

Obeying God's Law

Key Verse: *"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."*
—Exodus 20:24

Selected Scripture:
Exodus 20:18-26

image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."—vss. 3-5

Both the foregoing requirements given to Israel by God through his servant, Moses, as well as the next two commandments relative to taking his name in vain and

ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY recognized passages of Scripture is considered in the context of today's lesson. It was addressed to the Hebrew people after their release from bondage in Egypt and gathered at the base of Mount Sinai. (Exod. 20:1,2) As God's covenanted people, the Jews were given a set of requirements they were expected to follow in order to maintain their relationship with the Heavenly Father. These are generally referred to as the Ten Commandments.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."—vss. 3-5

observing the Sabbath, depict specific obligations mankind has towards the Creator. Although they were addressed to the Jews, it is well to note that these requirements should be adhered to by all mankind in order to attain and maintain God's favor.

There are also deeper lessons contained in these commands. During his earthly ministry, for example, Jesus had a dialogue with a woman of Samaria, who contrasted the place of her ancestors' worship on Mount Gerizim with Jerusalem, which the Jews viewed as the only proper location for approaching God. Our Lord responded to her that God was desirous of receiving worship "in spirit and in truth" for it to be acceptable, irrespective of location.—John 4:20-24

The last six commandments Moses received for the Israelites dealt with man's responsibilities to other humans. These included honoring parents, as well as prohibitions against murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness and covetousness. These matters also have both a literal and spiritual application.—Exod. 20:12-17; Matt. 5:21-48

The spectacular sights and sounds coming from Mount Sinai during the delivery of the Ten Commandments caused a sense of fear to come upon the Israelites. The people desired Moses to act as a mediator between themselves and God because of his relationship with the Heavenly Father.—Exod. 20:18-21

Our Key Verse gives instructions relative to the altar where God would receive sacrifices and offerings, as well as affirm his promise to bless the people. Since all of these matters were symbolic, we are thankful for the reality of Christ's sacrifice as being the fulfillment of God's plan to reconcile mankind back into his favor. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:5,6

