



God Prepares Israel for the Covenant

Exodus 19



LESSON GOAL

Students will praise and respect God for His holiness and gracious presence.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God promised to make Israel His treasure and to make them holy.
- Israel promised to obey God's Word.
- Israel was not allowed to go on the mountain because God is holy.
- Israel prepared their hearts for God's coming presence.
- God revealed His presence in a very powerful way.

KEY VERSE

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5).

APPLICATION

- Fear and respect God because He is holy.
- Obey God's Word with all your heart.
- Thank God for making people His treasure.
- Pursue a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ.

NEXT WEEK

God Gives the Ten Commandments
Read Exodus 20:1–21.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

In the three months following the exodus from Egypt, God had done amazing things for His people. He had continually directed their journeys by the pillar of cloud and fire. He had parted the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army. He had miraculously provided water twice and manna daily. He also had given them their first victory in battle (Ex. 17:8–15). Through these times, God patiently taught the people of Israel to depend on Him and cling to His word. Three months after Israel left Egypt, God was on the verge of making His covenant with them. But first, Israel needed to be prepared for the covenant. God prepared the people by introducing the covenant to them, by giving them three days to prepare, and by powerfully revealing Himself.

Introduction to the Covenant

After a nearly three-month-long journey, God brought the people of Israel to the Wilderness of Sinai, located in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. There they camped before Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb), the same mountain where Moses had seen the burning bush. How faithful God had been! When Moses had seen the burning bush, God had said to him, “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain” (Ex. 3:12). Just as God had promised, He used Moses to deliver the Israelites, and once again, Moses was serving God on Mount Sinai.

After Moses went up the mountain, God gave him a message to proclaim to the people of Israel (Ex. 19:4–6). God told the Israelites, “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” (19:4). God first reminded the Israelites of how He had cared for them. Being borne on eagles’ wings refers to how mother eagles fly beneath their young in order to catch them in case they fail their first attempts at flight. God had continually shown Israel their inability to care for themselves. He took their weaknesses as opportunities to show His strength. Although they were unworthy of such love, God had been faithful to them.

After reminding the people of His faithfulness, God revealed His future plan for them. Through Moses, God announced that Israel would be a “special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6). Although all people belong to God, God would take Israel to be His special treasure and deal with them with a special love. Being His treasure included two specific privileges. God would make them into a kingdom of priests. Through the covenant He was about to make with Israel, God established Himself as king over His people. But unlike other kingdoms, this was to be a kingdom of priests, where every person would seek to live as set apart unto God. Israel would have the unique role of being a mediatory nation between other nations and God. Closely connected is God’s proclamation that they would be a

Additional Reference Materials

Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus
by John J. Davis

The MacArthur Study Bible by John MacArthur

holy nation. They were to be so different from the surrounding pagan nations that God would bring glory to Himself through their obedience and consecration. What a privilege Israel had to have been chosen by God to bring Him glory among all people!

God's plan for Israel was dependent upon two conditions: they were to obey His voice and keep His covenant (Ex. 19:5). The two phrases are closely connected. Obeying God's voice included heeding God's revelation and taking seriously His commands. Keeping His covenant included not necessarily obeying perfectly but the desire and effort to stay far away from sin. God had great plans for Israel's future, but the plans required Israel's attention and devotion. God's Word had to be their chief concern, the highlight of their hearts. God summarized the need for unrivaled love for Him in these two commands: to obey His voice and to keep His covenant. Moses descended the mountain and revealed God's command and promise to the people. The people answered, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). The covenant God made sounded good to the people. They desired the special place in God's plan and promised to obey His voice and keep His commands.

Preparation for the Covenant

When Moses brought the people's response back to God, God gave Moses instructions to give to the people. God was going to "come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Ex. 19:11). He was not going to give Moses the covenant in secret but wanted the people to hear when He spoke with Moses and believe that God had really given the covenant (Ex. 19:9). Being so close to a special manifestation of God required special preparation. Although the people were eager to be God's holy nation, they needed to reflect on the holiness of God. They were to be especially consecrated and sanctified for three days. To prepare themselves, the people were to wash their clothes and husbands and wives were to refrain from sex (Ex. 19:10, 15). The clean clothes and refraining from sex were physical reminders of how they should be preparing their hearts for seeing God.

But no outward preparation could make them clean enough to be before God's presence. Moses was commanded to set a boundary around the mountain to prevent the people from going up the mountain or even touching its base (Ex. 19:12). If anyone, whether man or animal, broke the command, they were to be stoned or shot with arrows. God showed the seriousness of His coming presence by demanding the death penalty (19:12–13). God was protecting the people and teaching them to fear His holiness.

Revelation before the Covenant

Exodus 19:16–20 relates what the people experienced when God came down upon the mountain. There was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain. The people heard such loud trumpets that they trembled (19:16). God descended upon the mountain in fire. Immense clouds of smoke arose, and the mountain quaked (19:18). The trumpets grew louder and louder, and then Moses spoke to God. The millions of Israelites, standing before the mountain but not going beyond the boundary, heard God answer. God's response, in the midst of such awesome power, clearly revealed that Moses was a faithful mediator, chosen by God to receive and deliver the covenant.

The Lord called Moses up to the mountain. He commanded Moses to go back down and warn the people to not break through the boundary in order "to gaze at the Lord" in case "many of them perish" (19:20–21). He also warned the priests to be truly consecrated, "lest the LORD break out against them" (19:22). Moses

thought the warning was unnecessary and told God so. (How amazing that Moses, in the midst of God's awesome power, would question God!) The Lord told Moses to obey, to bring back Aaron, and to warn the people to not break through the boundary! Upon Moses' return, He would be given the covenant for Israel.

God revealed Himself in such a powerful way that even Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Heb. 12:21). God revealed the awesomeness of His holiness so that the Israelites might understand the implications of the covenant they were about to enter. God had an amazing plan for His "treasured possession"; holy Israel would be a testimony of God's holiness. By seeing how the Israelites lived and how God had entered into a covenant with them, the nations would glorify God for His righteousness, goodness, and mercy.

Believers also have entered into a covenant with God. But in contrast, the author of Hebrews says, "You have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore" (Heb. 12:18–19). While we should be in awe of God as He revealed Himself on Mount Sinai, we must not forget God as revealed at Calvary. The sky darkened and the ground shook when Jesus died, but there was something even more terrifying revealed, more terrifying than God's presence at Mount Sinai. The incredible weight of our sins was placed on Christ, and in His death, we see that our sin had been a boundary stronger than that which surrounded Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is minor compared to the awesome holiness of God revealed in sacrificing His own Son.

Because of the awesomeness of God's grace, we do not come to the terrifying mountain of Sinai, but to "Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...to God the Judge of all...to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 12:22–24). Through the sacrifice of Christ, we have entered God's presence. While not forgetting the awesomeness of God at Sinai, we have the privilege of coming to a much better mountain, the heaven pictured as Mount Zion, where all true believers will be for eternity.

Like God's covenant with Israel, our covenant comes with stipulations. God has determined that all the inhabitants of heaven be on earth "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). God has done far more than bring us out of Egypt; He has brought us out of darkness and into the light! In view of His mercy, we must be holy, embracing the character of God in all our actions, thoughts, and words. In so doing, we will be a royal priesthood and a holy nation that will have the special privilege of bearing God's glory among the lost.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

After three days in the wilderness, what did the people not have?
Water they could drink.

How did God provide water?
He had Moses throw his stick into the water; the water miraculously became drinkable.

With what did God provide the people when they were hungry?
Manna and quail.

How did God provide water the second time?
Moses struck the rock, and water came out.

Were the people wrong to complain?
Yes. The people did not trust God's Word.

What should the people have done instead?
The people should have obeyed God and trusted His Word.



"This Is the Way We...on a Sunday Morning"

Together with the students, sing and act out this song as if getting ready for Sunday School, going through the motions of washing their faces, combing their hair, putting on their clothes, praying for their food, eating their breakfast, brushing their teeth, picking up their Bibles, closing the door, and driving to church. Talk about the Israelites listening to Moses and obeying him while getting ready for something special. They washed their clothes and waited for a special day.



Special Treasure

Materials: costume jewelry and plastic gold coins in a decorative box

Directions: Open the box and let the students see the "treasure" inside. Explain that some people think treasure like this is the most important thing in the world but that today, they will learn about God's special treasure. Read Exodus 19:5 at the beginning and end of the lesson, and point out that the first thing God mentions is obedience.



A Special Possession

As students come into class, ask them whether they have a special possession. Have them share what those special possessions are. Bring in some your own



special possessions to show the students. Ask them to imagine that their special possession ran away or started to spit at them. What would they do? God had a special possession. Ask the students whether they can figure out what it is. In today's lesson we are going to learn about something He wanted to treat as a special possession.

Line Leader

God redeemed Israel for a special purpose. He said, "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God selected Israel to be a nation to lead others to God. When you take students out of the classroom, select one person to be the line leader. The line leader has a special job. That special job is to lead the students where the teacher wants them to go. Israel was a different kind of leader. They did not get their special job because they were smart, quiet, or helpful. It was just because God chose them to have a special job. They were to be good examples for the nations to follow. They were supposed to love God so much that other nations would want to know about this God they served. As a way to emphasize Israel's special job, select a few students to serve in a special way this morning.



Holy and Powerful

Bring in pictures of lightning storms or of the aftermath of an earthquake. Show them to the students. Ask the students if they have ever felt an earthquake or seen lightning. Have them take turns telling you about it. If you have experienced an earthquake or a terrible thunderstorm, tell the students about it. Emphasize how scary it is to go outside during one of these events. In today's Bible lesson, we will learn about God causing both earthquakes and thunderstorms on Mount Sinai. That is where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The people of Israel were told to stay back from the mountain because God's presence would destroy them.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Exodus 19:1–20.

Many nations have rules so the people can be safe and worship God. The same was true for Israel. Moses was their leader, and he talked to God for them. God gave Moses the rules, and he gave them to Israel. Israel needed to obey the rules God gave to them through Moses. In today's lesson, we will learn about how God prepared Israel to receive His special rules. We will also learn about Israel's promise to obey those rules.

How excited the people of Israel must have been to be free from the slavery of Egypt. They were slaves for a long time and were treated very badly by the leaders of Egypt. At last, they had arrived in the wilderness, following Moses, their new leader, and expecting a new life. First, Moses went up to Mount Sinai to talk to God. God had some special rules He wanted Israel to obey, and He told the rules to Moses. In Exodus 19:4–6 God said, “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all the people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Let us think for a moment about what God said. What had God done for Israel with the Egyptian army? Do you remember that the Egyptians were chasing Israel as they were running out of Egypt and came to the Red Sea? What did God do to help the Israelites to safety? He opened up the sea and let them cross on dry ground. As soon as the Israelites were across, the Egyptian army chased after them, and God let the waters go and flooded the sea again. The entire army drowned. God saved Israel from those evil men. Surely Israel remembered that. It was not just a story they had heard; they had lived through it. Next, God made a promise. But this promise would happen only if Israel obeyed. He would bless them and make them His own special possession, and other nations would see what kind of God Israel had.

Moses went to the people and told them God’s message. What do you think they said? In Exodus 19:8 we find their answer. “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” They said, “Yes, God, we will obey you in everything.” Let us see if they did what they said.

Moses went back to God on the mountain to give Him Israel’s answer. God told Moses that He had some rules for the people because in three days, He was going to come down the mountain and see them. They had three days to get ready for this very special visit. Do you get excited when you know someone special is coming to your house? Well, Israel must have been excited to find out that God was coming to visit them. They would have to follow the rules for the visit. God would give Moses these rules.

Rule 1: Everyone needed to clean both their bodies and their clothes. So everyone needed to take a bath and wash their clothes.

Rule 2: Everyone needed to get their hearts ready to hear from God. This meant they must pray and think about God in those three days.

Rule 3: The men and women had to stay apart. This was so that they would think only about God, His words, and His works.

Rule 4: No one could go up to the mountain. They could not touch it. Even the animals could not go up. The Israelites were supposed to put a fence around the mountain to make sure no one touched it because if they did, they would die [be killed].

God was serious about these rules and meant for them to be obeyed.

The people began to get ready. There was a lot of washing, bathing, fence building, and special time alone to think about God. How busy they must have been getting ready for this special visit. The three days passed quickly, and the morning of the third day was really different. There was loud thunder, flashes of lightning, and a very loud trumpet that could be heard all over the camp. Everyone was awake. As they looked toward the mountain, they could see a big, thick cloud, and they became afraid. The Bible says they trembled. That means that they were so scared that they shook. Moses called the people to come to the mountain and meet God.

How do you think you would feel if you were there?

Mount Sinai was full of smoke and shook violently, as though a big earthquake were happening. Then the trumpet sounded louder and louder. It must have been very noisy, and the Israelites must have been afraid. God called Moses to come to the top of the mountain. Moses went immediately. God reminded him that the people could not touch the mountain. Moses told God, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.'" God told Moses to go back down the mountain, get Aaron, and come up again to see Him. Moses did exactly as he was told.

When Moses and Aaron returned up the mountain, God had a special promise to give to Moses. We call it a covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two groups. This was a special message for the people. We must remember that God meant for the children of Israel to always obey His voice and all His rules.

We, too, must obey what God says to do. We will find out in the coming weeks that Israel did not keep their side of the promise. They said they would obey, but they did not. We have the same problem. We have not obeyed God. Because of that, we have offended God and should be punished. But we have been given a special gift from God—Jesus, who came as a baby in the manger, lived a perfect life, and was the holy one who died for our sins. He gives us salvation as a free gift. We must believe that He did all this for us and ask Him to be our Savior and Lord. We must confess our sins and turn to Christ. Then we can obey His rules. It is very important that we obey our parents and show them we are willing to live by the rules they give us.



Lesson Questions

What promise did God give the Israelites?

Israel would be His special treasure and a holy people.

What command did God give the Israelites?

Israel was to love and obey God's Word.

Why could Israel not touch the mountain?

Because God is so holy and perfect, the Israelites were to be killed if they touched the mountain.

What did the Israelites do to show that they knew God was holy?

They washed their clothes. Washing their clothes was a picture of their need to be forgiven.

How did God reveal Himself on the mountain?

Thunder and lightning, a thick cloud, a loud trumpet, smoke, fire, an earthquake, and His voice.

Because God is so holy, how should we live?

We should hate sin and obey God's Word.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Treasure-Box Object

The object for the treasure box for this lesson is a heart. The Israelites had to prepare their hearts to hear from God.



Thunder

Play a recording of a thunderstorm and ask the students to imagine how loud God's thunderstorm must have been.

Praise and Worship

Holy, Holy

Seek Ye First

Trust and Obey



God Descends on Mount Sinai

Up the mountain Moses walked,
(Hold hand at an angle; then walk fingers up hand.)

So that he could hear God talk.
(Hold hand to ear; turn head sideways.)

God told Moses what to say
(Hold hands at sides of mouth and look down.)

To Israel, who should then obey.
(Hold hand over heart and shake head up and down.)

A special treasure, holy priests—
(Cup hands as if holding something delicate; then hold palms together.)

To this the people all agreed.
(Nod vigorously.)

Then to confirm His covenant,
(Clasp hands together.)

The Lord came down upon the mount
(Raise arms straight up; then slowly lower them to shoulder height.)

With thunder, lightning, trumpet sound,
(Shake hands and arms vigorously.)

And smoke and fire all around.
(Wave hands and arms dramatically.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Mount Sinai Activity Page

Let the students tear out brown construction-paper pieces and glue them to a sheet of blue construction paper to look like Mount Sinai. Draw clouds with white chalk. Show the students how to tear lightning streaks and fire flames from orange or yellow construction paper and glue the flames to their pages. Last, have the students glue Exodus 19:16 to the bottom of the page. See page 7.14.



Play-Doh Center

Form mountains from Play-Doh and talk about the people camping at the bottom of the mountain. Make tablet shapes out of the dough, and pretend to write on them with the cut end of a wooden meat-skewer or a toothpick.



Obedience Game

With students seated in a circle, pull an item (a book, Bible, toy car, toy food, crumpled paper, etc.) out of a bag and ask one student to give it to another. The student with the item gives it to another student. After passing it to several students, ask the last student holding the item to put it where it belongs. Repeat with a different item and different students. After they have all obeyed, talk about their obedience. Are these things they might be asked to do at home? God wants us to obey His rules every day, just as they obeyed today.



5

Making Moses Memories

Choose a coloring page and reduce it to 4 x 6 inches. Have the students color the page, cut it out, and glue it to the next page in their scrapbooks.

Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheet at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).



Seventh Commandment

If you have decided to assemble the Ten Commandments as you go through them, post the seventh commandment on the wall under the sixth. We live in a world that has completely disregarded God’s seventh commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.” Adultery is defined as any wrong or improper relationship between a married person and someone who is not that person’s spouse. But this sin can also be committed in one’s heart. Jesus taught that if anyone has wrong thoughts about another person, that person has committed adultery in his heart (Matt. 5:28). To apply this concept to the students, teachers should ask the students how their moms and dads show love to each other. Some will likely talk about

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how their parents hug and kiss to show love. Discuss how that is good for parents to do, but only with each other, not with others. Discuss proper ways to show love to one another and that the love between a mom and dad is different from all other relationships.

Mount Sinai Verse Labels

**“Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled”
(Exodus 19:16).**

What kind of God called Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation?

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**“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever’”
(Exodus 19:9).**



“Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly” (Exodus 19:18).

