

“The First Scripture”
(Exodus 24:12-18; 31:18)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. In the History of Redemption, Genesis is not the only book of beginnings.
 - a. It's true that many things had their origin in Genesis.
 - (i) The world: God made all things of nothing.
 - (ii) The living creatures: He created the animals; He created man.
 - (iii) His covenants: He established the covenant of marriage; He established His covenant with Adam, not once (Works), but twice (Grace).
 - (iv) He established the nations, all languages, etc.
 - b. But it's also true that He established some new things in Exodus.
 - (i) One we saw last week was His allowing the light to go out in the Gentile world.
 - (a) He no longer kept a lamp of truth burning in their tents as He had for so many years, at least in the godly line.
 - (b) He finally left them to themselves, to go their own way – the same thing that would happen to any nation if the Lord withdrew from it.
 - (ii) He also set apart the first nation with distinct geographical boundaries that would be entirely devoted to Him.
 - (iii) And He gave them His Law:
 - (a) First, the Lord personally spoke to them from Mount Sinai, giving them His Moral Law.
 - (b) Then He gave them His Ceremonial Law through Moses.
 - (c) This Law would be their schoolmaster for the next 1500 years:
 - (1) To show them their need of the Messiah's obedience to make them just before God.
 - (2) To show them their need of the Messiah's Spirit to give them the strength to be holy before God.
 - (3) To show them their need of the Messiah's sacrifice to take away their sins.
2. Let's not forget that He didn't give this Law only to them, but to us as well.
 - a. His Moral Law still shows you how much you need the righteousness, the obedience of Jesus to make you just before God.
 - b. His Moral Law is still to be your moral guide in a world that has abandoned morality.
 - c. His Moral Law is still to point you to the Savior for His Spirit to give you the strength to obey Him.

- d. And His Ceremonial Law, though it has been fulfilled by Christ and done away with, still reminds you of your need of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice to take away your sins.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we're going to consider another first in the book of Exodus: the first written Word the Lord gave His people.
 - a. It's not that they didn't have God's Word.
 - (i) He made His will known to them from the very beginning.
 - (ii) But He did so by speaking directly to them, by speaking through prophets, and by their passing down what they heard to their offspring.
 - b. Now we see the Lord begin to give His people His Word in a new form:
 - (i) A form that could be preserved and handed down throughout their generations.
 - (ii) This was the beginning of the writing of that holy book you have in your hands this morning: the Bible.
2. Let's consider two things from our text:
 - a. First, that the first written Word/Scripture was given by Christ Himself.
 - b. And second, why it was important that Christ now begin to commit His Word to writing.

II. Sermon.

- A. Let's consider, first, that the first Scripture was given by Christ.
 1. It was after the Exodus, after the giving of the Moral and Ceremonial Law that the Lord gave His church the first Scripture.
 - a. Here is another first in the work of Redemption and something that was meant to build the church and advance the kingdom.
 - b. The Lord would now begin the canon of Scripture, which would be the rule of the church's faith, worship and life from then to the end of the world.
 - c. Of course, it wouldn't be completed for many years yet – about 1500 – when it would finally be closed by the apostle John.
 2. There is a question as to which was written first, the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets, or the book of Job.
 - a. The events in the book of Job certainly took place first, as we considered two week ago, which would make it the only contender for first place (since we know that Moses wrote the Pentateuch after the writing of the Ten Commandments).
 - (i) From the names and locations, it appears to have happened during Abraham's life, or shortly after.
 - (ii) Uz, the land in which Job lived, was named after Abraham's brother's son.
 - (iii) Elihu, one of Job's comforters was a Buzite. Buz was Abraham's nephew, again by the same brother, Nahor.

- (iv) Certainly these things happened before the writing of the Ten Commandments, which came well over four hundred years later.
- b. That doesn't mean, however, that it was written first.
 - (i) Several events in the book of Genesis took place before the giving of the Ten Commandments which were written down later.
 - (ii) We're not sure exactly when the book of Job was written.
 - (a) Some believe it was written by Moses because it contains several words that also appear in the Pentateuch. If this is the case, it certainly came after the Ten Commandments.
 - (b) Another view is that it was written during Solomon's time.
 - (1) This was held by some of the Jewish doctors, by Gregory Nazianzen (died c. AD 390), by Martin Luther, and by Keil and Delitzsch.
 - (2) Keil and Delitzsch reason that Solomon's days allowed for greater literary pursuits because of the abundant prosperity of that time. The book of Job also bears the marks of Wisdom Literature, which originated primarily during that time, which is why it's included in that section of the Bible.
 - (c) Of course, if either of these views is correct, then the Ten Commandments would have been the very first Scripture written, which would say something of its importance.
- 3. There is no question, though, as to who wrote it: it was the Lord Himself.
 - a. Here we see Christ, the divine Logos, the Word of God, in His work as Mediator, as Prophet, giving to His people the first written Word, by His own hand.
 - b. Apparently, the angels were also involved in the giving of this Law, both the Moral and Ceremonial.
 - (i) The author to the Hebrews, speaking about the giving of the Law at Sinai and how seriously the Lord took the breaking of that Law, contrasts it with that given by Christ in the New Covenant and how much more seriously He'll take the breaking of His Word, writes, "For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:2-3).
 - (ii) Paul, writing to the church in Galatia about the Law's purpose, also mentions the angels' involvement: "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made" (3:19).
 - c. They don't mean to say that Christ didn't give the Law, but only that the angels were somehow being used by the Lord at the time to communicate it.

- (i) David writes, “The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them *as at Sinai*, in holiness” (Psalm 68:17).
- (ii) He may have used them to write on the tablets of stone.
- (iii) They were very likely those who were blowing the trumpets at the time the Law was spoken.
- (iv) Certainly, they were present to guard the holiness of God on that mountain, as that is one of their special purposes in God’s economy.
- (v) But this Law came from the Lord Himself, in His role as Mediator, laying down the requirements necessary for their relationship to the Holy God, for the reasons we’ve already seen.
- (vi) And so we see that the very first written Word was given by Christ Himself, as well as all subsequent Scripture.

B. Let’s consider, second, why it was important that Christ now begin to commit His Word to writing. The Lord knew it was important at this point in redemptive history.

1. There was a time when the church could more easily get along without the *written* Word.
 - a. In the past, they had God’s Word, but it came to them in a different way.
 - b. From the beginning, the Lord often spoke directly to the patriarchs, and this, coupled with their longer lives, made the transmission of His will quite easy.
 - (i) Adam lived long enough to speak to Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methusaleh, and Lamech.
 - (ii) Lamech passed this knowledge on to Noah, who in turn lived until Abraham was seventy, and so could have passed God’s Word on to him.
 - (iii) Abraham passed the Word on to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob to his sons, who would live long enough to teach their children with whom they went down into Egypt.
2. This method of transmission would now no longer work so well.
 - a. The time that had past was becoming too long, and the lives of those who would carry the tradition too short.
 - b. And so the Lord, having separated the whole nation to be His people, now began to commit that Word to writing so that it might continue to be the rule of His church for future generations.
 - (i) Christ Himself, the prophet of His church, committed the Ten Commandments to the tables of stone.
 - (ii) And He also gave His whole Law to Moses to be written down in five books – called the book of the law – to be placed in the Tabernacle and kept there for the church’s use.

III. Application: In closing, I would make two applications.

- A. First, consider what a blessing it is to have His completed Word today.
 1. Do you really understand what you have in your hands?
 - a. For years, God’s people had it related to them by word of mouth.

- b. Once it was written down, even then most wouldn't have their own copies, but would have to memorize it as they heard it read at the temple and synagogue worship.
 - c. Even when the New Testament was being written, believers still had to hear the Gospels or the letters read at church gatherings and would memorize what they could so that they could meditate on it throughout the week.
2. Do you take the Scriptures for granted because they are so readily available?
- a. All of us need to make sure we don't take these blessings for granted.
 - (i) If it was illegal to have the Bible, we'd probably read it more.
 - (ii) If it was illegal to meet for worship, we'd probably fight to be here more often.
 - (iii) But when we can have these things anytime we want, we don't consider them to be as important.
 - b. Be careful not to let these blessings slip through your fingers.
 - (i) Read your Bible: it is God's Word to you throughout the centuries.
 - (ii) Even though you can read it whenever you want, don't let its truth slip away from you.
 - (a) Let it saturate your mind.
 - (b) Pray that the Spirit would write it on your heart.
 - (c) Pray that He would fulfill it in your life and keep you far from sin.
- B. Second, consider again what it was that the Lord considered important enough to write first: His Moral Law.
- 1. He spoke His Moral Law on Mount Sinai first before He gave the Ceremonial Law.
 - a. He wanted His people to see their predicament before He showed them the solution.
 - b. The Law always comes before the Gospel.
 - 2. And so remember that the Law is precious for three reasons:
 - a. Because it is able to show you your need of Christ, as well as those you seek to evangelize their need of the Savior.
 - b. Because it shows you how to love and serve God, how to be fellow workers with God for your holiness, how to be like Christ.
 - c. And because its threatening is able to restrain sin, your sin, as well as the sins of the world.
 - d. Let the Law, which the Lord wrote down for you, have its perfect work in you this morning. Let it drive you to Jesus Christ for His grace, His mercy, His full provision for your spiritual life that you might truly glorify Him. Amen.