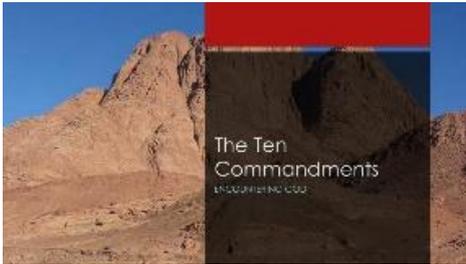




1-2-1 With God - Ten Commandments Ex 20:1-21
Sunday 18th March 2018

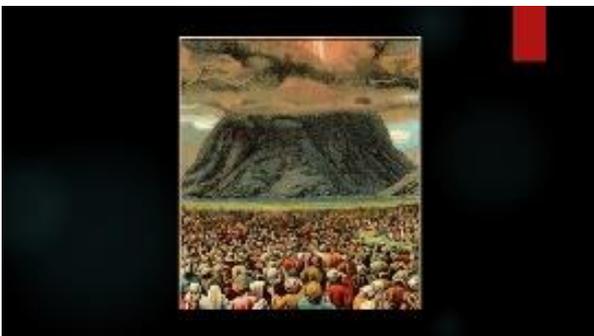
A.Brown



Come with me if you will to the foot of mount Sinai and imagine you are hearing from a woman of that time.

“Well what a journey we’ve been on. First all that trouble in Egypt. All those awful plagues, frogs, and locusts, and hail and blood and then the death of all the firstborn. And we had to paint blood over our doorways and then we had to get ready to leave in such a hurry.

I couldn’t believe we were going. I was born in Egypt, didn’t know anything else and now we had to go and follow this chap Moses. Then there was the sea parting and we all got to walk through the middle like it was normal, you could see the fish staring at you, and the sea bed was really difficult to walk on with all those uneven rocks. We had to hurry as the Egyptians changed their mind about letting us go and the army with all their chariots came after us. But the sea just closed over them and they were all drowned! Now we’ve been in this desert three months, we’ve been fed with big flakes of tasty stuff that appears each morning, and if you keep it till the next day its full of maggots! And then there was the quail, just ready for us to prepare, and so tasty. When we felt thirsty Moses hit a rock and water gushed out and he told us that God was leading us and taking care of us. Every day we walked on following a big grey cloud and at night the cloud was full of fire and lit the whole camp up. Moses said God was in there. And so here we are camped at the bottom of this big hill and this morning I thought I heard a trumpet and when I opened the tent door I couldn’t believe my eyes, the mountain was covered in black smoke and thunder and lightning were coming from it, and you could feel the ground trembling and the noise of the trumpet was getting louder and louder and people were rushing around, getting ready to meet with God”



What must it have been like to encounter God in this way. Perplexing, amazing, scary. It was certainly going to be a story to pass on for generations. Now God wanted to meet with them properly.

The people had been preparing themselves for this God encounter for the last two days. They had been instructed to wash their clothes, no mean feat in a desert! And to abstain from sex. Then on the third day we have the pyrotechnics described and Moses leads the people to the

foot of the mountain where there were prepared barriers to keep them from touching the holy ground. Imagine if you can the scene, 600,000 men plus women and children. That’s a lot of people.

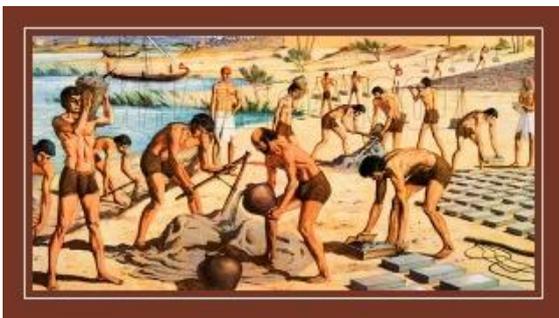
Moses is summoned up the mountain by God, and then sent down again to warn the people not to try and go after him, and to collect Aaron. He goes up again and its then that God gives him the ten commandments.

These were recorded like a treaty or covenant that was familiar at the time. It would have been familiar to them, as a people in slavery, like a treaty that would have been served on them by their masters. It would start by reminding them who their masters were and what wonderful things they had done for them, followed by rules that must be obeyed and the consequences of obeying them (blessings) and disobeying them (curses). So, God chose the familiar to give his chosen people rules to live by in a very unfamiliar setting. Let’s have a look at them shall we (My abbreviations)

1. You shall have no other Gods before me.
2. You shall not worship idols.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. You shall keep the sabbath
5. Honour your Father and Mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not give false testimony
10. You shall not covet

There's a lot more after those but these are the main ones that most others hang on

Why do you think God wanted to give the Israelites rules to live by?



We all need to have boundaries and the Israelites had been living under the rule of Pharaoh for a very long time. I believe God wanted to break the bondage of Egypt and teach the people he was making his own how he wanted them to live. These people were to be his chosen people and they needed to know how to behave in their new role.

What's your experience of rules. We have rules in our society that reverberate with the ten commandments. We still know it is wrong to murder, to steal and to commit adultery. We know it's wrong to lie and cheat and give false witness. But these days it feels more and more like the rules are there to be broken.

And why so dramatically?

God had already done quite a lot of dramatic things leading up to this moment. So, it is not surprising he chose to use a powerful demonstration at this pivotal time.

Can you think of a pivotal time in your life where God turned up powerfully?

But its not the norm is it and its good to know that we have a God that walks with us day by day too. Just as he walked with them in the desert in the pillar of cloud, so he walks with us through the nitty gritty of life.

What was this experience with God all about?

I sometimes wish God would speak to me clearly, well all the time really! God wanted the people to hear him clearly talking to Moses, because God knows people and he knew they needed some experience that would cement their faith in him and in Moses as his chosen leader.



19: 9 The LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.”

In a way we could see the story in Exodus as if it were an epic like the Lord of the rings or Harry Potter.

The whole story of the Bible tells continually returns to this time when God set his people free. The new testament is littered with references that would have been understood by the people of the day as a reminder that God had set his people free once and had promised to do it again by sending the Messiah; they were waiting for. Jesus took the commandments and expanded them in the sermon on the mount. No clouds of smoke or thunder and lightning that time. But the listeners would have easily made the connection to the law given at Sinai. And you and I live in that tension too. Jesus has completed his work, set his people free. He has made way for yet another Exodus.

In Hebrews we read these words

12: 18 -25

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.”^[c] ²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”^[d] ²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴



God sent Jesus so that he could lead us into the promised land. In that land there is no more tears, or pain or heartache. Its where the Lion lies down with the lamb and fear is no more.

What sort of mountain shall we go to then? The Old Testament one or the New Testament one.

I am not saying you must wait until you die and go to heaven, whatever that may look like in your theology. In mine it’s a new earth. You can start right here right now.

Jesus didn’t promise an easy life, but he does promise manna and quails and water and companionship. There is nothing you can go through that Jesus can’t walk through with you.

Sandra’s story



As we approach Easter lets reconsider our relationship with God and with Jesus. Lets not rely on the person up the front each week, lets explore Gods word for ourselves.

I also cringe at the part on Bake off where they have to make something from minimal instructions; they need to know how to make the base of the recipe like a roux sauce or a madeira sponge. I always cringe at some of the results.

How can we know more about Jesus and our faith if we haven't retained the story?

Take time to challenge yourself and to take time to get into the Bible. The Live Lent App has been great this Lent.