

## God Speaks at Mount Sinai

**Lesson Scope:** [Exodus 19-24](#)

*References in brackets refer to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise*

### Lesson Focus

After departing from their encampment at Rephidim, the children of Israel journeyed on into the wilderness of Sinai. It was here at Mount Sinai, where they were encamped for almost a year, that Israel received the Law directly from God through His servant Moses.

The Law was given around the time of Pentecost, approximately fifty days after the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. It is significant that, after the giving of the Law, three thousand people perished in one day (Exodus 32:28). But over a thousand years later, when God sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people were saved and found new life in the church.

The era from the Creation to the giving of the Law at Sinai is often called the Age of Conscience. Through the conscience, God has given each person a sense of right and wrong. Because of this, the underlying principles of the Law were not new to man. However, through the Law, these principles were codified to preserve the Israelites as a nation until the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:24).

The Ten Commandments were God's requirements for Israel as a nation redeemed out of Egypt. These commandments express principles that remain applicable to our day.

In teaching the timeless principles of God's plan for man, be careful not to cloud the change in covenants. Clearly, the Old Testament Law has been fulfilled in Christ. We no longer obey the Law and its directives. Yet the Ten Commandments contain a framework of teaching that is still relevant to those living under the Covenant of grace brought by Christ (John 1:17).

Today we live according to the principles embodied in the Ten Commandments. They are valuable to us as we make New Testament applications to them. Jesus strengthened these timeless principles in His teaching in the Gospels, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. The

goal of this study should be "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk ... after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

**Lesson Aim:** To teach timeless truths from the Ten Commandments.

**Theme Verses:** [Romans 8:3-4](#) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

### **Lesson Text**

#### **"The LORD Called Unto Him"**

[Exodus 19:3-6](#) And 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: <sup>4</sup> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> 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."

[Exodus 19:16-19](#) On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

#### **"God Spoke All These Words"**

[Exodus 20:1-17](#) And God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything

that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. <sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. <sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. <sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

## **Questions for Study**

### **"The LORD Called Unto Him"**

1. Define the word covenant.
2. Why did God establish a covenant with Israel?

### **"God Spake All These Words"**

3. What causes God to be jealous? How is God's jealousy different from that of carnal man?
4. How might one be guilty of using the Lord's Name in vain?
5. What is the connection between honoring parents and enjoying longevity? How can adults honor their parents?
6. In what practical ways is our honesty tested?
7. How can we overcome our innate tendency toward covetousness?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

The idea of a covenant was not new to God's people. After the Flood, God had made a covenant with Noah. Also, in His call to Abraham, God had given the terms of His future covenant blessings.

The Hebrew word translated jealous as used here (20:5) always refers to God. This attribute of God differs from the carnal jealousy of man, in that God has no equal. God has a holy jealousy in guarding the honor of His Name and the welfare of His people.

Sabbath means "rest, or repose: " God established the principle of keeping one day in seven as a day of rest by practicing it Himself at the close of Creation week. The Israelites were already observing the Sabbath before the giving of the Law (Exodus 16:23-26). More than a meaningless ritual, God intended the Sabbath to be a special sign between Israel and Himself (Exodus 31:12-17). Later Moses associated the Sabbath with Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

The word kill as used here means "murder." It describes a premeditated killing of a person as well as an accidental human death caused by negligence or carelessness. This verse is not forbidding the killing of animals, nor does it prohibit civil governments from using capital punishment.

The first and tenth commandments deal with issues that lie within the heart of man, while the other eight focus on outward acts that begin in the heart. Jesus strengthened these principles in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28).

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"The LORD Called Unto Him"**

1. Those who live in obedience to God's covenant are His treasured possession (19:5-6). The terms of God's covenant made at Mount Sinai were clear. He would continue to treasure Israel with jealous affection, and Israel would "obey [God's] voice indeed." God's covenant with believers today is also conditional. Our spiritual blessing and eternal destiny hinge upon our loyal adherence to God's Word. God is always faithful to His covenant promise. Are we living true to our commitment to Him?

## **"God Spake All These Words"**

2. Willing obedience is motivated by a deep gratitude for deliverance from bondage (20:2). When Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt was fresh on the people's minds, they feared and praised God (Exodus 14:31; 15:1). On the other hand, Israel's rebellion was often linked to their forgetfulness of God's goodness to them (Psalm 106:7-13). We should often reflect upon Calvary and our deliverance from sin's bondage. True gratitude issues into a life of faithful obedience.

3. In holy jealousy, the one true God tolerates no rivals (20:3-5). God hates idolatry. For it is not only an affront to His sovereignty, but idolatry also destroys those He created. We are commanded to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14). An idol includes any object or possession that steals our heart's affection from God. He will not accept a divided loyalty.

4. The Name of God shall not be used in vain (20:7). "Holy and reverend is the name / Of our eternal King." To use His Name in a light-hearted or joking manner is sacrilege. To teach or preach a partial gospel in the Lord's Name is also obnoxious to God. His Name is worthy of our reverent and sincere adoration.

5. One day in seven is to be set aside for rest and worship (20:8-11). God established this principle at Creation. New Testament believers sense their obligation to God in setting aside one day in seven to worship and rest from their daily labor. Ever since the time of the apostles, the pattern of the New Testament church has been to worship on the first day of the week, the day Christ rose in triumph from the grave.

6. Respect for parents is foundational to a stable society (20:12). "That thy days may be long"—this promise is not directly promising a long life to each individual who honors his parents. Rather, in a nation where respect for parents is the norm, God's promise points to a well-ordered and long-lived society. Respect for parental authority often parallels respect for God's authority.

7. Human life is sacred (20:13). God created man in His own image. To destroy human life brings His wrath and judgment. God's laws of justice in requiring blood to be shed for destroying innocent life helped to preserve a respect for the sanctity of human life under the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, civil authorities are responsible to punish murderers and other evildoers.

8. Moral purity is essential for the preservation of the home and nation (20:14). While this command was prohibiting adultery, Jesus taught that the lustful thought and look are also sin. Living in a society that increasingly disregards God's standard of purity, Christ's followers are called to be pure, first in heart and then in actions. In our relationships with others, we must exercise carefulness to protect the moral integrity of ourselves and also of others. Thus we serve as salt and light to those around us (Matthew 5:13-16).

9. God commands us to respect the rights and property of others (20:15). Taking that which belongs to another is stealing. God's children are honest in their dealings with others, whether it is filing tax returns, billing others for work performed, or relating to the time clock at work.

10. God requires honesty in how we speak about others (20:16). The New Testament commands us to speak the truth in love. This virtue will govern how we speak about others. Honesty in speech will eliminate exaggeration and false impressions. If we need to talk about others, we do well to follow the Golden Rule.

11. To covet the possessions of another is sin (20:17). Coveting is a sin that may not be obvious to men, but God clearly sees our hearts' desires. God's remedy for the selfish sin of coveting is to crucify carnal desires, set our affections on things above, and be content with what He has graciously given us.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Those who live in obedience to God's covenant are His treasured possession (19:5-6).

2. Willing obedience is motivated by a deep gratitude for deliverance from bondage (20:2).

3. In holy jealousy, the one true God tolerates no rivals (20:3-5).

4. The Name of God shall not be used in vain (20:7).

5. One day in seven is to be set aside for rest and worship (20:8-11).

6. Respect for parents is foundational to a stable society (20:12).

7. Human life is sacred (20:13).

8. Moral purity is essential for the preservation of the home and nation (20:14).

9. God commands us to respect the rights and property of others (20:15).

10. God requires honesty in how we speak about others (20:16).
11. To covet the possessions of another is sin (20:17).

## **Answers to Questions**

1. Define the word covenant.

A covenant is an agreement or transaction between two parties. It often contains promises as well as conditions that serve as terms to validate the covenant. The covenant that the Lord made with Israel at Mount Sinai outlined that God would treasure Israel as His chosen people and that they should "obey [God's] voice indeed" (Exodus 19:5).

2. Why did God establish a covenant with Israel?

God established a covenant with Israel because of His love for them and because of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). God sought out Israel to be a special people by which He could touch all nations with truth, for Israel was to represent Jehovah to the world. Also, Israel was to be the nation through which the promised Messiah would come to bless all people.

3. What causes God to be jealous? How is God's jealousy different from that of carnal man?

God is jealous for the welfare of His people and for the honor of His Name.

God possesses a holy jealousy, a diligence in guarding His chosen people from defilement and corruption. In contrast, the jealousy of carnal man is a hostile attitude toward a rival or one believed to enjoy an advantage. God is not envious of any rival, for He has no equal (Isaiah 44:6). In holy jealousy, God tolerates no other gods.

4. How might one be guilty of using the Lord's Name in vain?

We could become guilty of desecrating the Lord's Name by referring to God in a lighthearted and frivolous manner. Another sacrilege to His Name occurs when people teach a partial or false gospel and claim to be speaking in Christ's Name. Teaching in the Lord's Name while living the life of a hypocrite is also a dishonor to His Name.

5. What is the connection between honoring parents and enjoying longevity? How can adults honor their parents?

Honoring parents will benefit the child's physical and spiritual welfare and possibly prevent an accidental death through carelessness. However, the promise given here seems to point to the blessing of a well-

ordered and long-lived society where respect for parents is the norm. Adults honor their parents by continuing to live as their parents taught them in the Lord. They also honor them by caring for them in their sunset years.

6. In what practical ways is our honesty tested?

Our honesty is tested by our speech. How careful are we to speak the truth without leaving false impressions upon others? Our honesty is tested in handling finances. Do we give our creditors what we owe them in a timely manner? Are we honest in paying our taxes? Our honesty is tested when we report our time. Do we give an honest day's labor when on the time clock? Is our billing as accurate as possible?

7. How can we overcome our innate tendency toward covetousness?

The first step to victory over covetousness is receiving a new nature through Christ. We must crucify our carnal desires for satisfaction through the things of this world. We must set our affection on things above (Colossians 3:1-3). Contentment is an antidote to the sin of covetousness. A thankful heart toward God fortifies us against the temptation to covet.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Christ came to this earth, not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24). God's purpose for mankind has not changed with the change in dispensations. He still desires a holy people who will represent Him to the world and bring glory to His Name (1 Peter 2:9).

### **Research Guide**

1. Read the article under the subject "Decalogue" in a Bible dictionary. Also compare the wording of the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai in Exodus 20:1-17 with the later reiteration of them to Israel in Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

2. Study the meaning of covenant in a Bible dictionary. Nave's Topical Bible could also be helpful in this study.