

THE EXODUS

SINAI AND THE TABERNACLE

FALL

Lesson 09

NOVEMBER 02, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 19–40

FOCUS VERSE

Jeremiah 31:33

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God created a plan to dwell among His people.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will follow God's plan to know Him.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Israel camped at Mount Sinai where God called His name over them and entered into a covenant with them through the Ten Commandments. However, they broke their covenant with Him through idolatry, yet God continued to faithfully keep His promises to His people.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: How many of the Ten Commandments can you name? Can you name them all in order?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to emphasize the Ten Commandments as the conditions of God's covenant with Israel.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. TABLETS OF STONE

A. The Ten Commandments

DISCUSS: *Why do you think there are more commandments dealing with our relationships with one another than with God?*

B. Covenant Obedience

DISCUSS: *How does our view of holiness change when we realize it is our response to God's grace rather than an attempt to earn God's grace?*

C. I will live holy because God has saved me.

II. THE TABERNACLE

A. Instructions for the Tabernacle (I)

DISCUSS: *Have you orchestrated your life so God is comfortable living in the middle of your life? If not, how will you do so?*

B. The Portable Tabernacle (V)

C. The Golden Calf

DISCUSS: *What gods might we have in our lives to replace or even represent God? How can we remove these?*

D. I will make God's presence the center of my life.

III. GOD'S NEW DWELLING PLACE

A. On Our Hearts

B. In Our Hearts

C. I will live in covenant with God from the inside out.

DISCUSS: *Why is it important that we live holy from the inside out?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us keep all the covenants He has established
- For God to make us aware of His presence and for us to make following Him our priority

LESSON CONNECTION

Ludwig Nommensen traveled to begin missions work with a tribe in Southeast Asia. The village chief welcomed him and said, "You have two years to learn our customs and convince us you have a message worth hearing." After two years, the tribal leader was confused and perhaps a little angry. The tribe had some of the same laws prior to the missionary coming and preaching to them.

"We already know what is right," the chief explained. "We too have laws that say we must not steal, or take our neighbor's wives, or tell lies." The missionary smiled. "That's true. But my God supplies the power needed to keep those laws." That startled the chief. He asked, "Can you really teach my people to live better?"

Ludwig knew he couldn't, but Jesus Christ could and would if they would follow Him. The chief invited the missionary to stay another six months, and Ludwig Nommensen preached the gospel and taught villagers how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians. "You can stay as long as you want," the chief finally announced. "Your religion is better than ours, for your God walks with men and gives them strength to do the things He asks"

(benbergren.com).

God did not just give the children of Israel all the laws and then leave them to figure it out on their own. He also gave them the Tabernacle plan. This plan showed them God would dwell in the midst of them, giving them the power to daily obey God's commands.

Do not only seek a life of commandments. Desire a connection with God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit produces the power within us to give us the strength to walk daily in obedience to God's commands.

BIBLE LESSON

I. TABLETS OF STONE

A. The Ten Commandments

Although there was a shorter path to lead Israel from Egypt back to the Promised Land, God knew the people might be afraid if they had to battle with their new neighbors. Therefore, God led them to take a different path where He showed His glory and gave them the laws of the covenant. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) laid out the instructions from God teaching His people how to be holy like Him. While they were enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites were exposed daily to Egyptians worshiping hundreds of gods and treating their fellow humanity like property. Israel needed to learn how to rightly worship God and respect one another. The Ten Commandments were the founding documents establishing a covenant relationship with God and with each other.

The first four commandments taught them how to walk in covenant with God by placing no other gods before Him; not carving, bowing down to, or serving any graven image; not taking the Lord's name in vain; and finally, honoring the Sabbath Day established from the days of Creation. The final six commandments revealed their love and respect for each other as God's crowning creation made in God's own image. They were taught to honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, and not to covet anything or anyone belonging to someone else. God's covenant depended not only on how we honored Him but how we honored each other as well.

***DISCUSS:** Why do you think there are more commandments dealing with our relationships with one another than with God?*

B. Covenant Obedience

As the newly freed nation of Israel stood at the foot of the mountain, they thought of how God shared these Ten Commandments with them. Each of the commandments was a call to obey—do what pleases God and shun what does not. But God was not just giving them rules to live by; He was inviting them into close covenant relationship with Him. If they would keep these commandments, He would dwell right in the middle of them. He had already saved them from Egypt and was leading them back to their covenant land in Canaan.

Lest Israel get the cart before the horse, God was calling them to live holy and keep His commands to be holy because He had saved them, not so He would save them. In a similar way, God saves us when we are born again through the gospel. And He calls us to live holy as He is holy because He saved us; our covenant obedience is our

response to His amazing grace.

DISCUSS: *How does our view of holiness change when we realize it is our response to God's grace rather than an attempt to earn God's grace?*

It is easy to congratulate ourselves for obeying certain commandments while we may be breaking others. We say we love God with all our hearts and do not take His name in vain, but what if we dishonor our parents or covet our neighbor's cars, house, or even wife? We may be proud that we have never committed a murder or adultery, but if we are not honest, we may still be breaking other of His commandments. The Ten Commandments are like a sheet of glass: they are either broken or not; they cannot just be partially broken. According to James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." We must check our lives against *all* the commandments and not only the ones we find easy to obey.

C. I will live holy because God has saved me.

These Ten Commandments and the other laws God gave Moses at Mount Sinai showed Israel how to approach their holy God. The choice to obey is easy when we realize all God has done for us. He chose us. He redeemed us. How easy it is to choose to live holy because God is our Savior. And as we conform to His holy nature, we have unfettered access to His holy presence, and He has unlimited access to our lives. Today choose to be transformed by living a holy lifestyle, and you will open the door of access between you and God.

II. THE TABERNACLE

A. Instructions for the Tabernacle

Since Adam and Eve fell to temptation in the Garden of Eden, God's greatest desire has been to dwell among humanity again. From the moment He chose Abraham and separated him from the world, God was strategically moving toward dwelling in the middle of His chosen people. After freeing them from Egypt and delivering His commandments for them to keep, God revealed His plan to live among the people. (See Exodus 25:8.) He gave Moses a rather detailed plan for each part of a place called the Tabernacle.

God was so specific, He chose the materials, drew the blueprints, selected the builder, and even hired the artisans for the furnishings. (See Exodus 25:10–31:11.) And God's decision to place the Tabernacle directly in the center of the camp was an overt signal that He must be in the center of their lives. All twelve tribes of Israel surrounded the Tabernacle. After such a long time, God was finally once again where He longed to be: right in the middle of His people.

DISCUSS: *Have you orchestrated your life so God is comfortable living in the middle of your life? If not, how will you do so?*

B. The Portable Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was portable, not permanent. In Numbers 7:1–9, Moses took the offerings of the princes of the tribes and distributed the wagons and oxen among the Levites for the specific purpose of carrying the Tabernacle wherever they traveled. God assigned unique parts of the Tabernacle to each division of the tribe of Levi and gave them

specific instructions on how to carry out their duties. (See Numbers 3–4.) The Lord made the Tabernacle portable because He wanted the Israelites to remember they were on a journey to the Promised Land, but they had not arrived yet. Many years later, when they were established in the Promised Land, God allowed them to build the Temple, a permanent place of worship. However, until that day, His plan was a temporary, portable place for His presence to dwell.

C. The Golden Calf

But the story turned dark in Exodus 32. While Moses was on the mountain hearing from God, the children of Israel were already breaking their covenant with God. They demanded Aaron make them a god they could worship because they didn't know what had happened to Moses. He had been on the mountain for weeks. Was he coming back? Was he still alive? They were impatient, persistent, and ready to worship, so Aaron instructed them to bring all their gold to him. He fashioned their gold into a golden calf, and the people danced unrestrained and unclothed as they worshiped a calf. They cried out: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).

God's people had fallen again. They committed a similar sin as Adam and Eve. The serpent in the Garden had tempted Eve with the promise of becoming as a "god," asking her to replace God with herself. This was the same lie the enemy peddled to the impatient Israelites. Despite all the miraculous provisions and protection Jehovah had worked for them, the devil convinced them to make themselves gods to lead them.

This account is a warning to us today. God had already warned the Israelites regarding key aspects of the covenant: do not make gods to replace or even represent Him. (See Exodus 20:3, 4, 23.) While standing beside the mountain engulfed in smoke and fire, rumbling with thunder and lightning, they had become so distant from God that they broke their covenant with Him.

***DISCUSS:** What gods might we have in our lives to replace or even represent God? How can we remove these?*

D. I will make God's presence the center of my life.

God's desire for us today is the same as with Israel in their day. He wants to be in the very center of our lives. We cannot allow ourselves to become so familiar with feeling the presence of God that we no longer respect Him, revere Him, fear Him. Everything we do must be centered around, "What pleases You, God?" We must daily renew our covenant with God by making His presence the center of our lives.

III. GOD'S NEW DWELLING PLACE

A. On Our Hearts

The children of Israel had the Ten Commandments God Himself had chiseled on tables of stone, which they kept in a beautiful, gold-overlaid chest called the Ark of the Covenant. But that covenant was looking toward a brighter day when He would write a new covenant, and it would be different—it would be better—than the old. He would write this new covenant on the fleshy tables of our hearts and minds. Jeremiah foretold of a day when the covenant would

be within us and written on our hearts. (See Jeremiah 31:31–34.)

Ezekiel declared the writing of the covenant upon our hearts would come by the Spirit. (See Ezekiel 11:19, 36:25–27.) The writer of Hebrews used these prophecies to remind us that through the outpouring of God’s Spirit, we are living in the brilliantly bright day of this new covenant. When we experience the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection—by God’s grace through our faith in God’s Acts 2:38 plan of salvation, we enter this new covenant. Unlike Pharaoh, God is permitted to replace our hardened hearts with new ones willing to be in covenant relationship with Him.

B. In Our Hearts

It must have sounded scandalous to the Jews the first time they heard it, but one day God was not going to dwell in a portable Tabernacle or a permanent Temple. Under this new covenant, we become the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised in John 14:23 that when anyone loves Him and keeps His words, He would come and make His home with them. God moves in and dwells within humanity.

Our relationship with Him makes our bodies a “holy temple” and a “habitation of God.” Paul declared in I Corinthians 3:16–17: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” When you submit your life, obey God’s new covenant plan, and are filled with His Spirit, your body becomes the new tabernacle, the new dwelling place for God. God lives in your heart and protects and leads your life.

C. I will live in covenant with God from the inside out.

The choice is ours to begin a covenant relationship with God today. It starts on the inside and shows up on the outside. Although we are born at war with God because of our human nature, we are changed from the inside out when we are born again: when we repent of our sins, are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and filled with His Spirit. Living in covenant with God gives Him full access to our lives: what we love, whom we worship, how we worship, how we spend our time, how we dress, what we watch or listen to, how we talk, what we text or type—everything. We obey His commands, not to earn His grace, but because He has saved us by His grace. Let us live in covenant with the God who came from Heaven to earth to be in covenant with us.

DISCUSS: *Why is it important that we live holy from the inside out?*

Teacher Option: *Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the value of trusting God’s Word over our own feelings.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A Navy aviator was returning his plane to the aircraft carrier following a mission when he suddenly began experiencing vertigo (a dizzy, confused state of mind caused by an imbalance in the inner ear). His senses became confused, which is dangerous when landing a plane on a carrier in the middle of the night in the ocean. His senses told him he was flying upright, but when he looked at his instruments, they showed him flying upside down.

Everything he was doing was backward according to instruments on the plane, but in his mind, he was flying correctly.

He immediately realized he was going to have to make a choice about which was correct. He could continue to rely on his senses, or he could depend on the faithful instruments of the plane. He recalled that overriding his senses was the hardest thing he had ever done. The struggle in his mind almost overwhelmed him. He lived to tell this story, so you can breathe easier and figure out which choice he made.

This was the condition of the Israelites upon leaving Egypt. Their senses were all askew. They felt they were going in the right direction, but they were still upside down when it came to becoming the people God intended them to be. God had to take them to Mount Sinai and begin to show them the instrument panel by which to guide their lives. If they could learn to follow the guidelines God gave them, they could right their course and make it safely to their final destination.

What is controlling your choices today: your own senses or the unfailing principles established in the Word of God? We must not give in to our thoughts that we are going in the right direction when in truth our lives could be completely upside down. Instead, we look to God's Word as our instrument panel. We allow it to tell us whether we are flying in the right direction and can safely make it to our destination or if we are headed for destruction. Quit only following your senses and begin to read the instrument panel God has freely given us. Allow God's Word to guide your life, and you will arrive safely at the Promised Land.