

Being God's People

Exodus 20:1-17

Thank you for joining us this week as we continue our study through Exodus. We are now about halfway through the book of Exodus. The rest of Exodus tells us what happened at Mt Sinai. God reveals Himself to the children of Israel in ways they have never seen. They learn more about Him and experience Him at a whole new level. As we study this part of Exodus, we hope you will also learn more about Him and experience Him at a level that you have not known Him before.

As we are going through this section of Exodus, don't lose sight of the big picture. Some of these chapters are filled with lots of small details, and sometimes we wonder why all this information is in the Bible. If you start to feel that way, remember where this fits in God's story. God is building a kingdom, and He will redeem what was lost to sin; He will restore His kingdom in the whole world. We know the children of Israel go on and fall away from the true God, but from the children of Israel comes one called Jesus. Through Jesus, God will get it all back! God's plan will not be thwarted.

His story has twists and turns which don't always make sense to us. But remember, His heart is for the whole world to know Him, and this will happen. Understanding this brings purpose to all the Bible because every part points to this end goal. The Holy God of Mt Sinai has not changed; we must humble ourselves before Him and join His team. Don't lose sight of the end when Jesus will be the King of Kings, and we will have the privilege of serving this great king.

I give you this short introduction to remind you of the big picture. God's plan will be accomplished, He was working then, and He still is at work despite how things appear. I thank you again for joining us on Hope for Today; let's go with Bible teacher, J. Mark, for a closer look at today's lesson.

The people of Israel had special significance in God's plan, and He meant for them to listen to Him and obey Him. At times throughout the narrative of Exodus, He reminds them, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." We remember how Moses brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. It was, for them, a house of bondage, to be sure.

BEING GOD'S PEOPLE is no small privilege. Too many people want to identify as God's people without acknowledging the cost involved. That cost is, in part, a commitment to obey God's commands in living a holy life. God says of His people, "Be holy because I am holy."

God gave Israel the Ten Commandments on tables of stone. They were given as the basis of the relationship between a holy God and His people. Societies built upon these principles have come to light and freedom. Every child of God should memorize them from Exodus 20:1-17.

1. *And God spoke all these words, saying,*
2. *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*
3. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
4. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven 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:*
5. *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*
6. *And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*
7. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*
8. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
9. *Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:*
10. *But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*
11. *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.*
12. *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*
13. *Thou shalt not kill.*
14. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
15. *Thou shalt not steal.*
16. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*
17. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.*

God chose Israel to be His people and defined the AREAS of life and how to walk with a holy God. Let me help you see those areas from this Scripture.

First is the,

Area of Worship

God defined the object of Israel's worship. He said, "You shall have no other gods before me," I am the God who delivered you and no one else. This is truly exclusive; the worship of no other god was permitted in ancient Israel.

The LORD said, "You shall not make for yourselves any graven images." That was the ordinance of worship. No object of worship should be representative of who or what God is imagined to be. But how men have polluted this whole idea of worship. In museums of ancient times, I have seen the grotesque and hideous objects that people created to worship. One of Israel's prophets spoke of his people taking a piece of wood, chopping it in two, heating themselves, and cooking their food with part of it, and from the other part, they fashion a god, set it up in a corner and bow down to worship that block of wood!

The LORD set forth an ordinance with Israel which forbade them to make any representation of Him, whether it was carved or cast. No image of any kind, whether the pattern was in the heavens, the earth, or in the waters under the earth. The LORD was specific in this area of worship; no material object is able to convey who I am.

There was the object of worship, the ordinance of worship, and also the order of worship. God said, "You shall not take the name of the LORD in vain." That means that they were not to invoke God's name lightly or carelessly. They were to assume their role as the people of God with serious intention because the LORD would not hold him guiltless who uses His name carelessly.

Man is most vulnerable in this area of worship. It seems, in some ways, that we have lost sight of the divine purpose and objective of worship. We should reflect carefully on this. When God spoke to Israel about being His people, He defined the area of worship for them.

Next is the

Area of Work.

It is interesting that the area of work follows right after the area of worship. There is a relationship between work and worship. Here the LORD defines for them the area of work with respect to the week. He said there was a holy Sabbath Day to be observed. They were to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it

holy. The Sabbath had been sanctified at creation by the LORD God in the close of the creation week. They were to “set apart” the Sabbath Day.

Something else emerges here that is significant. Six days of the week were given to them for the necessary pursuits of life. “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.” Some people have been greatly distressed because the Bible sets forth this kind of work ethic.

The Bible, in other places, declares if a man will not work, he should not eat! Now I realize there are places in the world where food is not very plentiful, and even if one cared or wished to work, he probably couldn’t find anything to do. But this is a basic principle for living.

The LORD declared in these principles that one should labor only six days of the week, for the seventh day was a time of rest and worship. He said on that seventh day, you are not to conduct any kind of servile work, not you, not your son, not your daughter, nor anyone that is associated with your household. They are all to observe this day of rest and holy convocation.

I believe in today’s world, we need to redefine the area of work as surely as we need to redefine the area of worship. Certainly, God is honored and pleased when we labor with our hands during the six days of the week as He Himself labored when He created the earth in that six-day period.

Finally, there is the,

Area of Well-Being.

God began first with the family. He said, “Honor your father and your mother.” This establishes the relationship between father and mother and children. The family unit is very important to God, and so He brings it into focus immediately in this area of well-being.

He spoke next of the community when He said, “You shall not kill, and you shall not commit adultery.” These are interpersonal relationships, on the horizontal level, with neighbors and those who live near us. Bible scholars tell us there are several different words in the Old Testament Hebrew text that have to do with killing. The word in this particular Scripture has reference to murder. The LORD is carefully defining the area of well-being by instructing them to live at peace with themselves, which would avoid murder or adultery. Certainly, no one has any rights beyond those which the LORD has prescribed for us. So, you have the area of well-being in the family and the community.

Then there is well-being as related to property. God placed a prohibition upon taking the property of other people. He said plainly, “You shall not steal.” This meant that one could own personal property. It was protected by this particular statement from the LORD. No one should steal from you, and you should not steal from anyone else.

Then God said plainly, “Do not bear false witness.” That is also stealing, not material possessions but a man’s good name or his reputation. Do not bear false witness against your neighbor because he has the right to be represented truthfully.

The final commandment has to do with other material possessions a neighbor may have, whether it’s his house, his wife, his servants, or his animals, or anything that is his.

You see, the LORD made it very clear that in the area of well-being, they needed some careful definitions. So, He defined them specifically for the people of Israel.

Being God’s people brings with it great responsibility. There are certain areas in which He demands control. Those have been carefully outlined and defined in this text. They are the area of worship where He commands our attention and loyalty, the area of work where we respect what He has set up as the work week and the one rest day, and then the area of well-being for our family life, community, and personal property.

What is left? Very little. He demands the whole of our attention. What does He give in return? His peace. Do you want it? He can be your personal God, and you can be one of His people.

Thanks, J. Mark, for giving us these three areas from the familiar Ten Commandments. If you have any questions or if you’d like a copy of today’s teaching, here are a few ways you can contact us. The best way is by email. Our email is hope@heraldsofhope.org. If you don’t have email, you could write to us. Our address is: Hope for Today, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Or you can connect with us on our website. Our website is heraldsofhope.org.

Thank you so much for being with us. Please join us again next week. Until next week walk with the King and build His kingdom.