

Session 25– Study Notes
Exodus 23:20 – 24:18
Rev. Janice Y Cook – The Village Church

EXODUS 23: 20-33

1. **In Exodus there are three chapters of instruction** that provided guidance for the Hebrews during their day-by-day journey through the wilderness (chapters 21-23) And there are **another ten chapters in Leviticus** (17-26) Then these **combined thirteen chapters expand to seventeen** chapters in Deuteronomy (chapters 12 – 28).
2. **Worship and land have formed the backdrop for much of the Book of the Covenant. (Exodus 20:22–23:19) and even Exodus as a whole.**
3. **The Book of the Covenant is also concerned with Israel’s proper conduct toward their God.**
4. This brief epilogue to the cases and exhortations of Exodus reiterates God’s promise to bring the Israelites into the land of Canaan.
5. **In a formal sense, coming at the end of the stipulations of a covenant document,** they constitute the conditions “blessings” to be bestowed on those who honor the terms of the covenant.
6. The blessings typify what people need to survive in order to “fulfill the number of your days, v 26) in the highlands of Palestine: food and drink, good health and successful procreation.
7. The problem for the Israelites was that they were *not the sole occupants* of the land they claimed as theirs through the idea of divine promise.
8. The language of verse 22 (*I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.*) (Genesis 12:3, “*I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”) Is strikingly similar to that of a Late Bronze Age treaty: “Whoever is My Majesty’s friend should also be your friend; whoever is My Majesty’s enemy should also be your enemy.”
9. God assures the Israelites that the indigenous peoples (3:7-8) eventually will be forced out so that the land with broad parameters (v. 31) will be theirs alone.
10. Archaeological investigations of Israel’s territory and social science analyses of its national identity indicate that the indigenous occupants of the land more likely were absorbed into Israelite political and religious culture than forcibly expelled or killed.
11. **Doctrine of Discovery 1493 (SEE HANDOUT)**
12. By focusing on these two central themes of *worship and land*, the writer not only reiterates what has been said before but *prepares readers for what is to come.*
13. Whereas the first eighteen chapters of Exodus prepared Israel for its climactic appearance before God on the mountain, this section begins our journey down the mountain, symbolically speaking, by giving more detailed attention to the possession of the land.

EXODUS 24: 1-18

14. As the last chapter before the section that deals mainly with the building of the tabernacle Exodus 24 is a transitional chapter of sorts or a swing chapter.
15. **The covenant**, whose stipulations have been recorded, is confirmed through worship, sacrifice, personal dedication, and the writing of the law.
16. In verses 1-11, one is struck by the fact that, after all the words from God in chapters 20-23, God speaks only in verses 1-2, 12. Yet this provides the beginning point for the two major movements in the chapter.
17. The reason for the placement of verses 1-2 and 9-11 is to enclose verses 3-8, which has to do with the people as a whole.
18. In verses 3-8 we see that this section is more than just a transitional piece as it depicts the culminating step in the establishment of a covenant relationship between God and the Israelites.
19. A covenant is a “formal act of promising between two parties” which “created the situation of mutual obligation” the covenant described.
20. Both agree to accept the obligation that is inherent in the promise; *to order their activity in such a way as to be true to promises made.*
21. The use of the blood was probably a customary feature of such rites. Blood is the vehicle of life and belongs to God, recognized in its being sprinkled on the alter.
22. Here Israel is consecrated for a particular purpose, a people ordained, to God’s service . This covenant is for a specific purpose: *the vocation of the people of God.*
23. While verses 9-11 *were probably originally a tradition unrelated to covenant*, they now function as an aspect of the rite. It climaxes in a meal – a communal occasion of friendship and joy, life-giving in function – in which the leaders of Israel participate in connection with which they are granted an “audience” with God.
24. The Lordship of God is comfortably combined with the familiarity of the scene. This experience anticipates the more intimate presence of God with the people in the tabernacle. God is committed to a *real* presence with this people in all their journeying, a deeply personal level of involvement.

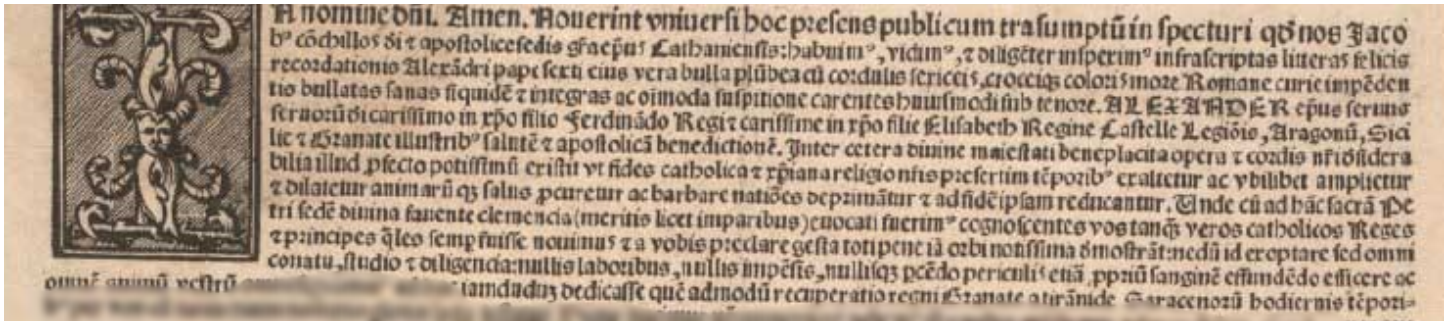
Reflections

1. Why was it so critical to the future of the world that God supply the Hebrews with so many rules and regulations?
2. How do you reconcile our sensitivity for indigenous people with what appears to be the unjust appropriation of land for the Israelites
3. In our celebration of the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim a “New Covenant”, what is this new covenant, and does it replace, repeal or restore the old covenant?
4. Why do you think the feet of God are revealed on Mt. Sinai?

Sources

1. The Book of Exodus by Brevard Childs
2. Exodus (Interpretation) by Terence Fretheim
3. The Particulars of Rapture by Rabbi Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg
4. Covenant and Conversation by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
5. The New Interpreter's Bible
6. Exodus – The New Cambridge Bible Commentary by Carol Meyers
7. Exodus – Application Commentary by Peter Enns

Doctrine of Discovery



SUMMARY

The Doctrine of Discovery established a religious, political, and legal justification for colonization and seizure of land not inhabited by Christians. Foundational elements of the Doctrine of Discovery can be found in a series of papal bulls, or decrees, beginning in the



1100s, which included sanctions, enforcements, authorizations, expulsions, admonishments, excommunications, denunciations, and expressions of territorial sovereignty for Christian monarchs supported by the Catholic Church.

Two papal bulls, in particular, stand out: (1) Pope Nicholas V issued "Romanus Pontifex" in 1455, granting the Portuguese a monopoly of trade with Africa and authorizing the enslavement of local people; (2) Pope Alexander VI issued the Papal Bull "Inter Caetera" in 1493 to justify Christian European explorers' claims on land and waterways they allegedly discovered, and promote Christian domination and superiority, and has been applied in Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas.

The 1493 Papal decree aimed to justify Christian European explorers' claims on land and waterways they allegedly discovered, and promote Christian domination and superiority, and has been applied in Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas. If an explorer proclaims to have discovered the land in the name of a Christian European monarch, plants a flag in its soil, and reports his "discovery" to the European rulers and returns to occupy it, the land is now his, even if someone else was there first.

Should the original occupants insist on claiming that the land is theirs, the "discoverer" can label the occupants' way of being on the land inadequate according to European standards. This ideology supported the dehumanization of those living on the land and their dispossession, murder, and forced assimilation. The Doctrine fueled white supremacy insofar as white European settlers claimed they were instruments of divine design and possessed cultural superiority.

The significance of the Doctrine continues to be debated. According to David Wilkins, “it is more complicated than just saying the Pope gave European Catholics the rights to colonize and convert. In reality, the absolute denial of Native land rights was replaced less than fifty years later when Charles V... sought the advice of Francisco de Vitoria ... as to what the Spanish could legally and morally claim in the New World. Vitoria, in a clear rebuttal to the Pope and the discovery notion, declared that Native peoples were the true owners of their lands.”

The Doctrine of Discovery was the inspiration in the 1800s for the Monroe Doctrine, which declared U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere, and Manifest Destiny, which justified American expansion westward by propagating the belief that the U.S. was destined to control all land from the Atlantic to the Pacific and beyond.

In an 1823 Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, the Doctrine of Discovery became part of U.S. federal law and was used to dispossess Native peoples of their land. In a unanimous decision, Chief Justice John Marshall writes, “that the principle of discovery gave European nations an absolute right to New World lands” and Native peoples certain rights of occupancy.

We study the Doctrine of Discovery to listen to voices that have been silenced and disregarded for centuries. These voices tell a frequently overlooked story about the origins of the United States.

SOURCES

- David Wilkins, “[Deconstructing the Doctrine of Discovery](#),” *Indian Country Today Media Network*, October 24, 2014.
- Pope Alexander VI, “Inter Caetera,” May 4, 1493. Retrieved from <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Alex06/alex06inter.htm>
- Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).
- United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/295. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (13 September 2007), available from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf (excerpt PDF)