

God's Covenant with the Israelites



Know that God made a covenant with Moses and the Israelites.
Be aware that this covenant is also made with us.

God speaks to Moses

After three months in the desert, the Israelites reached Mount Sinai. It was here that God took the initiative to make a covenant with them.

Moses went up the mountain and God told him the conditions for making a covenant with the people of Israel.

“Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my own possession among all the people; for all the earth is mine and you can be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5-6).

The Israelites were given the freedom to choose to make a response to God. If they said ‘yes’, they would become God’s own people, His possession and His treasure. This covenant was going to make them into God’s personal and sacred possession, His holy people.



Pause to discuss

God offers us a covenant to be His holy people.

What does this mean for our lives?

Give examples.

Moses speaks to the People

Coming down from the mountain, Moses gathered the people and gave God's message to them. The people immediately agreed to God's conditions for the covenant.

Moses was called by God to the top of the mountain where he remained for forty days and nights. He was given stone tablets on which God had inscribed Ten Commandments. These commandments were to help the people remain close to God and to be faithful to their covenant promises.

What do you think happened when Moses was away?

In the long absence of Moses, the people quickly forgot the covenant promises they had made to God. Instead they made a golden calf to worship. God knew what they were doing so He sent Moses down to warn them that He would be very angry with them.

Moses pleaded with God not to punish them. God relented. But when Moses came down from the mountain and saw what was happening, he broke the tablets of stone. This was his way of showing the people that they had already broken their covenant promises.

God called the Israelites a stiff-necked people. But they did not want to lose God's presence and friendship, so they repented. God renewed His covenant with them. Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone as God instructed.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.

3. Remember to keep the Lord's Day holy.

4. Honour your father and your mother.

5. You shall not kill.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.