

# (Exodus) Exodus 20:18-24

by J. Vernon McGee

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*The sermon highlights the importance of the law as a standard of perfection and the need for sacrifice and reconciliation, pointing to the cross of Christ as the ultimate solution.*

**Duration:** 6:22

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:18-21, Psalm 19:7, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:25

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the giving of the law to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. He emphasizes that the giving of the law was not a beautiful or pleasant event, but rather a terrifying and awe-inspiring experience. The preacher explains that God appeared in thunderings, lightnings, and smoke to impress upon the people that He is the living God and to contrast with the idols they had worshipped in Egypt. The sermon also mentions the commandments given by God and the importance of the altar for sacrifice.

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## Transcript

Now today, friends, we find that we've come to this 20th chapter, verse 18. Last time we saw the giving of the law, that is, the part of the law that we call the moral law, the moral code, the Ten Commandments. Now, he's not through by any means, because in the next few chapters, in fact, through chapter 24, why, we have social legislation.

And then we have the instructions for building a tabernacle and Leviticus, the service of it, and that's all part of the law. All goes in one package, by the way. Now I'm reading verse 18.

And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die. Last time we called attention to the fact that the giving of the law is not a beautiful or pretty thing.

There are people that think that it is, and they are generally the folk that haven't read very much about it, that it was wonderful that God gave the law on Mount Sinai. Well, it's not presented to us that way here in the Scripture. We saw before the thunderings and the lightnings and the danger that was, and now the people, very frankly, they backed off as far as they can get.

And they tell Moses, We're afraid, but we want you to speak to us, but not the Lord. And verse 19, and they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we'll hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die. Children of Israel didn't think it was pretty.

And then verse 20, And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. You see, the law presented a very high standard. The law of the Lord is perfect.

Nothing wrong with the law, and it demands, therefore, perfection. And friends, if you're not prepared to give perfection, you better get on some other kind of standard or basis than saying you're saved by keeping the law, because if you're not perfect, you won't make it. The law is perfect.

It demands that. And I thank God that under grace, He'll take a poor sinner like I am. Grace reveals something of the goodness and wonder of our God.

Now, He continues on here. Verse 21, And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. Now, this is a very significant and important thing. Why did God appear in just this way under the children of Israel? Well, the reason, I think, is quite evident, and it's simply because He wanted to impress upon them that He is the living God and that the idols around them, and they were idolaters, we'll find that out later, that down in the land of Egypt, all this business of worshiping the creature rather than the Creator, and He's now probably coming closer to these people than He'd ever come before.

That's very important here to see. Now, we come to the mention of the altar here. God gives them the commandments, and along with the commandments, there's given an altar, altars for sacrifice.

This is the same thing you have in your bathroom. You have a mirror, and underneath that mirror, you have a basin. The mirror reveals that you have a smudge spot on your face, and down beneath is a basin, and you wash your face with the basin.

And so there is the mirror. The mirror is this law of God, reveals His standard. But the law is perfect.

Man's not perfect, and it reveals that smudge spot. But thank God there's a basin down there, and that's the purpose of the altar. That altar speaks of the cross of Christ and the blood that He shed.

Now, notice the instructions concerning this altar, because again, this is the altar they had to use before the tabernacle was made, and it was apparently an altar that everywhere they journeyed, they made one like this. They couldn't take this one with them. The one in the tabernacle was one that could be transported.

Now, I'm reading verse 24, "...an altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings." Now, there's no sin offering here. Why? Well, we'll not get to that till Leviticus, because there could be no sin offering or trespass offering until the law was given. The peace offering reveals that man needs a sacrifice that reconcile him to God, and that Christ did make peace by the blood of His cross.

And the burnt offering speaks of who He is, His worthiness, His ability to save. Now, this altar that's to be made of earth was the place they would sacrifice burnt offerings, peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen. In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I'll bless thee.

So, obviously, they made an altar everywhere they went on the wilderness march until the instructions for the tabernacle were given.

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