

Zoom Sunday School 19 July 2020

God's list of instructions: The ten commandments

For the next three months God's people travelled. They came eventually to Mount Sinai – where Moses had seen the burning bush. God had promised Moses that he would bring him back there (Exod 3:12). Each morning during their travels the Israelites found the manna and knew that God was looking after them. He had promised their ancestor Abraham that his offspring would be God's special people – and they were! God still planned to bless the “all the families of the earth” through them (Genesis 12:3).

But they wouldn't be a blessing to anyone if they were just the same as all the other people living on earth. They needed guidelines so that they would live as God wanted them too.

So, at Sinai, God spoke once again. First he reminded Moses that he had looked after the people. He promised again that they would be special to him. But he added that they must live in the right way; they must obey his voice (Exod 19: 3-6). When Moses repeated this to the people, they immediately (without thinking much) agree to do everything God said.

So, instead of leading them forward, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire covered the mountain in an awesome display of thunder and lightning. The mountain shook and out of the darkness there came a long trumpet blast. It was terrifying! God was reminding the people that he was a holy God. This was a serious covenant or promise they were making.

And there God gave Moses the rules which are recorded in Exodus 20. These rules were basic instructions to keep lives running smoothly; a sort of manual or blueprint! If they disobeyed these rules, everything would stop working smoothly. They would no longer been treating God properly and they would be forgetting to show respect to each other. These basic rules have become known as the 10 commandments. They were so important that God wrote them down for Moses on 2 blocks of stone so there would be a record of them.

And what were the rules?

Perhaps we can think of them in two sets: The first four were about how to treat God, the last 6 were about how to treat others.

Unlike the people around them and those back in Egypt, God's people were to worship only the one true God; they were not to make images of God as these could become like idols; they were not to use his name casually; each week they were to keep the Sabbath day as the Lord's day, setting aside time to worship him.

They were also to treat people properly: they were to respect the authority of their parents; they were not to murder; they were not to be unfaithful to their marriage vows; they were not to steal; they were not to lie and they were not to be jealous.

When Jesus came, he reminded people that this was not a test where you could pass with 9 out of 10. These laws have to influence everything we do every day. It isn't just about ticking them off as we do when we make a model or a cake. These laws are to make us think about God and how we live.

But we can never live perfectly. We should all be punished for failing God's test or assessment. It is only because Jesus took our punishment on the cross that we are forgiven. God keeps his side of the promise even when we flop.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Exodus 19:3-9

Tuesday: Exodus 19:16-20

Wednesday: Exodus 20:1-5a

Thursday: Exodus 20:7-11

Friday: Exodus 20:12-18, 20