

Exodus Chapters 19 & 20 -- John Karmelich

1. OK, we made it to the 10 commandments, now what ☺?
 - a) Our lesson tonight covers Chapters 19 and 20.
 - b) The first part of Chapter 20 is "The 10 commandments".
 - i) Summarizing the 10 commandments in one lesson is about as easy as a Reader's Digest article summarizing the Encyclopedia Britannica!
 - a) There are many great books just on this topic.
 - b) Most radio ministries have multiple-part series on the 10 commandments, usually at a pace of one commandment per week.
 - ii) So how do I summarize it all in one lesson and not miss anything important?
 - iii) I don't. I pray for God to show me what *he* wants me to pass on.
 - a) The rest is God's problem. ☺
 - c) What I *do* want to do is separate this into two lessons.
 - i) Tonight I'm going to "dance around" the commandments themselves.
 - ii) I'm going to talk about the *implications* of the commandments and "the law" to you and I.
 - iii) I am also going to cover all the text except the commandments themselves.
 - iv) Next week, I'll do a separate lesson just on the first part of Chapter 20.
2. A common question Christians ask is "Do I have to obey the 10 commandments?" Without trying to sound too much like Bill Clinton, it depends what you mean by "obey".
 - a) If you say "obey" in the sense your salvation *depends* upon it, the answer is no.
 - b) If you say, "obey" out of gratefulness of what God did for you, Yes!
 - i) The 10 commandments and the law in general are a model of what God expects for our lives. If you are confused of how Christians should interpret the law, which is what "The Sermon on the Mount" is all about in Matthew Chapters 5-7.
 - c) Remember that God *redeemed* us. If you have turned your live over to God, through Jesus, this means you desire to do *God's* will, as opposed to your own will. God's model of an *ideal* life is found in the law, and summarized through the 10 commandments.
 - d) The "trick" of course, is not to try to do it through self-discipline. This is a guaranteed failure. It is through *prayer*, regular time in the Word, spending time with other Christians, that God *changes* you to be more like God wants you to be. This way, God gets the credit, not you.
3. This leads to another common question. When we become born-again, why doesn't God change me more? Why don't I instantly become the person I want to be?
 - a) For example, why doesn't an alcoholic *immediately* not lose his or her desire to drink when they become a Christian? Why do I still have to fight my old nature, often for the rest of my life? (I have seen some exceptions, but those are usually rare.)
 - b) Other examples are: Why do I still get angry, or lie, and break the 10 commandments even after I've been a Christian a long time?
 - c) Paul himself discusses this problem in Romans Chapter 7. He realizes that, despite all his zeal to be a great Christian, he realizes that his old sinful nature still haunts him.
 - i) "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18 NIV)

- d) To answer this, consider the opposite: Suppose those who became a Christian *immediately* lost every desire to break one of the 10 commandments. People would end their sinful life *just* for that benefit, not to get to know the true and living God.
 - i) People would then *forget* just how much of a problem sin *is*.
 - ii) God leaves us our sinful nature to remind us just how *bad* we need him!
 - iii) God wants to hear from us, and hear from us on a regular basis.
 - a) It's like the parent whose kid is in college. He sends them a little money at a time just so they would call more often!
 - b) God knows we are going to fail, which *should* drive us back to Him for forgiveness/guidance to improve our lives & our relationship with God.
 - e) Another strange thing that "the law" does, it that it makes us sin more!
 - i) There is something about our old human nature that makes us want to violate the rules. Society even idolizes "the rebel".
 - ii) There is an old cliché: If you have a nice lawn, will it get trampled on *more* if you don't put up any fences or if you do & put up a "keep off the grass" sign?
4. This leads us back to tonight's lesson.
- a) The Israelites have been redeemed. That is what Passover is all about. Next came several lessons about *preservation*. God preserved them from hunger (manna), from thirst twice (Moses putting a tree in bitter water, and Moses striking the rock) and finally preservation from chaos (God organizing the leadership through Jethro).
 - b) After redemption, comes the law.
 - i) God bought us. He can do whatever he wants with us. That it what surrendering your life to Jesus is all about. God gives the requirements via the law.
 - ii) God wants the best for our lives. He gave us these 10 commandments as a model of how to live out our lives. Out of gratefulness we should obey these commandments. In tonight's and next week's lesson, I talk about the 10 commandments from a New Testament perspective, leaning on Jesus' and Paul's' teachings for examples.
 - iii) With that, lets get back to the Israelites in the wilderness:
5. **19:1** In the third month after the Israelites went out from the land of Egypt, on the very day, they came to the Desert of Sinai. **19:2** After they journeyed from Rephidim they came to the Desert of Sinai, and they camped in the desert; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.
- a) It is interesting to compare this scripture to what God first said to Moses about the Exodus back in Chapter 3:
 - i) "Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.'" (Exodus 3:18 NIV)
 - ii) God was right. It is only a 3-day journey. What we now understand is that the 3-day journey *does not begin* until the Israelites got to Mt. Sinai. We'll read later that there is a 3-day time from the time Moses says, "get ready" to the time the law is actually read.
 - iii) Why does God mention the 3-month time period from the Exodus to now? It may be simple "pun" to focus on the number 3, as it symbolic of the time of the cross. It may simply emphasize the time it took the Israelites to trust God, through all the trials & preservation.

- b) The Israelites are going to spend a lot of time here. From Exodus 20 to Numbers Chapter 10 all takes place at Sinai. No more wandering around for awhile.
 - c) This is the same place where the “burning bush” occurred. Moses knew the place.
 - d) Archeologists debate over the exact location. The majority/traditional opinion is it is a place known today as “Jebel Musa”. Those who have been there say it looks like a “giant pulpit”, as it is flat near the top. This was a good viewing spot for several million people to look up at God.
6. **19:3** Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, "Thus you will say to the house of Jacob, and declare to the people of Israel: **19:4** 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.
- a) If you study the passage carefully, you'll see Moses does a lot of walking. I counted two times he went up & down the mountain on the first day, and two more on the 3rd day. I suspect that it was a several hour hike each time. First of all, it had to be weary on somebody, especially an 80-year old like Moses. Second, those long journeys gave Moses time to meditate on the words God spoke to him.
 - b) “Eagles’ wings” (19:4) is a visual picture the Israelites understand. An eagle carries its young on the back of its wings when it flies. It is a picture of protection, as a mother cares for its young.
 - i) There is a general rule in scripture about how literal to take the text. I believe if the literal meaning is 1) possible 2) *plausible*, and 3) does not contradict other passages, one takes it literally. Here God says he lifted them up on eagle’s wings. This does not mean God has feathers!
 - ii) When people ask me if I take the Bible literally, I say no, for passages like this. What I *do* say is that I take the Bible seriously.
7. **19:5** And now, if you will diligently obey me and keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine. **19:6** And you will be my kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites."
- a) Bible commentators love the word “covenant”. This simply means a contract.
 - b) Many Bibles, including the classic “Schofield Bible” divides up the time-line of the Bible into “covenants”. This begins the “Mosaic covenant”.
 - i) A “one party” contract/covenant is when one party agrees to do something regardless of what the other party says or does. It is unconditional.
 - (1) For example, if I agree with my wife to do the dishes, and there is nothing for her to do in response, that is a one-party contract.
 - (2) This is a one-party contract (or covenant) on God’s part.
 - b) When God told Abraham “I will bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you, (Genesis 12:3), this was unconditional. Abraham did not have to do anything to earn this.
 - ii) A “two party” contract/covenant is when one party agrees to do something if the other party does something. It is conditional.
 - a) For example, if I agree to do the dishes if my wife agrees to clear the table, that is a two-party contract. We both must agree to make it binding.

- iii) We have a conditional, two-party contract here. In Verse 5, God says “if”.
 - a) God promises they will be a “special possession to God” if they obey.
 - b) Does this mean they won’t go to heaven if they disobey?
 - (1) I argue no. Salvation already came through Passover. This is about obedience. Our Christian life is the same. Our *rewards* in heaven are based on our obedience, not our salvation.
 - (2) There is a debate among theologians whether God’s covenant relationship began at Passover or here at Sinai. Even though God asks the “if, then” contract-question here, I take the view God’s *relationship* with Israel began at Passover. This is the same model for us. First comes the unconditional salvation, then comes the model for obedience.
- iv) One thing Christians tend to overlook is God’s focus on us as a nation. We tend to focus on our Christian lives as individuals. God also judges us as a nation based on our national obedience to God.
- v) Ever wondered why God allowed the United States to become such a great nation? Other nations have free market economies. Other nations have a democracy. Russia has greater natural resources than we do; yet we prosper far greater than Russia and every other nation. I believe it is solely due to our allegiance to God & the fact that America is a “beacon” for the gospel.
- vi) One of the interpretations of the “end-times” is that God will turn his attention back on Israel once the church is raptured. I personally take this view. I argue it based on 1) God’s promises to Abraham was unconditional and 2) modern-Israel is having great prosperity despite its own lack of natural resources and surrounding enemies. Many Christians disagree with this end-time view, but I use these two arguments as the basis of my evidence.
- c) Chapter 19, Verse 6 says “And you will be my kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”
 - i) Guess what folks, The New Testament says that about Christians:
 - a) “has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father”
 - (1) (Revelation 1:6b, NIV)
 - b) “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9 NIV)
 - ii) When we think of “priests”, we think of white collars, black robes and men called “father”. What Protestants call “clergy”, Catholics/others call “priests”.
 - a) Biblically, we are all priests. It simply means one who serves God. We are all in the ministry. By witnessing to people, raising Godly children, serving in your local church, etc. *you* are being a priest.
 - iii) How are we “kings?”
 - a) When Jesus refers to the “kingdom of God” in the New Testament, one of the definitions is that it refers to all believers. In the millenium, (a 1,000 year period after the 7-year tribulation of Revelation), we will rule and reign with Jesus and serve as kings. The bible does not give more details than that, so one can only speculate.
 - iv) OK, I’ve spent a whole page on two verses, better speed it up! ☺

8. **19:7** So Moses came and summoned the elders of Israel. He set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. **19:8** And all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has commanded we will do." So Moses brought the words of the people back to the Lord.
- a) One of the great Christian debates is “pre-destined by God” versus “our free-will”.
 - b) Here is an example of the “free-will” aspect of our relationship with God.
 - i) God freely asks the question, are we *willing* to obey these commandments?
 - ii) To love somebody with a “perfect-love” means you give somebody free will.
 - iii) The Israelites were very free to *not* accept this contractual relationship.
 - iv) It made me wonder, what if they said no? Would there still have been the “Ten commandments”? After much prayer, thought (and reading), I argue yes, there still would be. God’s standards are Gods standards. He is not going to change them based on our reactions. Even if they said no, God has *his* standards for righteousness, which is the law.
 - c) People will often ask, “Why was there such a long time between the 10 commandments and Jesus? Why not sooner?
 - i) The long span of time added to the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Clues about Jesus’ life are given in *all* through the Old Testament Books.
 - ii) I specifically asked this question here for a different reason. The 1,500 (+/-) year span was to prove that no one could not keep the law by himself or herself. God allowed a long period of time as evidence that it is impossible to keep the law. “For no one living is righteous before you” (Psalm 143:2b NIV)
9. **19:9** Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and will always believe in you." And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.
- a) I like it when God states his purposes for doing something in the text, as he does in this verse. It makes my job a lot easier! ☺
 - b) This verse says that the people may hear when I speak & will always believe in you.
 - i) God did this to show the Israelites that God appointed their leader Moses.
 - ii) Did the Israelites still disobey Moses later? Yes, we’ll get to that.
 - iii) What this does is not give the Israelites any excuse for disobedience.
 - c) The same applies to us. “Ignorance of the law is no excuse”.
 - i) Paul teaches in Romans 1 that the evidence of God’s existence is obvious enough that man does not have any excuses for not searching out and discovering the true & living God (See Romans 1:20).
 - ii) We as Christians are further held accountable for what we know. We live in an age of information. There is no excuse for an adult American as we have access to all that we need.
 - d) What’s “the dense cloud” all about?
 - i) I stated several lessons back that most commentators agree this is an idiom for the Holy Spirit. The “cloud covering by day” is a picture of God’s protection and separation between believers and non-believers. The same cloud is also “A fire by night” (Exodus 13:22). That idiom describes the Holy Spirit is also our guiding light in a dark world.

10. **19:10** And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and make them wash their clothes **19:11** and be ready by the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
- a) As I stated on Page 1, God told Moses and (Moses told Pharaoh) in Chapter 4 they will have a 3 day journey. The 3 day journey is a spiritual one. Here it is!
 - b) It is also a typology of the coming of the Messiah, how Jesus is raised on the 3rd day.
 - i) Some time one should study the "third day" references in the Bible. They are all positive in nature and point to the Messiah. The 3rd day of Creation in Genesis is the only day where God says "And it was good" twice for emphasis.
 - ii) Notice the future prediction of Jesus in Verse 11: "be ready by the 3rd day!".
 - c) "What does "santicy the people and wash their clothes" mean?
 - i) This means to set them apart. If there is a room full of chairs, and I randomly pick one to sit in, I just sanctified it. In this instance, it is more positive. It means to "separate" yourselves to be used by God.
 - ii) To worship God requires a mind-set of "respect". That is why God commanded them to wash their dusty clothes. He wanted them to "think" clean!
 - a) By the way, they were in a desert, I wonder where the water came from to wash 2-3 million people!!!
 - b) God wants the same mindset when we pray, read the Bible or come to church. It is not be a ritual where we go through the motions. He is interested in our heart as we worship him!
 - c) Some churches have more of a literal interpretation and won't admit people who are physically dirty. I believe God's intention is on the heart, not the clothes!
11. **19:12** And you will set boundaries for the people all around, saying, "Take heed to yourselves not to go up on the mountain nor touch its edge. Whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death! **19:13** No hand will touch him-but he will surely be stoned or shot through, whether a beast or a human being; he must not live. When the ram's horn sounds a long blast they may go up on the mountain."
- a) What's with the boundaries? It's to teach the importance of respecting God's holiness!
 - i) To God, it is so serious it means the death penalty!
 - b) God is teaching you can not *casually* approach God. Here is where I think Catholics/Orthodox churches have a better understanding of God's holiness than Protestants. The former emphasizes God's *holiness* in their worship service. The Protestants, who are less formal, emphasize God's love and our personal relationship with God.
 - i) Christianity requires a good balance of both.
12. **19:14** Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. **19:15** And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day. Do not go near your wives."
- a) We talked about the 3rd day, what's with the sexual abstaining?
 - b) There is nothing wrong with sexual relationships with your wife. God commands it. There are times when God just wants our attention on him and not on our flesh. When we are being affectionate to our wives, for the moment, our thoughts are not on God.
 - c) Paul talks about this "Do not deprive each other (of sex) except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Cor. 7:5 NIV)

13. **19:16** And on the third day in the morning there were thunders and lightning and a dense cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a very loud horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. **19:17** And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their place at the lower end of the mountain. **19:18** Now Mount Sinai was completely covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of a great furnace, and the whole mountain shook greatly. **19:19** When the sound of the horn grew louder and louder, Moses was speaking and God was answering him with a voice.
- a) Stop and try to visualize this picture. A mountain of smoke. Fire descending. A loud trumpet that could be heard by 2 to 3 million people, and everybody audibly hearing God! Read this passage again & put yourself in the mind of an Israelite with all the visual and audible effects going on. Would you want to approach that mountain?
 - i) That had to scare the pants off of everybody.
 - b) In verse 17, Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God.
 - i) "The camp" probably became their comfort zone. God calls us out of our surroundings, our comfort-zone in order to prove him.
 - a) Again, they had to be scared. Approaching the mountain took faith.
14. **19:20** And the Lord came down on Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain; and the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.
- a) This whole demonstration is for the *people*. Remember the last time God was on the mountain, it was just a burning bush. The demonstration was to teach them (& us) about the holiness of God *and* to respect the leaders as chosen by God, i.e. Moses.
15. **19:21** And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and solemnly warn the people, lest they force their way through to the Lord to look, and many of them perish. **19:22** And let the priests also, who draw near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break through against them." **19:23** And Moses said to the Lord, "The people are not able to come up to Mount Sinai, because you solemnly warned us, 'Set boundaries for the mountain and set it apart.'" **19:24** And the Lord said to him, "Go, get down. And you will come up, and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people force their way through to come up to the Lord, lest he break through against them." **19:25** So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.
- a) There is a little humor in here, but you have to read the whole chapter in context to see it. In Verse 20, Moses went up to the mountain for the 3rd time in 3 days (2x – 1st day).
 - i) In Verses 21-22, God tells Moses to go back down & warn the people not to come up and check out what was happening.
 - ii) In Verse 23, Moses tries to talk God out of going back down again.
 - iii) After three times up and down that thing, I would be grumbling too!
 - iv) Moses is saying in effect "Do I really have to go back down again. Come on' Lord, those people already (sort of) know what you're asking me to do.
 - v) This is a test to Moses of obedience. God often asks us to do things want to do. It is times like these where one has to really trust God, and not themselves. Our "flesh" gets lazy, among other things.
 - b) I suspect God sent Moses back down, as during their absence they were considering violating God's commandment and wanted to go up the Mountain themselves?
 - c) Why did God ask Moses to take Aaron, his brother with Moses this time?
 - i) I suspect a number of reasons. First of all, many probably looked to Aaron as the co-leader. He often went with Moses to Pharaoh.
 - a) We'll read later that Aaron was weak as a leader. He was like a politician who did whatever the people wanted. If the people wanted to violate God" command (through Moses), Aaron might lead the charge.

- ii) The other reason God told Moses to bring up Aaron this time was a reminder to Moses of the *last* time Moses disobeyed God. When God spoke to Moses through the burning bush, Moses made excuses how he was unable to speak. God then told Moses that Aaron would be his helper. God asking Moses to fetch “Aaron” may have been a reminder of Moses’ past disobedience.
- 16. Next comes the 10 commandments themselves. This is Chapter 20, Verses 1-17. We will cover this in next week’s lesson. As you read the next set of verses, remember that everybody audibly heard God speaking the 10 commandments.
- 17. **20:18** And all the people were seeing the thunderings and the lightning, and heard the sound of the horn, and the mountain smoking-and when they people saw it they trembled with fear and kept their distance. **20:19** And they said to Moses, "You speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak with us, lest we die." **20:20** And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you so that you do not sin."
 - a) So here was God reading the 10 commandments. Did it make people say, “Hey, good stuff God, we’ll get right on it! Did they say, “Hey, no problem, we can handle this?”
 - b) No! They were afraid. They saw this fire-smoking-quaking-thundering-lightening site and feared for their lives. They probably remembered what God did to the Egyptians too. They probably thought... “ooh, boy, we’re next. We can’t handle this!” “Moses, *you* talk to God, but we’ll die if we keep this up!”
 - c) The key verse of the passage is verse 20: Moses said ..."Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you so that you do not sin."
 - i) The Bible often uses the expression the “fear of God”. It sounds like God wants to punish us every time we do wrong. Fear as motivation. This is not true.
 - ii) First of all, 40 days from now, the people are going to build a golden calf. If fear *works* as a motivator, it is strictly short term.
 - iii) The best “clue” I can give of what “Fear of the Lord” really means is to quote the first 5 verses of Proverbs Chapter 2:
 - iv) My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
 - v) What Moses is saying in Verse 20 is the same thing Solomon is saying in Proverbs...Get to know God, spend time in his word. Understand what God is trying to teach you. Mediate on his word. Then, and only then, will you understand what the “Fear of the Lord” is all about. It’s about all the things I talked about in the introduction. It is about understanding God’s holiness, our obedience to God, acting out our gratefulness for what God has done for us. We “fear” God out of respect and love, not out of fear and punishment.
 - vi) If God wanted to destroy the Israelites and us for their/our sins, God would have done that a long time ago. It is like a parent and a child. Does a parent kill a child when he/she does wrong? Discipline yes, but destroy no! The parent(s) wants what is *best* for the child, and is constantly trying to teach and encourage that child to grow in the image that the parents want them to be!

18. **20:21** The people kept their distance, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.
- a) The fear of God (in a bad sense) kept the people away. Remember that the “thick cloud” representing God resting on the mountain. Moses needed to be in that cloud to hear the voice of God. Here we see the people accepting Moses, and Moses alone as their leader.
 - i) “Man's desire for a mediator - someone to act as a go-between with us a God - is only good if it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for there is one God and one Me- diator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (See 1st Timothy 2:5). Un- fortunately, men who are aware of their need for a mediator look to someone other than Jesus - and end in ruin” David Guzik.
19. **20:22** The Lord said to Moses: "Thus you will say to the Israelites: 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken with you from heaven. **20:23** You must not make alongside me gods of sil- ver, nor make gods of gold for yourselves.
- a) God's first commandment after the 10 commandments is to re-emphasize the worship of the true God and no other.
 - i) The “gods of silver and gods of gold” can best be thought of today as material prosperity. To ignore god for the purposes of making material things *greater* than your love for God is a common sin today as well as back then.
 - a) This is probably the #1 form of idolatry in the world. Idolatry is simply anything you put as a priority before God.
 - b) We'll get more specific in the next lesson about worshiping false gods.
20. **20:24** You must make for me an altar made of earth, and you will sacrifice on it your burnt of- ferings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I cause my name to be honored I will come to you and I will bless you.
- a) First comes the 10 commandments, then comes alter-instructions. Why?
 - b) Because God knew the people were going to break the commandments.
 - c) God is setting up a method of continual relationship with his people (not a way of sal- vation!). When we fail, we need a way to restore our relationship with God. The Christian-equivalence of this altar is asking God for “forgiveness.
 - d) “Sin” means “missing the mark”, like shooting an arrow and missing the bull's-eye.
 - e) When we sin, God has to set up a way of restoration.
 - f) Remember the Christian's “bar of soap” (and memorize this!)
 - i) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NIV)
 - ii) My Bible has the word “all” underlined in that last sentence.
 - iii) Remember that God knows all, and can not learn. How many of your future sins was God aware of when he called you to serve Him? That's not an excuse to keep on sinning, but 1 John 1:9 is God's “first-aid” kit as a sin remedy!
 - iv) One should never feel so guilty about a sin that God is ashamed of you. God always wants you to turn to him, no matter how bad or how often you've failed in the past.

21. **20:25** And if you make me an altar of stone, you must not build it of hewn stone, for if you use your tool on it you will have defiled it.
- a) If God wanted a big fancy altar he would have said so. Instead he wanted one just made of plain stones, uncut.
 - i) The danger of “fancy” altars is that it glorifies man and not God. God wants our focus to be upon Him, and not the altar.
 - ii) This gets into a great debate over “ornate vs. practical” church construction. How fancy should one build a church building? A lot of the great church buildings and artifacts of the Catholic Church were destroyed during the reformation based on zeal over this debate. This whole argument is a debate unto itself, and there are some good arguments on both sides. For example, can architects use their God-given gifts to glorify God? Other bible verses speak of material-using-artists as having spiritual gifts. I suppose the ultimate answer is this whole debate is who is being glorified by church and altar construction.
22. **20:26** And you must not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness is not exposed.'
- a) Men wore robes. I suppose this verse is about not “flashing” the audience as one walks up the stairs.
 - i) The spiritual significance of this verse is the same as the last verse. The focus of our worship is on God and not on “our flesh”. This is another visual reminder that God, and God-alone is glorified in worship, and no deeds of the flesh be exposed.
23. Next week, we’ll go over the verses we missed, with is the 10 commandments themselves. In re-cap, the most important thing to understand is the role of the law in our lives.
- a) It is not about salvation, it is about God’s standard for righteousness our *need* for a Savior.
 - b) Further the law is something for us to “shoot for”; just like “sin” literally means missing the mark.
 - c) Jesus was the only person ever to fully obey the law. He is our model of how to live the Christian life.
 - d) I have stated many times, just like “you are what you eat, you *also* become what you worship.”
 - i) It is only by looking to God, and letting God *lead* our lives, that we can find joy and happiness in our lives.
 - e) The law, beginning with the 10 commandments, is a model for a happy and fulfilling life. The secret is to let God work it *through* us and not through our own efforts. *That* is the “human effort” that God condemns in the last few verses of Chapter 20.
24. Let’s pray. Father how often we miss the mark. It is only by the law that we realize our need for a savior. As we grow in our Christian walk, we realize more and more the weakness of our old life and our dependence upon you. Make us aware of the changes you want for our lives. Lead us on as you see best. Help us, as we know that in our flesh lies no good thing. Help us to be more like Jesus every day, the “author and finisher of our faith”. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the fulfillment of, and perfect-keeper of the law, Amen.