



Exodus 19-20

Shall we turn now to Exodus 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.

Now, this would put us in the month of June, about the time of what later became known as the Feast of Pentecost, the third month after they had come out of Egypt. They came out in the middle of the first month, the fifteenth of the month. Now, in the third month, the first day of the month, they finally arrived in their journey to this area known as the wilderness of Sinai, which is a stretch of land about two-and-a-half miles long and about a half-mile wide; and jetting up out of the plain is this solid granite rock outcropping, mount Sinai.

And so when they had departed from Rephidim, they came to the desert of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; so Israel camped there before the mountain. 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 wants Moses, first of all, to remind the people what He did to their enemies, how that He destroyed those who had enslaved them. "You have seen what I've done to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings to bring you to myself." And so, by the processes that they had gone through, they had been brought to God.

This figure of being born on eagles' wings is more fully amplified in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, as there we read as an eagle flutters over the nest, or stirs up the nest, and how it watches over it's young, actually tossing them out of the nest, and then bears them up on eagles' wings. Little eaglets have to learn to fly. They learn by much, I guess, the way they say they used to teach the Indians to swim; just throw them in the water and let them go for it.

The mother eagle stirs up the nest, knocks the little fledglings out of the nest, and they begin to flap their wings, but tumble topsy-turvy on down towards the rocks below. And just when it seems that they would be dashed upon the rocks, she swoops underneath, and bears them up on her wings, brings them back up into the nest. And so, this process goes on day after day, until one day that little fledgling begins to coordinate it's wing activity, and it begins to fly, a bit erratic, but it begins to fly. Begins to learn how to use it's tail feathers in guiding itself, and soon it is soaring as the other eagles.

God said that's the way He dealt with Israel, bringing them to Himself on eagles' wings. Every trial, every hard place was intended to bring them to God, even as God allows difficulties and trials in our lives that are intended, really, to bring us to God. They are eagles' wings bearing us to God.

It's amazing how we hate our trials. We hate our nest being disturbed. I like to be comfortable. I like to be kicked back and relaxed. I like someone just coming and bringing me food, and dropping it in my mouth whenever I'm hungry.

The little eaglets very comfortable there in that nest; but if it were allowed to grow in that nest and never fly, it could be destroyed the first time it fell out. It's got to learn to fly.

And so, God disturbs our nest. God disturbs our lives. We don't like these disruptions, we don't like the

disturbances, but they're all a part of the process of developing our character in Christ, our growth. They bring us to God.

It's amazing how that so many times we're prone to forget God when things are going well. It's just a part of human nature. I get caught up in the things that I'm doing, in my projects and in my pursuits, and God sort of gets a back seat until calamity arises. And then, in the midst of calamity, I cry out unto God, "God, help me. What are You doing, God? Why have You allowed this to happen to me?" And God says, "Did I hear you say something? Missed you lately. Where have you been?" "Hey, no time for frivolity, God, we've got to get out of this mess. This is desperate."

But God allows these things to draw us to Himself. "I have born you on eagles' wings to bring you to Myself," God said. And so, the purposes of the trials in our lives are always to bring us to Him.

You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, I bore you on eagles' wings, I've brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be a special treasure to Me.

So, the promise is that they might be a special treasure to God. They might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; these are God's promises to these people.

I'll make you a special treasure, for the earth is Mine. You'll be a royal priesthood, or, a kingdom of priests, and you will be a holy nation.

But these are the conditions: "You must obey my voice and keep My covenant." God is wanting now to enter into a covenant relationship with His people. The covenant relationship is base upon their obedience to His voice, and their keeping the covenant. Now, the privileges that are offered by God are tremendous. You will be God's special treasure.

When Paul the Apostle was praying for the church at Ephesus, he prayed that they might know what was His exceeding riches in His saints, that they might know how much God valued them and treasured them. If you only knew the great value that God places upon you. If you only knew what a treasure you are to God. God places such a high premium and value upon you, that He gave His only begotten Son in order that you might become God's special treasure. That's the kind of value He placed upon you; willing to give His Son for you, that you might become a part of His family. That's how much God longed for fellowship with you.

God longs for fellowship with His people. The word fellowship means, "oneness," or, "communion, full accord," and that's exactly what God desires with you; a oneness, a communion, a full accord. But God is holy. For me to be one with God, I must be holy. God is love, and for me to be one with God, I must be loving. God is righteous; for me to be one with God, I must be righteous. God is just, God is merciful. To be one with Him, I must be just, and I must be merciful.

So God has brought them to Himself. Now He's offering to them special privileges. "You will be my special treasure, you will be a kingdom of priests, you will be a holy nation; if you obey my voice and keep my covenant.

So Moses came down from the mountain, he called together the elders of the people, he told them the things that God had spoken to him. And all of the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.

Now, they consented, though they did not yet hear the terms. The terms of the covenant had not yet been spoken to them, yet they assented; "All that the LORD has spoken, we will do." Why? Because we want to

be God's special treasure, we want to have access to God, we want to live in communion with Him, we want to be a holy nation, so all that the LORD has said, we will do.

So Moses went back up to the mountain and he said, "LORD, they agreed. They said that everything You said, they're willing to do." And so the LORD then told Moses to prepare the people, for in three days, God was going to speak to them in a powerful way, and in a way by which the people would never again doubt that it was God who had brought them out of Egypt, and it was God who had given to them His commandments that they are to obey and to follow, if indeed they will be that holy nation, that kingdom of priests, that special treasure.

So, God is going to speak in a very spectacular way, but the people must be prepared.

So the LORD said to Moses, Behold, I will 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. And the LORD said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today, and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes,

Now, a part of the preparation was the washing of their outward garments. God is holy, and so there is that concept of the cleanliness, washing your outward garments. Now, the rich people were allowed to change their garments, but the poor people only had one garment, and so they had to wash them. And so, here they are required, first of all, to wash their clothes.

And let them be ready, for on the third day the LORD will come down upon mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Now, you're to set a fence, the boundaries for the people all around, saying, Take heed, or be careful, that you do not go up to the mountain, or touch it's base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through with an arrow, whether he is a man or a beast, he shall not live; when the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.

But they're not to come on to the mountain itself. Put a fence up to protect and to keep them from coming on the mountain. If anybody comes beyond the fence, even if it's an animal, it's to be shot with an arrow. It's to be stoned. They're not to lay a hand on them, that is, they're not to physically choke them; but stone them, or shoot them through with an arrow.

Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and he sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, be ready for the third day; and do not come near your wives.

And so, they were to be celibate for this day; special day.

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; and all of the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

And so, this awesome scene the third day. The thundering, the lighting, this thick cloud coming down on the mountain; and then the sound of a trumpet blast, and all of the people. You can imagine what kind of a response and reaction that would have on the camp of the people when on this third day they wake up in the morning to this thunder rolling, and they see the lightening flashing, and they hear this trumpet blast loud over the camp, and they gather now to the foot of the mountain.

Now, mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire;

And I think that any attempt to explain this as a volcanic eruption, or some such thing is to take away from the force and the truth of the text. This particular mountain is of solid granite. It isn't of a volcanic type of igneous rock, it's solid granite, and it's not volcanic in its form at all. I think that God came down, and this was just the physical, visible affects and results of the presence of God there on mount Sinai.

The smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

So there was a lot of physical phenomena that was associated to and related to the presence of God upon the mountain. The thunder, the lightning, the trumpet blast, the quaking, the smoke going up like a furnace,

And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long, and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

So the people heard the actual audible voice of God.

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.

That must have been awesome; ascending up into that mountain that was quaking violently with that cloud over it, and the thunder and the lightning, the smoke covered and going up like a furnace.

And the LORD said to Moses, Go down, and warn the people, lest they break through the barrier to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish.

Now go down and warn those people.

Also let the priests who come near the LORD sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out against them. And Moses said to the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount; as you warned us, saying, Set the fence around the mountain, and sanctify it.

Moses is arguing with the Lord, "Ah, they can't come up; we put a fence down there," -- and all.

And the LORD said to him, Away, get down, and then come up, you and Aaron with you;

Now, it's probably a good hike up the mountain, and Moses wasn't going to hike down and back up again. And so, he argues with the LORD. The LORD says, "Go down and warn those people, now, lest they come past the fence, and many of them be slain." He said, "Hey there's a fence there, LORD, we told them, they're not going to do anything." The Lord said, "Hey, get down, and warn them, and then come on back up, you and Aaron with you."

But do not let the priests and the people break through to come to the LORD, lest they break out against them. So Moses went down to the people, and he spoke to them.

CHAPTER 20

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am JEHOVAH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

Or beside Me. He's got to be the Lord exclusive in your life; no other gods. There are many gods. God is not really a name. We use it as a name. We use it to refer to JEHOVAH, but God is, in reality, a title, and a person's god is that master passion that governs a person's life.

So, for some people, their god is pleasure. In the Old Testament, the god of pleasure was called Molech. For some people, their intellect is their god. Their whole thrust of life is the developing of their understanding; and it has taken the control, it's their master passion. The god of the intellect of the Old Testament was known as Baal.

There are some people who's god is power, money; and their whole thrust of life is that of gaining more power. It absorbs them. It's their compulsion, it's the absorbing compulsion of their life; to get, to get, more, more, more. It's really a rather tyrannical god. Once it gets a hold of you, there's really no way out. In the Old Testament, that god of power was known as mammon.

Many gods; there's only one true and living eternal God who created the heavens and the earth. But every man has a god. Every man is governed by some philosophy, some ideal, some ambition, some driving force that is the center part of his being that gets him out of bed in the morning and gets him going during the day. You're living for something, and whatever it is that is at the center of your life, that master passion, that is your god. That which absorbs the most of your thought, and the most of your life, has become your god.

Now, the LORD said, "I am JEHOVAH, and your God. I'm the one that brought you out of the land of Egypt, and out of bondage, and you're not to have any other gods besides Me."

Second;

You shall not make for yourself any 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 the fourth generations of those who hate me; but showing mercy to thousands of generations to those who love Me, and keep My commandments.

Now, this is not a prohibition against carving statues, or a prohibition against carving out deer, or fish, or whatever. The prohibition is carving them out to be representatives of God, and bowing down and worshipping them. You remember that when they made the tabernacle, God said that they were carve these cherubim, or make these cherubim out of gold, and set them on the mercy seat. These are things in heaven. They were also to embroider the cherubim on the curtains separating the holy place from the holy of holies.

So, it is not a prohibition of making the likenesses of animals or fish or whatever. It is the prohibition of making these as objects of worship.

Now, in Egypt, of course, they had many idols that the people worshipped; and they worshipped fish, and they worshipped animals, and they worshipped these various little images that have been carved out. And that was a very common thing, the worship of idols. And this is what is being prohibited here; the bowing down to, the praying to, the veneration of an idol, or an image of a likeness of a person, or of an animal, or anything. You're not to do that.

And so, He said, "I am a jealous God. I visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations of those that hate Me."

Now, it is important that we understand what the Lord is saying here. It doesn't mean that if my parents are evil and all, that God is necessarily going to visit me with punishment. But if I continue in my parents'

sin, then that judgment will come upon me also; of those that continue in them, continue in that hatred of God.

Now, it is true that so often, unfortunately, the sins of the parents are visited upon the children. Many children are being born, presently, with AIDS; a tragedy, indeed. Many of the children that are born go through heavy withdrawals on birth, because their mothers were on heroin, or some other addictive drugs, and the child, when it is born, the first thing it does is go through withdrawals. Tragic. The sins of the parents being visited on the children.

Also, it does follow that a child raised in an ungodly atmosphere is apt to grow up in this ungodly environment, and is apt to be very ungodly and God-hating - themselves, because of the example that they have seen by their parents.

But, thank God through the grace of Jesus Christ, we can break any relationship with the past that may be bad or wrong. It may be that you had a bad experience as a child, that your parents did not bring you up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, that they did set before you a very poor example. But thank God that can be broken. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old things are passed away, and everything becomes new. And it doesn't mean that you've got to suffer because of your parents' hatred of God, or their mistakes. That can be broken.

But to those who love the LORD, He shows mercy unto all of those who love and keep His commandments, to the thousandth generation.

Third;

You shall not take the name of JEHOVAH your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

This is probably in a reference to taking an oath; for when Jesus explained this particular commandment in the New Testament, He said, "You have heard that you are not to swear by God, but I say unto you not to swear at all by anything in heaven or in the earth, for the heaven is the Lord's, the fullness thereof. Let your yes be yes, and let your no be no."

Now, saying, "By the Lord, I will do it," if you do make such a declaration, don't do it in vain. "Do not perjure yourself," actually, is what is being said, "in the name of the Lord."

Now, in our system of justice, we had a process of swearing in the witnesses whereby they must swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help them God. They used to have them put their hand on the Bible. They don't do that anymore. But often, they'll have them raise their hand and to take this oath, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help me, God."

Now, if you take such an oath, then be careful that you don't perjure yourself. You see, if a man would swear before the Lord to tell the truth, and then he doesn't tell the truth, your whole system of justice goes down the tube, because our whole system of justice is predicated upon the belief of the witness and his having sworn to tell the truth.

Now, in most of the ancient civilizations, the penalty for perjury was death, because if you would get on the witness stand and lie about a person or a situation, that person could be put to death because of your testimony, your lie. And therefore, the punishment for perjury was extremely severe; death, as a rule.

Now, today, there are still severe punishments for perjury. If you have sworn as a witness to tell the

truth, and you perjure yourself, there are still severe penalties in our course of law; and it must be so, otherwise, our whole system of justice is down the tube.

So, here it is; God says you're not to take the name of the Lord in vain. That is, you're not to swear by the Lord, and then give false testimony. The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

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're not to do any work, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servants, nor your maidservants, not ever your cattle, you're not to work them on the Sabbath day, nor the stranger who is within your gates.

Everything is to cease on the Sabbath day. Everything comes to a halt. You're to rest. You're to take it as a day with the Lord; a day of quietness, a day of rest. You're not to do your normal task, or your labors on the Sabbath day, but you're just to rest and spend it with the Lord. Keep the Sabbath day holy.

Now, this was a special covenant that God made between Himself and Israel, as we will find next week, as we continue on in the book of Exodus. And as circumcision was a special covenant for Israel, so was the Sabbath day. I still think that the pattern of six and one is important. I do believe that there is one day out of the week that a person ought to just take off and rest, and spend in relaxation and worship of God. And, if you can worship the Lord surfing, or fishing, or whatever, great; but take a break from the normal labor, from the normal routine. Change the pace; a day of relaxation, a day where you just are drawing close with the Lord. And surely you can do that in nature.

When they met to determine what relationship the church should have to the law--the Gentile church--it was determined not to put the Gentile church under the law, but just to recommend that they keep themselves from fornication and from things that were strangled, and if you do this, you do well. No mention was made to the church of the Sabbath day. So, the church became accustomed to worshipping on the first day of the week, because that was the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. And so, early, even in the New Testament times, Paul speaks, "And when you gather together on the first day of the week to break bread..." So it became the custom of the church to gather on the first day of the week.

There are those today, especially the Seventh-day Adventists, or Seventh-day Baptists, or Jehovah Witnesses, or Herbert W. Armstrong, who still adhere to Sabbath day worship, and are strong advocates to Sabbath day worship. And they make a big issue over worshipping of the Sabbath day, and they try to accuse the Roman Catholic church of changing the day to Sunday. But there is evidence, of course, even in the New Testament, and then in early church history, before the development of the Roman Catholic church under Constantine, evidence of the worship of the church on the first day of the week.

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, said that the only day, really to break bread, and to worship, was Sunday, or the first day of the week, because that is the day that the Lord was raised. And, of course, they say, "Well, Sunday, you know, it's the sun god, and so, actually, that was why they worshipped, because the pagans worshipped on Sunday--sun god." Well, Saturday is Saturn god, so what have you got?

The early church did not lay the Sabbath day upon the Gentile believers, and later on, Paul said, "Let no man judge you in respect to new moons, holy days, or of Sabbath days. These were all a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

The Sabbath day of the Old Testament was a shadow of things to come. Of what to come? The Sabbath day was the day of rest, and it was a shadow of the rest that is brought to us by Jesus, for they that have received Jesus have entered into His rest. And so, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath for us. Again, Paul said that one man esteems one day above another, another man esteems every day alike, let everyone be fully

persuaded in his own mind.

So, early in the church the controversy arose because of the Jews within the early church insisting on the Sabbath day, and the Gentile believers taking Sunday as their day of worship, it became a controversy, even in the early church. And As Paul brings out the controversy, Romans 14, he said, "One man esteems one day above another, another every day alike. Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Now, I am of the breed that sees every day alike. As far as I'm concerned, every day is the Lord's day. That doesn't mean I kick back and relax every day and go fishing every day, or surfing---far from it; but it doesn't matter to me if I go surfing on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday; I usually don't have time to go on Sunday, but it doesn't matter to me what day of the week I take off to rest and relax. Sometimes it's Tuesday. Quite often, it's Tuesday; but many times I can't take Tuesday off, so I'll take off a Wednesday, but I never take off a Sunday.

So, let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Now, the reason for the Sabbath day;

Six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Now, Henry Morris is a man that I greatly admire, and the work of the Christian Research Institute. I think that these men down there have done a highly commendable job in their presentation of scientific evidence for creation versus evolution. These scientists have stood up against the theories of evolution, and have shown in debates around the United States with some of the greatest evolutionists, they have shown how that evolution is totally without support or foundation in the facts of the fossil record, or true facts of science. There's no demonstrable evidence to prove evolution; and they have done a tremendous job.

I do not necessarily agree with their position of a young earth, nor do I believe that the Scripture necessarily supports a young earth. I do believe that there is much credence to what is known as the gap theory," and that is; between verses one and two in the book of Genesis, there is a gap of time that could extend to several billion years. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth became wasted and desolate. Darkness was upon the face of the deep.

So, sometime between Genesis 1, when God created the heaven and the earth, and Genesis 2, when the earth was wasted and desolate, or without form and void, as you read in King James, that there was some cataclysmic happening in the universe that brought the earth into a chaotic state; an ice age, perhaps. And I think that this could extend over millions of years, even into billions. There's no way to estimate.

Now, one of the strongest proof arguments that Dr. Morris and Dr. Gish present for their young earth theory is the verse here, verse 11,

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them.

So, they say that the whole was made in the six days; the heavens and earth, everything in the six days. It is a strong argument, but I think that it does have a fatal flaw. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The word for created there is "bara", which is in the capacity of God only; that is, the capacity of out of nothing, bringing into existence form. In the beginning, God bara, created, out of nothing, the heaven and the earth.

Now, as we go into the creation days of Genesis, a different Hebrew word is employed. God "made" the

dry land to appear, and God “made,” and God “made;” that’s the Hebrew word, “asa,” which is “to assemble from existing materials.” So, in a sense, you might say that a man created this pulpit. Now, I don’t mean that he said, “Pulpit exist,” and POOF, suddenly a pulpit came out of nothing and was sitting there. That’s “bara.” We don’t have that capacity. But a man drew out a design, cut the materials, glued them together, and he made the pulpit, but he made it out of existing materials.

And so, the word, “asa,” the assembling of existing materials. Now, this particular word here, “for in seven days God *made* the heavens and the earth,” is again, the word “asa,” that is, God assembled from the existing materials the heaven and the earth, in it’s present order, as is recorded in the remainder of chapter one of the book of Genesis.

So, I do not believe that from the Scriptures, you have to argue for a young earth of, say, ten thousand years or less, though there may be a lot of scientific evidence for that, and you really can’t prove very well otherwise, but I don’t think that it is necessarily a Scriptural position.

Another problem with this particular theory is, when then did God create the angels? If everything in the heavens and the earth were created in these seven days; or six days, God rested the seventh; when did He create the angels? And when then did Satan fall? On which of the seven days were the angels created, and on which of the days did Satan fall, because we knew that he was already fallen by the time he came into the garden, and he seemed to be a pretty, man, a pretty well person of experience at that point.

When was Satan in Eden, the garden of God, covered by every precious stone? When was he the anointed cherub that covered; perfect in beauty, perfect in wisdom, perfect in all of his ways, until the day that iniquity was found in him? The general reading of the Scripture would make Satan’s creation way back, prehistoric, sometime in the past, in the ages existing, for they sang when the foundations of the earth were formed. The morning stars sang together at the forming of the foundation of the earth.

So when were they created if God, in the six days, created everything that was in the heavens and in the earth, as the Scripture declares? So, it is the assembling together of the creation, of the pre-creation of the earth, in order that man might dwell upon it; and, in that case, you have room for the pre-creation, the fall of Satan, and perhaps even the fall of Satan accounting for the chaotic condition that the earth was in, this being the sphere and realm where Satan ruled; and it’s chaotic condition could be explained by Satan’s rebellion against God.

So, as I say, though I highly respect Dr. Morris and Dr. Gish, and those other scientists that work with them there in San Diego, and I thank God for these men, they are close friends of mine, and I love them, and I support them; yet, I do feel that in taking the position that they have as a young earth being the only Scriptural position that you can take, I do not necessarily agree with that. I’m not the scientist that they are, but I do not believe that it is necessary from a scriptural standpoint, to take the position that they do.

All right, now, notice these first four laws have to do with your relationship with God; and that’s first. If your relationship with God isn’t right, your relationship with your fellow man can’t be right. Life always exists on two planes; the perpendicular axis, and the horizontal plane, and it’s sort of a fixed point here in the middle. So if the perpendicular axis of your life is off center, then your life is going to be out of balance.

And many people find their life totally out of whack, it’s out of balance, you’re out of cinch, and you’re constantly endeavoring to bring your life into balance, and you’re doing everything you can to find the balanced life, and you get overboard on this, so you say, “Hey, man, you’re really overboard.” “OK, I’m going to quit that.” So you get tilted the other way; and you’re constantly fighting to get a balanced life. Well, you’re problem is the perpendicular axis. If the perpendicular axis is correct, the horizontal plane will be correct.

Jesus said, "if you will seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, then all these other things will be taken care of." Yet, the mistake that we make is trying to take care of the other things to bring our life into balance, and that's why we are constantly struggling, but without success, to live a well balanced life, because you're only dealing with the symptom. The problem is at the heart; your relationship with God. When that becomes correct, then the horizontal plane will balance out.

And that is why, first of all, the first four commandments, have to do with your relationship with God. This is fundamental, this is primary.

Now, having established this relationship with God, then my relationship with my fellow man becomes what it should be. What should it be? First of all,

You're to honor your father and your mother.

The family ties are one of the strongest foundations for a society; and I really fear for our society, because of the break down of the family unit; the tragic consequences that we observe in our society as a result of the breakdown of the family. And you'll notice that many of these laws that deal with our relationship with each other, are relationships that involve the family; relationships by which the family ties can be destroyed.

And so, it begins with the honoring of your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives to you.

Secondly, in this second table of the law;

You shall not murder.

Jesus said, "It's more than that. You're not to hate your brother." It is possible for you to hate someone so much, you wish they were dead; that you could even see yourself killing them. Jesus said that, really, you've violated the spirit of the law. The hatred in your heart is a violation of the law. You're just as guilty as the man who killed someone. It's in your heart to do so. Man looks on the outward, God looks on the heart.

You shall not commit adultery.

Again, we look at it as just the physical act; going to bed with some other man's wife. But Jesus said, "If you look at a woman to lust after her in your heart, you've committed adultery. You're guilty." And so, Jesus took it one step further in the Sermon on the Mount. All under the initial statement, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven."

And as He gave the five illustrations, He showed that the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was all predicated upon an outward observance of the law, whereas God was really seeking to deal with the inward attitude of a man's heart. And though they kept outwardly the standards of the law, inwardly, they had violated. And that's why Jesus said, "Outwardly, hey, you look like a white washed sepulcher. But you take the lid off and there's bones, dead bones, skeletons inside. You wash the outside of the platter, but inside, you smell. It's horrible; filthy." God's interested in what's inside your heart.

You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. And you shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his

ox, nor his donkey,

Nor his Mercedes, nor his Porsche, nor his ski boat, *nor anything that is your neighbor's*. Coveting--man, that's a hard one to control, isn't it? Now that is really dealing with the inward spirit, I mean, coveting is a thing that is of the spirit. And this is the law that caused Paul, that finally opened Paul's eyes to the fact that the law was spiritual.

At one time when Paul was a Pharisee, he thought that he had it made. As far as the righteousness which is of the law, he said, "Hey, man, I'm blameless. I was blameless. I kept every jot and tittle of the thing. But when I came to the realization that the law was spiritual, man, I was wiped out." When he came to the realization that "thou shalt not covet" deals with an attitude of my heart, a desire that is in there, I have a hard time controlling that.

When I see a lovely yacht moored at a dock down there on Lido Island; hard not to desire that yacht. Wow, isn't that beautiful, man, I'd like to have that. Zap! Guilty. I've coveted, I've desired something that belongs to someone else.

So, Paul said, "When I really understood the law, that it was dealing with spiritual things, sin revived, and it killed me. I'm dead. It condemned me to death."

And so, God's covenant, if the people will obey His voice, keep this covenant, then they will be God's special treasure. They'll be a holy nation. They'll be a kingdom of priests.

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, Hey, man, you go, you speak with us, and we'll listen to you; but don't let God speak to us, or we'll die.

I mean, this awesome sight and this consciousness of the presence of God terrified them. "Look, you go ahead, and you tell us what God says. We'll listen to you. Don't let God tell us. I mean, we're afraid that He'd wipe us out."

So Moses said to the people, Do not fear; for God is come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.

God has come and put on this awesome demonstration that you might really respect His law, and keep it.

So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. 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.

They actually heard God's voice. He articulated His commands.

You shall not make anything to be with me gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.

Now, what was the first failure of the children of Israel? And it's going to happen pretty soon. They've just said, "Lord, everything You said, man, we're going to do." Moses spent quite awhile up there on a mountain with God, and when he came down to the camp, what did he discover? Aaron had told the people, "Bring all your gold earrings, and everything else." And he had molded a calf, and they were dancing around it, worshipping the calf. "Thou shalt not make any graven image, bow down to it, and worship it." And here,

God is sort of reemphasizing that particular one. “Not make anything to be with me, gods of silver, gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.”

And then, it is interesting that even in the building of your altars, for your sacrifices of burnt offerings, and peace offerings, your sheep, and your oxen; that you are to make your altars out of earth, dirt, natural.

And if you make an altar of stone, don't chisel the stone; don't make it of hewn stone.

Don't make any carvings on the stone, don't make the stones ornate. Just plain, uncarved, unhewn stone if you're going to make an altar out of stone. Natural. God doesn't want our attention to be distracted from Him to some fancy artwork. When you see the priests going to the altar, He doesn't want your mind to be taken from God to some fancy, ornate stone that have been carved, and you say, “Wow, isn't that beautiful, isn't that intricate, isn't that wonderful.”

I really believe that a building is a convenience, but that's all. I think when we build a building to worship God, we should build it just simple, natural as possible. If we were in Hawaii, we wouldn't even need a building, we could use a Banyan tree, worship outside. It's just a convenience, it's to shelter us from the cold, or from the rain to make it more convenient. But, it isn't to be some elaborate, glorious structure to stand as a monument to man in the future; you know, look what we have done. Look what this architect designed, and to be some display of man's ingenuity or abilities that distracts from God.

God is saying, “Keep it simple. Make your altar out of earth. If you use rocks, don't carve on them, don't hue the stones. Leave them just natural.” If you use a tool on it, you've profaned it. You're offering to God now the works of your hands.

Nor shall you go up by steps to the altar,

God doesn't want the priests' legs to be exposed to the people. So, not even steps going up to the altar. Nothing to take your mind away from God, that's basically what it is. And I think that's a good rule to follow. I think that if you're ministering, you ought to wear clothes that don't attract attention to your clothes. Loud flashy ties, or loud flashy socks, or something where peoples' minds are being distracted to your dress, and away from the Lord.

I'm a real fanatic about keeping distractions to a minimum. That's why we don't have children in the services except those that are old enough to sit quietly and orderly, because we don't want children distracting, and they can be a tremendous distraction.

That's why we discourage people calling out “amen's” or “praise the Lord's,” or whatever during the teaching of the word, because that can distract from the Word of God, and people look to see who said that. And so we seek to keep the distractions to a minimum, in order that we might give full attention, that God might speak to us through His Word, with distractions kept down at a minimum. We don't try to have fancy ornamentation or anything else to take a person's mind away from the Lord, and onto artifacts.

We're not going to make chapter 21 until next Sunday. So, we'll take the next three chapters next Sunday.

Now, tonight, if you'd like a beautiful poinsettia, you are welcome to take those that are on the steps. We'll leave these that are on the back here. They're going to make it for a little while, we can still water those, but those that are on the steps, you're welcome to take one of them home with you to put in your yard, or to put in your house for awhile, and plant in your yard, or whatever, but you're welcome to take one tonight off of the steps after church, if you so desire.

May the Lord be with you, and may the Lord bless you, may He watch over you, may He fill you with His love, and above all, may He get your life in balance, as you put God first, and as you get your relationship with God right, and it becomes all that it should be. May you see the work of God, and may you indeed become His special treasure, a royal priesthood, zealous of good works; the chosen and the called of God through Jesus Christ.