

# The Journey

## Series 03: Covenant

### Week 23: To Follow or Not to Follow

*\*We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis for these lessons\**

#### Review (Where We Have Been)

As we open our Bible (at the very beginning) we learn of God's power and sovereignty over all creation.

We see His deep love in creating man and woman (and uniting them in marriage).

In placing them in the garden, God wants them to trust Him and live by His wisdom. They were told not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This one command was an invitation to completely trust their Creator and live according to His ways.

Their response shows a total distrust in God and His ways, and that they desired to define good and evil for themselves. It was only one command, and they could not follow it. From the start, man's heart is wicked and broken because of his choice to disobey and not trust his Creator God.

This is an important foundational piece for this part of the narrative.

#### Big Idea

God is perfectly holy, and we are perfectly sinful.

#### Information (What They Need to Know)

We will be picking up our narrative in Exodus 19.

We have witnessed God's battle with Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. They have crossed over the Red Sea and hit a few bumps but arrive at Sinai.

**Exodus 19:2 (ESV)** They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain...

Sinai was where Moses experienced the burning bush.

God can always be counted on to fulfill His promises (He is sovereign)

*Exodus 3:12* - You will bring my people out of Egypt, and you shall serve God on this mountain.

**Exodus 19:3-4 (ESV)** while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'

God remains faithful (He brought them out)

God heard their cry and sent Moses as a deliverer. God defeated Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. God provided food and water amidst all the grumbling.

God lifted them up

Eagle - Bird of Prey, bird of rescue, bird of care

Mother eagle with young learning to fly. The young struggle to fly the mother swoops under them and lifts them on her wing back to safety.

**Deuteronomy 32:11** - Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.

God is drawing them close

All of that was done so that God could be close to his people. Despite the complaining and grumbling, He draws near. All He has to work with are sinful people. He chose this family, this nation. He brought them out and provided for them and now He is close.

God plans an agreement with His people

**Exodus 19:5-6 (ESV)** Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; **6** and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

God will bless the Israelites if they obey perfectly. They must do everything He will tell them, then He will accept them, and they will prosper in every area of their lives.

Israel promises to obey in everything.

**Exodus 19:8 (ESV)** All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

**Israel has a bad memory**

- Complain at the Red Sea
- Complain about Food
- Complain about Water
- Complain about Being Set Free from Slavery

**Israel is self-confident**

They thought they could obey God well enough so that He would prosper them in everything. They failed to see their hearts were completely sinful and that they could not please God by their own efforts.

*Who else thought they could please God by their efforts?* Cain. Instead of obeying and bringing the sacrifice, he brought from his garden.

*What is Israel missing? Why would they make such a brash promise?* They do not understand their own complete sinfulness - that their thoughts and desires are fully and completely tainted by sin. They were unable to obey God perfectly.

**So, if God knows this (the utter sinfulness of his people) and that they will fail, why does He make the promise and offer the agreement?**

*God wanted to prove to Israel that they were sinners and unable to please Him. They could not become His friends and earn His acceptance and gifts by their own efforts.*

God needed Israel to agree with Him and understand their sin problem. They are unable to make themselves acceptable to God. We are the same way.

Look back at Adam and Eve. In their fall, they attempted to cover sin and shame, but that is not acceptable to God. They needed God to step in and provide a way to cover their sin for them. We are all in this dire situation.

**Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

*Desperately Sick: It is the idea of a terminal, incurable illness. Jeremiah is speaking of Judah but it is true of everyone.*

So, we are all marred, warped, and scarred by sin. Many try, but no one can save or deliver themselves from this drastic sin problem - from the enemy (Satan) or the penalty (death).

God wants to display this holiness and righteousness to his people

**Exodus 19:9-11 (ESV)** And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.” When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord, **10** the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments **11** and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

They were to clean themselves and their clothes in preparation to experience the presence of God.

God’s people are about to learn just how holy He is.

Holy is not saying that God is just a *moral or good being*. It deals with God as the one and only being with the power to create the whole universe and fill it with such incredible beauty and life.

All of this makes God utterly unique and powerful, yet very dangerous. Not because he is so bad, but because He is so good, and we are sinful.

Proximity to God’s holiness for unholy people is dangerous.

God's holiness meant that there needed to be certain precautions to protect the people...cleansing themselves and their clothes.

**Exodus 19:12-13 (ESV)** And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. **13** No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.”

God is beginning to introduce his people to the magnitude of His holiness. This is important because He loves them, wants to be in relationship with them, and protect them. He needs them to understand their sin before a Holy God.

Remember Adam and Eve? After they sinned, we learned that the consequence of their sin is death (physical, spiritual and eternal).

What about Noah? The whole earth was completely wicked, and the punishment was death (the flood).

The people consecrated themselves and set up boundaries for this holy mountain of God (He comes to speak with them)

**Exodus 19:17-20 (ESV)** Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. **18** Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. **19** And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. **20** The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain.

What would you feel like if God showed up like this - lightening, thunder, smoke, fire, and ground shaking? This was the God who brought down Egypt and all their fake gods. He led them through the Red Sea and provided food and water. It had to be shocking and overwhelming.

God communicates to the people

**Exodus 20:1-2 (ESV)** And God spoke all these words, saying, **2** “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

As we will see next week, God delivers His commands to His people. They needed to grasp God’s holiness so that they can understand the gravity of their utter sinfulness...because the consequence of even one sin is death!

**James 2:10 (ESV)** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

The law, as we will see in the coming weeks, will help Israel see they are fully sinful and incapable of pleasing God. It not only shows this to Israel but also to all humanity. We cannot tip the scales in our favor.

Many think they can do enough good in their lives to overcome the desperate weight of sin. It is completely and utterly impossible.

You can try to clean up your appearance or life. Your sin cannot be fixed by helping people, buying someone's meal or coffee behind you in line.

Attending church services cannot tip the scales. Even if you try to keep the 10 commandments, you will completely fail.

God has a standard, and it's perfection.

**Romans 3:10-12 (ESV)** None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.

No one is exempt from this...even if you say, "I don't believe that."

**Romans 3:19-20 (ESV)** Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

### Application (What Do We Need to Do?)

What are you relying on in order to be accepted by God? So that you might have eternal life?