

Covenant at Sinai

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Date: 22 April 2021

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our service this evening with the singing in Gaelic of the words of Psalm 13.

Psalm 13. How long wilt thou forget, me Lord? Shall it forever be? O how long shall it be that thou wilt hide thy face from me?

How long take counsel in my soul? Still sad in heart shall I. How long exalted over me shall be my enemy.

Thank you for the time I have been in the morning. Thank you for the time I have been in the morning. I have been in the morning of three and three. Thank you for the time I have been in the morning of the night.

Thank you for the time I have been in the morning of the night. Thank you for the time I have been in the morning of the night.

[1 : 03] Good evening. Good evening. Good Abdullah. Good night. Good day.

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The End The End The End Let us come before God in prayer. Let us pray.

Ever blessed God as we continue in your presence we give thanks that we can call upon your name and that when we do so we follow the example of many who have gone before us.

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The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End The End often think of the preaching of the word and think of it in these terms that our labours are not in vain in the Lord. But it is true also, whatever we do, whether it is to bear testimony to your grace, to bear witness to it, to remember others as we pray for it, that these things are not done without fruit, whether we would ever know of it or not.

[11 : 05] It's not for our knowledge or our gratification that these things are done, but for your glory. So you who are the hearer of prayer, the answerer of prayer, to whom each one will come.

We know that the words of the truth remind us of that. We know that those who are your people frequent the throne of grace because they know that God is a God who hears prayer, that God is a God who answers prayer. And we give thanks that when they do pray, they have the certainty of knowing that God will hear them.

You alone are our salvation. You are our sure defence. It is in you that our glory is placed, and that is the one to whom we come. So bless us as a people, bless us as a nation, remembering all the needs, temporal or spiritual, that are before you, even ones that are hidden from us. As we continue in this time of pandemic, we give thanks for any progress that is made.

We give thanks for the vaccines that are proving successful. We pray for those who have recovered from the illness and we remember before you those who go on in their path of mourning, as they grieve over the months that have succumbed to it, finally. We ask that you would preserve life, be it the life of the young or the old, and that we would see that this progress that is being made, that it would continue, not only in our own nation, but in the nations that surround us throughout the world.

Remember especially the parts of the world where poverty is rife, where there are many situations arising out of that poverty, where there is disease and where there is illnesses that are once commonplace in this part of the world but are now almost eradicated because of the material wealth that we possess. But there are parts of the world where such poverty that is dominant, denies access to these remedies. And there is a misspending of wealth by so many.

[13 : 58] And there is a misspending of mercy upon us for the way that we misuse the graces and the gifts that you endow us with. For this you will call us to account. Bless the preaching of the word. Bless the preachers of the word. Bless the hearers of the word. May it redound to your glory and may we see a day of quickening and a day of power. Help us now as we wait upon you in the reading of your word and pardon sin. In Jesus name. Amen.

We're going to hear the word of God as we have it in the book of Exodus in chapter 19. We're reading from the beginning. In the third month when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim and were come to the desert of Sinai and had pitched in the wilderness. And there Israel camped before the mount.

And Moses went up into God and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.

For all the earth is mine, and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

And Moses came and called the elders of the people and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

[16 : 13] And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow and let them wash their clothes. And be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that you go not up into the mount or touch the border of it.

And Moses said unto the people, Be ready against the third day.

Be ready against the third day. Come not at your wives. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. So that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. And they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. And the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, walks louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

[18 : 17] And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mount. And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount. And Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down.

And charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also which come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

And Moses said unto the Lord, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for thou chargest us, saying, Set bones upon the mount, and sanctify it.

And the Lord said unto him, Get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee. But let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them.

So Moses went down unto the people, and spoke unto them. Amen. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise.

[19 : 33] Amen. Amen. Amen. In this passage, which is a passage of great input to God's people, we find the preparation made for God's further revelation of himself by way of covenant, in the extraordinary events of Mount Sinai.

The encounter itself is a further explanation of God's intention for his people.

And we need to remind ourselves that there is nothing in this passage that would suggest to us that Israel was deserving of this special favour of the Lord's.

Far from it. Far from it. We need to keep that before our mind because it is almost an inevitable consequence of our sinfulness that we can think, that we can in some way merit God's affection or attention by something that we do or say.

Many aspects of our *saud Joshi*, which is according to you, is your faith but not *asäatrius*. Is it even that fact that the Holy Spirit could not be achieved any means of God's special love. Some people, when they think of Israel, think of God's special people as if they were special because of their spiritual experience, or spirituality.

[21 : 19] But nothing could be further from the truth. we know that they were very much on the brink of of breaking out almost always and constantly as we see when they fashioned and formed the golden calf even while Moses was up on the mount in the book of Joshua we are reminded there of what they were when God was showing favour to them Joshua 24 verse 14 Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faith and put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt and serve ye the Lord they were serving foreign gods even when God did not take the mouth of Egypt in the book of Amos in chapter 5 would it have you offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years O house of Israel but ye have borne the tabernacles of your Molech and Hewn your images the star of your God which ye made to yourselves it shows that these people were sinful and forgetful of who God was choosing their own gods creating their own gods and God is not ignorant of their condition

He was mindful of their relationship and knew that these people needed to be reminded of what was true of them and why it was true of them God had made this people His people it was His doing it was His activity in the book of Exodus towards the beginning of the book chapter 6 we read So here in chapter 19 we are witnessing the renewal of God's covenant obligation to the people

He has not forsaken or He has not forgotten that but they need to be reminded of it You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bear you on eagles wings and brought you unto myself now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people for all the earth is mine and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation these are the words which you will speak unto the children of Israel if we look at the words of this passage we will find that they serve to direct our attention to this event in history where we are reminded of what makes

God's people distinct and the first thing we can notice is that when God dealt with them it was within a covenant framework God's promise to Abraham was a promise of future prosperity he made an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come to be your God and the God of your descendants after you what he said to Abraham was reported to Jacob all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring and evidence of the covenant blessing was seen even in the years of bondage in Egypt famine took them there and there they increased in number and were successful which in turn made them a threat to the Egyptians however when we get to this point in God's dealings with his people having redeemed them from Egypt there is a clear advance forward it is what the theologians call the heart of the Old Testament revelation of God and it is at this point that God gives the Ten Commandments to the people John L.

[27 : 00] Mackay the late professor of Old Testament in the Free Church College it is not to keep this law and you will save yourselves they are given the law so that they might continue to enjoy the salvation they have already been given the verses before us remind us of afresh of the basic requirements of the covenant the preamble to the words that we have here is along the lines of the covenant the content of the covenant the Ten Commandments are a reminder to the people of the obligations that they are under to God theologians spend time thinking about the physical nature of the giving of the law two tablets of stone and Ten

Commandments divided as they say in a particular way but it could well be that the order of the words on the tablets may or may not have been as envisaged by the various theologians over the years but what is most obvious and what we can say with certainty is that we are told who are involved in this arrangement the house of Jacob and the children of Israel physical and spiritual as we would have them described in for example Genesis 32 verses 23 to 33 there's a description of God's faithfulness within the covenant you have seen he says you have seen what

I did unto the Egyptians and how I bear you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself I have brought you to the place promised there is acceptance of the covenant based upon obedience we have the development of the covenant foreign the privilege of being a believer a peculiar treasure to belong to God is a great blessing and the law shows to them the nature of God's holiness and the nature of their sin it is also expressed when the nation is described to us as God's family they are the people of God and he is their father kingdom of priests a kingdom consisting of priests in what way could we say that their role is unique in the world a vehicle of knowledge and salvation of God to the nations of the earth a holy nation a peculiar treasure to belong to

God as his chosen people that's a great blessing a great blessing to be numbered amongst the people of God I don't know how often we think of ourselves if we think of ourselves as Christians how we think of this wonderful privilege of having this sense of belonging be ye holy God says as I am holy holiness and obedience it's demanded of them but it is also a blessing sometimes when we think of holiness we think that if we're asked to be holy that we are required to be something that is forced upon us it is holy a requirement it is entirely something that we must be almost against our will but to be holy is a blessing in itself to be as much as possible in the likeness of God a sinful flesh can be is a privilege this people were set apart they were elect from all eternity called in time for that very purpose and

God gives his law to remind the people of who he is and their duty to him God knew the hardness of the law and the sterility of the law in a sense but well it may be some theologians have suggested that the very place that the law was given was in a desert to identify with the kind of effect that it had because it wasn't by keeping the law that they were to live it was to have the law in their hearts to have hearts of flesh upon which that law was imprinted to live according to the light that they had upon it knowing that it was not through doing that that they would inherit eternal life their ability to fulfil the law would have meant sudden destruction but there was another upon whom they put their thrust and they are guided to that person there is a glory in the law symbolised by the face of

[33 : 55] Moses the day would come when a greater glory but there was glory nevertheless and it took God's people further towards being consecrated in Christ for a holy nation demanded of them a blessing to them the son is the king and the priest so the word of God says you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests a holy nation and the people of God needed to be reminded of that they needed to be encouraged to believe that because their God was a faithful God even in the face of their faithlessness even in the face of their godlessness even in the face of their embracing of idols

God remained faithful and he would correct and trust eyes and bring them to himself so that they would once again embrace in obedience to covenant life that they were called to God remind us even through these words the wonderful nature of the relationship that exists between God and his people albeit through the passion of the son who fulfilled all righteousness on our behalf who has brought us to the place where we would be the very thing of which he speaks here remember the words of the apostle Peter in his epistle he speaks of God's people in this fashion he speaks of them as those who have this very thing of which he speaks a kingdom of priests a people who are to bear the image of

God of Christ in the world a chosen generation a royal priesthood a holy nation a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light which in time past the apostle says were not a people but now you are the people of God which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy thanks to God that he is a God of mercy and we pray that his blessings would be brought home to us in greater measure and greater detail may he bless to us these few thoughts let us pray cleanse from sin oh God most high thankful that you are a faithful God even in the face of our faithlessness our forgetfulness our negligence our covenant breaking we give thanks that you have never given any reason to question that that diligence that observation revelation of your word which you have committed to even as you have spoken these words to our forefathers be they

Abraham Isaac or Jacob or David or any one of the saints to whom you disclosed your pleasure may you remind us again through your word of the wonderful and the awesome nature of your everlasting peace and mercy upon us in Jesus now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen