

D. The Establishment of the Covenant (Exodus 19-24)

This is one of the important sections of the Pentateuch. It is outstanding in its importance in the structure of the Pentateuch. It is so vital that logically it could have an entire book to itself, though it is actually only five chapters. God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and they marched rapidly across the desert until they came to Sinai and there they settled down. Now that they have escaped Egypt what is going to happen? Are they simply to be led up to the Promised Land and brought in there to go about their business, as they would like to do? No. God did not bring them out of Egypt simply to set them free to do what they might feel like. God brought them out of Egypt because they were His people whom he had set apart, not simply to be His pets, but to be His pattern. He set them apart not simply because He liked them better than any others, but because He had a purpose to work through them. There was a plan of God in which the Israelite nation had a very important part to play. Just as important as the deliverance from Egypt is the establishment of a covenant between God and His people. This covenant is established in chapters 19 to 24 (Establishment of the Covenant). This is in many ways the most important section of the whole Pentateuch: everything previous leads up to this covenant and everything afterwards is for its explanation. To understand the structure of the Pentateuch, it is absolutely necessary to understand this fully. But I am also stressing it in this course because it is extremely important. If we are to understand the higher criticism at all, we must see the real purpose and nature of chapters 19 to 24. It belongs where it stands. It is the account of how God made a covenant with His people whom He had delivered and it shows why He had delivered them. He had brought them out of Egypt for a purpose.

In view of its importance I am going to divide this section into four parts: 1) *Preparation for the Covenant* 19:3-25. God says, I have brought you out of Egypt, I have delivered you from the mighty hand of Pharaoh; now I want you to keep my covenant and to be my people. The people answer and say, Yes, truly we will keep your covenant and we will obey your Word. You are our deliverer and our great God. Chapter 19 gives a clear presentation: the people were already God's people. He had already redeemed them. The Law was not the basis