

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 1

Testimony from Mount Sinai

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 2-20
Subject:	What the LORD God did through Moses
Complement:	delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and gave them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai.
Exegetical idea:	The LORD God used Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and give them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai.
Homiletical idea:	Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to listen to the words of blessing from our loving God.

Introduction

(Heavy breathing) Whew! I'm tired. I must stop to rest! Climbing mountains at my age is hard work! And these precious stone tablets are heavy too! But I'm not complaining. I will remember this day for the rest of my life!

What an amazing experience! I have been communing with the LORD our God on this holy mountain for the past 40 days. The glory of His presence is like a consuming fire, but I was not afraid. I have never felt more alive than I feel right now! I am filled with love and joy and peace, but I am also filled with sadness.

I have always believed that the LORD our God is the only true God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever He had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, He is God! But I never thought that I would meet with Him like this, on this holy mountain. He gave me these precious stone tablets! These are the words of blessing from our loving God. Hallelujah! I have seen precious stones before during my years in Egypt, but I have never seen anything like this.

Some of you seem a little surprised to see that these tablets are made of sapphire. Did you expect them to be made of worthless rock? They come from the presence of the LORD our God, written with His finger! Where the LORD God sits enthroned, his throne is made of sapphire and even the pavement beneath His feet is made of sapphire! (Exodus 28:18) But more precious than these stones are the words of blessing that are written on them.

When I was a young child, my birth mother Jochebed told me stories about the LORD our God. I learned that He is a mighty God. A miracle-working God. I heard the stories of our forefather Abram...how the LORD our God promised him that his descendants would be so numerous that they could not be numbered, just like the stars of heaven. Abram had no children at the time that promise was given, and he was an old man, almost as old as I am now. But the LORD God fulfilled His promise to Abram, and his son Isaac was born 25 years after the promise was given! Then the LORD our God changed Abram's name to Abraham because, through Isaac, he would become the father of many nations. The LORD our God is faithful to His Word!

I heard stories about our forefather Jacob. I remember the story when Jacob was running for his life from his brother Esau. Our forefather Jacob had just deceived his father and manipulated his older brother. And he had to run away in order to save his life. I thought of that story when I was fleeing toward Midian. And I found hope when I remembered that the LORD our God came to our forefather Jacob in a dream. It was a dream about a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. At the top of that ladder was the LORD our God, and He said to Jacob, "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." And the LORD our God promised Jacob that in spite of his failure,

the LORD would be with him and bless him.

I heard the stories about our forefather Joseph. From those stories, I learned that the LORD our God can reveal the future to His people through visions and dreams. Our forefather Joseph was sold into slavery, and yet at the appointed time he was set free and used by the LORD our God to do mighty work for his people. I heard all of these wonderful stories and many more, from my birth mother Jochebed.

My birth mother Jochebed told me how the LORD our God had sent His angels to protect me at the time of my birth. The Pharaoh had declared that all of the Hebrew baby boys should be killed, thrown into the river Nile. My mother obeyed that command to throw me in the river Nile, but she provided a little protection for me! Isn't that just like a loving mother?! She placed me in a little boat of reeds. As a young boy, I can still remember the tears running down her cheeks as she told me that story. And I can still remember my mother's smile as she told me how the LORD our God watched over me and my life was miraculously spared.

The LORD God used my Egyptian mother, daughter of the great Pharaoh to save my life! Isn't the LORD our God an amazing God? Hallelujah! I was adopted into the Pharaoh's own family, and became the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I was trained in all of the wisdom of Egypt. I was given every privilege and opportunity.

But I also had to live in the midst of all of false gods of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped more than 100 gods. As a young man, I was expected to learn about all of the gods of Egypt: Aken, Aker, Am-Heh, Ament, Ammit. Then there was Amun-the king of the gods, Anuket, the fertility goddess of the Nile. And, of course, there was Ra, the sun god and on and on and one the list went. One god after another! But I knew, deep in my heart, that there was only one true

God—the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

I spent the first half of my life in Egypt. But many years ago, 40 years ago, I left Egypt. I was forced to run for my life, to flee as a fugitive. I made a terrible mistake. I killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was abusing one of my Hebrew brothers. I know, it was wrong. I should not have acted in anger like that. I was not humbly following the leading of the LORD our God, but rather proudly following my own impulses.

When a report of that incident was given to the Pharaoh, I was portrayed as a traitor and worthy of death. I had no choice but to run for my life. I have never felt so alone in my whole life. I ran east, toward the rising sun. Filled with fear and remorse. I had failed, and failed miserably. But the LORD our God watched over me. He is such a merciful God, isn't He? He will never leave us for forsake us!

I fled through this wilderness, east to the land of Midian. That's where I met Jethro and his family. They were nomadic shepherds, just like my ancestors. But Jethro was also a priest, a servant of the Most High God. Jethro has been good to me. He opened his home to me. He treated me like a son, part of his family. He even gave me one of his daughters to be my wife—Zipporah. In my opinion, Zipporah is the most beautiful of all of Jethro's daughters. Zipporah has brought me joy in the midst of my sadness, love in the midst of my loneliness. The LORD our God has blessed us with two sons: Gershom and Eliezer. My family is here now. They are waiting for me at the base of this mountain. Father Jethro arrived with them just before the LORD our God called me up to meet with Him on this mountain.

Until just recently, I thought that I would spend the rest of my days there in the land of Midian, as a contented husband and father. When I was a young man, I believed that the LORD

our God had a special plan to use me to deliver our people from bondage. In fact, even the leaders of my people believed that. But I had failed and failed miserably. The LORD our God would surely choose someone else to do His work.

But an event took place just a few months ago that has changed my life forever. I was on the other side of this mountain, caring for my family's flocks and herds. And all of a sudden, one of the bushes on the mountainside burst into flames. That wasn't so unusual. We have fires around here. It is so dry and barren. But this fire was different. The bush was burning but it was not consumed. It burned brilliant, like an oil lamp glowing in the darkest night. I drew closer to see this strange sight. And that is when I heard a voice...like the sound of many waters: "Moses! Moses!" I didn't know how to respond. I have never talked to a burning bush before! And yet I sensed deep in my soul that I was in the midst of a sacred encounter. "Here I am," I replied, as I took one step closer toward the burning bush. Then I heard these words: "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground!"

The voice seemed to come from the midst of the burning bush. Who was speaking to me, and how did he know my name? My question was soon to be answered. "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

That was the first time that I heard the voice of the LORD our God, speaking directly to me. My strength left me and I fell on my face. The LORD our God told me that He was going to use me to lead my people out of the land of Egypt, out of bondage of slavery. There was a time in my life when I would have boldly stepped forward and said, "Here am I, LORD God. I am Your servant! And I am ready." But as I lay prostrate before that burning bush, I remembered by failure and my pride. I remembered my foolish self-confidence as a young

military leader in Egypt. Could God still use me in spite of my failure? I learned that day that the LORD our God doesn't give up on His children just because they stumble and fall. He is a merciful God, full of forgiveness and love!

The LORD our God performed miraculous signs that day at the burning bush to show me that He would be with me. Perhaps you have heard what happened to my rod! I won't throw it down now, because you might become frightened! But the LORD God asked me a question that day. It seemed like a strange question at first: "What is it that you have in your hand?" "A rod," I replied. "Throw it down!" And when I obeyed His command, the rod became a serpent! And I was ready to run, just as I had run when the Pharaoh wanted to kill me! But the LORD God said to me, "Pick it up, pick up the serpent by the tail!"

Now I don't know a lot about serpents. But this much I do know. You don't pick up a serpent, especially a dangerous serpent, by the tail. Human wisdom tells you, if you have to pick up a serpent, that you should seize it right behind its head. That way, it can't turn and bite you! But the LORD God said to me, "Pick it up by the tail!"

In my mind, I wanted to argue. That's one weakness of my character. I wanted to argue. But then I asked myself, "Who am I to argue with the LORD God, Creator of the heavens and the earth?" So I reached down and seized the serpent by the tail....and it became a rod again!"

In the last few months, God has used this to show His mighty power. When our people stood on the banks of the Red Sea, with the armies of the Pharaoh close behind us, my people were filled with fear. But I told them, "Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD!" Then I did what the LORD our God has instructed me. I stretched out my rod toward the sea, and the sea divided. When our people were dying of thirst, God told me to take this rod and to strike a

rock at Horeb. And when I struck the rock, water flowed from the rock! Perhaps you are thinking, “That is a powerful rod!” But it’s not the rod that’s powerful. It’s the LORD our God who is powerful. Hallelujah! It’s the LORD God who is mighty.

The LORD our God confronted the Pharaoh and all of his false gods. He has demonstrated that He alone is God, the only true God. By a strong and mighty hand, the LORD our God brought us out of Egypt, out of the bondage of slavery. He delivered us from our enemies. He has provided sweet water at Marah. He has given us Manna, bread from heaven. He has poured forth water from the Rock.

Surely, the LORD our God is an awesome God. He is the only true God. We have witnessed one miracle after another. He has carried us on eagles’ wings. And He has not just brought us out but He has brought us here to commune with Him. He wants us to know Him as the LORD our God!

I have just met with the LORD our God on this holy mountain. He summoned me to come up and meet with Him. I have been up on this mountain for the past 40 days, miraculously sustained in His presence. He has spoken His words of blessing to us. (Pick up stone tablets) And He was written these words of blessing with His own finger on these tablets of precious stone. These words of blessing from our loving God will guide us as we continue our journey to the land of promise. I am excited that I can share these words of blessing with my people.

That is why I am filled with joy. But I am also filled with sadness. (Place stone tablets down on/behind the rock and pick up staff) Just before I left the presence of the LORD our God, He told me that my people were in rebellion at the base of the mountain. He told me that my people have made a golden calf and they are saying, “This is the god who brought you out of

Egypt!” How can my people so quickly turn away from the LORD our God? How can they so quickly rebel in their hearts? I would not believe it unless the LORD our God had told me Himself! That is why my heart is filled with sadness.

Ah, there is Joshua. He has been waiting for me near the base of the mountain. I see the anxiety on his face also. And now I can hear the Egyptian music coming from the camp. And I can see the people dancing in a frenzy around the golden calf. How can my people so quickly turn away from the LORD our God? After all that the LORD our God has done. He has redeemed us. He has delivered us. He has provided for us. He has called us His own special people.

Is this how we respond? Is this how we respond? After all that the LORD our God has done? He sends us words of blessing and we don't even want to listen? What is wrong with us? Why do we refuse to listen to the LORD our God?

(Moses falls to the ground and begins to weep. Breaks the tables of stone at 2nd and 3rd service)

(Narrator)

“Today, if you hear God’s voice, do not harden your heart as our forefathers did in the wilderness. Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God.”

(Read Exodus 20:2-17)

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

[3] "You shall have no other gods before me.

[4] "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. [5] You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, [6] but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[7] "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

[8] "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

[12] "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

[13] "You shall not murder.

[14] "You shall not commit adultery.

[15] "You shall not steal.

[16] "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

[17] "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God. Amen!