

Exodus 19-20

Exodus 19:1-2

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

After a few months of traveling Israel finally reached Mount Sinai, a peak within a mountain range called Horeb. This becomes the resting place for Israel through the remainder of Exodus and Leviticus. They will not move again until the mid way point of the book of Numbers.

Numbers 10:11-13

*Now it came to pass on the **twentieth day of the second month**, in the **second year**, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. And **the children of Israel set out** from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. So **they started out for the first time** according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.*

It is here at Mount Sinai where Israel will receive the Law, the instructions for the Tabernacle and be formed from a people into a nation. It is also here where they will build the tabernacle and begin the daily sacrifices and offering that become the backbone of Israel's worship and relationship with God.

Exodus 19:3-6

*And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: "You 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, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

Once established, God called Moses up the mountain for the first of a series of encounters. Moses will be going up and down the mountain several times in the next few chapters. **On his first visit**, before receiving the law, Moses is given a promise for the people. The promise begins with a **description of the actual journey** they were on.

If we were to stop this caravan and ask the people where they were headed some might respond "To Canaan" others "To the promised land" but if we asked God, He would

respond "***I am leading them to Myself.***" This is the destination for all believers. Whatever we are facing the goal is to lead us to closer to God and to becoming more like Christ.

Paul put it like this:

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

All things in life are designed for the good of conforming us into the image of Christ. Every trial, tragedy or triumph is designed to make us more like Jesus and more effective in winning others to the Kingdom. Israel ran out of water and food, faced attacks from Egypt and Amalek and endured the hardships of the desert all to bring them closer to the Lord and learn of His provision and grace.

That is always the desire of God. Whatever situation you are facing, God is seeking to bring you closer to Himself. You may be experiencing difficult financial times, problems at home, hardship at work or any number of other difficulties. From our perspective the goal may be to reach the end of the trial but from God's perspective the goal is to bring us closer to Himself. The verses following this statement encourage the people to obey the Word, make a commitment to the Lord and separate themselves from things that are displeasing to God.

If we want to reach the destination that God is calling us to, that place of being closer to Christ and more like Him we need to separate ourselves from any sin and obey His Word.

God also promises to make them a special people, a great nation and a kingdom of priests. These promises are conditional, based upon Israel keeping the covenant and obeying the Wor

Exodus 19:7-9

*So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "**All that the Lord has spoken we will do.**" So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever."*

So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

Through the remainder of the chapter, Moses will be hiking up and down the mountain bringing messages from God to the people and the people to God. We read of Moses going up and down at least 6 times in chapter 19

The first message is to rehearse the promises. The **people respond** by committing themselves and their ways to the Lord.

"All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

This is a good illustration of what many of us experience. **We have a great desire to commit to God but we find that we fail along the way.** The same people who promise to obey will also worship a cow, commit fornication with the women of Moab and refuse to step into the land of promise.

Paul described the **struggle** he faced with desiring to please the Lord while lacking the ability to pull it off.

Romans 7:15

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Romans 7:21-23

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

This drove Paul to cry out

Romans 7:24-25

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The struggle Israel faced illustrates the struggle every child of God faces. We have a desire to please God but we are also weak and prone to falling.

"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love..."

Jesus put it this way

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We need to realize that determination is never enough to bring about spiritual victory. We need: regeneration, commitment to Christ, **daily** sowing to the spirit, **daily** refusing to sow to the flesh and **daily** filling with the Spirit

The Sirens;

In Greek mythology, Sirens were part human, part bird who lived on a rocky island in the midst of the sea. They sang melodies so beautiful that sailors passing by couldn't resist getting closer to them. Following the sound of music, the sailors would steer their boats towards them or jump in the water to get closer. Either way, it always ended in disaster as the sailors perished on the rocks.

There are two stories of men resisting the Sirens. In the Odyssey, Odysseus ordered his men to put beeswax in their ears so they couldn't hear the music as they sailed by. His men tied Odysseus to the ship's mast so he could hear the enchanting tunes but wouldn't be able to swim ashore.

Another story tells of Jason and the Argonauts who were saved because they had a talented musician who played music that was even more beautiful than that of the Sirens. As a result the men hardly heard the sound of the Sirens.

Keep in mind that Greek mythology was designed to instruct, these stories emphasized the danger of temptation and two contrasting ways to resist it. Many of us follow the example of Odysseus trying with all our strength to resist. A better way is to realize that the sweet promises of Christ are far better than anything we would get if we wander from Him. The secret to success as a believer is to get to know Christ better.

Exodus 19:10-13

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and **consecrate** them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be **stoned or shot with an arrow**; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.*

The people were commissioned to prepare themselves to meet with God. He would be coming with great glory and they must be consecrated to meet with Him

Consecration - To dedicate or ordain a person for sacred office or an object for sacred purposes. Many things throughout scripture are consecrated:

Later on we read of the consecration of the priests — (Exodus 29)

The Levites Numbers 8.

The Nazarites (Numbers 6).

Certain objects used for worship — such as temples, altars, firstfruits, spoils of war,

Consecration carries the idea of being set apart not being perfect. The people were not required to be sinless to meet with God otherwise they couldn't, instead they were required to be devoted and to remove things that would make them unclean.

The holiness of God is illustrated in the dire warning given not to touch the mountain. If a person wandered over the boundaries they were to be shot from a distance. No one was to trespass in order to get them. Paul wrote

The idea is that while we are on a rescue mission to retrieve back this who have wandered from the Lord, we must be careful not to trespass the commands of God in doing so. There is a constant struggle within the child of God who is attempting to be both holy and to reach out to others.

Exodus 19:14-15

So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives."

Part of consecration is to set aside permissible things for a season.

The concept of **fasting** would also illustrate this point. When Daniel refused to eat delicacies it was not because pastries are inherently evil, but that he was choosing to set those things aside in an attempt to emphasize his walk with God. It is a healthy practice to take times of fasting from food or even from certain social activities. With the constant sensory overload we receive from our smart devices it might do us all good to fast a week from social media and emphasize our walk with God. I am sure all the kitty videos and food pictures will still be there next week.

Exodus 19:21-25

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them." But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.' " Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them." So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

Once Moses made his way up the mountain his first order was to go back down and warn the people again to set themselves apart to the Lord and to avoid touching the mountain

Paul wrote of the need to reemphasize the commands of God

Philippians 3:1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Exodus 20 - The 10 Commandments

The book of exodus can be divided into 2 unequal sections. The first 1-19 records Israel's deliverance from Egypt and arrival at Sinai. The second 20-40 records Israel's being established as a nation under the authority of the law of God. The first half of Exodus is about Israel being rescued from service to a pagan nation, and the second half is all about proper service of the one true God by keeping his covenant.

As the Lord begins to form the nation **the first step is to establish a law** that is not based on culture or upon the dictates of the heart but is established in heaven. God will make it clear that **His design is to govern His people by giving the standard of His word**

It is important to keep the setting in mind as we read of the giving of the law

Exodus 19:9

*And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I **come to you in the thick cloud**, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever."*

Exodus 19:12-13

You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, "Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall

surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain."

Exodus 19:16

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that **there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain;** and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.*

Exodus 19:18

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke,** because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke **ascended like the smoke of a furnace,** and the **whole mountain quaked greatly

Clearly He is emphasizing the importance of the law that will govern the people

"The 10 Commandments"

1. No other gods
2. No graven images
3. No blasphemy
4. Keep sabbath
5. Honor parents
6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not lie
10. Do not covet

Before we talk of these in detail, let's take a moment to **imagine** a culture that sought to live by his code. How much of what flashes across the daily news feeds would be eliminated if these laws governed each of us.

It is striking that people would be so incensed with anger as they seek to remove any mention of these things from classrooms and courthouses. What is so terribly wrong with a law code at forbids murder, theft, dishonesty, or the destroying of another man's family?

It is also worth noting how these commands reveal the **value** God places upon:

- Holiness
- Worship
- Family
- Human life
- Marriage
- Truth
- Personal property

these things ought to matter to us as followers of God and we should elect leaders that have these same **values**

The 10 commandments are often referred to in the New Testament

Mark 10:19

You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' ”

Romans 13:9

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

James 2:11

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

9 of the 10 are repeated as NT requirements

The only one left out is the law of the **Sabbath**

Exodus 20:8-11

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Although the sabbath was established in the garden it did not become a law until Sinai

The sabbath law is repeated in Ex 31:12-17, additional info is given as it relates to the severity of the law. Sabbath breaking was a capital offense for Israelites

The subject of the sabbath is addresses again in Ex 35, here we find an **example** give as to what constitutes work

Exodus 35:3

You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”

The law is repeated again as the Levitical priesthood is being established

Leviticus 23:3

“Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

Leviticus 25 explains that in addition to resting every 7th day, Israel was to give the farmlands rest every 7th year. This God promised to provide enough for them in the 6th year to allow the land to rest the 7th

Three passages describe the failure of Israel to obey the sabbath regulations

Numbers 15:32

Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

Nehemiah 13 where Israel is involved in commerce with the surrounding people on the sabbath. Nehemiah responds by stopping the commerce and threatening the people

Nehemiah 13:21

Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath.

Finally, Jeremiah refers to the captivity being 70 years because of the number of sabbaths that had been broken by Israel over their history. Nehemiah alludes to this when addressing the sabbath breakers of his day

Nehemiah 13:18

Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

As time went on volumes were written to define precisely what was meant by work, rest, burden bearing and fire kindling. Today many of the restrictions forced upon the people make the sabbath far more burdensome than any other day of the week.

Jesus addressed the aberrant teaching regarding the sabbath he prevailed in His day. He purposely chose to heal, collect grain and teach on the sabbath. This outraged the religious leaders but helped to define the real purpose of the sabbath.

Matthew 12:8

For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:27-28

And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

The New Covenant places no obligation upon us to keep the Sabbath

According to Hebrews four, Christ himself becomes the rest for the believer. Since He accomplished the work of salvation on our behalf we can rest in Him.

Paul went so far as to free us from the obligation of the sabbath when he wrote

Romans 14:5

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

Colossians 2:16-17

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Consequently the NT church gathered on the Lord's day or resurrection Sunday to meet corporately. It was at this time that the weekly functions of the church took place.

1Cor 16:1-2

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come

Revelation 1:10

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

In Israel today Messianic believers generally meet on the sabbath because it coincides with the culture.

The remaining 9 commandments are all found in the NT

No other Gods -

Matthew 4:10

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

No graven images -

Acts 15:18-19

"Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

No blasphemy -

1 Timothy 1:20

of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Honor parents -

Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

No murder -

Matthew 5:21

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

Romans 1:29

*being filled with all unrighteousness, **sexual immorality**, wickedness, **covetousness**, maliciousness; full of envy, **murder**, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,*

No adultery -

Matthew 5:27-28

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Galatians 5:19

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: **adultery, fornication**, uncleanness, lewdness,

No theft -

Ephesians 4:28

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

1 Peter 4:15

But let none of you suffer as a **murderer**, a **thief**, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

No lying -

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Revelation 21:8

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, **murderers, sexually immoral**, sorcerers, **idolaters**, and all **liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

No coveting

Ephesians 5:3

*But fornication and all uncleanness or **covetousness**, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;*

Ephesians 5:5

*For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor **covetous** man, who is an **idolater**, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither **fornicators**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor **thieves**, nor **covetous**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

As the pages of Scripture turn further explanation of these laws is given. For instance it is made clear that capital punishment, killing in battle or accidental death (what we refer to as manslaughter) or killing of animals for food are not a violation of the law against murder

What is the primary purpose of the law?

The law was never given as a way to get to heaven. Instead the primary purposes of the law were for it to serve as

- A mirror to show us sin

- As a mirror we see ourselves reflected in the law and find that we do not measure up to the standard of God. This should lead us to Christ who alone can pardon sin
- A guard rail to keep us on track
 - Immorality and its consequences on family, society and nations is curbed by adherence to the law of God.

The law was never meant as a means to bring salvation.

Romans 8:3-4

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Galatians 3:22-25

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

These are not the only laws given by God to Moses. He will receive ceremonial laws designed to develop worship and social laws designed to help establish the nation. It is important to make the distinction between moral, ceremonial and social laws since the church is not a nation and has been established upon a new covenant

Exodus 20:18-20

The People Afraid of God's Presence

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

The people naturally responded with fear. It is interesting to note how Moses addressed their fears.

Do not fear - they did not need to be afraid since they were in a covenant relationship with God. All His majesty was not against them but on their side. He had revealed His power in deliverance and provision over the past few months

His fear may be before you - they needed to fear God. They must have a healthy respect for His awesome power and holiness. This fear is a strong driving force to deter us from sin. Those who have no fear of God are those who live however they wish. This is not a sign of maturity but of neglecting to understand the nature of God

Exodus 20:22-26

The Law of the Altar

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'

The chapter closes as it began reminding Israel that they were not to make graven images or even an elaborate altar for worship.

Exodus 20:4

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

Exodus 20:23

You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.

Israel learned that along with being jealous, just, merciful, faithful and holy YHWH is also the only true God and must not be reduced to an image or an idol.

Icons or religious artifacts are a part of every religious system. People cling to man made objects thinking they are closer to God if they kiss an image, wear a necklaces, or carry a religious charm. God makes it clear that this has no place in relationship with Him. It seems to me that there are two primary reasons for this.

First, no image can adequately represent God. If we try to make something that shows His love, He often looks weak. If we try to replicate His power, it makes Him look tyrannical. If we showcase His mercy we neglect to reveal His justice and holiness. There is no earthly image that can reveal the majesty of His divine nature. That does not mean that we cannot know God, in fact Paul wrote;

Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

The person of God will never be adequately revealed in a poster, icon or artifact. But we can see deeply into the nature of God by examining the words and ways of His only begotten Son.

Secondly, images not only fail to represent God they also give a false sense of his presence. When we where a cling to an icon as a reflection of God we lose sight of the fact that He is ever near His children and wants us to cry out to Him. We must learn not to look to an image but beyond the image to the very throne of God where Jesus sits to pour out His grace, mercy, love and power to help us walk with God.