

THE STORY

STUDY 5: CHAPTER 5

1. *How were the people to prepare themselves to meet with God?*

God commanded the people to separate themselves from impurity and consecrate themselves to God.

The 3-day purification ritual involved them washing their clothes and abstaining from sexual relations.

During this time no one or no animal was allowed to make contact with the mountain that God would descend and meet the people on. If anybody or any animal did, they would be stoned or shot with arrows and killed without anyone laying hands on them and defiling themselves.

Such careful preparation with regards to purity shows us the significance of what was about to happen. The Holy God of the heavens was about to meet personally with the people and purity/holiness was at the heart of this meeting.

2. *What does this story of the giving of these new commands tell you about the character of God?*

A Holy God: The purification ritual, the commandments, the covenant of God all speak of a God who is pure and set apart to righteousness.

A righteous God: God works in right ways as he deals with people.

A Relational God: The 10 commandments show us how to relate to God and to each other in a right way which pleases God.

A Gracious God: God desired to make the Israelites his treasured possession, even though they were sinners. He gives the law to show them their sinfulness and point them to his grace in the promised Messiah.

3. *What was the purpose of the 10 commandments?*

From the 10 commandments themselves God teaches us who He is and how He expects us to relate to himself and to each other.

We also learn that the law was not given so that Israel or us would by keeping it attain righteousness.

Romans 3:20 tells us that it was given by God to make us conscious of our failure to relate to God and to each other in a way that pleases God – in other words to make us conscious of our rebellion against God's ways, our failure to please God, our sin.

Galatians 3:24 tells us that the law was given to lead us to Jesus. The law was given for the purpose of showing us our desperate need of a saviour who would rescue us from God's judgment because we have failed to keep the law. A saviour who would enable us to have a righteousness that God accepts.

Already we have seen that righteousness that God is pleased with comes through faith (Gen 15:6). Abram believed God's promise of a special son, one who would crush the serpents head, the Messiah, the saviour who would be a blessing to the peoples of the earth. In the New Testament a right relationship with God is founded on faith in that son that HAS come, the saviour Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1-2)

And so the purpose of the Law was to show the Israelites who God is, their sinfulness in contrast with God's holiness which condemns them to God's judgment and in turn to point them to the promised saviour from God, so that through faith in God's promises, they have a right standing before God.

4. How can God be both the merciful forgiver of sin and the punisher of the guilty?

In other words: how can God be both Just (punish the guilty) and merciful (forgive the guilty)?

God is perfectly just and as a perfect judge, He rightly punishes the guilty because of their sin, their failure to keep God's commands.

God also is perfectly merciful. In order to show mercy and forgive the guilty of their sin yet still remain Just, He provided a substitute for the guilty that will satisfy the judgment and appease the one who has been offended (namely himself).

In Old Testament times this substitute was an animal sacrifice. However we know that it was not the perfect substitute because blood of animals or the death of animals could not pay the penalty of a person's sin. A person who had no guilt of their own would need to be the substitute. However, the blood of animals, was an acknowledgment that a perfect sacrifice was needed and that the people had to have faith in that perfect sacrifice still to come.

In other words the sacrificial system of the Old Testament merely covered the people from God's judgment against their sin as they looked forward to the perfect substitute who would satisfy God's judgment for all sin.

God would be true to his promise and provide his own Son Jesus Christ, who became fully man and who also live a righteous life (ie: he was not guilty of any sin himself) in order to be that perfect substitute for guilty mankind and to take the full punishment and appease the anger of the offended one (God).

And so before the perfect substitute Jesus Christ came, God could be both just and merciful because the sacrificial system of the Old Testament looked forward to Jesus' coming as the perfect sacrifice who would perfectly meet the judgment of all those covered by the sacrificial system.

God is both Just and Merciful now because the perfect sacrifice/substitute has come, and has paid the judgment for our sin and appeased the wrath of the one offended and those who have faith in that perfect substitute receive his mercy, those who don't receive his just punishment.

5. The Israelites became impatient and finally made a golden idol in the shape of a calf for themselves. What are some false gods/idols worshiped in our society today?

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| Ourselves | Health |
| Jobs | Entertainment |
| Possessions | Sport |
| Our Status in the family, community, society | ? |
| Money | ? |
| Others – celebrities | ? |

6. The Lord spoke to Moses "as one speaks to a friend." What steps can you take to gain a deeper understanding of who God is?

Live in relationship with God through faith by allowing him to speak to you through his Word and you speaking with him through prayer.

Be exposed to the teaching of God's Word – Eg: Bible studies, biblical preaching.

Expose yourself to certain people who have a deep understanding of who God is.

Watch, learn and experience how God works and moves in the lives of His people.

Ask Him to show you more of himself.