

God Establishes His People

Date: 08.23.2026 | Yahweh Gives the Ten Commandments
Scripture: Exodus 19-20

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God is holy, and we should love and obey Him.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

God rescued His people and gave them rules to help them honor and obey Him.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

Because God is holy and has rescued His people, He calls them to worship Him alone and obey His commands.

STUDENTS:

At Mount Sinai, God revealed His holiness and established His covenant with Israel, calling His redeemed people to reflect His character through worship, obedience, and love for others.

ADULTS:

Having redeemed Israel from slavery, God brought them into a covenant relationship with Himself and revealed His holy character at Sinai. The Ten Commandments show how God's redeemed people are to live—worshiping Him alone, loving Him wholeheartedly, and reflecting His righteousness in their relationships with others.

MEMORY VERSE

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring to you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:13-14



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What does God require in the first, second, and third commandments? First, that we know and trust God as the only true and living God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry and do not worship God improperly. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence, honoring his Word and works as well. - NCC q.9.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

The children of Israel, having been delivered from bondage in Egypt, were brought by the Lord into the Sinai covenant, which was designed to shape and bless them in three major areas: life in relationship with God, life in fellowship with the people of God, and life centered on the true worship of God. Several months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites arrived in the Desert of Sinai and camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, the same mountain where Moses had encountered the burning bush and where God had promised, “you shall serve God on this mountain” (*Exodus 3:12*). Throughout Israel’s history, the Lord would continually point His people back to the Exodus as a reminder of who He was and what He had done for them, often calling them to remember His salvation and live accordingly (*Judges 6:8; 1 Samuel 10:18; Psalm 81:10; Jeremiah 34:13*). Israel’s dramatic rescue from Egypt was not the end of God’s plan, but the beginning of a deeper covenant relationship with Him. God had delivered His people not merely to free them from slavery, but so they could become His treasured possession, a holy nation through whom His presence, blessing, and glory would be displayed to the world. Eventually, the people would move toward the Promised Land with God dwelling in their midst, protecting and blessing them. For this covenant relationship to function properly, however, Israel would need to live in obedience to the Lord and to the instructions He would give them.



Exodus 19 marks a major turning point in the book because Israel had now arrived at Sinai, where the remainder of the events in Exodus would take place. Moses went up the mountain, and the Lord gave him a message for the people: “If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession” (*19:5*). Although the whole earth belonged to God, He was calling Israel into a unique covenant relationship with Himself. Israel was to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (*19:6*), meaning they were to be set apart from the surrounding nations while also representing the Lord and mediating His blessing to the

nations around them. Yahweh's covenant with Israel involved both God's gracious promises and the people's obligation to obey Him. Israel was to live under the authority of their great King. Moses delivered the Lord's words to the elders and the people, and the people responded that they would do everything the Lord had spoken.

The events at Sinai strongly emphasize the holiness, majesty, and power of God. Just as Moses' earlier encounter with the burning bush revealed God's holiness at this same mountain, the blazing mountain at Sinai further demonstrated that the Lord is holy and must be approached with reverence and awe. God told Moses that He would come to him in a dense cloud and speak in a way the people could hear so that they would trust Moses as His chosen mediator. The people were instructed to prepare themselves for God's presence by consecrating themselves, washing their clothes, and staying away from the mountain. Moses was commanded to establish boundaries around the mountain because it would become holy due to the Lord's presence upon it **(19:10-13)**. The Hebrew word "consecrate" means "to set apart as holy," emphasizing that sinful people could not casually approach a perfectly holy God.

On the third day, the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in a terrifying display of power and glory. Thunder and lightning filled the sky; a thick cloud covered the mountain; and a loud trumpet blast made the people tremble with fear. Smoke covered the mountain because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the whole mountain shook violently. As the trumpet sound grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him **(19:16-19)**. The people stood trembling at the foot of the mountain while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. The Lord warned the people not to break through the boundaries and come up the mountain lest they die, while Moses and Aaron alone were permitted to come near. These events highlighted both the holiness of God and the separation that sin creates between God and humanity.

In **Exodus 20**, God spoke the Ten Commandments, which form the foundational core of the covenant instructions He gave to Israel. God began by reminding the people who He was and what He had done for them: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" **(20:2)**. The commandments were given within the context of God's covenant grace and redemption. The first four commandments focused on Israel's relationship with God: they were to worship no other gods, make no idols, not misuse God's name,

and keep the Sabbath day holy. The remaining six commandments focused on relationships with others: honoring parents, protecting life, maintaining faithfulness in marriage, respecting property, speaking truthfully, and rejecting covetousness. Together, these commandments established the foundational pattern for how God's people were to live before Him and with one another. The following chapters of Exodus would continue to expand, explain, and apply these covenant laws.

When the people witnessed the thunder, lightning, smoke, fire, and trumpet blast surrounding the mountain, they trembled with fear and stood at a distance. They begged Moses to speak to God on their behalf because they feared they would die if they heard the voice of God directly. Moses explained that God had allowed them to experience His awesome presence so that the fear and awe of the Lord would keep them from sinning (*20:18-21*). Israel was learning that the God who had graciously rescued them from Egypt was also perfectly holy, righteous, and worthy of complete obedience.

God had offered Israel an extraordinary privilege. If they would obey His covenant and follow His commands, He would dwell among them, bless them, protect them, and establish them as His holy people in the Promised Land. The covenant at Sinai revealed both God's grace in redeeming His people and His call for them to live in holiness as those who belonged to Him.

TELL THE STORY

Exodus 19-20

The Biggest Story Storybook Bible - The Way to Stay Free

Three months after they left Egypt, the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. Moses went up the mountain, and God spoke to him there. He said, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I have cared for you. If you carefully listen to Me and keep the covenant I will give you, then you will be My own special people."

Moses went back to the people and shared what God said. The people said, "We will do whatever the Lord asks us to do." So, Moses went back up the mountain to talk to God.



The Lord said to Moses, "Bring the people with you to the bottom of the mountain in three days. I will come to you in a dense cloud, and the people will hear when I speak with you, and they will believe you. Tell the people to prepare to meet with Me by washing their clothes. Make sure that no one touches the base of the mountain." Moses returned to the people, and they prepared to meet with God.

Moses and the people returned to Mount Sinai on the third day. There was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud was on the mountain. They heard a very loud trumpet sound, and the people were afraid. The Lord summoned Moses and Aaron to the top of the mountain. Then God spoke these words:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.

Do not have other gods besides Me.

Do not make an idol for yourself. Do not bow in worship to idols or serve them.

Do not misuse the name of the Lord.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Do not do any work on the seventh day.

Honor your father and mother so you may have a long life in the land God is giving you.

Do not murder.

Do not take another person's husband or wife as your own.

Do not steal.

Do not lie about your neighbor.

Do not be jealous of anything that belongs to your neighbor.

When God finished speaking with Moses, He gave Moses the two stone tablets bearing these commandments. The finger of God had written the commandments.

God gave His people commandments so they would know how to honor Him and live rightly. Because of sin, no one can keep

these commandments perfectly. God sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect, sinless life. Jesus died and rose again so that sinners can be forgiven.



REBUILD THE STORY

1. Where did the Israelites camp after leaving Egypt, and why was this mountain important in Moses' life? (*Exodus 19:1-2; 3:12*)
2. What did God promise the Israelites if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant? (*Exodus 19:3-6*)
3. How did the people respond when Moses told them the words of the Lord? (*Exodus 19:7-8*)
4. How did God instruct the people to prepare themselves before He came down on Mount Sinai? (*Exodus 19:9-15*)
5. What signs and sounds showed the holiness and power of God when He descended on the mountain? (*Exodus 19:16-20*)
6. Why did God command the people not to come up the mountain or cross its boundaries? (*Exodus 19:21-24*)
7. What were the first commandments God gave the Israelites about their relationship with Him? (*Exodus 20:1-11*)
8. How did the Israelites respond after hearing God's voice and seeing His power at Mount Sinai? (*Exodus 20:18-21*)
9. God called Israel His "treasured possession" and "holy nation." What does it mean for God's people to be set apart for Him today?

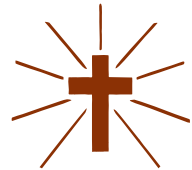
10. The Israelites were afraid when they experienced God's holiness and power at Mount Sinai. What does this story teach us about God's holiness and our need to approach Him with reverence?

11. The first commandments focused on worshiping God alone. What are some things people today are tempted to put in God's place, and how can believers guard against idolatry?

12. God's commandments were given to help His people live in relationship with Him and with one another. How do God's instructions still guide and protect believers today?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Through God's Law, His people are continually reminded of His holiness and their need for grace. The Law reveals God's perfect character and makes clear that sinful people cannot meet His standard of righteousness on their own. God is fundamentally different from humanity, completely set apart in the perfection of His nature, character, and ways. In giving Israel His commandments, the Lord anchored them in their relationship with Him and reminded them who they were as His chosen people, from where He had brought them, and the purpose for which He had called them.



It is important to recognize that God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt came before the giving of the covenant commands. At Sinai, Yahweh reminded the people, "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (*Exodus 19:4*). Before speaking the Ten Commandments, God declared, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (*Exodus 20:2*). The covenant was therefore not based on legalism or human achievement. God did not rescue Israel because of their goodness, moral virtue, or ability to obey. He delivered them solely because of His mercy, love, and covenant faithfulness. Their obedience was meant to be a response to His grace and redemption already given to them.

This same truth is seen even more fully in the gospel of Jesus Christ. No person can earn salvation by perfectly obeying God's Law because all people fall short of His holy standard (*Romans 3:23*). The Law ultimately reveals humanity's need for a Savior. Just as

God graciously rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, He graciously rescues sinners from slavery to sin through Jesus Christ. Salvation is not based on human effort or worthiness, but entirely on God's mercy and grace displayed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through Christ, believers receive forgiveness, freedom, and a restored relationship with God—not because they deserve it, but because of who He is and what He has done on their behalf.



WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for setting up guidelines for our lives. We want to follow You and serve You because of who You are and the grace You have shown us. Thank You for repeatedly reminding us that You are perfect and holy, and we are not! Help us to recognize our shortcomings and look to You and Your righteousness for forgiveness and restoration.

THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Exodus 24-34