

# Sermon Outline

## THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

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### THE PRIESTLY KINGDOM

*Exodus 19:1-6*

#### I. The Savior of the World

- A. Our church's theme this year is "The Savior of the World."
  - 1. God calls his people to be involved in a great many things—the arts, social justice, education, healthcare, etc.
  - 2. But the most important service Christians are to offer the world is *evangelization*, the proclamation of the Gospel.
- B. What is the Good News of Jesus Christ?
  - 1. It is the Good News about what God has done for us in and through the person of Jesus Christ.
  - 2. Jesus is the Kingdom of God in person.
  - 3. In him, all of God's blessings of salvation are found.
  - 4. Thus, the only way to gain the mercy of God is to go to Christ and put our trust in him.
- C. To fully appreciate and apply the Gospel in our lives, we must understand the story of the Old Testament.
- D. That was what we set out to do the early part of this year in January.
  - 1. Our first two lessons set the stage.
    - a. John 4:42: Jesus is the Savior of the whole World, *not* just of Israel.
    - b. Colossians 1:15-17: Jesus alone is the Savior of the World because he is the God-given Beginning and Conclusion of all history.
  - 2. Then we went to the Old Testament.
    - a. Genesis 1:26-28: God made mankind to be his servants in the world—thus, Christian discipleship is about forming World Christians.
    - b. When our first parents disobeyed God, they brought condemnation upon the entire human race.
    - c. But in Genesis 12:1-3, the human race was given a glimmer of hope.  
—God selects a man, Abraham by whom the nations will be blessed.
- E. Even within this condition of judgment, God still holds out mercy and hope.
  - 1. God is not content to allow the human race to go the natural course of judgment.
  - 2. Out of Abraham's family, God will draw the one nation, Israel, through whom the Savior of the World would come.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What must we do to fully understand the Gospel?  
(2) How do John 4:42; Colossians 1:15-17; Genesis 1:26-28 and 12:1-3 help us

understand the work of the Lord Jesus and its place in history? (3) What is Abraham's role in relation to the Gospel?

## II. Reaffirming the Covenant at Sinai

- A. Exodus 19 is that great moment when God reaffirms Israel as his own special people.
- B. The Lord also calls on Israel to make promises to him as well.

**\*Question for reflection:** What is Exodus 19 about?

## III. What the Lord Has Done (Exodus 19:1-4)

- A. When we come to Exodus 19:1, three months had passed since the people of Israel came out of Egypt.
- B. From Rephidim, Israel has arrived at the wilderness of Sinai, at the mountain the Lord designates for his meeting (v 2).
- C. After Israel had set up camp at the foot of the mountain of God, "Moses went up to God" (v 3).
- D. The Lord instructs Moses to tell Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (v 4).
- E. Salvation is ultimately God-centered—we are saved for God.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) When we come to Exodus 19:1, how long has it been since Israel came out of Egypt? (2) What does the Lord instruct Moses to tell Israel in verse 4? (3) What did the Lord do to the Egyptians? (4) The Lord says that he brought Israel out on "eagles' wings." What does this expression communicate?

## IV. Terms and Conditions (Exodus 19:5)

- A. In view of all that he had done for Israel, the Lord—as the Great Savior and the supreme King—now presents his terms to his people.  
—The Lord is establishing the legal framework within which he will relate to his people.
- B. First: The Lord presents Israel with a condition—"if"
  - 1. The word "if" is conditional language.
  - 2. What follows "if" is the criteria that Israel must fulfill if they are to be and remain the Lord's special people.
  - 3. What are the requirements that God places on Israel?  
—God says: "if you will indeed *obey* my voice and *keep* my covenant..."
    - a. In essence, God requires faithfulness from Israel.

- b. The words “obey my voice” refer to all the instructions that God had spoken and will speak through his prophets (Moses, Joshua, etc.).  
—God wants Israel to obey all his instructions from his prophets.
  - c. The words “keep my covenant” refer to the whole relationship between YHWH and Israel that was started with Abraham.
    - i. God wants Israel to be his loyal people, his faithful son.
    - ii. In relation to God, this would mean Israel as a nation cannot exchange the Lord for other gods—the worship of YHWH is Israel’s national religion.
    - iii. In relation to other nations, this would mean that Israel cannot make political alliances of any kind that would harm her loyalty to the Lord.
- C. Second: The Lord explains the result of Israel’s covenant loyalty.
- 1. The Lord says, “you shall be *my treasured possession* among all peoples...”
    - a. “Treasured possession” = “royal property.”
    - b. Israel is to be the Lord’s special property, his prized possession.
  - 2. God has the absolute authority to do this because, as he says, “all the earth is mine.”
    - a. Whether the nations recognize it or not, God owns them.
    - b. While each nation has a right to its own land, our rights are relative to God.  
—As the supreme Landlord, God has the right to give and remove land from people.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) In verse 5, the Lord establishes the legal framework by which to relate to Israel. (2) What is the requirement for Israel to be treated well by YHWH? What is the Lord asking for from Israel? (3) What would happen when Israel keeps faith with the Lord? (4) How is it that the Lord has authority to make Israel “my treasured possession”?

## V. A Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation (Exodus 19:6)

- A. The Lord reveals what being his treasured possession would mean.
  - 1. It would mean being his “kingdom of priests.”
  - 2. It would mean being his “holy nation.”
- B. First, notice the terms God uses to describe the community of Israel.
  - 1. Israel is to be...
    - a. a kingdom.
    - b. a nation.
  - 2. As a nation (*goy*), Israel is now its own distinct people group, with its own values and culture.
  - 3. As a kingdom, Israel is a nation under the rule of a King.
    - a. At this point, Israel’s King is not a human ruler.
    - b. Israel’s King is YHWH, the Lord God himself.

- c. The implication of this is that Israel as nation is meant to be the manifestation, the living, institutional embodiment, of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- C. Notice how the Lord defines the kind of nation and Kingdom Israel is called to be.
  - 1. Israel is called to be...
    - a. “a kingdom *of priests*”
    - b. “a *holy* nation”
  - 2. What does it mean for Israel to be a kingdom of priests?
    - a. Douglas Stuart: Priests “stand between God and humans to help bring the humans closer to God and to help dispense God’s truth, justice, favor, discipline, and holiness to humans” (*Exodus*, 423)
    - b. As a “kingdom of priests,” Israel will be a kingdom administered by God’s priests.
    - c. But given how the apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:9) and John (the author of Revelation) (Rev 1:6; 5:10) would later use this verse to speak about the whole Church, “kingdom of priests” also means that the whole nation—every Israelite—functions as a priest of God to the rest of the world.
    - d. This means that each Israelite is to reveal God to the world.
    - e. The cumulative effect of this would be clear.
      - i. Israel as a whole will be the Lord’s priestly nation to the world.
      - ii. The nations of the world will hear the Word of God, and see what it means to live *under* the rule of God, to live *as* the Kingdom of God.
  - 3. Israel would therefore be a “holy nation,” a nation set apart to serve the purposes and the will of the Lord God.
    - a. Israel is to be God’s holy light to the world, shining forth the holy, life-giving presence of the Lord to a world lost in sin.
    - b. John I. Durham: “Israel as a ‘kingdom of priests’ is Israel committed to the extension of throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s Presence” (*Exodus*, 263).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is involved in being the Lord’s treasured possession? (2) Who is Israel’s King? (3) What does it mean for Israel to be a kingdom of priests? (4) What does it mean for Israel to be a “holy nation”?

## VI. Evangelization as Forming the Priestly Kingdom

- A. What does all this have to do with the spreading of the Gospel or evangelization?
- B. Simply put, *evangelization is about forming the priestly Kingdom of God in the world.* —It’s about gathering the people of God from the nations of the world and making them the Kingdom of God.

- C. When we come to the New Testament, we find that God’s definition of who his people are has expanded.
1. God’s priestly people now include people from the other nations of the world.
  2. This is in keeping with the original promise he made to Abraham; that in Abraham’s descendants, “all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:18).
    - a. The exclusiveness of Israel was therefore only a temporary measure.
    - b. Through the priestly work of Israel, other nations will become part of the Household of YHWH.
    - c. God’s care has always extended to the other nations of the world.
  3. In 1 Peter 2:9, the traditional titles for Israel—terms like “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation”—are now applied to non-Israelites.
  4. When we come to the final book of the Bible, Revelation, the idea of the kingdom of priests incorporates all those whom Christ has saved.
    - a. Revelation 1:6: Christ made us “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father...”
    - b. Revelation 5:10: Christ has made the people he redeemed from the nations of the world, “a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) “Evangelization is about forming the priestly Kingdom of God in the world.” What does this statement mean? Discuss. (2) How has the definition of God’s people been expanded in the New Testament? (3) What do 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6, and 5:10 teach us about who is included in God’s priestly kingdom?

## VII. The Promises We Offer

- A. All the above would have implications for the actual content of our message in evangelization.
- B. First, we hold out *the promise of acceptance* (Ex 19:5)
  1. This is the promise that people can become God’s treasured possession.
  2. The promise of acceptance is important because people are looking for acceptance in some form or fashion.
  3. The acceptance that matters most is from God himself.
- C. Second, we hold out *the promise of meaning, of purpose and direction* (Ex 19:6)
  1. This was what the Lord himself did for Israel at Mount Sinai: “and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”
    - a. To be a priestly kingdom/a holy nation is to be a people with a mission.
    - b. That mission is to work for the reconciliation of the world to God.

2. We have difficulty assimilating a grand vision such as this because the immediate pressures of modern life tend to distract us from what is most important.
  3. But this is where the practice of corporate and private worship comes in.  
—When we make time to be with the Lord by ourselves and with his people, we are reminded of our priestly calling.
  4. But one of the best ways of keeping our mission in mind is by *doing* it!  
—When we practice inviting our non-Christian friends to come home to God, we lock the awareness of God’s mission into our very lives.
- D. Thirdly, we hold out *the promise of God himself* (Ex 19:4).
1. Because the world is already looking for acceptance and meaning, it’s easy to give the impression that acceptance and meaning are the main goals themselves.
  2. But the goal of our salvation is God himself.  
—“I bore you on eagles’ wings and *brought you to myself*.”
  3. Our final reward is not a thing, but a Person; a Person who graciously shares himself with all his people—the Lord God himself.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are three promises we hold out in evangelization? (2) What is the promise of acceptance? (2) What is the promise of meaning? (3) What is the promise of God? Why is this the most important promise of all?

### VIII. Christ Jesus, Our Covenant Keeper

- A. There is one major hurdle to overcome before we gain God and the acceptance and meaning that comes from him.
  1. The hurdle of sin, our lack of covenant faithfulness and perfect obedience.
  2. The promises of God in Exodus 19:5 are conditional: “Now therefore, *if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant*, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples...”
- B. How can sinners like us ever hope to become his people?  
—The answer rests in Jesus Christ.
- C. In the end, God intends for only one person to keep the covenant, and to do so for the rest of us—the perfectly obedient Son of God, the Lord Jesus.
  1. Jesus has kept the covenant and obeyed God for us.
  2. Jesus has earned the Kingdom of God and gives it to his people.
- D. This is what we see in the vision of the prophet Daniel.
  1. In Daniel 7:13-14, a human-like figure approaches the throne of God.
  2. “And to him was given dominion and glory and *a kingdom*, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (v 14).

3. What happens after this human-like divine person receives the kingdom?
  - a. He shares it with his people.
  - b. Daniel 7:27: “And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High...”
4. Daniel 7 gives us a vivid portrayal of the events following the ascension of Jesus.
 

—Upon returning to heaven, Jesus is granted all authority in the universe by God the Father.
5. From Philippians 2:8-9, we learn that this authority is really a reward for Jesus’ perfect obedience even unto the death on the cross.
6. Read Philippians 2 together with Daniel 7 and what do you find?
 

—Jesus is the faithful Israelite who has earned the Kingdom of God for his people by his perfect obedience to God’s Word.
- E. Therefore, this is how we sinners—both Israelite and non-Israelite—become God’s people: *We do so by putting our trust in Jesus Christ.*
- F. From there, God will grant us a share in his work of reconciliation.
 

—2 Corinthians 5:18-20: “<sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the major hurdle to our attaining God’s promised rewards? (2) Who is the answer to this hurdle? (3) What does Daniel 7:13-14, 27 and Philippians 2:8-9 teach us about the relationship between Christ’s obedience and our gaining the Kingdom? (4) In the end, how do we sinners become God’s people? (5) What does God grant us after we have been reconciled to him through Christ?

## **IX. Reconciled and Reconciling**

**It is by the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ that God makes us his treasured possession; his holy kingdom of priests in the world. As God’s priestly people, our work is now to reveal God’s life-giving Presence to the world, calling people to be reconciled to God.**