

Sermon Title: Moses Went Up To God

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Exodus 19:1-8 (10 Commandments # 1 of 13) Date: 2-20-11

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Today we launch a new series on, arguably, the most famous portion of the Bible, of which our shorthand is: "The Ten Commandments." I gave you a little forewarning last week that we were going to do this, and I just wonder: Do you know which chapter of the Bible contains the Ten Commandments? I won't ask you to raise your hand, but it's amazing how people will demonstrate and protest and fight over a couple of pieces of monument containing the Ten Commandments being removed from a park, but ask them to look them up in the Bible—"I don't know where *that* is!" Could you, if someone held a gun to your head—well, that might make you nervous...If someone offered you a good reward, could you recite or write down the Ten Commandments without looking in your Bible? Well...have you even seen the *movie*? You wonder sometimes how people can say something is so important, and know so little about it. Well, we're going to fix that—at least, for you, and all of us who will listen.

What *is* so significant about the Ten Commandments? What *are* they? Are they still in force? Do they have to do with *you*, or is this just something that was for ancient Israel? Well, today we're going to introduce the study of this portion of God's Word by starting to answer three questions about the Ten Commandments. It'll take today and next week, before we actually get to the commandments themselves, but we want to ask the questions: What Is The Context Of The Ten Commandments? How Shall I Understand The Ten Commandments?—I mean, are they really for me, or not? And then: What Are The Ten Commandments?

First: The Context Of The Ten Commandments. Without knowing the *context* of these commandments, it's almost dangerous to talk about them, because it's very easy to take things that are black-and-white, do-and-don't, you-shall-you-shall-not, and just turn them into a pretext for "moralizing." Telling people to live by the Ten Commandments, without understanding their purpose and their context, is ridiculous.

I'll put you out of your misery right now, if you're feverishly searching through your Bible. You might have had a tip when I said we were going to do the context, and we're in Exodus 19. The Ten Commandments are in Exodus Chapter 20; and to put this into historical and Biblical context, we're going to start at Chapter 19.

By this time, God had called Moses to be the leader of Israel. He sent Moses, and Moses confronted Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, several times to demand that Pharaoh let Israel go; Israel had been serving Egypt for 400-plus years. Pharaoh refused to let Israel go. Then, God brought a series of ten specific judgments upon Egypt, each one specifically aimed at discrediting one of the many gods of the Egyptians (see Ex. 12:12). The final one of those judgments, or "plagues"—we usually refer to them as "The Ten Plagues"—was the death of every firstborn in Egypt.

Simultaneously with that, God instituted the celebration of the Passover among the children of Israel, and all who applied the blood of the lamb to their house were spared the death of the firstborn; the Angel of Death "passed over" each house which was under the blood (Ex. 12:23, 27)—and obviously, that's a picture of Christ who was to come (see 1 Cor. 5:7; cf. Jn. 1:29; Matt. 26:28; Rom. 4:7; Heb. 10:14; Rev. 1:5).

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With that great act of redemption—and that picture of the ultimate Redeemer, Jesus Christ—God freed His people Israel from slavery in Egypt. As soon as they were gone, Pharaoh changed his mind; he sent troops to pursue Israel, and they chased them to the shore of the Red Sea. So here's Israel with the Red Sea in front of them, Pharaoh and his armies bearing down on them from behind. But God protected Israel from the Egyptians; He granted them escape by that miracle of parting the Red Sea; and when the Egyptians pursued through the parted sea, they were drowned when God released the water to return to its natural state.

You can read about the Plagues in Exodus 7 through 11. The early call of Moses comes before that. You can read about the Passover in Chapter 12, the Exodus and the death of the Egyptians in Chapters 13 and 14. Chapter 15 is one long song of jubilation celebrating Israel's deliverance. After the celebration song, the rest of Chapters 15 through 17 record a series of miraculous provisions that God made to give Israel victory over their enemies, and to provide them with food and water. Chapter 18 is about dividing the responsibility for the leadership of all these people under Moses.

And by the time we arrive at Chapter 19, Israel has now traveled for three months, and we pick it up at Chapter 19, Verse 1—"In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain" (vss. 1-2; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

"The wilderness of Sinai" was a place with a flat plain. It's actually at about 5,000 feet above sea level. There's a *large* flat plain there—well over 400 acres—almost like an amphitheater. Israel camped there at the foot of Mount Sinai for eleven months. Amazingly, during that time, 58 chapters of the Bible, as we now know it, were given: Exodus 19 through 40, Leviticus 1 through 27—in other words, all of Leviticus—and the first ten chapters of Numbers.

So here they are now—three months, over two million people on a camping trip, God providing miraculously for them—and they come to this very special place. Chapter 19, Verse 3—"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 sons of Israel...' " Now, again, we need to put this in context. Moses had been to this place before; you read about that in Exodus Chapters 3 and 4. There, it's called "Mount Horeb." The reason it's called "Mount Horeb" there and "Mount Sinai" here—"Mount Horeb" is the Hebrew name for it; "Mount Sinai" is the name applied to this place in other languages. We still speak of the "Sinai Peninsula." That word has stuck through all the centuries.

It was *here* that God appeared to Moses in a "burning bush" (Ex. 3:2; Acts 7:30). When Moses arrived here again, God was fulfilling a promise that He made to Moses at this place. In Chapter 3, Verse 12, God—speaking to Moses—said: "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain" (cf. Acts 7:38).

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This is the fulfillment of that promise; it happened *exactly* as God said it would happen (cf. 2 Chr. 6:15; Jer. 33:14; Lk. 1:20, 45; 21:22b; Acts 1:16)—God fulfilled His promise, just exactly as He said.

So apparently, Moses went partway up the mountain alone, and God spoke to him again there. He began to give Moses specific instructions for Israel. Notice how God used two parallel expressions to describe Israel: He calls them "the house of Jacob" and "the sons of Israel"—or "the children of Israel" (NKJV), or "the people of Israel" (ESV)—that connects the humble beginnings of Israel in Egypt, when it was the "seventy" members of the extended family of Jacob who originally moved to Egypt (Gen. 46:27), and now, 430 years later, over two million people have come out of Egypt and arrived at Mount Sinai.

And God tells Moses exactly *what* to say to all the people, and it begins with this recap of how God brought them to this place. Notice: we're at Chapter 19, Verse 4; because in a few minutes, I want to show you the significance of what's going on here in Verses 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. In Verse 4, God is speaking—and remember, He said, "This is what I want you to tell the people"—and He says: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself." That's a one-sentence summary of the previous 18 chapters. "What I did to the Egyptians"—that refers to the Ten Plagues.

"I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself"—that's a fantastic metaphor; it's based on the way that some eagles teach their young to fly, and it's referred to several times in the Bible. In Deuteronomy 32, Verse 11, describing what God did for Israel, Moses says: "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions." Here's what that refers to: When it comes time for young eagles to fly, the parents stir away the soft feathers and padding at the bottom of the nest, so that it becomes uncomfortable. Who wants to sit on a bunch of prickly things? As the young eagles move to the edge of the nest and look around—I think in "Eaglese," they say something like, "Woah! You want me to do *what*?" It's pretty *scary*, I would think. The parents will actually take them on their own backs and soar into the sky, and make the young ones learn to fly. And when necessary, the parents catch their young on their own outstretched wings—bearing them on their "pinions," in other words.

God led Israel out of Egypt, similarly to how an eagle leads its offspring into the air. Just as the eagle spares its young from disaster, God provided everything Israel needed, every day on their journey (Ps. 78:12-16, 24-25). He led them from bondage, He says, "to Myself." "I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself." Israel was now to walk with God Himself. God was now going to make them, *not* a nation in bondage, but a *unique* nation. And just how unique it was to be, is what is now beginning to be revealed.

What follows here is what is called the "Mosaic Covenant," or, the "Sinaitic Covenant." If you're reading the New Testament, where the emphasis is on the New Covenant, this is sometimes called the "Old Covenant" (2 Cor. 3:14; cf. Heb. 8:13; 9:15). It's very specific. More and more details of it are specified in the Ten Commandments through the

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Book of Leviticus, and the first ten chapters of Numbers—those 58 chapters that were revealed at this place in Israel's history. Much of it is then repeated in Deuteronomy—which means "second law"—the repetition of the Law 40 years from now, when Israel would actually enter the land.

So we continue with Verses 5 and 6. God says: " 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." God chose to bless and to redeem the nation of Israel. In this covenant, He is extending the previously-stated covenant that He made with Abraham, and now opening it up to this entire nation.

Look at the structure of what we just read there in Verses 5 and 6. You'll notice that it's in the form of an "if/then statement." "*If* you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, *then* you shall be My own possession among all the peoples." Something *very important* to notice here is that this is a "conditional" covenant. The *condition* is that Israel obeys what God says.

This is in contrast to the previous covenant that God made with Abraham; that's recorded first in Genesis Chapter 12 (cf. Gen. 13:14-17; Ps. 105:8-12), and it is "unconditional." God told Abraham certain things would happen, and there were no conditions upon it whatsoever. Genesis 12, Verses 2 and 3—let's look at what this says. God says: "And I will make you a great nation"—referring to the descendants of Abraham through "Jacob," also known as "Israel" (Gen. 32:28)—"And I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

This covenant that we're looking at now—the "Sinaitic," or, "Mosaic Covenant"—this covenant represents the terms under which Israel would be blessed under the broader plan of God revealed to Abraham. The Abrahamic Covenant is the umbrella covenant under which all the rest of the Biblical covenants flow (see Gal. 3:15-17). You see, God must be faithful to fulfill every detail of the Abrahamic covenant, because God "swore" that covenant "by Himself" (Heb. 6:13). Remember that unique thing in Genesis 15, where God told Abraham to take those animals to offer them as sacrifices, and split them in two and lay them out, and then God brought the fire and passed between them? (vss. 9-17) Well, when two parties made a covenant, that's how they would symbolize that they were committed to it. "May it be done to us as it happened to this sacrifice, if we do not both keep our parts of the covenant." And the two would then walk side-by-side between the halves of the offerings. Well, in this case, God *alone* passed between those; so, He swore to this covenant *by Himself*—unconditional on man's part. It does not depend on man's obedience; God *will* bring that to pass (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13), but that's not a condition.

The same thing is true of the covenant that God would one day make with David, where He promised that a descendant of David will reign on his throne in Jerusalem forever (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:3-4, 19-37).

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The same is true of the "New Covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6), which God revealed through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12) and brought to pass through Christ (Lk. 22:20; Heb. 9:15), and then He will apply it to "all Israel" during the Millennium (Rom. 11:26-27; cf. Zech. 13:1,9; 14:9-21).

But this covenant here, in Exodus 19, spells out the conditions under which Israel will enjoy God's special blessing while He is working out His plan of redemption. In other words: God is going to have His way; He is going to get His will done. But His *people* have a choice, whether they will be blessed along the way, or whether they will, by their own rebellion, turn themselves crosswise with God, and receive His chastening (cf. Ps. 89:31-32; 99:8; 1 Cor. 10:1-5). That's the "conditional" part of this.

Now, we can summarize what's going on here in Exodus 19 by looking at the three titles that God uses for Israel, and we'll see what He is going to do. Again, Verses 5 and 6—"If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be *My own possession among all the peoples*"—there's the first phrase: "My own possession." It has the idea of a special treasure (see Zech. 2:8; Mal. 3:17). The New American Standard translators chose "My *own* possession," but it means something *special*, something to be treasured particularly (cf. Deut. 10:15). And God says: "You're going to be My *own* possession among *all* the peoples." He says: "All the earth is Mine" (vs. 5)—"I'm in charge of the whole thing" (cf. Dan. 4:35)—but Israel is the nation of His special choosing (Deut. 7:7-8). Israel was to be His most special trophy of His grace and of His goodness.

As a kid, thoroughly in love with baseball, our son used to collect baseball cards, for a number of years. He has thousands of them—stored, of course, at *our* house—and they are *all* his possessions; every one of them belongs to him; he has control over every single one of them. Some are more valuable on the market than others are. But there's one that always was, and still is, his special treasure. We went to some great lengths, and some expense, to give him a Ken Griffey Jr. rookie card. Junior just retired, but that was 20 years ago.

That's the idea here, in that God controls everyone in every nation—the whole Earth is His (Ps. 24:1; Ezek. 18:4). He is sovereign over all the peoples, regardless of their state of faith or lack of faith, or obedience or rebellion (Prov. 20:24). Everything on Earth belongs to Him, but by His own will, He chose to make *one* nation His special treasure—and He wants Israel to *live like it*. That's what this covenant is about.

Look at the second thing He says there: "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests" (vs. 6a). That explains what God's design was for Israel. What is a "priest"? A priest is one who mediates between God and the people. So what is a "kingdom of priests" among all the peoples? It is a nation which, like a priest, communicates God to whoever will listen, and leads those who listen into the presence of God. They are to be "a kingdom of priests." If this is sounding familiar, that's because the very same thing is said about the Church in the New Testament (Rev. 1:6; 5:10)—we'll get to that later. As God said to Abraham: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3), the plan of God was for Israel to be His beacon of light to the rest of the world (cf. Is. 49:6).

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This is the point at which Israel's eventual failure was the greatest. God meant for Israel to be like the channel of a mighty river of His grace and blessings, and for that river to flow to all the nations (Ps. 18:49; 117:1). And Israel said: "We like the river! Let's build a dam, and make sure nothing gets past us." Israel dammed up the flow of the blessings of God—tried to keep them all to herself—and that caused them to forfeit God's blessing.

God didn't bless Israel *just to bless Israel*—do you understand that? That's what "kingdom of priests" means. He intended for Israel to be His showcase to the world of how good and wonderful He is (cf. 1 Chr. 16:31; Ps. 67:4; 72:11, 17; Mic. 4:2). My friend, we've already come to a very important application: God doesn't bless you just to bless you; God blesses you so that you can be a blessing to others, whom He will bless through you (e.g., Matt. 5:44-45; 18:32-33; Lk. 6:35; 1 Cor. 12:7; 2 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 4:10). If you think of Christianity as all about what *you* get in Christ, you don't yet understand Christianity! You are like Israel saying, "We want the blessings—we don't want to share." God blesses you, God chooses you, God pours out His grace upon you, so that you will be a channel through which He blesses other people.

And the third thing He says here: "And you shall be to Me...a holy nation" (vs. 6b). We're going to be spending weeks looking at this; but for now, simply understand: The essence of the concept of "holy" is "separate, distinct" (cf. Ps. 92:15; Hab. 1:13a; Heb. 7:26; Jas. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5). God says, "I'm going to make you distinct from all the other nations." To be "holy" is to be separated from sin—not only set apart *from* sin, but set apart *for* the service of God (2 Tim. 2:19b, 21). As we arrive at the Ten Commandments, we'll see: They are all about practical, daily holiness for God's people. In giving this covenant to Israel, and the accompanying laws and all the details that go along with it, God intended to make that nation *different* from all of the other nations (Ps. 147:19-20).

There's a great bit of insight to be had here, if you will think about it. How many times have you heard somebody say, "I just try to live by the Ten Commandments"? Most of the time, those are the folks who don't know what chapter they're in, and couldn't list them if they had to; they might get three or four of them. The idea of living by the Ten Commandments in order to get to heaven *totally misunderstands* the Ten Commandments and the message of the entire Bible.

And that is, by the way, one of the "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). *Satan* invented that idea! "Let's get people to just say, 'I'll live by the Ten Commandments so I can go to heaven'"—because that *completely* misses the point! You *cannot* live by the Ten Commandments, to the standard of *perfection* (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:21; cf. Ecc. 7:20; Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10)—that's why you need a Savior (Gal. 3:24). Salvation-by-works is the *ultimate* doctrine of Demons (see Prov. 14:12; 30:12; Lk. 16:15; 18:9). "Living by the Ten Commandments" is ridiculous (Jer. 13:23).

So, think about this: Had God chosen Israel? Yes! That was settled about 600 years earlier, in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 18:18-19). Had God blessed Israel? Yes. That was settled in the things that He did to arrange for Joseph to get to Egypt (Gen. 50:20), and then the 430 years they spent in Egypt, where the original 70 people who went there

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had now become two to two-and-a-half million strong. Had God already redeemed Israel? Yes. That was settled when He set them free from Egypt by His mighty hand, when He humbled Pharaoh and provided everything that they needed (2 Sam. 7:23). Was God leading Israel? Yes—every day by a pillar of smoke, every night by a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21); often through the words of His servant Moses (Ps. 77:20). Was God providing for Israel? Yes. Every single day, He provided everything they needed. He provided manna; He provided fresh water—even if it meant doing a miracle (Ps. 78:15-16, 24). I'm not a camper, but I know people who go camping know how to make sure that they have what they need, when they need it. Well, imagine 2 million people on an extended camping trip in a desert; you need some provisions! God was providing everything they needed.

So, think about this carefully: If God had already chosen Israel, if He already blessed Israel, if He already redeemed Israel, if He was leading them every day and providing everything they needed, then *what is the purpose* of providing this set of laws? The Ten Commandments, and all the laws that follow, are *not* about securing the choice of God. It *wasn't* to secure the blessing of God. It *wasn't* to secure redemption from God. It *wasn't* a condition which had to be met before He would lead them. It *wasn't* a condition to be met before He would provide daily needs. The purpose of the Ten Commandments, and every other law of God, is so that you know how to show your love and gratitude to God for His goodness (see 1 Jn. 5:3; cf. Ex. 20:6; Ps. 116:12). That's what this is all about!

It has *never* been the purpose of the Law of God to save anyone. The Law can't save you (Gal. 3:21). Salvation is not, and it never has been, based on keeping the Law of God. As a matter of fact, James 2:10 says that if you have *ever* broken *any* part of the Law at "one point," you are "guilty" of *the whole law*—you are guilty of being a lawbreaker! You deserve the full punishment of *everything* that God has to do in His righteousness against sin (Ezek. 18:4; cf. Ecc. 12:14; Nah. 1:3).

Salvation is by the grace of God, received by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). It's God's work. It's His gift that you receive (Rom. 6:23). But, *obedience* to God is how you respond to the love of God (Gal. 2:20; cf. Ps. 50:15). Do you get the point? God was calling Israel to love Him in return for the love that He had already poured out upon them. Or, in New Testament terminology—1 John 4:19: "We love, because He first loved us."

By being obedient to God, Israel would have untold blessings as the chosen people of God. It would have been clear that they *were* God's specially-treasured possession. They *could have been* the great lighthouse to the world, attracting millions to Jehovah Himself as "a kingdom of priests" with God as their King. By being a different, unique—or, holy—nation, they could "proclaim the excellencies" of God to the rest of the world (1 Pet. 2:9). But tragically, Israel took God's command to be separate, and instead of understanding what His plan was for them, they turned that around and turned it into being "separatistic," and having a superiority complex, and becoming arrogant (Is. 65:5).

Now, back to our text. Moses went partway up the mountain; God spoke to him, told him what to say; Moses went back to the people, and he told them what God had said, and he passed along every word. Now, Verse 7—"So Moses came and called the elders of the

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people"—and if you've been reading through Exodus, you know the significance of that—that structure of leadership set up in Chapter 18 is Moses speaking to the Elders who speak to the smaller and smaller elements of Israel. "So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him." The people agreed to the plan, and Moses returned and verified to God that the people said they were willing to accept the covenant. Verse 8—"All the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do!' And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord."

Now, let me help you understand the way this is presented. We don't relate very well to the idea of 2 million people on an extended camping trip, following God through a desert wilderness area. That's not our lifestyle, shall we say? We have before us the completed Bible, and we don't relate very well to hearing from God by means of one man going up and down a mountain, disappearing into the midst of clouds and thunder and lightning, and then reappearing and telling us what God said to him—because *we know* that the Word of God is complete in the Scriptures (Prov. 30:6; Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18).

But there's a very important reason why *this* is given to us the way that it is. Aside from the awesome physical manifestations of God's presence on the mountain, God made known His Word to Israel in a manner that they would understand. In other words: God "accommodated" Himself—that's one of the principles, we understand, of interpreting the Bible. God "accommodated" Himself to speak in language and in structure of language and in cultural context that the people could understand.

This that we have just read—Verses 4 through 8—is given through Moses in a form that we have discovered was common in the world in that time. Research into ancient customs helps us understand just why God formatted it this way. It's called a "Suzerainty Treaty." That is a treaty offered by a "Suzerain." A "Suzerain" is a superior.

So, a "Suzerainty Treaty" is the terms set out by the superior, given to the subordinate, to define the nature of the relationship. This is *not* a negotiated deal. This is *not* a compromise. This is the terms that are named *totally* by the Suzerain—the "superior one"—and the terms that are guaranteed by the Suzerain and are to be enforced by the Suzerain. In other words, it's a take-it-or-leave-it.

Such treaties have a very specific format to them. They included a preamble, a historical prologue, certain stipulations, and blessings. The acceptance of the treaty would be recorded in the final treaty document.

And so, if you look at the structure here, it is exactly what we have in Verses 3 through 8. The preamble is in Verse 3; the historical prologue is in Verse 4—"Look what I did to Pharaoh..."; the stipulations and the blessings are in Verses 5 and 6; and then the acceptance of the people is in Verses 7 and 8. Once the basic treaty is agreed to—Verse 8—then, the rest of what follows is the unfolding of all of God's instructions to His chosen, beloved, blessed, redeemed people, concerning how He expects them to live in return for His blessings and His grace and His redemption (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 7:1).



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That is part of the first point of the introduction to this series. I'm going to finish the introduction next time, and we'll continue and start to look at the Ten Commandments. But I want you to know that this is The Context Of The Ten Commandments. Get it in its context, and these commandments will be all the more rich to you. We will talk about how we should understand the Ten Commandments. And, believe it or not, we're actually going to look at what the Ten Commandments are, and then we'll study them one-by-one.

Now friends, I want you to grasp this. I said it's so important to get it in the context. *Throw out* that idea that, "I can live by the Ten Commandments and make my way to God." (see Ps. 143:2) Now, I'm not at all opposed to the Ten Commandments being posted in public places. It's a *great idea* for the Ten Commandments to be posted on courthouses, and anywhere else that you want to. On the route that Marsha and I take our walk, we walk by the Ten Commandments several times, that people have in their front lawn—remnants of the battle that the city of Boise had over the stupidity of some of its leaders awhile back. It's *fine* to put the Ten Commandments out there—they're *always* true, they're *always* right, they're *always* the best way to live. They *are* a reminder that our entire nation is built upon the truth of God. Don't get me wrong about that.

But I want you to realize—it's *not* the standard by which you're going to achieve salvation. It shows you your need for a Savior (Gal. 3:24; cf. Rom. 3:20; 10:3-4). And I also want you to realize that, as we study the Ten Commandments, this is not just something long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away. We're going to see that the Ten Commandments are *for us* (Matt. 5:17-19). All through the Ten Commandments, you're going to see that the nature of God and the morality of God *never* change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). When God gave the Ten Commandments through lightning and thunder and clouds and earthquakes and miracles, what was true of Him then is true of Him today! He still cares for His people (Rom. 11:1). His care is still perfectly sufficient and gracious (2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:19).

And, by the way: the terminology that God used here keeps getting repeated. Centuries *after* giving the Ten Commandments, God spoke through Isaiah about His consistent provision which would be the blessing upon those who would return from the Captivity. Isaiah was promising them they still had a future (Is. 10:20-27; 44:28; 45:4, 13, 25).

Some of you have tee-shirts that have part of this written on it: Isaiah Chapter 40, starting at Verse 27—"Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God?'" In other words, he's saying: "Why are you complaining, as if you don't deserve what you're getting? You're thinking that God has forgotten you; you're wrong. Isaiah goes on: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable." God didn't just forget about you. God didn't grow weary of taking care of you. Realize: He's got a plan! "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might, He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly"—in other words, even the strongest fall short—"yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

Sermon Title: Moses Went Up To God

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Exodus 19:1-8 (10 Commandments # 1 of 13) Date: 2-20-11

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My friends, we live in one messed up world (1 Jn. 5:19). If you haven't noticed, it's not getting any better (2 Tim. 3:13). So you think you lack justice? Maybe so. Probably so. Then, turn to God (Prov. 29:26). He is faithful. Every promise of His which has not yet come true will certainly come true (Is. 42:9; Ezek. 33:33; Jn. 13:19).

And in your time here on Earth—while justice is anything *but* perfect, while suffering is an everyday reality—God will give you the strength every day to make you able to live for His glory (Heb. 13:21; cf. Ps. 68:35; 119:173; 2 Thess. 3:5). He "bore" Israel "on eagles' wings," as it were—metaphorically speaking—from Egypt to Mount Sinai. He will grant you the grace and the mercy and the strength to soar like an eagle. He will give you the strength to endure, *if* your perspective is to wait for the Lord (Ps. 37:3-11; 130:5; 147:11; Prov. 20:22; Is. 8:17; 25:9; 26:8; 33:2; Lam. 3:25-26; Zeph. 3:8; Phil. 3:20). "Those who wait for the Lord"—*they're* the ones who "gain new strength." So, instead of complaining of injustice, change your perspective to: "I'm waiting for justice." (see Jas. 5:7-8) And it *will* come (Ps. 37:12-20). That means you're waiting for the coming of the Lord to make all things right (2 Thess. 1:6-10).

Israel tragically dammed up the flow of the blessings of God; so, eventually, God sent them off into captivity. He brought them back; they had yet another chance. He sent His Son and they rejected Him, and so He set aside Israel for a time (Rom. 11:25, 28). That breaks the heart of God. Jesus looked over "Jerusalem," and He "wept" for their spiritual condition (Lk. 19:41). But God is going to give His blessings, so He cut a new channel for the river of His blessings to flow to the world; that new channel is the Church (Matt. 21:43). That's why He says to *us*, in First Peter Chapter 2, Verse 9—"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood"—a "kingdom of priests," you're the King's kids—"a holy nation," even though we are many nations (Rev. 5:9). That's you and me.

God has gone to great lengths in the Scriptures to make sure that we know He has *not* forgotten His unconditional covenants (e.g. Jer. 31:35-37); He has *not* forgotten Israel (Rom. 11:2); He is *not* going to fail to fulfill *every detail* of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:15-17). Romans 11 says very clearly: There is coming a day when "all Israel will be saved" (vs. 26). There will be a day in future history when *every single Jew on Earth* will embrace Jesus Christ, because God says it will be that way (Zech. 12:10; 13:1; cf. Ezek. 20:38; Zech. 13:9).

Jesus *is* coming again (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20), and He *will* sit on the "throne of David" (Is. 9:7; cf. Lk. 1:32), in "Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:4, 8, 10-11), and establish a Kingdom forever—just as promised (Dan. 7:13-14). And in the meantime, God says the same things to you and me that He once said to the nation of Israel. When I say we don't live by the Ten Commandments in order to be saved, *don't you dare* go away thinking that I'm saying the Ten Commandments are not for you and me! *Don't you dare* go away thinking that *you shouldn't* live by the Ten Commandments—because you should!

Stay tuned for the rest of the series, and we're going to learn what it means to be holy, in obedience to God, to show Him that "we love Him because He first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19, NKJV), so that His will *will* be done.

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Let's pray:

*Our Father, again, we say, "Thank You" for the riches of Your grace in Christ Jesus. Like Jesus taught His disciples to pray, we say: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And Father, we know that that means that You want us to live according to Your will—Your gloriously-revealed will—through Jesus Christ. So as we look at this famous portion of Your Word, my prayer continues to be the same: Staring with me, and through each one of us, do whatever You need to in our hearts, that we might be the more useful to You for Your glory, that we might indeed be "a royal priesthood" to the nations, that we might indeed be, as the family of God, "a holy nation" to exalt Your holiness and Your glory. Thank You for Your promise to finish the work that You've begun in us, in Jesus' name. Amen.*