

Covenant

St Mary's Homegroup studies
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St. Mary's Church
Haddenham

Covenant with Moses

For many, this covenant is the stuff of movies: Moses ascends to the mountain and disappears into a cloud, only to descend some time later with his famous two tablets of stone. The Israelites are unfaithful and worship a golden calf. Moses almost loses it when he descends from his encounter with God, only to find them worshipping a heathen image.

You may like to begin by sharing experiences when people may have undermined the Christian faith. How did you feel? How about when people who have been keen Christians seem to lose their faith as the pressures of life come in?

God makes his covenant with his people at Mount Sinai

Read Exodus 19:1-8

1. Why do you think God goes over the past when he addresses his people?
2. What does it mean to be 'Carried on eagle's wings'?
3. Verses 5 and 6 are particularly moving. What does it say about the covenant relationship between God and his people? What sort of nation would they be?

At Sinai the people of God were called into a relationship that brought them close to God but also called them to be a 'kingdom of priests' – they were called to model what it meant to follow God and be a means by which other nations might also come to know God. This foreshadows the call in Isaiah to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6). It also foreshadows the call on God's new covenant people in Acts 2.

Read Isaiah 42:1-7

4. Isaiah would have been very familiar with Exodus 19. Discuss how this passage echoes Exodus.
5. How does it also point toward God's expanding covenant in the future?

Read Exodus 20:1-17

6. What did God ask of the people of God?
7. How did these commandments help to keep them as a 'Holy Nation'?
8. How are they relevant to us today?

The encounter at Sinai formed the Israelites as the covenant people of God. Even today, Jewish people look back to Sinai as a crucial moment in their spiritual history. For Christians, we can see how it points towards God's expanding covenant. As we read Isaiah 42 we can see how the hope of a Messiah grew from this covenant and how our faith can also find its spiritual roots in this astonishing encounter with God.

Extension study

Read Exodus 19:16-21

This is a description of an amazing encounter with God. If you calculate the time of year, it is happening at the Feast of Pentecost!

9. In what ways does this encounter with God have similarities with Pentecost in Acts 2? How was the Holy Spirit active in both?