



Who Are We and Why Are We Here

Part 3: Why 19 comes before 20

Have you heard about the fellow who searched for divine guidance in a time of uncertainty? His strategy: open Bible, close eyes, flip pages, place index finger on the count of three.

The result? He had landed on a verse that said, “and Judas went out and hanged himself,” a bit less inspiring than what he had expected. So, he decided to give it a second try.

This time the result was alarming: “Go thou and do likewise.”

This would suggest that such a technique may not actually be reliable.

Here is what we know: God will not leave us in the dark about His purpose for our lives, personally or corporately.

Early in the life of the nation of Israel, God was anything but vague about what He wanted from them. Exodus 20 gives us what are called the Ten Commandments, but it is in Exodus 19 that we find the real meat of this historic event: the record of a covenant. God formally affirms His plan for Israel to be His special people. He declares His desire and intention to bless them on the condition that they obey all He tells them to do. The nation, in an act of collective affirmation, responds, “Yes we will.”

With that exchange a covenant was born. And then, with this relationship in place, He provides them with a lengthy and detailed manual about how they are to live.

Yet many seem to miss the message of Exodus 19 as evidenced by the commonly accepted – and mistaken – assumption that “If I can only live by the Ten Commandment, I’ll make it to heaven.” The directives in Exodus 20 and the chapters that follow reveal how God’s people are to live so that they reflect the covenant they already have with Him. Those instructions are not given as a doorway to a relationship, but rather as God’s plan for them to be distinctive, and to be a living evidence of His holiness, His divine “otherness,” and what life is like under the blessing of His Kingdom authority and covenant life.

Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord God, make us aware of those parts of our lives that fail to make our relationship with You evident to those around us. Help us to more fully reflect the wonder of walking in the covenant life with the God of all grace and truth.