

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 19:1-20:21

Exactly three months after the people of Israel left Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai. They camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

Then Moses went up to God. The Lord called out to him from the mountain. He said, "Here is what I want you to say to my people, who came from Jacob's family. Tell the Israelites, "You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt. You saw how I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to myself.

"Now obey me completely. Keep my covenant. If you do, then out of all of the nations you will be my special treasure. The whole earth is mine. But you will be a kingdom of priests to serve me. You will be my holy nation.' That is what you must tell the Israelites."

So Moses went back. He sent for the elders of the people. He explained to them everything the Lord had commanded him to say. All of the people answered together. They said, "We will do everything the Lord has said."

So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.



The Lord spoke to Moses. He said, "I am going to come to you in a thick cloud. The people will hear me speaking with you. They will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said.

The Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people. Today and tomorrow set them apart for me. Have them wash their clothes. Have the people ready by the third day. On that day I will come down on Mount Sinai. Everyone will see it.

"Put limits for the people around the mountain. Tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain. Do not even touch the foot of it.'"

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. A thick cloud covered the mountain. A trumpet gave out a very loud blast. Everyone in the camp trembled with fear.

Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God. They stood at the foot of the mountain.

Smoke covered Mount Sinai, because the Lord came down on it in fire. The smoke rose up from it like smoke from a furnace. The whole mountain trembled and shook. The sound of the trumpet got louder and louder. Then Moses spoke. And the voice of God answered him.

The Lord came down to the top of Mount Sinai. He told Moses to come to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up.

The Lord said to him, "Go down and warn the people. They must not force their way through to see me. If they do, many of them will die. The priests approach me when they serve me. But even they must set themselves apart for me. If they do not, my anger will break out against them."

Moses said to the Lord, "The people can't come up Mount Sinai. You yourself warned us. You said, 'Put limits around the mountain. Set it apart as holy.' "

The Lord replied, "Go down. Bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through. They must not come up to me. If they do, my anger will break out against them."

The Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai. Then he gave him the two tablets of the covenant. They were made out of stone. The words on them were written by the finger of God.



So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Here are all of the words God spoke. He said,

"I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. That is the land where you were slaves.

1: "Do not put any other gods in place of me.

2: "Do not make statues of gods that look like anything in the sky or on the earth or in the waters. Do not bow down to them or worship them. I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I punish the children for the sin of their parents. I punish the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who hate me. But for all time to come I show love to all those who love me and keep my commandments.

3: "Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will find guilty anyone who misuses his name.

4: "Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. Do all of your work in six days. But the seventh day is a Sabbath in honor of the Lord your God. Do not do any work on that day. The same command applies to your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and your animals. It also applies to any outsiders who live in your cities. In six days I made the heavens and the earth. I made the oceans and everything in them. But I rested on the seventh day. So I blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

5: "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

6: "Do not commit murder.

7: "Do not commit adultery.

8: "Do not steal.

9: "Do not give false witness against your neighbor.

10: "Do not long for anything that belongs to your neighbor. Do not long for your neighbor's house, wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey."



The people saw the thunder and lightning. They heard the trumpet. They saw the mountain covered with smoke. They trembled with fear and stayed a long way off.

Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. God has come to put you to the test. He wants you to have respect for him. That will keep you from sinning."