



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

EXODUS 19:1-25 •

MAIN POINT

God instructed Moses to remind the nation of Israel, if they kept His covenant and obeyed His Commands, that He would elevate them above the other nations of the world and bless them?

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce approaching God.

Who was the most important person that you have ever met? Why were they so important to you or to the world?

What do you do to prepare for an important meeting?

A "covenant" is similar to a promise in that it is the agreement between two or more people. The Bible speaks of such agreements (Gen 21:27,32; 1 Sam. 18:3). In the Old Testament, the concept of "covenant" began with an one-sided declaration of God, "I will establish my covenant with you" (Gen 6:18). Then God made His intentions known to me. Before they received the Ten Commandments, the people of Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God (Exodus 19:5-6). The Lord required Israel to obey His voice and keep His covenant. The covenant the Lord made with Israel at Mt. Sinai was conditional on the people's obedience. God's people had responsibility within the covenant relationship. God promised specific blessings for Israel if they kept the covenant. For instance, God would make Israel His own possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6). Of course, the entire world belongs to God, but the people of Israel would belong to Him in a unique way.

UNDERSTANDING

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 19:1-15.

What does it mean to be God's "treasured possession" (v.5)? Why are all believers considered "treasured possessions?"

Which areas of life were believers to be holy, set apart, or different (19:6)?

How are believers today to be set apart?

Every nation in the world belongs to the Lord because He's the Maker and Sustainer of all things (Ex. 9:29; Ps. 24:1), yet He chose Israel to be His treasured possession (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18;). This choice was not because of any special merit that Israel possessed, because they had none (Deut. 26:5-11), but was a result of God's love and sovereign grace.

How do you think people felt as they prepared to meet God? What feelings and emotions do you think you might have experienced?

How often do you think about the fact that you will come face-to-face with God? Like the Israelites, what can we do to be prepared to meet God? What (or who) will make you ready?

Moses did just as the Lord instructed him to do and separated the people as God had commanded. He told the people to prepare themselves for the third day. It's likely Moses gave instruction of some kind to build a fence around the front of the mountain to keep anyone from wandering too close to it.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EXODUS 19:16-25

Why might God have issued the warning He did in verse 21?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Why do believers today have the extraordinary privilege of approaching the throne of grace? What enables us to do so? When you approach God in prayer, are you mindful of what a privilege it is?

The warning God issued in verse 21 on the penalty of death shows God's concern to protect the Israelites, while also revealing to them His awesome and personal reality. God cannot be treated as an object of curiosity that one can approach and examine without personal engagement. God was teaching the Israelites the distance between His holiness and their sin. Because of Jesus, believers today can experience a nearness to God the Israelites could not at Sinai. The New Testament communicates the nearness of God, because God became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1-18). His name is Immanuel,

meaning "God with us." Because of His death and resurrection, Jesus opened a new and living way into the presence of God (heb. 10:1-25).

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture apply directly to their lives.

Exodus 19 demonstrates that God initiated a covenant with His people, and He is a God who keeps His Word. how do theses truths influence your faith?

God's people cannot rely on willpower to make themselves acceptable to God. On what basis can a Christ follower trust that he or she is among God's treasured possession?

What current situation in your life would benefit from you being continually mindful that God keeps His promises? What specific promise are you relying on in regard to your situation?

PRAYER

Give thanks to God taht He is a God who keeps His word. Offer praise that because of Christ, we are able to approach a holy God with confidence. Ask God to lead group members into a closer personal relationship that reveals His holy attributes.

COMMENTARY

| EXODUS 19:1-25

19:1-2 It took the Israelites three months of trusting God to get to Mount Sinai, but they finally arrived. They saw God's deliverance from Egypt, received His guidance on the way to go, saw His glorious victory at the Red Sea, received God's miraculous gifts of food and water, and they saw a prayerful victory won over the Amalekites. This was the beginning of the fulfillment of what God said in Exodus 3:12: this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

19:3 One purpose for Moses making three trips up the mountain and back (vv. 3,7-8,14,20,25) was to clarify visually the unique role and privileges he was granted. The

people needed to acknowledge his authority as God's representative and the importance of his message.

19:4 The Lord's past provision should be the basis for Israel's future decisions. The mention of being carried on eagles' wings implied a comparison between the Lord's bringing Israel out of Egypt and eagles that sometimes carried their young on their backs (Dt 32:10-11). Eagles were also noted for their speed, long flights, and high nests (2Sam 1:23; Isa 40:31; Jer 4:13; 49:16; Ob 4).

19:5 The Lord wanted Israel to be known by what He had done as well as by what they would do. My own possession uses a word that is sometimes translated "treasure." David used it to speak of his "personal treasures of gold and silver" that he had set aside for building the temple (1Ch 29:3). In extrabiblical literature a king sometimes used a closely related word to speak positively of a vassal with whom he had a good relationship and where a king advertised himself on his royal seal as the treasured possession of a certain god.

19:6 The ideas of priesthood and holiness go together, since special requirements marked priests as set apart for special service that benefited others (Lv 21). The tasks of priests included helping people offer sacrifices to God, according to the need or condition of the person (Lv 1-7). Priests acted as judges, both in matters of ritual purity and in civil controversies (Lv 13-14; Dt 17:9; 21:5), and they taught God's law (Lv 10:11; Mal 2:7-9). These tasks pointed to the work of Israel among the nations. As the priesthood in Israel was to the nation as a whole, so Israel should be to the other nations; as Israelite priests had unique requirements, duties, and privileges among the Israelites, so Israel would have unique requirements, duties, and privileges among the nations (Lv 20:22-26; Dt 4:5-8; 14:21; 26:17-19; Isa 2:1-5).

19:7-8 The people agree to obey God's covenant. The people are later challenged to receive the covenant again, after they heard its terms, and they received it again (Exodus 24:1-8). Here they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." Later they would say it again, in an even more formal arrangement (Exodus 24:1-8). Moses here acted as a true priest, as an intermediary between God and the people. Yet God spoke audibly to Moses so everyone would know that it was really God speaking to Moses

19:10-13 God commands that His holy presence on Sinai be respected. God was going to appear to Israel in a spectacular way; and before this could happen, the people had to prepare themselves. As God promised to reveal Himself on Sinai, He told Israel, Stay away. There were boundaries that could not be crossed. Israel had to keep distance behind a

barrier, and the penalty for failing to keep their distance was death. Any person or animal killed for getting too close would be regarded as so unholy they could not even be touched, they had to be executed with stones or arrows. If there is anything basic to human nature, it is that we need boundaries. In setting these boundaries and providing the death penalty for breaching them, God showed Israel that obedience is more important than their feelings. We don't doubt that some bold Israelites felt like going beyond the boundaries, but they were to submit their feelings to obedience. The people could only come near at God's invitation, and the trumpet signaled that the invitation was open. At the sounding of the trumpet they could come up to the boundaries, but not beyond them.

19:14-15 God commands for ceremonial purity and cleanliness. The people immediately prepared for the revelation of God that was promised for the third day. The meeting with God could only come at the third day. God promised to reveal Himself on the third day, and they had to wait for it. The rest of the Scriptures do not teach that there is any inherent uncleanness in sexual relations. This command was peculiar for this event. In this situation, God wanted the people to demonstrate their desire for purity by putting on clean clothes and restraining desires, even legitimate desires.

19:16-19 God's terrifying presence on Mount Sinai. Thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud: These signs of power and glory signaled the presence of God. The whole environment spoke of God's presence in a terrifying sense. What Israel saw and felt in the thunder, lightning, the cloud, the smoke, and the earthquake was terrifying; but each of these are natural (though frightening) phenomenon. Yet the sound of the trumpet did not come from the camp, but from heaven itself. No wonder that all the people who were in the camp trembled. At the sound of the trumpet, Moses led the people up to the barrier at the base of Mount Sinai, where they could see, smell, hear, and virtually taste the fire which covered the mountain – as well as feel the earth shake under their feet when the whole mountain quaked greatly. In the midst of all this, the sound of the trumpet blast became longer and louder and longer and louder, until Moses spoke to God, and God answered him by voice. Collectively, Israel heard the Lord God speak from Mount Sinai in an audible voice.

19:20 Moses goes up on Mount Sinai to the immediate presence of God. God came in a special presence to Mount Sinai, ready to meet with Moses as a representative of the whole nation of Israel. And Moses went up: God came down, and Moses went up. As the people trembled in terror at the foot of the mountain, Moses needed courage to go to the

top and meet with God. It took courage for Moses to go up in the midst of all the thunder, lightning, earthquakes, fire, and smoke.

19:21-25 God tells Moses to go back down and warn the people again about respecting the holiness of His presence on Mount Sinai. Those who through rebellion, curiosity, or simple daring presumed to go up on the mountain would perish. The glory and greatness of God wasn't to be a matter subjected to scientific inquiry or a way to prove one's own manhood. Just because God called Moses and Aaron up did not mean there was an open invitation for the whole nation to meet with God on Mount Sinai. The whole idea at Sinai was exclusion. Exodus 19 describes the awe and fear each Israelite must have felt at Mount Sinai. It is easy to think that this alone inspired them to a holy lifestyle. Many today feel we need to get more of the thunder and fire and trembling of Mount Sinai into people as a way of keeping them from sin. Yet, not forty days from this, the whole nation would have worship around a golden calf, praising it as the god that brought them out of Egypt.