

The Point of It All

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. Do not have other gods besides Me. – Exodus 20:1-3
HCSB

Elohim did a phenomenal job liberating His people out of slavery and bringing them to a place of safety. They had witnessed miracles and were at this time faced with God's awesome power. They saw smoke and lightning; heard thunder and trumpets and could feel the mountain thrumming with the very presence of God beneath their feet. Naturally, they trembled and were afraid to approach this frightening vision.¹

"You speak to us, and we will listen," they said to Moses, "but don't let God speak to us, or we will die."² Afraid they would die? Hadn't the same threatening God just miraculously delivered them out of Egypt without a hair harmed on their heads? Hadn't He rescued them from the pursuing army? Wasn't He already feeding and watering them? If God had wanted them dead, He could have just left them to the slavers' partial birth abortionists.³ The job would have been done within a generation.

The people let their wrong theology drive them to wrong conclusions and behavior. They thought that just because God was scary, that He would harm them without cause. Listen - God IS scary. But He wants to be OUR scary God. When we fail to accept that God is big, scary and powerful but loves us, we misconstrue His intent.

God decided to make His wishes clear and gave them what we now call the Ten Commandments. The first four verses deal with loving and honoring God. Then the next seven verses tell us how to treat each other. Isn't it interesting that Jesus summed it all up with the same division? Love God, love your neighbor?⁴

Notice something else with me: where are all the sacrifices? Do you notice that He didn't list the Passover, circumcision, waving wands or burning candles? The evidence is overwhelming. What God wants most out of His people is moral behavior driven by a sacred love of God.

It has always been this way. From the very beginning, we were created in His image.⁵ We are thus capable of knowing good from evil.⁶ God made us capable of distinguishing right from wrong and gave us the will to choose. He also empowered us to act upon our decisions. But we cannot forget that with power comes commensurate responsibility and accountability. We must live our lives with that accounting in mind.

To do anything else is to replace Him with a false god. The god may be our own will or it may be our false image of the real God. But God expects us to live moral, ethical lives that are firmly grounded in love. That is the point of the Decalogue. This is how we serve Him.

¹ Exodus 20:18

² Exodus 20:19 HCSB

³ Exodus 1:15-22

⁴ Matthew 22:36-40

⁵ Genesis 1:27

⁶ Genesis 3:5, 22