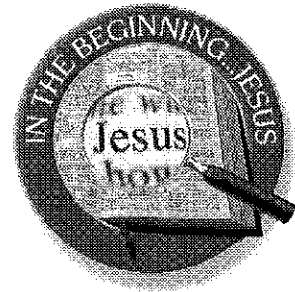


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 17

God's Covenant with Israel

Themes:

- God is faithful and good—He provides for all the needs of His people.
- God is merciful—He is kind to undeserving sinners.
- God desires to have a special relationship with His people.
- God established His covenant with Israel: a binding agreement in which He outlined the conditions of His relationship with His treasured possession.

Scripture:

Portions of Exodus 15-19

Memory Verse:

Isaiah 53:12a (and review verses 3-11)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - GOD'S WONDERS + PHARAOH'S HARD HEART = FAME FOR THE LORD (from previous lesson).
 - GRUMBLE and QUARREL—Bury these two small slips of paper in the sand mentioned below.
 - SIGN and MOUNT SINAI—For assembly instructions, see Resource Packet.
 - SEA (from previous lesson).
 - GOD'S MERCY/GOD'S JUDGMENT (from previous lessons).
 - CLUE SCRAMBLE.
 - TICKET.
 - JESUS IS THE KEY visual (from previous lessons).
 - Bible Clue Card #20 and #21.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue cards).
- Large, shallow container (approx. 6-10" deep) about half filled with sand.
- Map of the Sinai peninsula (found in the back of many Bibles).
- 2 blindfolds.
- A thick stick (about 1 foot long)—Somewhere on the stick write: Exodus 15:24-25.

- A rock—Somewhere on the rock write: Exodus 17:6a.
- White board or large piece of paper and markers.

Visuals for Application (for Small Group Leaders):

- DESERT (see Resource Packet).

Lesson

Briefly review the events of the previous lesson in which God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt.

How do you think the Israelites felt after seeing and experiencing these miraculous wonders God had performed? Do you think they might have said something like, "Wow, look at what we did! We beat the mighty Pharaoh. We're the best"? What did Israel really do?

Read **Exodus 15:1** and **11**:

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea."

"Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

What did Israel understand about its deliverance from Egypt? Display GOD'S WONDERS+PHARAOH'S HARD HEART=FAME FOR THE LORD.

Emphasize that Israel understood it was God and God alone who had delivered them, and He deserved all of their praise and worship. There was no one else like Him! His fame would spread over all the earth.

Was Israel now supposed to just sit around on the other side of the sea and continue to sing and celebrate? What were they supposed to do next?

Read **Exodus 15:22a**:

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur.

Display the map of the Sinai peninsula region and the container of sand. Point out the location of the Sinai peninsula on the map. Describe this area as a huge desert wilderness. Was Moses leading the people the wrong way? Why go this way?

*When the LORD first spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He gave Moses a sign that would prove God had chosen Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. (**Display SIGN.**) Does anyone remember what that sign was? (Choose a child to open the window on the visual to reveal **MOUNT SINAI.**) After leaving Egypt, the people of Israel would serve God on the same mountain on which the LORD appeared to Moses—Mount Sinai. [Point to the area of Mt. Sinai (also called Mt. Horeb) on the map.]*

Explain that Moses knew he must lead Israel to that mountain, and he knew that getting there would mean they must travel through this wilderness.

Imagine you were leading a large group of people on a trip through a desert. Can you think of any problems you might have? [Allow the children to give some responses.] Here is one problem Israel had very early on this journey:

Have the children turn to **Exodus 15:22b**:

They went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Do you think God knew His people would need water to drink? What should Israel do? What do you think you would have done in this situation? [Allow the children to give a few responses.]

Activity: Choose two children to come up to the front. Explain to them that hidden in the sand are two small slips of paper, each containing a word describing what the people of Israel did when they became thirsty in the wilderness. Blindfold each child and give them the signal to begin sifting through the sand. After each child finds a clue, remove their blindfolds and have them read the words to the class: **GRUMBLE, QUARREL.**

What did the Israelites do when they were thirsty? Grumble and quarrel. Was that the right thing to do in this situation? Why not? What were they forgetting? [Allow the children to give a few responses.]

Illustration: Have the children imagine the following scenario:

Suppose it was your birthday and your parents surprised you with a big party. They invited all your family and friends, served your favorite foods, played your favorite games, gave you a terrific present, and told you how much they loved you. Would you wake up the next day and wonder if they would forget to take care of you and feed you? Would you wonder if they loved you? Why not?

Display SEA and ask the children what God had done to the sea. [Parted it.] Could

the God who is able to part a huge sea to save His people be trusted to provide His people with water to drink in the wilderness? What would God have been right to do with His grumbling and quarrelling people? **Display GOD'S JUDGMENT.**

But this is what God chose to do instead...Display the stick and the rock.

Tell the children that these are two clues about God's response to His people's grumbling and complaining about their thirst. Divide the class into two groups (e.g., girls and boys). Give the stick to one group and the rock to the other. When a child in each group finds the written clue, have him read the clue to his group. Then have the children find their clue in their Bibles. Have one child from each group read the passage to the class:

The stick: **Exodus 15:24-25a**

And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

The rock: **Exodus 17:6a**

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.

Did God respond with judgment for Israel's grumbling and quarreling? How did God respond instead? **Display GOD'S MERCY.**

Did the Israelites finally learn to trust God after He provided them with water? No. they found something else to grumble to God about—they were hungry. They even complained to Moses that their life in Egypt was better!

Do you think God was getting tired of these weak and sinful people? How did God respond to their grumbling this time?

Display Bible Clue Card #20. Choose a child to insert the card behind the red paper of the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

*Scripture: Exodus 16:4
Clue under Window # 2*

Have the children turn to **Exodus 16:4**. Choose a child to read:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's

portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not."

Does any one remember the name given to this "bread from heaven" that God provided? [Manna.]

Open Window #2 on the poster to reveal: **BREAD FROM HEAVEN.**

Does bread usually fall from the sky? Would this bread from heaven be a response of God's judgment or of His mercy? [His mercy.]

Emphasize that as God led His people through the wilderness, He continued to show Israel His faithfulness, mercy, and goodness. After three months, God brought Israel to the very mountain where He first spoke to Moses. (On the map, point to the area of Mt. Sinai.)

Isn't this mountain a long way from Canaan (point to Canaan on the map), the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel? Besides keeping His promise about Moses returning with Israel to this mountain, is there another reason God brought Israel to this place instead of going straight to the promised land?

Display the **CLUE SCRAMBLE**. Tell the children that in the verses you are about to read there is a special word that answers the question: Why does God want His people at this mountain? Have the children listen carefully because you will ask them the identity of the scrambled word after you finish reading the passage.

Have the children turn to **Exodus 19:2b-6** and follow along as you read:

Israel encamped before the mountain.

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: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 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; 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."

Display the **CLUE SCRAMBLE** again and ask: Can anyone guess the scrambled word? [Covenant (from verse 5).] Why does God want His people at this mountain? That is where He wants to make a special covenant with Israel. What is a covenant?

Explain that a covenant is a special agreement. In the Bible, God makes covenants between Himself and a person or a group of people. In these covenants, God explains what their relationship to one another will be like. Earlier, in Genesis, God had made a covenant agreement with Abraham. In a covenant, God promises certain things, and then He tells the people He is making the covenant with what they must do in response.

In the passage I read, whom is God making an agreement, or covenant, with? [The people of Israel.]

On a white board or large piece of paper, write:

GOD	Israel
will make Israel	must

What does God agree to do for Israel? Look for three things listed in the last part of verse 5 through the first part of verse 6. [God will make Israel: 1) His treasured possession; 2) a kingdom of priests; 3) a holy nation.] (Write these answers under the corresponding heading.)

But God also told Israel what they must do in response. In verse 5, what two things does God say Israel must do? [Israel must: 1) Obey Him fully; 2) Keep His covenant.] (Write these answers under the corresponding heading.)

Does this sound like a good agreement? Would it be a good thing to be God's treasured possession? Why? [Allow the children to give some responses.] Do you think the Israelites agreed to do their part of the covenant?

Choose a child to read **Exodus 19:7-8a**:

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

How will Israel know if it is keeping the covenant? What does it need to know if it is going to be obedient?

Illustration: Have the children imagine they are driving home with their parents and a policeman pulls them over. Your dad rolls down his window and the policeman says, "You didn't obey the rules," and then gives your dad a blank ticket. (**Display the TICKET.**) What would your dad want to ask the policeman? [What rules did I break?] Suppose the policeman answers, "The ones you were told about." Could that be confusing for your dad to understand? Why?

Point out that God wanted Israel to be very sure of what He expected—what Israel's part of the agreement would include. This special covenant was not just going to be a spoken agreement like the one made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What would be different about it?

Display Bible Clue Card #21. Choose a child to come up and insert the card behind the red paper in the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

Clue under Window # 10

Open the window to reveal: **GOD'S HOLY LAW.** What is pictured here? The Ten Commandments. Point out that God had brought the nation of Israel to this mountain in the wilderness to make a special covenant with it. This covenant would include something new—God writing down His commands on stone tablets so all the Israelites would know exactly how they were to live as God's covenant people. Explain that in the next lesson, we will be learning more about this special covenant.

Application

- Remind the children that it was only three days after God had delivered Israel from Egypt that Israel began to grumble. Why is this so amazing? What does this show about the people's heart attitude? Had God saved them because *they* were good, always trusting, and wonderful? What does this tell us about God and how He saves and cares for His people? Is it something that is earned? Read portions of **Psalm 103:7-14**. Ask: *Are you like Israel sometimes? Do you grumble and quarrel with God? (Or the ones He puts in authority over you—for example, your parents?) Give an example of this. How can you get your heart and mind right before God? Are there things you need to remember about God? Are there any verses that can help you battle against unbelief and a complaining attitude?*
- Ask the children if they have ever visited a desert (or show a picture of a desert). Point out that God had a very special purpose for leading His people through the wilderness. Could the Israelites survive on their own as they traveled? Why not? What should this experience have caused them to think about? Instead of grumbling about the lack of water, what should they have done first? Ask: *Can you think of ways in which God has been merciful to you? Has God been good to you? Has He shown that He is good and faithful even when you have grumbled? Should you assume God will always act in mercy even though you have a grumbling heart?* Read and discuss **Romans 2:4-5**.
- Explain that the Israelites called the bread that God sent from heaven

"manna." God had special instructions as to how they were to collect the manna. Read **Exodus 16:16-21**. Why would God have told them to collect only as much as needed for one day? Why not store up the extra manna so they would be sure to have enough for the next day? [They would have to trust God each day for what He would provide. God was teaching them the importance of trusting in Him alone, each new day.] Read and discuss **Lamentations 3:22-23**.

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 17 in their workbooks. Have them write today's clues in the notebook portion of the page. How might the clue "Bread of Heaven" be pointing to Jesus and His death on the cross? [Only have the children ponder this question. DO NOT refer to Jesus' statement: "I am the bread of life," unless a child brings it up.]
- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children look at the workbook portion of their pages. Review what a covenant is. Because it is a special agreement between God and Israel, does that mean that God and Israel are on equal terms with each other? For example, *Suppose your parents say they have a deal to make with you. They will take you to the zoo at the end of the week. Your part of the deal is to make your bed and clean your room every day. If you don't do your part, your parents will not have to follow through with their part. Would it have worked if you had gone to your parents and said, "I have a deal for you. I will make my bed every day and clean my room. If I do this, then you must do your part and take me to the zoo"?* What is the difference between the two "deals"? Could the first one actually happen? Could the second one? Why not? Who can decide whether or not there will be a "deal" made and what the conditions will be? Review **Exodus 19:5-6** and have the children use this text to fill in the missing words on their page. According to our second clue, in what special way (or form) was God planning to communicate Israel's covenant responsibilities? Have the children draw the outline of stone tablets in the empty box. Ask: *Is the law of God still in place? Do you believe we must perfectly keep God's laws to earn His favor? Why or why not? Do you think it is possible to earn God's favor by your law keeping? Can you think of how the clue "God's Holy Law" points to Jesus and His death on the cross?*

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