years of slavery.

As usual, God took the initiative and restored their relationship by renewing the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The people of Israel were then responsible for fulfilling their part of the covenant.



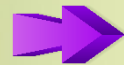
Preparing the covenant:

- God gets close to humans
- God redeems humankind



Signing the covenant:

- Sinai: commandments and symbols

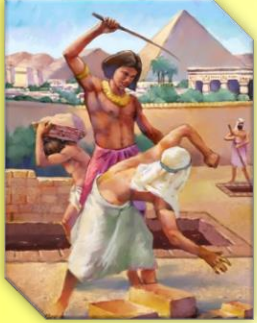


Obligations of the covenant:

- Obedience
- Commitment

GOD GETS CLOSE TO HUMANS

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.” (Exodus 19:4)



God showed grace to Israel by liberating them from harsh slavery, and tenderly leading them to a new covenant relationship with Him.

There are two illustrations in Deuteronomy that represent how God treated Israel:



Dt. 32:10-12. Like an eagle that carries its chicks high. Then it drops them, so they learn to fly. If they cannot, the eagle carries them with its wings again.



Dt. 1:31. Like a father that guides his son by the hand and protects him.



We need God to tenderly guide us and protect us until our relationship with Him has fully matured.

GOD REDEEMS HUMANKIND

"You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation." (Exodus 15:13)



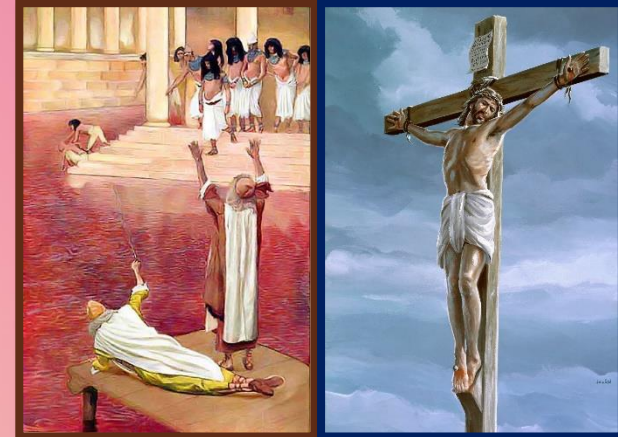
God's first step to help the people of Israel was to redeem them from slavery (Exodus 6:6-7).

A redeemer was someone who helped a close relative who had to sell their land or could not pay for their debts and had become a slave. This redeemer bought the land back or liberated the person from slavery.

God was that redeemer for Israel. To redeem them, He had to "come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 3:8).

What price did God pay to redeem Israel [and ourselves]?

He came down to this world and became human. He paid for our sins by dying on the cross (John 6:51; Ephesians 1:7).



“According to the law Christ Himself gave, the forfeited inheritance was ransomed by the nearest of kin. Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, that dying in humanity He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death. He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man Christ could die. By death He overcame death.”

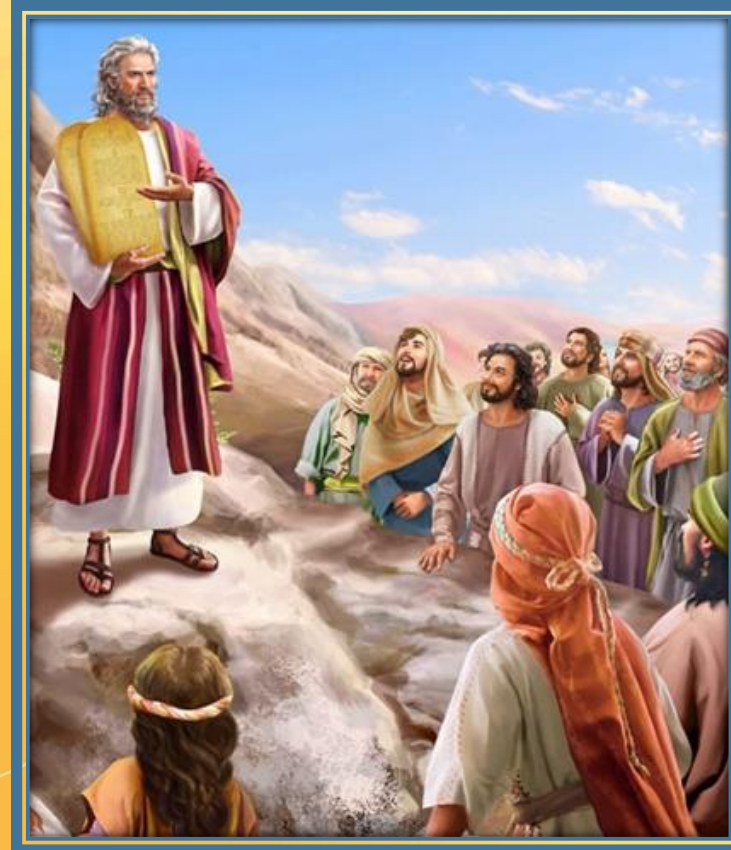
E.G.W. (SDA Bible Commentary, book 7, note on Hebrews 2, p. 925)

SINAI: COMMANDMENTS AND SYMBOLS

"You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3)

The signing of the covenant is found in Exodus 19-24:

1. God led Israel to Mount Sinai (19:1-2)
2. He proposed His covenant to them (19:3-6)
3. The people of Israel accepted the covenant (19:7-8)
4. They had to consecrate themselves for three days, and to set limits around the mount so no one would come too close to God's presence (19:9-25)
5. God came down and proclaimed the Ten Commandments (20:1-17)
6. Moses was chosen as the mediator to close the covenant (20:18-21)
7. The rules of the covenant were detailed (20:22-23:22)
8. The covenant was ratified before 70 elders, and "the blood of the covenant" was sprinkled on the people (24)



SINAI: COMMANDMENTS AND SYMBOLS

"You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3)



God commanded Israel to build a sanctuary for Him, so they could better understand the terms and the meaning of the covenant (Exodus 25:8).

God used the sanctuary and its rites as a symbol of heavenly truths: the plan of Redemption.

This redemption went beyond the liberation from Egyptian slavery. It pointed to the Messiah who would carry our sins on Him and die like the sacrificial animals.

This is the true meaning and purpose of the Everlasting Covenant. It is the salvation that the Lord offers to fallen humanity.



OBEDIENCE

“And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 11:13)

Obedience is key to the covenant. The people of Israel had to obey God even before Sinai: they had to spread blood on the doorposts to get out of Egypt.



If obedience is necessary to stay within the covenant terms, does that mean that we are saved by our obedience?

Salvation is by faith alone. Obedience is just a result of true faith (Rom. 3:20, 24; Rev. 14:12).

Obedience helps us grow spiritually, mentally, and morally (Rom. 7:7). God can use us to proclaim the Gospel to the nations thanks to our obedience.



COMMITMENT

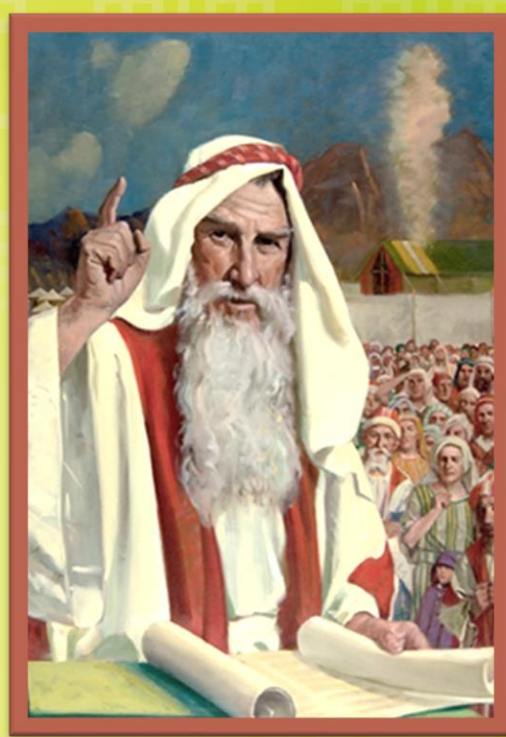
"Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.'" (Exodus 24:7)

The people of Israel had good intentions, but they did not do everything God had commanded. Why?

Because they tried to obey God's covenant by their own efforts. Our own efforts are like "filthy rags" before God (Isaiah 64:6).

They were missing a key ingredient: faith (Hebrews 4:2). After some time, they began to believe that strict obedience to the Law (if that's even possible) would make them worthy of Salvation.

It is not our righteousness that saves us, but God's. When we accept this by faith, He works in us "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13 NIV).



“Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”

E.G.W. (Steps to Christ, cp. 7, p. 62)