

JANUARY 28, 2012

Exodus 19 and 20

Exodus 23:10-33, Exodus 24,

Sinai represents the next great leap forward in revelation history. It was here on this mountain where God said, to Moses back in Exodus 3:12 "When you've brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve the God on this mountain." That was a sign that required a great deal of faith, but now, with 2,000,000 people who He has liberated from bondage, Moses comes again to meet with God on Mount Horeb (or Sinai).

Now, not to supersede the covenant He made with Abraham, but to build upon it, there is another "covenant." This one is cut with a whole nation, but before it comes, the whole nation must prepare itself for an encounter with a holy God. A theme that begins to be developed very extensively just at this point of Scripture, and which will be developed to a very high degree in the remainder of the Book of Exodus and that of Leviticus, is easily stated this way. "Since God is a Holy God, you dare not approach Him in a casual fashion, but only in ways that He has prescribed and in a spirit of reverence and contrition."

"If Israel is truly going to meet me here," God tells Moses, "then first Israel must consecrate herself. She must prepare and she must realize that she is in the presence of the Holy God. To fail in this will bring her into great peril. If Israel comes in an unprepared, unworthy or irreverent way into my presence, *The Lord will break out against them.*"

Notice that the Ten Commandments are the next "Covenant" that God creates with his people. Be sure to add this to your covenants page in your Project 4:4 Readers Guide. The community of God is taking a great leap forward into the eral of 'THE LAW". This is one of the all-time most famous passages of the Bible, and, in fact of all literature worldwide. Here are some highlights.

There are "ten commandments", or "words," given here to Israel. The first four Commandments relate to God, to that vertical relationship. The fifth Commandment is a kind of bridge, dealing with my relationship to God's most immediate representatives in my life - my parents. Commandments 6 - 10 deal with my relationship to other people. Remembering this may help you to keep all ten of the commandments in your mind in some kind of order.

The First Commandment is to have no other gods before Jehovah. Only one God. No ifs ands or buts. Don't worship anyone or anything else.

The Second Command deals not with **Who** we worship but with **How**. Because God is the creator of all, to try to represent Him with any image is to demean Him by equating Him to that which He has created. Any image or statue will always reduce

God to less than his full power and glory. So God commands that his people never worship and image.

The Third Commandment is usually understood in a popular way as a prohibition against using God's name in an irreverent way. It certainly includes that, but goes beyond it to include the idea of false swearing as well, i.e., using the name of God to attest to the truthfulness of that which is not true. In the New Testament Book of James, the Christian is encouraged not to swear by any oath (James 5:12) simply because he is to exhibit the truth on all occasions and should not need to call on the name of God to verify His Word. It can also refer to the concept of taking his name - calling yourself a follower - and not living up to that name.

The Fourth commandment tells us to set aside one day for rest and worship. We honor God by remembering him all day one day per week. We also reflect his pattern of work and rest when we rest on that day.

The Fifth Commandment - the bridge to our relationship toward one another relates to honoring our parents. According to Scripture, we do that when we (a) obey them (Deuteronomy 21:18); (b) hold them in high esteem (Proverbs 4:8); (c) show respect for them (Leviticus 19:3); and (d) care for them (Psalm 91:15). Cursing one's parents in the Old Testament economy was a capital offense!

The Sixth Word deals with murder - this is later differentiated from other forms of killing. In particular, the law will leave room for killing in self defense, at war, and as a means of capital punishment. However, murder is strictly prohibited.

Seventh with adultery/sexual immorality - keep sex within marriage

the Eighth is about stealing - don't do it!

and the Ninth with lying about your neighbor.

The last Commandment takes an entirely different direction because unlike the first nine it does not deal simply with actions but with attitudes – *“Thou shalt not covet.”* This "internalization" of the Law anticipates remarkably what Jesus Christ would do with the Law. In the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5,) He insists that our inner attitudes are every bit as important to keeping the true Law of God as our outward actions.

This commandment is also critical because it is amazing how much coveting - or jealousy - drives people to break commandments 5-9.

To wrap up this section on the 10 Commandments it's important to note that God never gave Israel the Law to make her righteous - the Law cannot do that, for no one can ever keep it. Instead here are several reasons the Law was given.

#1 - to reveal man's sinfulness. That is the whole point of Romans 3:19-20.

- #2 - to illustrate the hideous nature of sin (Romans 7:8 ff)
- #3 - to reveal the holiness of God
- #4 - to restrain sinful behavior and help us come to Christ.
- #5 - to restrain sinful behavior in order to protect society.

God will later contrast the law of Moses to the covenant of grace with Jesus. The good news is that Jesus knows we will all fall short of the law. (I know I personally have broken most of the commands.) But in his goodness, he offers us his life and forgiveness despite our wrongdoing. We don't get what we deserve, we get what he has bought us with his blood.

And all this good news comes from the Word of God, which is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. This has been Mark Ashton wishing the peace of God upon you.