

# Let Freedom Ring!

## *4. Faces Carved in Stone— and the Mirror of the Almighty*



**Scripture Reading: James 2:8-11**

### ***Introduction:***

**What has 60-foot high faces, eyes 11 feet across, noses 20 feet long, and mouths that stretch 18 feet and is visited by nearly three million people a year?**

**It is Mount Rushmore - located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The sculpted heads of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt were carved from a solid mass of granite rising above pine, spruce, birch and aspen at an elevation of 5,725 feet near Keystone, South Dakota.**

**The famous and flamboyant American sculptor Gutzon Borglum was commissioned in to carve the massive tourist attraction in 1927. Each president's face is as tall as the entire Great Sphinx of Egypt—as tall as a six-story building. If the figures had been carved to their toes, each would have stood 465 feet tall. The Statue of Liberty would not have even come to their knees. Mount Rushmore represents the largest work of art on the planet. It took 14 years to complete at a cost of less than a million dollars, and is now considered priceless.**

**Gutzon Borglum, a student of the famous European sculptor Rodin, began drilling into the mountain in 1927 when he was 60 years of age. For Borglum's crew of 400 out-of-work hard rock miners, the project was simply a job at first—a way to put food on the table for their families during the years of the Great Depression. It was on again, off again work. On a good week, when the snow didn't blow, the sun didn't scorch, and the wind didn't whistle, there might even be enough change left over for a cold beer at a local tavern. But as the four faces of freedom began to emerge from the timeless granite, the men who helped carve the memorial began to share their driven sculptor's dream. These drill-dusty, unemployed miners, who at first only sought a paycheck became caught up in the challenge of creating America's "Shrine of Democracy".**

**Some built buildings while others ran roads. Some ran the hoist house, generated power, took measurements, or sharpened the thousands of bits for the pneumatic drills. Some set the dynamite charges that removed large amounts of rock quickly and inexpensively. Others completed delicate finishing work on the sculpture that polished the surfaces sidewalk smooth. The powder-men became so skilled that they could blast to within four inches of the finished surface and grade the contours of the lips, nose, cheeks, neck, and brow. Ninety percent of the nearly half million tons of granite removed from the mountain were taken out with dynamite.**

**Today Mount Rushmore National Memorial is visited by 20,000 people a day in the summer months, and is considered the greatest free attraction in America. Sculptor Gutzon Borglum once spoke of the length of time his most famous work, Mount Rushmore, would endure. He said the great stone faces would last, "Until the wind and the rain**

alone shall wear them away.”

## ***I. Freedom Carved in Stone***

**Freedom carved in stone! We rightly stand in awe of Mount Rushmore. But the Bible speaks of an even greater monument to human liberty and to freedom. This monument might be called *The Mirror of the Almighty*. It was also carved in stone. Tonight we will recount the story of the giving of this mirror. Then we will take a look into it together. As we do so, we will see ourselves as our Creator God sees us and as we truly are. Then we will look again to see the face of One far greater than any earthly ruler—the Maker of the mirror.**

**The story of the Mirror of the Almighty is found in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. This mirror is the Ten Commandment Law of God carved into two stone tablets on top Mount Sinai by the finger of God, which allows us to see our own true reflection, and also that of our Creator. Simply put:**

**The Ten Commandments  
are a self-portrait of our Creator God  
written in terms humans can understand.**

**Let’s turn again to the treasure house of Scripture as we trace the story behind the giving of God’s timeless and universal law to humanity. This drama will unfold in three great scenes:**

**The first is: Breaking All Bonds—the Hunger for Freedom.**

**The second is: A Look Into the Law of Liberty—the Mirror of the Almighty.**

**And finally: How To Stay Free, Even When You Stumble.**

## ***II. Breaking All Bonds—the Hunger For Freedom***

**Our story this evening does not begin with freedom, but with the cruelest and most unjust bondage. The book of Exodus tells of the Creator's Chosen Nation—the descendants of Abraham. These Israelites had gone down into Egypt for 400 years and become a mighty people, even as God had told Abraham they would long before. They had arrived in Egypt with Pharaoh's favor, due to the benefits done the Egyptian nation during time of famine by their ancestor Joseph. But the years had passed. Another Pharaoh sat on Egypt' throne who saw the growing numbers of Israelites as a threat. He reduced them to slavery and set them to hard labor building the wealth of his empire.**

**The new dynasty's goal was to turn Israelite slave blood into mortar for building Egypt's wealth and power. But no matter how cruelly the taskmasters drove them, Israelite muscle and tenacity met the challenge. They not only survived, they increased in numbers. Day by day as they labored, they looked on the faces of the Pharaoh's carved huge in the looming walls of temples and palaces, and on the inscrutable Sphinx, and on the soaring pyramids. All these stone marvels were the works of man's hands designed to praise mighty Pharaoh and his conceptions of the gods. These gods supported the cruelty of the Egyptian slave masters' might. They seemed invincible. Yet even as the Israelite slaves treading mud and straw to brick for their Egyptian overlords, they held the hope of one day returning to their true homeland of Canaan. They remembered the words of God who once promised this very thing to their forefather, Abraham. So they groaned beneath the lash, but they endured.**

**Near the end of the four hundred years, an Israelite baby named Moses was set afloat in the Nile River. His slave mother placed her son in a reed basket to prevent him from being thrown into the Nile in compliance with the genocidal order of cruel Slave Master, Pharaoh. Providentially, the baby was spotted by Pharaoh's daughter as she came to the Nile to bathe. He was returned to his Hebrew mother who raised him until age 12 before he was sent to his adoptive mother in the palace of Pharaoh.**

**Moses grew into manhood amid the splendor and luxury of the Egyptian court. He found himself caught between two cultures with two markedly different visions of what it means to be human. Was mighty Pharaoh the prototypical human, with his every godlike whim the law of life and death for all beneath him? Or was Father Abraham of the Israelites, with his altar of sacrifice in the center of his encampment and his adherence to Divine instructions given through dreams, visions and even direct encounters with God?**

**These two worldviews were in stark opposition. Moses might choose his own image carved in stone for all who would come after to see as Egypt's next pharaoh. He could sway the throne and set scores of thousands building his pyramid tomb to stand forever. Or he could choose the promises given to his ancestor Abraham and the mud pits and plight of his enslaved people.**

**We must make the same decision still: Either we will have a god whom we make in our image, or we will have the God who remakes us into His own image. We make the choice, then the choice makes us.**

**As the brilliant and favored son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses stood in line for the throne of Earth's mightiest empire. Yet when he looked on the cruelty of the empire he would inherit as the next Pharaoh, Moses found his sympathies lay with those of his own blood—the Hebrew slaves. He was caught between earth's mightiest throne and his pity for the bloody-backed mud trampers groaning in Pharaoh's brickyards.**

**One day the strain proved to great. Prince Moses saw a taskmaster beating a muddy Hebrew slave bloody with a whip for sport. He looked around to be sure no Egyptian eye was on him, then stepped forward and killed the cruel taskmaster, burying his body in the sand. He thought those of his blood would understand he intended to favor them when he came to power.**

**But he soon learned otherwise. When he saw two slaves fighting with each other a short time later, he tried to make peace between them as brothers.**

**“Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian?” taunted the stronger of the slaves. Then Moses knew his secret allegiance to the Chosen People would not be kept. His own life was in grave danger.**

**He fled to the land of Midian, where he married Zipporah, the daughter of a shepherd priest. For the next forty years Moses herded his father-in-law’s sheep in the wilderness. There in the land of the shepherds amid the austere granite peaks and dry wilderness pasturelands he dipped his pen in inspiration and wrote the scrolls of Genesis and Job that appear in our Bibles. Those books drew on the stories passed down by oral tradition among the Chosen People. Probably Moses learned much of what is written in Genesis and Job from his Hebrew mother during his first 12 years before he was sent to the Egyptian palace.**

**The Israelites were “The Remembers” among the scattered nations of mankind whose language had been confused at the Tower of Babel. According to Moses’ genealogy and chronology there needed to be only word of mouth transfer through five people from Great Grandfather Adam until Moses wrote it all down. This was due to the extremely long lives of those generations fresh from Eden before human life span began to be seriously shortened due to sin’s effects. In the books of Genesis and Job, Moses wasn’t writing myth, but rather changing rather recent oral history of God’s dealings with people into writing.**

**But while writing the history of the world and those of his bloodline may have brought Moses comfort and allowed him to trace his own roots back to Eden, it seemed his two-volume early history of the planet would have little other value. He had fallen into faceless, nameless obscurity. Back in Egypt, his Israelite people cried and died, trampled into the bloody mud of the brick pits by the heel of Pharaoh’s cruel taskmasters.**

**They ate from the fleshpots—the fast, cheap food of Egypt—fish netted from the Nile and chopped with garlic, leeks and onions into the cooking vats. But food alone cannot meet the hunger of the soul. The Hebrews hungered for freedom. They remembered the old prophecy that someday they would return to the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Hope is fragile, but its hard to kill.**

**One day while herding sheep in the wilderness, Moses saw a burning bush. Its leaves and twigs flamed, yet unaccountably, it did not burn up. Moses drew near to gaze on this wonder. A Voice spoke to the shepherd from within the bush. It said, “Moses, take off your shoes, for the place you are standing is holy.”**

**There the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob revealed Himself to Moses by a new name: I AM. I AM told Moses he was to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let His people go. When they had been released through signs and wonders, Moses was to bring them back to the place where the burning bush had been—at the foot of the great granite peak called Mount Sinai. When Moses proved reluctant and offered excuses, God gave him three miraculous signs to convince others he spoke with the authority and power of the Israelite God.**

**First, I AM told Moses to throw his shepherd’s rod on the ground, and it became a hissing snake! Moses fled from before it. But the One in the burning bush told Moses to pick up the venomous reptile by its tail—sure death unless God intervened again. Then the serpent became a rod again.**

**Then, I AM told Moses to put his hand into his cloak and draw it out. When he did so, Moses saw his hand had become white with leprosy—a deadly and incurable flesh-rotting disease. I AM told Moses to put his hand back inside his cloak again, and when he had drawn it out, it was healed.**

**A third miracle the God whose name is I AM told Moses to perform could only occur in the land of Egypt itself. He was to take water from the Nile River and pour it onto the ground. As he did so, the water would turn into blood.**

**Armed with his ex-serpent staff, with his brother Aaron for his spokesman, and the three miracles God had granted him, Moses returned to Egypt. He faced off first with the Israelite leaders and then with Pharaoh. The haughty monarch refused to acknowledge the God of his slaves and increased their labors and punishments even more. Before the Israelite slave were required to tramp a certain number of straw-laced mud bricks each day from materials provided to them. Now that Moses had come among them speaking on behalf of their God,**

**Pharaoh required the same quota of bricks, but without providing straw. When they failed to perform this impossible task, Pharaoh called them lazy and had them beaten. Their lot was far worse than before.**

**In bitterness of soul, they turned on Moses. “You have put a sword in Pharaoh’s hand to kill us!” they said. And they refused to listen further. Moses saw they had a point. He brought the matter to God’s attention.**

**Then I AM rose up to do battle on behalf of His enslaved people. Through Moses, God performed ten miraculous signs that struck at the very heart of the Egyptian economy and religion. Each plague was announced in advance, and each time it fell Pharaoh promised to release the slaves, only to change his mind once the plague had been removed.**

**Finally came the tenth and most dreadful of the plagues on Egypt: the death of the firstborn. The Hebrew slaves slaughtered the Passover lamb, sprinkled its blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. They gathered together with family and friends for their final meal as slaves and their first as free men. That night the angel of death winged its way down the valley of the Nile. Every firstborn from the slave who ground grain behind the door to Pharaoh’s own Crown Prince son was slain. Every firstborn among all the cattle died as well.**

**A great cry rose up from Egypt as a nation mourned its dead. But the Passover angel marked the homes with blood already on the door, and passed them by.**

**Let’s pause here a moment. Listen carefully! All who are the firstborn child of your mother, please stand. If you are the firstborn son of your mother, please stand where you are this evening!**

*(Wait for people to stand.)*

**Thank you! You may be seated.**

**There is a price for freedom. It is the blood of the firstborn. If you had been in Egypt on its last night of bondage, all who just stood would have died—unless the blood of the substitute sacrifice were clearly marked on your door.**



**That last night in Egypt, all bonds were broken. The Israelites finally tasted freedom in a meal of mutton, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. They marched out of their long slavery with full stomachs, their children jangling the jewelry their parents had requested of their captors as back pay for 400 years of hard labor.**

**They made it as far as the Red Sea before stubborn-hearted Pharaoh changed his mind yet again. He sent his pursuing chariots and horsemen to bring the former slaves back to the mud pits again. But God drew a wall of fire between slave master and His people as evening fell. He told Moses to raise his rod over the sea. All night long the wind blew. It carved a pathway through the great deep. Before the sun rose, the entire nation of Israel had passed through the sea's bottom on dry ground to the safety of the far shore. By light of dawn their Egyptian taskmasters chariots and horsemen swept down into the watery canyon in determined pursuit. What folly!**

**One day in Sunday school class, the teacher was telling this story to the children sitting before her. At this point in the tale, she paused and said, "Of course, you know it was really just a shallow place there. The water was only a few inches deep. They waded across easily."**

**A little boy who had been listening intently said, "Isn't that wonderful? It is a miracle!"**

**"A miracle?" asked the puzzled teacher. "What miracle? I told you the water was only a few inches deep. They hardly got their feet wet."**

**The boy kept beaming and marveling. Finally, he replied. "Teacher, isn't it great how God could drown the entire Egyptian army in only a few inches of water?!"**

**After the great walls of congealed water roared down on the heads of the pursuing Egyptian army and the waves washed the sand clean, the Israelite slaves knew they were free forever. They rejoiced before the Lord! Mariam--the sister of Moeses—along with the other Israelite women, took up tambourines and danced for joy, barefooted in the sand. So every bond was broken, and the captives set free. Those who**

had hoped so long were satisfied. Such a rich feast of freedom! Let Freedom Ring! Let Freedom Ring!

Moses brought Israel up from Egypt's land according to the command of the I AM God who met him at the burning bush. He knew he and the nation of newly freed men had an appointment to keep. They must now go to the very mountain where the bush had once burned to meet with the I AM God of their fathers, who had freed them by his marvelous working might and summoned them to himself.

### *III. A Look Into the Mirror of the Almighty*

Now the nation was encamped at the foot of a great granite peak somewhat similar to Mount Rushmore. This was a peak where God would do the carving in stone, not man. God called Moses alone up the mountain and gave him this message for Israel:

**“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**

When Moses returned and gave this message to the people, they said, “We will do everything the Lord has said.”

God had more to say. He would give them the terms of the covenant that would bind them to himself and make them his own. They were given three days to prepare to meet I Am. Moses told them to wash their clothing and refrain from normal marital relationships during this time. Three months to the day from the time they left Egypt the nation of freedmen stood in their camp at the foot of the sacred mountain looking upward. A boundary had been placed around it that no human or animal was to cross on pain of death. But the scene before them was astonishing enough to make them tremble.

**“Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke**

from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. The Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.”

Then God spoke his law of freedom to those he had already freed from slavery—ten great words that rolled down the slopes of Sinai like thunder. The people broke and ran! They left their camp and bolted until they were winded before looking back. When Moses came down the mountain and discovered them standing a great distance off, he went to them. They pled, “Speak to us yourself, and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die!”

Moses replied, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” But the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

In the end, God not only spoke the Ten Commandment Law to his people, he also carved that same law into two tablets of stone. There in letters of fire, the Almighty God wrote the only part of the Bible he felt was important enough to personally pen to make sure all men forever would get it exactly right. This is what I AM wrote in stone—*the Mirror of the Almighty* as it appears in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus:

#### The First Commandment:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. “

This is the Creator I AM God of the Bible speaking. It is not some generic deity, whose attributes we can invent as we go along and as seems pleasing and logical to us. This is the God who provides freedom from cruelest bondage first, then gives the Law of Liberty to allow us to understand exactly what true freedom is all about. Does the God you worship exist as He is in Himself? Or only as you conceive Him to be?

#### The Second Commandment:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

**You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”**

**In the New Testament, this principle of idolatry is extended to include simple greed. The way we know whether we are an idolater or not, and are worshipping other things than God, is to check out the rest of the commandments. If we're keeping them, the Creator I AM God is #1 for us. If we're not, we're worshipping other things more than Him.**

**One may worship their own ideas of what God ought to be like, refusing to accept Him as He declares Himself to be in the pages of the Bible. This is also a form of idolatry—less the statue in the backyard. Do you make God into your own image? Or are you willing to find out who He truly is, and be remade into the image of your Maker?**

#### **The Third Commandment:**

**“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”**

**Do you curse using the names of God or Jesus Christ? Do you defame people made in the image of this God? Do you claim to be a Christian, on the other hand, and then not behave as one? Have you taken his name upon you, then behaved in way that make people disgusted with the God you claim to worship? Have you ever done any of these things even once? Do you step into God's shoes and take His prerogatives in damning things and people who displease you? All these are violations of the third commandment. Words are the halfway place between feelings and thoughts and outward actions. Simply speaking wrong is a sin.**

#### **The Fourth Commandment:**

**“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.**

**For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”**

**Do you work 24/7 without a break? Do you take an entire day each week off from your regular work and encourage others to do the same? Do you make your employees work weekends? Do you take and allow regular rest?**

**Do you accept and promote an alternate view of the origins of our planet than the six days of creation specified in the Genesis story? This commandment is based on an acknowledgment that the Creator God spoke the world into existence in six days and rested on the seventh. Not to acknowledge the Creation as God says it occurred is a violation of the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment.**

**If you are a Christian, is that day you set aside Saturday--the seventh day of the week? Or have you accepted a substitute day unbiblical day--invented and inserted by mere men after Jesus and the apostles passed from the scene? Do you remember the specific day the Creator I AM God wrote in imperishable stone with his own finger? In process of your weekly worship are you systematically forgetting the only day God ever told us to remember?**

**Do you prefer to continue on in violation of God’s command to set aside the seventh day of the week simply because your denomination or ancestors have done so for a very long time? Are you ready to rise up and reject the *Mirror of the Almighty* as flawed in whole, or in part, because you don't like what it is showing you at this point?**

### **The Fifth Commandment:**

**“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”**

**Have you ever spoken scornfully of your own mother and father? Have you held them up to ridicule? Have you given them obedience in all things not in violation of God’s greater law as a child growing up? Have you made selfish choices that brought them pain simply because you could do so? If they live at a distance, do you remember to keep in contact with them?**

**If they are still alive, when was the last time you honored your parents? Do you write? Do you phone? Do you make it a point to visit them? What specific things have you done to show them respect? In what ways have you failed to do so? What time and expense have you incurred in order to make a suitable return to your aged parents for the trouble they took raising you?**

**The Sixth Commandment:**

**"You shall not murder."**

**Murder is related to killing in the same way adultery is related to sex--it is a misuse of a function that can be employed lawfully. Capital punishment for capital offenses is killing, but it is not murder. Nor is it a violation of this commandment when justly applied without reference to race, position in society, or how able a lawyer one can afford by a civil government. Death during wars that are not predatory wars inflicted on innocent nations--just wars to defend home and family--are not murder either.**

**But behaving in such a way to shorten one's own life span through mistreatment of one's body might fall into the category of slow self-murder. Are your lifestyle choices such as smoking, drinking, or the use of recreational drugs shortening your life span through abuse of your body? Is someone else forced to deal with your second hand smoke?**

**How is the quality of your relationships? Jesus said if we are angry with another person without cause, we have broken the commandment against murder--because that kind of unrighteous rage is the root of murder. Do you have an old grudge against someone? Have you ever been angry with somebody for no good reason? Might want to take another look at this commandment. Its requirements are far broader than simply forbidding homicide.**

**The Seventh Commandment:**

**"You shall not commit adultery."**

**By definition, adultery is to "adulterate a pure compound by mixing it with other things". Anything other than God's original plan of "One**

man with one woman together in marriage for life" as the sole context for sexual expression falls short of the Biblical ideal.

But it is not simply wrong actions that are a violation of the commandment against adultery. Jesus said, "He who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery already with her in his heart." The seventh commandment holds us accountable to God in every thought, look, word and action. How are you looking in the *Mirror of the Almighty*? Do you like what you see?

#### The Eighth Commandment:

"You shall not steal."

We steal what is not ours when we cheat on a paper or a test at school. We steal from an employer when we do not give a full day's effort for a full day's wage. We steal from our families when we spend time they deserve pursuing our own selfish interests instead. We steal from God by not returning 1/10 of our income called "tithe" that He claims as His own. Predatory wars are also a violation of this commandment. So are forcing trade agreements that injure a weaker party for the purpose of benefiting the stronger nation. Cheating on a business deal, lying to the IRS, taking credit for someone else's intellectual property—all these are forms of stealing too. Whether it is white-collar crime raiding someone else's pension fund, or blue-collar crime stealing things from an employer, the eighth commandment says, "Don't steal." It is part of the *Mirror of the Almighty*.

#### The Ninth Commandment:

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

This is the commandment forbids lying in any form. It includes not telling an untruth about anyone to harm their reputation, not telling a fib to get out of a tight spot, and not perjuring oneself in court of law among other things. It includes lying on your resume to a potential employer. It includes telling half-truths and "strategic misrepresentation" as a business practice. The book of Revelation says liars will simply not be permitted into heaven.

#### The Tenth Commandment:

**"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

**Do you want what the other person has enough to take it from him, if you had the chance? Would you take his wife, or her husband? Would you take his position? Would you take what she owns if you could do so safely without being caught and punished? That wanting what rightfully belongs to someone else is coveting. Even if you never act on what lurks in your heart, coveting is a moral violation of the final of the Big Ten.**

**We've taken a look together at the *Mirror of the Almighty* this evening. This is basic "Morality 101". How does your face look in the Great Moral Mirror of God? Which of the Big Ten have you invariably kept? Which have you violated on even one occasion in the past? Which are you currently violating on an ongoing basis? Someone has said, "A clear conscience is generally simply a poor memory." When you see yourself as God sees you in the reflection of His holy and unchangeable law, are you satisfied?**

**If you don't like what you see, where's the soap and water to clean yourself up? How can you rectify what you've done in the past--remove the stains of things you've already done? The New Testament says if a person break even one of these laws, he is guilty of breaking them all--like breaking a single link in a ten link chain is to have a broken chain. When it comes to the Ten Commandment Law, we either keep it in its entirety as written by the finger of the I Am Creator God Himself, or we stand in its violation. If you want to make a long distance phone call, how many of the ten digits do you have to punch in wrong not to get through to your intended party? Only one.**

**From the time Adam and Eve ate the fruit forbidden by God until tonight, not one human being who has ever lived has kept the Ten Commandment Law without fail on every occasion.**

- The Bible says, "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins."**



- It say, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...”
- It says, “Sin is the transgression of the law.”

**That puts us all in the same position before our Maker. We look into the *Mirror of the Almighty*, we compare our own lives with His eternal Ten Commandment Law, and we’ve all got dirty faces. Not one person who has ever lived can look genuine Biblical morality squarely in the face and lay personal claim to having perfectly observed the Big Ten. Nobody, except One. His name was Jesus Christ, and we killed Him.**

#### ***IV. How To Stay Free Even When You Stumble***

**Those to whom God first spoke the Ten Commandment Law were no better or worse people than us. No wonder they ran when they felt the ground shake beneath their feet, saw the mountain wrapped in smoke like a volcano, heard the blast of the great trumpet of God growing louder and louder, and listened to the I AM saying what they knew they should be—but weren’t! They were in exactly the same position we find ourselves in—guilty for past infraction and unable to provide current compliance in our own strength.**

**Moses lingered in the darkness wrapped summit of Mount Sinai with God for forty days. There the same God who spoke his great law in words of thunder carved two tablets of stone and wrote the same law in writing with his own finger. There was nothing God could do to impress the importance of the law more clearly and forcibly.**

**Meanwhile at the foot of the mountain, the Israelites have returned to their tent. Moses hasn’t come down from its smoking summit for over a month. Nobody wishes to venture up to look for him. But they are feeling rather abandoned. Between the speaking of the Ten Commandments and the time Moses brings it freshly written by God’s own finger from Mount Sinai, the Israelites fell into grave sin.**

**They went to Aaron, Moses' brother, and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."**

**Aaron said, "Tear the golden earrings out of your ears and bring them to me." Perhaps he thought this bloody bit of self-plunder would stop their request. But the people complied. Aaron was now on the spot. He melted down the earrings and formed them into the shape of a golden calf—the sort of an image their former slave masters had bowed before back in Egypt.**

**The people cried, "These are your gods, of Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt!" A little over a month before they had heard God say not to have any gods greater than him and not to make images and bow before them. Now they were doing that very thing!**

**Aaron set the next day as a festival. They rose early and offered sacrifices to their golden calf. These included many thank offering sacrifices--a kind of religious barbeque. Alcohol flowed freely. It was a major party throughout the encampment, with dancing, revelry and the twisted sensual rites of the fertility cult that calf gods enjoined. Above it all stood the lifeless, golden, obscene god they had chosen in place of the God of the burning bush. To this god of their own hands they gave praise and worship for bringing them up out of the land of slavery.**

**Up on the mountain, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Then he said, "Go down, Moses, because your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have quickly turned aside from what I commanded them. They have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They are bowing down to it and saying it one of their gods who brought them up from Egyptian slavery. Now I'm going to destroy them. When they have died for their evil, I'll make you and your descendants into a mighty nation."**

**But Moses said, "Don't do it, Lord! The Egyptians will think you brought their slaves out into the desert to kill them. Word of this will spread among the nations. People won't understand why you did what you did. Don't kill them for this evil they've done. Remember you promised Abraham, Isaac and Israel, 'I will make your descendants as**

**numerous as the stars of the sky...I will give to your descendants this land I promised them as their inheritance forever?’**

**Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. The Bible says:**

**“Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.”**

**When Moses saw the golden calf and the dancing, his anger burned. He threw the Mirror of the Almighty—those Ten Commandments just penned by the finger of the I AM Creator God—to the ground, shattering them physically even as the sinful nation were shattering them by their conduct. God later rewrote the Ten Commandment Law again in stone and those tablets were preserved inside the golden ark in the temple. So I AM not only wrote the Big Ten once in stone for us, but twice! We should not overlook their importance.**

**Moses isn’t the only one who broke a physical object of great value due to the unacceptable conduct of others. Borglum, the sculptor of Mount Rushmore did something similar just before beginning his great masterpiece. He had been engaged in creating a similar monument at a place called Stone Mountain in Georgia at the time he was summoned to consider the Mount Rushmore project. That project had been plagued with setbacks and lack of funding. By February 1925 his strained relations with the Stone Mountain Association’s board peaked. They dismissed Borglum from completing the project for which they had first hired him and expressed their intention to hire another artist to complete the giant sculpture according to Borglum’s models and drawings.**

**Borglum was outraged. He rushed to Stone Mountain, ordered the destruction of his working studio models, then raced up the mountain and sent models of Lee’s shoulders and Stonewall Jackson’s head crashing to the base of the cliff. So the fiery sculptor who carved Mount Rushmore made his escape in a wild-goose chase by Georgia police, who held a warrant for his arrest. According to Borglum the pursuing**

deputies even took shots at his fleeing escape vehicle before he made it safely across the line into North Carolina.

Moses didn't simply shatter the *Mirror of the Almighty*—God's holy Ten Commandments. He also smashed the golden calf. He strode to the center of the camp where the idol stood, tore it from its stand physically, pounded it to powder with a hammer, threw the powdered gold into the water supply, and made the people kneel and gulp down the dust of the god they had praised. Nobody was going to be putting that idol back together again! Even this did not stop the wild revelry among the people. It wasn't until Moses called those who had been loyal to God to him and sent them throughout the camp to cut down 3,000 with the bloody edge of the sword that order was finally restored.

The people, in full knowledge of God's Ten Commandment Law, had sinned greatly. So have we. What do you do when you see God's Law and know you haven't kept it? What do you do when you see God's Law and go ahead and violate it anyway? How can we stay free even when we stumble?

We can look into the Law of God and see we have done wrong. But the *Mirror of the Almighty* cannot make us clean. It can only reveal our sin. What do we do when we see what we should be, but are not?

Some wish to throw out God's Ten Commandment Law entirely, or in part. They claim it was only applicable to the Jewish nation and has nothing to say to the Christian today. In this, they disagree with Jesus, who said:

**“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”** *Matthew 5:17-19*

**Is there a heaven above your head with clouds and stars? Then the Ten Commandment Law of God is still in force in every detail. Is there ground beneath your feet? Then you may know the *Mirror of the Almighty* remains eternally applicable to us still.**

**What is Jesus relationship to the Ten Commandment Law? He did “fulfill it”. He filled it up by observing it perfectly throughout the 33 years of his earthly life. Yet that fulfilling did not do away with its claims upon those who trust in Him—for he also fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized by John in the Jordan River. Yet he commanded those who believed in him to also be baptized. “Fulfill” plainly means Jesus both was baptized and kept the Ten Commandment Law perfectly. He expects us to follow his example.**

**When we first look into the *Mirror of the Almighty* we see our own deformed reflection—all the places we have fallen short of its righteous requirements. But we should not turn away quickly for all of this. If we look more closely we will see another face carved in stone. That face is the face of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.**

**Listen carefully. It was I AM God who met Moses at the burning bush and called Israel from Egyptian slavery through the Red Sea to Mount Sinai to give them the Ten Commandments. I AM wrote those ten eternal, holy, unchangeable principles into living stone with his own finger. This is undeniably true.**

**Now fast forward 1,500 years. In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, Jesus is in dispute with the religious leaders of his day. They think he is making claims about himself that are outrageous. They sneer, “Do you think you are greater than our father Abraham?” To which Jesus replies, “Before Abraham was, I AM!” The religious leaders understood what Jesus was saying perfectly. He had just laid claim to be the very I AM God who spoke to Moses in the burning bush, who brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery and who wrote the Ten Commandment Law with his own finger on top of Mount Sinai. They picked up stones to stone Jesus to death for blasphemy.**

**Now either Jesus told the truth, or he didn't. But lets be plain. Jesus claimed to be I AM God, the Creator Himself, come in the flesh. Unlike all who have ever lived on earth, he had a pre-existence before his entry**

**into our world. Fifteen hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he carved the Ten Commandments in stone on Sinai as I AM God. They are his own self portrait carved in stone long before the wise men and shepherds knelt by his manger beneath the star of Bethlehem.**

**Some would like to eliminate or modify one of another of the Ten Commandment Laws. To attempt this is to deface what God Himself has established. The Great Sphinx of Egypt had its nose blasted off for artillery practice. Did that improve on the original? Of course not! Nor can any later alterations of the law that is Jesus self-portrait in stone improve on the original. How can a perfect law that portrays the character of our perfect Savior ever be altered in even one part?**

**When Mount Rushmore was being carved, each of the four faces were separate and distinct, yet each portrayed some aspect of the great theme of American democracy. The birth of our nation was guided by the vision and courage of George Washington. Thomas Jefferson always had dreams of something bigger, first in the words of the Declaration of Independence and later in the expansion of our nation through the Louisiana Purchase. Preservation of the union was paramount to Abraham Lincoln but a nation where all men were free and equal was destined to be. At the turn of the Twentieth Century Theodore Roosevelt saw that in our nation was the possibility for greatness. Our nation was changing from a rural republic to a world power. The ideals of these presidents laid a foundation for our nation as solid as the rock from which their figures are carved. Each man possessed great skills and leadership of the brand our nation needed for the times. In the same way, we do not all become clones by observing God's Ten Commandment Law. We retain our individuality, yet come to bear the likeness of the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in character through obedience to its teachings.**

**When Borglum began his work on Mount Rushmore, he started by creating a model of the four presidents in a 1-to-12 inch scale, meaning an inch on the model represented a foot on the cliff. This model has been preserved for viewing at the Sculptor's Studio. To transfer measurements from the model to the mountain, workers determined where the top of the head would be, then found the corresponding point of the model.**

**A protractor was mounted horizontally on top of each president's head. At the center mark, a pivot was placed with an attached metal rod that extended outward across the arc of measurement and over the subject's face. On the cliff above a 12 times larger apparatus measured large to the specifications of the model in the studio below. In this way workers could quickly determine the amount of rock that needed to be removed.**

**The Ten Commandment Law is like the protractor. It is the means by which the character of the I AM Creator God is transferred from the unchangeable God to people like us who are being remade into the image of our Creator. What Jesus is like is what we may and must become in our own character and choices. When we fall short, we can quickly see our lack by comparing our lives to God's Law. We can confess our sins, receive forgiveness for what is past, and have that deformity carved away from us forever. Jesus perfect commandment keeping stands in place of our own imperfect commandment keeping before God. Yet his perfection does not release us from further obligation to conform our conduct to the pattern of his own life and law. To turn from the Ten Commandment Law is to turn from Jesus Christ himself, or it is his own character carved into stone by his own hand.**

**The apostle John once wrote:**

**“But we know when (Jesus) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins.” *I John 3:2-4***

**And again, he wrote:**

**“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” *I John 2:6***

**How did Jesus walk? He walked in complete compliance with the Ten Commandment Law he had written with his own finger in stone on top Mount Sinai. He calls us, broken and morally marred as we are to himself. If we come to him, he will undertake the great work of remaking us into his own image. He who begins this good work in us has**

promised to complete it until the day of his appearing. Then when we look into the *Mirror of the Almighty*, the face carved in stone will not only be that of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also our own.

## *V. Appeal*

Someone here this evening may have looked at the Ten Commandment Law and then at your own life, and despaired. You may have wondered how even God could take such a deformed chunk of moral granite as yourself and carve it into the very image of Himself. Do not be discouraged! Jesus says:

“All that the Father gives to me will come to me,  
and the one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Even though we have fallen short of God’s holy law, there is hope for us. We can be forgiven the past. We can be fashioned into the likeness of our Creator. Would you like this to occur in your life? If you would, just put your hand up so God can see.

*(Hands.)*

Tonight we’ve seen the mirror that reveals sin. Tomorrow night we will see the soap and the water. Be sure you are here and bring a friend! Meanwhile, remember this: The finest statues are carved from the hardest marble. What you cannot do for yourself, God will do for you. There is nothing wrong with anyone here that God cannot fix.

This evening we have looked at the *Mirror of the Almighty*. Be sure to be here tomorrow night when we consider the soap and water necessary to clean up our lives quickly. Our subject will be “The Bridge That Couldn’t be Built and the Island That Couldn’t be Escaped”.

Come and bring a friend!

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