

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

There must be thousands of jokes that include Moses, Jesus, and someone else. Have you heard them? Since we are studying the life of Moses now, it might be good to stop for a minute and tell one. You may have heard it, but it's one of my favorites.

Moses and Jesus were part of a threesome playing golf one day. Moses pulled up to the tee and drove a long one. The ball landed in the fairway, but rolled directly toward a water trap. Quickly Moses raised his club, the water parted, and the ball rolled to the other side, safe and sound.

Next, Jesus strolled up to the tee and hit a nice, long one directly toward the same water trap. It landed right in the center of the pond and kind of hovered over the water. Jesus casually walked out on the pond and chipped the ball right up onto the green.

The third guy got up and sort of randomly whacked the ball. It headed out over the fence and into oncoming traffic on a nearby street. It bounced off a truck and hit a tree. From there, it bounced onto the roof of a shack close by and rolled down into the gutter, down the drainspout, out onto the fairway, and straight toward the aforementioned pond. On the way to the pond, the ball hit a little stone and bounced out over the water and onto a lily pad, where it rested quietly.

Suddenly a very large bullfrog jumped up on the lily pad and snatched the ball into his mouth. Just then an eagle swooped down, grabbed the frog, and flew away. As they passed over the green, the frog squealed with fright and dropped the ball, which bounced right into the hole for a beautiful hole-in-one.

Moses turned to Jesus and said, "I hate playing with your Dad."

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

Pretty bad theology, but in a weird way illustrative of Israel and what God is doing for them. Return with me to the Desert Palms course—the original desert classic; but here the people are not playing golf, they are playing with obedience and doing it inconsistently. (*How's that for a transition? I should get an award!*)

God the Father has been showing His people some miraculous displays of His power, but they are not as appreciated as they should be. The Israelites are poor players and very poor winners. In a very short period of time the Israelites have seen some amazing things. What a wonderful display of God's ability and power! You would think they would be thrilled. At almost every challenge and test, however, they have reverted to their complaining. They appear like the fictitious Moses in our opening joke and seem really to be playing with God.

For example, watch their attitude and God's provision in Ex. 17:1-7:

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2] So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" 3] But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" 4] Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5] The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6] I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7] And he called the place Massah [Massah means testing.] and Meribah [Meribah means quarreling.] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" .

This reaction seems very frustrating, until we realize again they really are children, reflecting all the attitudes and qualities of spoiled and immature little ones. We then begin to glimpse the patience God exercises as He deals with His children. There will come a time when much will be required of them as they are taught and experience more of

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

God's provision and presence. They will feel the painful consequences of their refusal to grow up into maturity, but for now we will see a loving parent deal with His very immature children.

We see after a visit from Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (Ex. 18:1-17), the children of Israel have arrived at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1-2). 1] *In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai.* 2] *After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.*

This is where we want to pause and camp today as well. This moment at the foot of Mt. Sinai is very significant for Moses and the children of Israel. I want to review the context of this moment from two perspectives before we see Moses climb the mountain and receive the Ten Commandments.

The Review of Moses' Individual Journey —Exodus 3:12; 19:1-2

Turn back to Exodus 3:12—*And God said, "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."*

I want us to think what this experience at Mount Sinai must have meant to Moses. This whole area is where Moses herded his father-in-law's sheep. He knew where the water was and how the terrain was arranged. He had been in isolation, in an exile of sorts, for 40 years. Then about three months before, he saw a burning bush on this very mountain and heard God's call to return to Egypt and free the people of God from their slavery. Ex. 3:10—"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Moses had responded to the scene of the burning bush by offering five excuses for not going and doing what God asked. Four of the five excuses God had answered. The fifth ("I'm not available") finally made God angry, but eventually Moses agreed to return to Egypt to act as God's servant as He freed His people.

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

Do you remember the miracles God showed Moses to convince him he would be able to go back to Israel and help free the Israelites? When he started with the "Who am I?" defense, God countered with a promise: Ex. 3:11—"But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12] And God said, "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 [The Hebrew is plural.] will worship God on this mountain."

This circumstance is not uncommon for God to bring about in our lives. He calls us to do something, but we have little faith to believe it will happen. God's Word, however, is true. He will fulfill His promises as we walk in obedience to Him, and the proof and signs of His calling will be evident *along the way*, not necessarily *before*.

When you see the promises of God fulfilled, I encourage you to do what God told Moses he should do when he returned to Sinai—worship! We must be careful not to forget the miraculous ways God has led us, provided for us, and brought us to the place He has promised.

So the sign God promised is now being fulfilled as Moses stands at the foot of this mountain. What a moment this must have been for Moses! Here he is on his old stomping ground with two million people as the sign or proof that God is with him and has sent him to bring Israel out of Egypt. He now has two million reasons to believe God.

God initially gave Moses some signs that he was called to return to Egypt. Later, things happened as God promised. After the "Who am I?" defense, God also began to teach Moses through the things in his hand (the common ordinary things) that He would be able to use him:

- **A staff**—God used the staff on a number of occasions in Egypt; in the escape, and

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

for the provision of Israel.

- **A hand**—that became leprous and was later healed
- **A cup of water**— that became blood

The burning bush was a private experiences Moses had with God, but its lessons became instruments God used in public settings as Moses followed His command to return to Israel. When God calls us to obedience, He'll often use common, ordinary circumstances to prepare us. Once we get to the destination of our calling, we will discover God continues to use those private experiences, whether successes or failures, to help others find the Lord. Look for them—and when you see them repeated/replicated, worship God wherever you find yourself, or you will forget!

These aren't key moments for Moses alone; God now reviews His journey with the people of Israel. Using the language God employs, we'll call it:

The Review of the Eagles' Journey
—Exodus 19:3-6.

3 Then 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 house 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. 5 Now 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, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

These words are bracketed like the frame around a picture.

This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel" —v. 3a. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now 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, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

"These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites"—v. 6b.

"As a picture frame highlights the importance of the artwork, this literary frame highlights the importance of the written material. These three verses are bursting with life. Contained within is crucial, life-giving information for the Israelites and us. The Apostle Peter viewed these words as crucial, for he quotes from them in 1 Peter 2:9, making it clear that these words were not only for Israel, but for us as well. Paul also makes reference to Exodus 19:5 in Titus 2:14. The words of the Lord to Moses here pertain to what the Lord has done for us, what He offers us, who we are, and what we are to do."

These are some of the most beautiful words in the Scripture—let's look at them as indicating God's heart for His people and for His church.

The Basis for the Covenant Relationship with His People—v. 4.

The Lord tells Moses to remind the people about three things He has done for them, thereby appealing to their perception of what He has done. Again, it is so easy not to recognize and appreciate what the Lord has done.

Though we have seen God's provision, it doesn't always register; it can pass right by us, because we are self-absorbed, worrying about protecting or advancing ourselves. These words from the Lord, then, offer strong encouragement to us to recognize and appreciate what He has done, particularly the things we have seen.

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

The Lord reminds the people that He has done three things:

1. He defeated the Egyptians,
2. He bore them on eagles' wings,
3. He brought them to Himself.

Let's look at each of these:

You yourselves have seen... (you've been witnesses)

1. **what I did to Egypt**—v. 4a.

- He unleashed the 10 plagues on them, the last of which finally convinced Pharaoh to release the Israelites.
- He caused the Red Sea to divide and allowed His people to walk through it on dry ground.
- Then, when Pharaoh pursued them into the sea, the Lord caused the Red Sea to collapse upon the Egyptian army.
- The Lord utterly defeated Egypt, thereby winning Israel's freedom.

- **...how I carried you on eagles' wings**—v. 4b.

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

- He led them away from a battle they were not ready for.
- He provided them with food and water
- He gave them victory over the Amalekites.
- He brought Jethro to give them important instructions.

It's been an incredible trip, one they never could have navigated on their own. This is what God calls a picture of an eagle carrying her eaglet. This picture is apt—and beautiful because it implies the Lord (the eagle) is carrying a helpless baby with no ability to provide for itself or to get from one place to another. Like an eaglet, Israel is helpless; it would have perished in the wilderness without the Lord. Like a strong eagle caring for its helpless baby, however, the Lord has led and provided for His people for three months. He has tenaciously clung to His young one as He soared through the air. He has not dropped them; He could not.

The Lord is telling the people in these verses, "I poured out My heart for you and I nurtured you." What a beautiful picture of care and nurture—the eagle carrying His eaglet. If this were all God had done, it would be enough to send the Israelites' spirits soaring. But the journey had a purpose.

- **....and brought you to myself.—vv 5-6.**

The image now shifts from the Lord as eagle to the Lord as king. Like an eagle He has carried the children of Israel through the wilderness and now deposits them at the foot of Mount Sinai, which is serving as His throne. And at the mountain, He meets them.

What is the purpose of this meeting between the King and these people? Why has He gone to such incredible lengths to bring them to this spot? He wants to tell them something. In fact, He has a proposal for them—a marriage proposal. In this section, we see God inviting the people into this covenant relationship, offering Himself as a

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

husband. Moses, in Exodus 19, acts as a kind of matchmaker, going between the Lord and the people.

It becomes clear now that in His war against Egypt, and His care for them in the wilderness, the Lord has been "courting" them! He's had patience with them because He loves them. He's been showing them His heart. As anyone who has ever extended his heart to someone knows, this is a tremendously vulnerable thing to do. The risk is enormous.

Have you known what it means to have the Lord court you? If you are a believer and follower of Jesus, then you have seen what it is like.

Let's revisit the three things God did for Israel, and see how the Lord similarly acted on our behalf.

He defeated Egypt. A vast array of wicked spiritual beings has taken aim against the kingdom of God, and against each person's entry into it. If today you are a follower of Jesus, that means the Lord turned back those wicked forces. This was a *huge spiritual conflict!*

Whatever demonic forces were aimed at keeping you in the darkness, He turned back, so that you had the ability to move toward the Light.

He carried us on eagles' wings. We could not make it on our own, but have needed His care and provision as we have grown up from an infant/eaglet stage into a mature eagle.

He brought us to Himself. We never would have found our way to the Lord without His own leading. Before we even came to Christ, He poured out His heart for us, just to get us to the "swing on the porch so He could pop the question!"

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

If you are not a follower of Jesus and are reading these words, you should understand the Lord is extending you the offer of a relationship. He has silenced the evil, spiritual voices that have been shouting in your ear, and He has allowed you to move toward the voice of truth. If you accept His invitation, He will not leave you alone, He will carry you—on eagles' wings.

Something in you is aching, and you just can't figure it out. Maybe today is the day He has brought you to the point where you are ready to hear and accept His proposal.

Back to Exodus 19. Let's see how the marriage proposal is going to the children of Israel.

The Conditions for the Covenant Relationship Are Offered—v. 5.

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. This shows us that man's relationship with God is never neutral or free from conditions. In fact, with the promise of relationship always comes conditions.

The Lord invites the people to "obey" His voice. The base meaning for the verb is "hear," or "listen to." The Lord is proposing here, asking them to listen to His covenant proposal, offering relationship. The offer, of course, calls for a response; the Lord invites them to "keep My covenant."

The simplest explanation for a covenant is an agreement between two parties—nations, kings, or individuals. Even today we speak of "the covenant of marriage," in which two individuals agree to enter into relationship.

This particular covenant is known as the Sinatic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, or the Old Covenant. The Lord, though, is the superior party, the ruling King, and He is

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

offering relationship. For the Israelites to "keep" this covenant relationship,

- they must enter into it and agree to its terms, and
- they must remain in it.

Keeping the covenant means entering into relationship with God and persevering in it. However, the covenant itself guarantees that God will enable us to persevere (John 10:28; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:38-39). In fact, our perseverance in the covenant is the evidence of having truly entered into it.

If the Israelites meet these conditions and agree to listen, obey and enter the covenant, then this relationship promises wonderful rewards.

The Rewards of the Covenant Relationship—vv. 5-6

- **....you will be my treasured possession.** —v. 5.

The word "possession" doesn't seem like any special status, but in Hebrew, it is a highly significant word used of the treasure of kings (1 Chron. 29:3, Eccl. 2:8). These treasures were the kings' most valued possessions. So the Lord tells Israel that it will become His most valued possession upon accepting His proposal. Israel will be God's treasure chest—His special treasure (see Deut. 7:6, 26:18). Talk about identity and purpose!

The Lord doesn't leave us as treasure! He takes us to places we do not wish to go so that He can polish us and make us shine more brightly.

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

- **....you will be for me a kingdom of priests —v. 6.**

Because every Israelite had been redeemed to a special status before God, the nation would be a kingdom of priests. Even though Israel would later be given priests from the tribe of Levi, they could not get away from the fact (in view of the Exodus event) that every Israelite stood out from all other peoples/nations in the eyes of God.

- **....and a holy nation.—v. 6.**

Because Israel belonged to God, it would be a holy nation.

If Israel was to be a kingdom, it must have a king. This, of course, is the Lord—their royal suitor. The phrase "holy nation," which is in parallel construction, can be seen as an expansion of the phrase "kingdom of priests." "Holy" means to be set apart for a special purpose.

This description of priests and a holy nation ties together as the Lord's special possession. We recognize the Lord God is the King of Kings who desires to bring us into His kingdom as His treasured possession. We turn to Jesus Christ (who is not only our King, but our high priest) for further application—Heb. 2:17, 3:1, 4:14. As our high priest, He offered up not the body of an animal but His own body (Heb. 10:10), which is pleasing to God and atones for our sins.

So as a kingdom of priests and thus a holy nation, we are to do the same thing Jesus did: offer up our bodies to the Lord, present them for His use—Rom. 12:1. (See I Pet. 2:5-9 for application to the Church.)

The Response of the People to the Covenant—v. 8

The people all responded together, *"We will do everything the Lord has said."* "We'd love to do what God says; we'd love to be His special people, a holy nation and

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

kingdom of priests." It is so easy to make these statements, but often it's just verbage, emotional froth.

The Report to God About the Response of the People to the Covenant—v. 9

The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

[Next time](#) we'll begin our study of the Ten Commandments...

Conclusion:

Let's try to take some of what we have seen in this study and some from our other studies on Moses and the children of Israel, and see if we can't come to the mountain of God and worship as well.

Ex. 3:11—"But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12] And God said, "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 [the Hebrew is plural] will worship God on this mountain."

Part Four: On Eagles' Wings—Exodus 19

Written by Bob Stone

On Eagles' Wings

I'll lift you up
on eagles' wings
I'll carry you home
In your trials,
I'll be with you
and guide you through the storm

Remember My deliverance
I brought you here to be
a kingdom priest, holy nation
a treasure for Me

You'll bring me to the place You planned
a promised land for me
If I'll obey Your commandments
You'll keep me free