

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EXODUS 19-20

When I want to spend a few days with my wife to relax and unwind we go to **the beach**... When I want to enjoy my family I clean up the yard and invite them over to **G-daddy's house**... But when I desire to take a few days to get alone with God, sit at His feet, and spend time with Him, I often head to **the mountains**.

Whether it's the North Georgia mountains, or a little further north to the Smoky Mountains, or even Stone Mountain... *there's something about the mountains!*

Even the Bible exhorts us to seek God on the mountain tops. Psalm 61:2 says, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I..." God is compared to a mountain. Today, whenever we encounter God in a vivid way we refer to the experience as "a mountain top moment."

And in the OT there was one particular mountain that was called, "the mountain of God." "Horeb" was the mountain range. "Sinai" was its tallest peak. Psalm 68:17 refers to Mount Sinai as God's "holy place."

Elijah went to this mountain to hear from God, but the prophet didn't find Him in the gale force winds that blew upon him, or in the earthquake that shook the ground under him, or in the fire that consumed all that was before him... He met God in a still, small voice.

Again, a thousand years later a converted Pharisee named Paul wanted to seek God and sort out his newfound faith in Jesus so he traveled to Arabia - *we assume the mountain of Moses and Elijah*. And there Paul says *God revealed His Son in him*, revolutionizing his life and changing the whole scope of Christianity.

My point is, a lot happens on mountain tops. And it's no surprise after exiting Egypt that Israel's first stop on their journey to the Promised Land was to a mountain to meet with God. In Exodus 19 they come to Mount Sinai, where Moses spoke with God forty years earlier.

Chapter 19, "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."

The traditional Mount Sinai, or **Jabal Musa**, is a rectangular shaped piece of granite that soars 7,500 feet above sea level. The mountain is located deep in the Sinai Peninsula. Today, a Greek Orthodox monastery, St. Catherine's, sits just below the

peak...

*But several other sites have been suggested for Mount Sinai... To me, the most intriguing is a mountain range called **Jabal al Lawz**, or “the mountain of the Law.” Its located east of the Gulf of Aqaba in ancient Midian or present day Saudi Arabia. It’s tallest peak is **Jabal Maqla** which means “burnt mountain.” The mountain top appears charred by fire. It’s been blackened. Break the rocks open and their inside are a reddish-tan color, meaning the outside were burned. Possibly by the glory of God that descended on Sinai.*

There’s also a cave near the peak of Jabal Maqla where Elijah may’ve retreated... And there’re signs of organized worship at its base, where the rebellious Israelites set up their calf worship... We can’t be sure, but Jabal Maqla could be the biblical Mount Sinai.

Yet **where** Sinai is located pales in comparison to **what** occurred there. “**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.'"** God has treated the Hebrew nation like a mother eagle trains her eaglets to fly...

The day comes when the mother bird tosses her offspring out of the nest. She hurls the little eaglets toward the ground; then at the last second just before impact the mother swoops down and catches her chick. She does this over and over until the little bird finally learns how to flap its wings and fly on its own...

And likewise, God is pushing Israel out of its nest, into a wilderness. The Hebrews are forced to deal with *polluted water*, and *hunger*, and *no water*, and *attacks from the enemy*. And each time God swoops down and rescues them at the last second just before they crash.

And He orchestrates trials to do the same with us! This is how He teaches us to fly on wings of faith.

“**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.”** *Wow, what a promise!*

Up until now God’s blessing on the Hebrews was based on the covenant God made with their father, Abraham. He made three promises to his descendants: **a chunk of land, a nation or descendants, and salvation or blessing**. Remember, the **sod, seed, and salvation!**

The Abrahamic Covenant was unilateral. It depended solely on God's effort. All Abraham was required to do was look on God's promise and believe. And this covenant will still be in force - it's an eternal covenant.

Yet now another covenant is now being established. And this is a different kind of agreement. It's conditional on Israel, obeying a set of laws and rituals. And their adherence to God's laws will make them His "*special treasure*" among the nations. The distinctive practices will set them apart, and make them holy to God.

Today we refer to God's covenant with Moses as the "Old Covenant" or "Old Testament" for it was made obsolete by *a newer testament*. The New Covenant was paid for by the blood of Jesus. It's now faith that warrants God's favor, not the laws given to Moses.

Yet for 1500 years the Mosaic Covenant benefited the Hebrew people, and created in them spiritual sensibilities that God hoped would define them. Christians too, can learn a lot by studying God's Law.

"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." Here, when they arrive at Mount Sinai the nation formally agrees to live by God's laws.

Verse 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." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them (that is, dedicate 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." I'm sure at this point they had no idea what to expect, but God's glory will literally appear in physical, visible form, and hover on the mountain top.

"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.'" Moses will rope off the mountain. No one will be allowed on its slopes.

And here's why, "Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death." From the outset of their relationship, God wanted the Hebrews to know that He is so holy a sinful human, *apart from God's grace*, can never safely stand in His presence and live. The only people allowed on the mountain are Moses and Aaron.

Death is the penalty for walking nonchalantly onto the mountain. And God even tells them how this penalty should be executed, verse 13, “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.” God invites the Hebrews *near the mountain*, but not *onto the mountain*. They kept a distance. It served as a reminder that on their own their righteousness would never be enough to satisfy God.

“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. 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.” God loved these people. They were His “*special treasure*” - His baby eaglets. Proverbs 9:10 states, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...” Thus, fear or reverence is their first lesson.

The same is true for us. It’s great to know God loves us, but we can’t appreciate His love until we recognize His glory and grandeur. Until we “*tremble*” before Him.

This is why I’m suspicious of people who refer to God as “*the man upstairs*,” or “*the big guy*,” or “*my homeboy*.” Do they really know *the awesome God*?

Verse 17, “And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 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. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder...” Hey, it’s early in the morning, the sun is up. God is overshadowing the mountain in a thick, fiery cloud. The summit is on fire - like an erupting volcano.

Underneath the cloud and smoke it’s like a solar eclipse. This huge, chunk of granite is rumbling and shaking, as a blast of a trumpet grows and intensifies...

And that’s when, “Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.” Imagine, hearing the Almighty speak audibly. *How would God’s voice sound in our ears?*

On this day there was no need to quiet your spirit, or listen for His still, small voice. There were no subtleties at Sinai. Deep spiritual sensitivity was not required. God is about to sound His law for every ear to hear!

“Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the

LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 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." *Curiosity isn't always good!*

"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.' Moses underestimates the people's stupidity. God knew someone might try to breach the rope and break through to see God up close and personal. Moses needs to warn the foolish Hebrews!

And these Hebrews aren't the only people who don't respect the ropes, and disregard God's boundaries. It's a human tendency to pursue the forbidden. I like the old saying, "Never take down a fence until you know why it was erected." *There was a good reason.* It may no longer be valid, but it served a purpose for a time.

"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."

Of course, the question arises, "*If God loved these people (and He did) why was He so concerned about them breaching His space, and approaching His holiness?*" And to understand the answer we need to recall the difference between *acceptance* and *love*. God's love is unconditional. He loves us regardless of what we do. But His acceptance is highly conditional. God has terms we have to satisfy for Him to accept us.

The Hebrews knew God loved them, but they had not yet gained His acceptance. Not until their sin was absolved could they enter and enjoy God's presence.

In Hebrews 12 the New Testament writer contrasts *Israel's experience at Mount Sinai* with *our experience in Christ*. He writes, "*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*" Israel came to a roped off Sinai where they only beheld God's glory at a distance. But we've been given access to Mount Zion, to God's heavenly mountain, to His very throne room.

At Sinai, the Hebrews trembled in fear. In Christ, we receive God's comfort and grace... At Sinai, access to God was restricted. In Christ, access to God is unlimited... At Sinai, the Hebrews approached in fear. In Christ, we come with confidence... At

Sinai, Israel was burdened with guilt and sin. In Christ, we're forgiven... At Sinai, they were judged by the Law. In Christ, we're registered in heaven... At Sinai, their mediator was a man, Moses. In Christ, our mediator is the living Lord... **We've come to a better mountain!**

Some people teach the key to obedience is more of Sinai - *more rules, more fear, more intimidation, more law and awe*. But that didn't work for Israel. At Sinai they trembled, but a few weeks later they worshipped an idolatrous, golden calf. To really change we need the grace that comes from Jesus and from Mount Zion.

Chapter 20, "And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

God now uses a mountain for a pulpit, and speaks audibly to His people. He lays down the Law. And He begins with Ten Commandments - God's Top Ten List.

We learn later these commandments were written by God on two stone tablets. Apparently, the first four commandments were written on one tablet, and deal with man's relationship with God. While the second six commandments were written on a second tablet, and relate to man's relationship with his fellow man.

There are folks who believe God wrote these Ten Commandments on the heart of the first man, Adam. They constitute what we call "*conscience*." But when Adam sinned, his conscience was defiled. The internal standard was defaced. Thus, God came at Mount Sinai to restate His moral code... *to literally, write it in stone*.

And people today certainly need to be reminded of God's moral code. A USA Today poll revealed that 74% of Americans can name the Three Stooges... 35% can recall the six kids from the Brady Bunch... 25% can name the seven ingredients on a MacDonald's Big Mac... *but only 14% of Americans can name all ten commandments*... 60% can't even name half... Yet 78% favor their public display. *Seems to me, before we display them publicly we should know them personally*.

Once, a little boy was asked to name the Ten Commandments. He said he could only remembered two, "Pick up your toys" and "Don't drink and drive."

It reminds me of the Sunday School teacher who asked her class, "Which of the Ten Commandments would you be breaking if you pulled your dog's tail?" One little girl answered, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." I hope you have done a better job at remembering God's Top Ten commandments...

For God has given His people, of old and today, ten non-negotiables by which we should live our lives and order our society. *These are not the ten suggestions, but the ten commandments*. Though we're no longer under the Law, these ten commands still

ooze with universal wisdom - we ignore them to our own peril.

Recently I saw a commercial where a boy says to his girlfriend, "I'm not impressed with you anymore. You don't have any values." The girl snaps back, "Yes I do, I bought this shirt for \$5.95." She had confused *moral values* with *monetary value*. She's not the only one...

Here's what concerns me about the society we live in today: *what are our convictions, our standards?* Morality isn't a guessing game. Right and wrong do exist. An eternal God has absolute truths. A customized morality that serves our selfishness doesn't have the power to tamp down evil and keep sinful people in line.

Interestingly, on the eastern facade of our Supreme Court building in Washington DC you'll see a line of lawgivers, but they're all turned toward the one in the center. It's Moses, holding the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. The architects of our democracy recognized the primary importance of God's Top Ten. Today, these commands are needed more than ever!

Verse 3 begins, "You shall have no other gods before Me." In today's western nations most people are too sophisticated to have statutes on their mantle; yet that doesn't mean they're immune to idols. You can make a god out of anything - *money, success, sports, sex, appearance, a cause...* Anything that rivals your love for God and your allegiance to God becomes your idol.

DL Moody wrote, "You don't have to go to heathen lands today to find false gods. America is full of them. Whatever you love more than God is your idol." We obey the first command by allowing God to permeate all corners of our life and giving Him supreme authority.

The second commandment is in verse 4, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." Commandment #1 tells us who to worship. The second, emphasizes how to worship.

As I've often said, "You don't really love someone unless you love them in the way they want and need to be loved." And this goes for God. Don't just love God in the way that's convenient for you. That's not love. Real love considers God's concerns - *what pleases Him*.

God is invisible and intangible. Jesus said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Thus, avoid employing carved images, or

physical representations in your worship - *icons, or trinkets, or crucifixes*. Over time the symbols we employ can overshadow who it is they represent.

The Puritans of old and orthodox Jews today interpret the second commandment as a prohibition against art in general. *All images were prohibited*. But if so, God broke His own command when He called men to embroider cherubim in the curtains of the tabernacle, or mold two golden cherubim for the top of the Ark. God was never against *artistry*, just *idolatry*.

Verse 7, "**You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.**" Commandment three forbids *disgracing* or *trivializing* God's name. Either **derision** or **disregard** violates this command.

Put in the positive *we should always take God seriously*. Let's treat Him and His name with respect.

Verse 8, "**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.**" The fourth commandment is a change of pace. Stop what you do six days as week, and rest with God on the seventh.

God knows that in this world the rigors of work are going to consume much of our time - so He commands us to set aside one day in seven to retreat from work and spend time with Him. One day in seven should be devoted to *pray and play*. You do something different.

The Sabbath is a reset. It's the one day that reminds us why we do what we do the other six days. The Sabbath brings us back to God and family. It's said, "**For six days we make a living, on the seventh day we rediscover life.**" It's essential to our health to develop a weekly rhythm of work and rest, work and rest.

Of course, in the NT we learn that resting one day in seven doesn't make us right with God. *Jesus does that!* But what it does do is keep you in your right mind!

Verse 12, "**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**" Generally speaking, **parents are wiser than kids!** Parents have been around the block a time or two. They know stuff their kids don't.

That's why if you listen to your mom and dad - **you'll minimize life's dangers and maximize life's enjoyments.** *Why learn everything the hard way?* The Bible says you'll live longer and better if you honor your parents.

The sixth commandment tells us, "**You shall not murder.**" God alone **gives life, thus God alone has the authority to end life...** Now remember, **all murder involves killing, but not all killing is murder.** At times God delegates the authority to kill to mankind.

God justifies the use of the sword in policing and just wars... He sanctions self-defense... He even gives governments the task of executing capital punishment.

But life remains sacred. It is a gift from God. Mankind was made in God's likeness, so to harm an *innocent person - and unborn persons are the most innocent persons of all* - is to mar God's image... Jesus said even if you get angry, and in hatred lash out at another person - with words, or with spite you can commit murder in your heart, and assassinate a reputation.

Hey, *"How can we adore God, yet abhor the person who bears His image? How can we love Jesus and yet despise the person He died to save?"* The answer is *we can't!* The sixth commandment against murder teaches us to respect all human life - be fully pro-life!

Verse 14, "**You shall not commit adultery.**" Since life is sacred then the institution that propagates life is also sacred. So God places a high hedge around marriage.

Sex before marriage, or sex outside of marriage is a violation of this commandment. Guard the fidelity of your marriage at all costs. Build trust with your spouse!

Once a Sunday School teacher was explaining the Ten Commandments when a little boy asked, "**What does it mean to commit agriculture?**" He meant "**adultery**" but got confused! Well, when the teacher stopped laughing she still had to answer his question. After an awkward silence another student bailed her out. He said, "**It means you shouldn't plough in another man's field.**" *That's true of agriculture and adultery!*

And just as it's possible to commit murder in your heart; likewise you can commit adultery. Jesus said in Matthew 5, "**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.**"

Obviously, the sin's *seed* is not as destructive as its *deed*, but it's just as loaded with evil. Remember, "**Adultery begins in the head long before it ends in the bed.**" Be faithful to our spouse. If you're married, to your present mate. If you're single, to your future mate.

Verse 15, "**You shall not steal.**" Stealing is taking something that belongs to another person without their permission. It includes a lot: *burglary, shoplifting, pilfering or employee theft, music and software piracy, deceptive advertising, not returning borrowed items...*

And the most insidious form of theft is stealing from God, which we do according to Malachi 3:8, when we don't give to God our tithes and offerings.

The world says, "**What's mine is mine. I'll keep it.**" The thief says, "**What's yours is mine. I'll take it.**" But the Christian says, "**What's mine is God's. I'll share it.**"

And notice the progression that occurs in these commandments... The **sixth** affirms the sanctity of life. The **seventh** upholds the sanctity of marriage - the institution that propagates life. Now the **eighth** protects the sanctity of private property - stuff that sustains life. In its rawest form, to steal another person's property is to prohibit them from meeting their needs, and kill them by a slow death. God wants us to be givers not takers.

Then verse 16, "**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**" The ninth command instructs us to be truth tellers - be men and women of our word.

This is what holds a society together - *honest communication*. If I can't trust what another person says, it's impossible to have a meaningful relationship with that person. Business will break down. Marriage will fall apart. Courts will become dysfunctional.

Again, notice the progression... **Murder** robs us of life itself. **Adultery** destroys the institution that propagates life. **Theft** takes away resources used to sustain life. And **slander** robs us of the reward of a great life - it destroys a good and godly reputation.

Then the tenth command, "**You shall not covet your neighbor's house...**" Even if it's brand new, has a full basement, three-car garage, and granite countertops.

"**You shall not covet your neighbor's wife...**" Even if she sunbathes in the driveway wearing a string bikini.

"**You shall not covet your neighbor's male servant...**" The guy he hires to spray weeds, and mow his grass.

"**You shall not covet your neighbor's female servant...**" The girl from *Maid Brigade* who cleans daily.

"**You shall not covet your neighbor's ox...**" or new riding mower. And "**You shall not covet your neighbor's donkey...**" even if it's a new sport-utility donkey.

The tenth commandment, more than any other, reveals the sinful core of every human heart. Whatever it is, it's never enough. Oh, we're fine until our neighbor gets one; then suddenly we too are in need of that very same commodity. How dare

anybody *one-up* us...

In Romans 7:7 Paul said it was this commandment that convinced him of his sinfulness. God wants us to be content - *with Him and with His blessings*. He wants contentment to characterize the lives of His people. What better way to praise God for His sufficiency!

But a constant selfishness and craving for more only makes God look as if He can't satisfy His people.

Let me sum up God's Top Ten List. I've got a plague hanging in my office of the Cajun version of the Ten Commandments. You'll enjoy this, and for some of you it could bring clarity to your understanding of the list...

- 1) God is number one, and das' all.
- 2) Don't pray to nuttin' or nobody, jus' God.
- 3) Don't cuss nobody, 'specially da Good LORD!
- 4) When it be Sunday, pass yo'sef by God's House.
- 5) Yo mama an' daddy dun did it all, lissen to dem.
- 6) Killin' duck, an' fish, das' OK, people - NO!
- 7) God done gave you a wife, sleep wit' jus' her.
- 8) Don't take nobody's boat, or nuttin' else.
- 9) Stop lyin', yo tongue gonna fall out yo mouf."
- 10) Don't go wanting somebody's stuff.

Now remember Moses has been on the mountain listening to God communicate these commandments, while the Hebrews were at the base of the mountain, behind the ropes, gazing up at the smoke and fire.

Verse 18, "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."

The people were so intimidated by God's glory, *His awesomeness*, that they preferred to deal with Moses. They were more comfortable with flesh and blood. The presence and voice of the Almighty overwhelmed them. They were wiped out by His glory and majesty.

"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." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was." This is why Proverbs 1:7 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." A healthy reverence for God can be a strong deterrent to sin.

“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.’” The Hebrews had just heard God speak from heaven. Obviously, the true God doesn’t need help. Never add a god-like assistant or apparatus to your relationship with God. No other help is required. Faith in Jesus is all we need.

In a few chapters we’ll see the Hebrews fashion a golden calf. It wasn’t as much a violation of the first commandment as a violation of the second. The calf represented one of the angels around God’s throne.

In years to come the Hebrews will build elaborate altars to God. These “high places” always ended up being used to worship false gods. Once the Tabernacle was constructed God prohibited the building of altars. He sanctions only one altar, the altar in the Tabernacle.

Yet in the meantime... *for this is before the building of the Tabernacle*, “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 (that is, of carved, or chiseled, or polished stone, it has to be natural stone); for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.” In other words, when you build an altar don’t make it flashy - don’t use it to showcase your talents, and artistry, and skills, and craftsmanship.

And this is relevant especially to pastors and worship leaders. The service of God is never a time to show off musically or spotlight a preacher’s cleverness. Serve skillfully, but never steal the glory from the One who’s being worshipped. God should get all the glory, not us!

Verse 26, “Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.” The priest wore flowing robes, so if he walked up the stairs to an elevated platform folks would see under his robe. He would be exposed. *That’s why there were no steps to the altar. The altar was to be on ground level.*

And I love how God’s instructions for the altar fits His plan for our salvation! There are no steps to God! Jesus is our altar. You and I come directly to Jesus. He’s our mediator. He meets us right where we’re at!

And Jesus isn’t gold-plated. He wears no heavenly garb. In essence, He’s an “earthy altar,” born humbly.

In the OT, Messiah was depicted as a stone, a rock. But not a *cut rock* - chiseled by human hands. Daniel 2 refers to Messiah as “a stone cut out... without hands.” Nothing about our salvation had to do with human ingenuity. It was all a work of God, finished by Jesus!

It's interesting in Exodus 20, instructions for an altar appear immediately after God's Ten Commandments. It was as if God knew we'd never completely keep His commands, *especially the spirit of them*. He knew we'd break His Law, and need an altar to obtain forgiveness.

Evidently, God didn't give us Ten Commandments thinking they'd make us good. Just the opposite. He gave us the commands knowing they'd expose our sin, and prove our need for a Savior. In truth, The Ten Commandments can only be lived out by a person who's been to the altar and walks in the power of God.

The two tablets of the Ten Commandments teach us how to love God and love our neighbor, but it's only when we come to Jesus that God puts that love in us!