

#10 - The 10 commandments - Exodus 19:1-20:21

Engage:

- In the past two stories we have seen how God prepared Moses and the children of Israel (who were both somewhat reluctant to follow God's call) for the time when they would become known as the Israelites). They had grown from 70 people (Genesis 46:27) to about 600,000 men, plus women and children (Exodus 12:37) at this time. This was obvious to the children of Israel and the Egyptians that God had miraculously delivered them from Egyptian slavery. In this story, we find the children of Israel at the beginning of their long trek to the promised land, but before they went any further, God gave them an education in the responsibilities of holy living. At Mt. Sinai God's covenant people received detailed instructions regarding their personal conduct and worship of God, plus a blue print as to how they were to build the tabernacle.

Note: This new nation had been delivered from Egyptian bondage by God. "But God's purpose is not freedom for the people to do as they please, but rather freedom to serve Him in holiness." (DW, 1981)

- We see in this story one of the greatest events in the history of Israel, and perhaps in the history of all humankind - when God gave the Law.

Note: The New Testament clearly states that the main function of the Law was to show the sinfulness of humankind (Romans 3:19-20) in contrast with God's standards of holiness and righteousness.

Note: The Mosaic Law in Exodus has three parts: The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21), the Book of the Covenant with civil and religious ordinances (Exodus 20:22-24:11) and the ceremonial regulations (Exodus 24:12-31:18). Our focus will only be on the Ten Commandments.

Thoughts About The Story:

At Mt. Sinai

- **19:1-2** – The Israelites arrived here three months after leaving Egypt. This is the same mountain known as Horeb (Exodus 3:1-3; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13) where God spoke to Moses from a burning bush.

The benefits of the covenant

- **19:3-4** – Moses went up on the mountain and God spoke again to him. God told Moses to tell the "house of Jacob" (another of the many names for Israel) that His deliverance of them from Egypt was to be understood as being "carried . . . on eagles' wings," just like a mother eagle would do to help her young eagle to learn to fly (See Deuteronomy 32:10-11).

- **19:5-6** – God also told Moses to tell Israel that they were expected to be obedient and to keep the covenant He made with them. In other words, the special relationship that God had with Israel was contingent upon their willingness to be faithful and obedient. They would not be able to be the people that God called them to be – a "treasured possession" and a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" without such obedience – whose charge was to be dedicated to the purpose and service of God. The New Testament reveals the same truth for all followers of Christ (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

The preparation to receive the covenant

- **19:7-15** – Moses came from the mountain to tell the “elders of the people” what God had commanded. They responded by saying: “We will do everything the Lord has said.”

Moses was then told to tell the people to “consecrate” themselves in preparation for the coming of Lord to Mount Sinai “in the sight of all the people.” The three day purification included washing their clothes and abstaining from sexual relations. Limits were placed around the mountain that they were to not cross. If they did they were to be killed by either stones or arrows! Only when the rams horn is heard could they go past the limits placed at the mountain.

Note: The same God who required purity for the Israelites, requires pure hearts from those who come to Him today (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 1:9).

- **19:16-25** – When the third day arrived, God descended to Sinai in majesty and great power. There was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud and the sound of a trumpet. There was smoke because Lord descended “in fire.” “**EVERYONE IN THE CAMP TREMBLED.**” Again the people were warned to keep their distance.

Note: All of these examples demonstrate the great difference between God and humankind, plus the miracle and wonder of receiving revelation from God.

The Ten Commandments (and not the ten suggestions)

- **20:1-2** – The Ten Commandments are literally the Ten Words. The first four commandments concern the relationship of humankind with God. The other six have to do with social relationships between humans.

- The first words of God were a reminder that God the Redeemer was one who leads His people out of slavery. Note: Our responsibility is to answer the call and follow Jesus as others have done (Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9; 10:37-38; 12:26; 20:29-34; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-43).

Note: “All of the OT Law is but an amplification and application of the Ten Commandments. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the NT for believers today.” (Wiersbe) See the NT references with each of the commandments except the 4th.

#1 (20:3) – “You shall have no other gods before me”
(Acts 14:15; John 4:21-23; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6)

- God expects and demands total allegiance! This is the foundation on which everything else rests in the relationship that we can have with God. Sad, but true, Israel often disobeyed this first command by worshiping the idols of other nations. Eventually they were exiled to Assyria and Babylonia because of such worship.

#2 (20:4-6) – “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything You shall not bow down to worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,” (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:22-23; 1 John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 10:7, 14)

- Nothing but God is to be the object of our worship. Why worship something that is created (visual), rather than the Creator (visible through eyes of faith)? Not only is God a jealous God, He is zealous for the devotion and service of His people. To reject Him is to “hate” Him. This is another example of how sin said to bring punishment or discipline that will affect other

family and community members. By contrast, to love Him is to blessing of God's love.

- See Psalm 115:4-8. **Very important passage!**

#3 (20:7) – “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God” (James 5:12; Matthew 5:33-37; 6:5-9)

- God's people are to not use God's name for “any idle, frivolous, or insincere purpose (such as speaking His name when taking an oath with no intention of keeping it, Leviticus 19:12). People should not use His name for selfish or evil purposes (cf. Psalm 139:20), thereby seeing to usurp His authority.” Bible Knowledge Commentary Just as #3 was visual, #4 is verbal.

#4 (20:8-11) – “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” (Note: The only time keeping the Sabbath is mentioned in the NT is in relation to people who are Jewish. Nothing is specifically said about Christians keeping the Sabbath.)

- To keep the Sabbath holy means to “separate” it from the other six so as to make it a special day for God. This was not a day for doing nothing, but for seeking God. For the Christian, we focus on the first day of the week, as this was the day the Jesus was raised from the dead and the day the the church began (Acts 2 - Pentecost).

#5 (20:12) – “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Ephesians 6:1-4)

- The family unit is a miniature example of the nation of Israel. As the family goes, so goes the nation. Longevity is promised to those who honor their parents. One interpretation says that longevity refers to keeping a nation of people from destruction. See Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 20:20.

#6 (20:13) – “You shall not murder.” (1 John 3:15; Matthew 5:21-22)

- Because humans are made in the image of God and have a responsibility to preserve society, humankind is commanded to not take the life of others by premeditated murder. To kill in an act of war (Israel going to war against their enemies in the OT), self defense or to carry out capital punishment (Romans 13:1-5) is not the same thing. Also, there was a death penalty for those who broke the Sabbath (Exodus 31:17; Numbers 15:32-36) and for those who committed adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:23-24). The following is a listing of a partial list where the death penalty was directed (Exodus 22:18-20; Leviticus 20:13; 21:19; Joshua 7).

#7 (20:14) – “You shall not commit adultery.” (Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-20; Hebrews 13:4)

- A fundamental foundation for society is the family. This commandment is given to protect the family from being destroyed by unfaithfulness.

#8 (20:15) – “You shall not steal.” (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; James 5:1-4)

- This commandment demands that God's people respect the property of others. It is closely related to the 10th commandment. And it is another foundation block to uphold a society from

being destroyed by sin.

#9 (20:16) – “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:25)

- God’s people are to not speak falsely against others. See the book of Proverbs. Words can destroy or build up. Again we are given another foundation block to preserve and enhance our relationship with one another.

#10 (20:17) – “You shall not covet” (Ephesians 5:3; Luke 12:15-21)

- God’s people are not to desire or lust for anything that belongs to others. Any society that is good and will last will practice this command, as well as the others we have just discussed.

- **(20:18-21)** – The response of the people was: “they trembled with fear” (also 19:16). This was based on what they saw and heard.

- Moses told them to not be afraid. “God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

- Tragically, Israel soon lost their fear of God (see Exodus 32 - the golden calf). As it was with Adam and Eve, Abraham and even Moses – we are really no different than they were. We see that we are not God and that we are not perfect. We are in need of the love of God that endures forever (See Psalm 136).

Extra:

Note: A summary of the Ten Commandments. “They might be called rules of (1) religion, (2) worship, (3) reverence, (4) time, (5) authority, (6) life, (7) purity, (8) property, (9) tongue, and (10) contentment.” Bible Knowledge Commentary

Quote: “The tablets of Sinai were given to show the need for the cross at Calvary.” (unknown)

Quote: “If God wanted a permissive society, He would have given the Ten Suggestions.” (unknown)