

Exodus Chapter Twenty

Read **Exodus 20:1-17** – The Ten Commandments

v.1 “AND GOD SPAKE ALL THESE WORDS, SAYING,”

“AND GOD SPAKE”, here we not only have words provided by the inspiration of God and recorded by his penmen, we have words that God actually spoke to the nation of Israel. An earlier English translation dated before 1066 and rendered in Old English simply records that “GOD SPOKE THUS”.

This listing of commandments has various names throughout the scriptures. In **Exodus 24:12** God calls them “LAW, AND COMMANDMENTS WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN”; **Exodus 34:28** they are called the “WORDS OF THE COVENANT, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS”; and they are also called the Tables of the Covenant, the Two Tables, most frequently The Testimony, and in **Matthew 19:17**, Jesus simply calls them “THE COMMANDMENTS”. As we consider the following verses we need to remember that within the ten commandments the first four deal with man’s relationship with God, the fifth is a transition commandment that deals with children’s relationship with their parents and the sixth through tenth commandments deal with man’s relationship with man.

v.2 “I *am* THE LORD THY GOD, WHICH HAVE BROUGHT THEE OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.”

He reminds them that He is Jehovah God, the one who through miracles brought the plagues against Egypt, redeemed them from slavery and led them out of Egypt. He reminds them that all He is the source of all of these signs that they have witnessed.

We see in this verse that God is addressing the nation of Israel, the people that he had redeemed from Egyptian slavery only three months before. Again reminding us and emphasizing that this law, these commandments and this covenant was between God and Israel only. The rest of the world continued under the law of the Patriarchs until the coming of Christ. This is the reason that Nineveh could repent and be pleasing to God as the result of the preaching of Jonah. This is the reason that Cornelius and others in the New Testament that were not Jews could be counted as righteous men even though they were not under the Mosaic Covenant.

We will also see that these commandments are in absolute terms, there are no penalties given as being related to them at this time. That would come later and be necessary only because man can’t seem to obey God. Therefore punishments, rewards and eventually redemption are all required in order to for God to even have a hope of being able to associate himself with his greatest creation, the one part of his creation that he loves.

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v.3 “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”

Israel’s greatest trouble throughout her history would be the worship of idol gods. It is said that idol worship began at the time of the tower of Babel. I could not substantiate that in scripture but we know that Rachel stole the gods of her father when Jacob departed Haran to return to Canaan (**Genesis 31:19**). We also see that when God sent Jacob to Bethel to worship he cleansed his household by removing all the strange gods. We also saw in our earlier study that the Egyptians worship all manner of images that represented various animals, insects, and other things found in God’s creation. So it’s understandable that Israel would be tempted to worship idols, idol worship was all around them.

Jehovah, God of heaven, had given them sufficient proof of his power, majesty and love toward them that they should never forsake him and serve other gods. But man is tempted of Satan to sin as he did Eve in the garden and will rebel against God as did Adam, eating of the fruit that Eve offered him knowing that it was forbidden. Israel was no exception. So Israel was given the commandment to have no god’s “BEFORE ME” or “BEFORE MY FACE”; a commandment that they would break within a matter of days and that they would break again and again throughout their history.

Judges 2:11-13 “AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE **LORD**, AND SERVED BAALIM: AND THEY FORSOOK THE **LORD** GOD OF THEIR FATHERS, WHICH BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND FOLLOWED OTHER GODS, OF THE GODS OF THE PEOPLE THAT *were* ROUND ABOUT THEM, AND BOWED THEMSELVES UNTO THEM, AND PROVOKED THE **LORD** TO ANGER. AND THEY FORSOOK THE **LORD**, AND SERVED BAAL AND ASHTAROTH.

Are graven images the only idols that men serve? The prophet Ezekiel writes about idols in the heart:

Ezekiel 14:4 “THEREFORE SPEAK UNTO THEM, AND SAY UNTO THEM, THUS SAITH THE **LORD GOD**; EVERY MAN OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL THAT SETTETH UP HIS IDOLS IN HIS HEART, AND PUTTETH THE STUMBLINGBLOCK OF HIS INIQUITY BEFORE HIS FACE, AND COMETH TO THE PROPHET; I THE **LORD** WILL ANSWER HIM THAT COMETH ACCORDING TO THE MULTITUDE OF HIS IDOLS;”

So we also need to remember that graven images are not the only gods that man serves. Anything that we place ahead of God in our lives; anything that we set up in our hearts, as the prophet says, becomes our god. It doesn’t matter what it is, it can be personal pleasures, sports, money and material things, or just about anything that we can imagine. At this time God is addressing specifically those gods that Israel will encounter when they enter the land promised to them.

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v.4 “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.”

The Hebrew word translated “GRAVEN IMAGE” refers to anything that can be hewn in wood, carved in metal or graven in stone where an axe, chisel or graving tool would be employed. Then God adds anything that has a likeness of any living creature, whether in heaven, on earth or in the water that is on the earth.

Just as did several of the plagues God brought against Egypt, this commandment strikes against every false god that Egypt worshiped. Their gods Osiris and his wife Isis were images of mankind, Apis and Mnevis were images of oxen or heifers; ibis, storks, cranes and hawks were worshiped; the crocodile, serpent and beetle or scarabeus were also worshiped. Egypt also worshiped fish, especially one called Oxurunchus and Phagrus and many other animals and creatures of God’s creation. But even before Israel moved from the foot of the Mountain of God, they will break this commandment:

Exodus 32:3-4 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE BRAKE OFF THE GOLDEN EARRINGS WHICH WERE IN THEIR EARS, AND BROUGHT THEM UNTO AARON. AND HE RECEIVED THEM AT THEIR HAND, AND FASHIONED IT WITH A GRAVING TOOL, AFTER HE HAD MADE IT A MOLTEN CALF: AND THEY SAID, THESE BE THY GODS, O ISRAEL, WHICH BROUGHT THEE UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

This prohibition not only excludes any image of any creature in God’s creation it also excludes any image that man would devise of God, the son of God, saint or anything else that man would bow before in worship. So the prohibition against worshiping idols includes the images worshiped by the members of the Catholic denomination. And to support their false worship, Adam Clarke contends in his commentary that the Catholic denomination has removed this commandment from their Bibles and broken the tenth commandment into two commandments to restore the proper number of ten. Clarke is writing in 1836 or thereabouts and when I read the 1899 Catholic Douay version this commandment is there. Clarke also contends that this would also exclude any “false worship” including “other superstitions and ceremonies.”

v.5 “THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO, 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;”

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The reason that Israel was not to “BOW DOWN”, “NOR SERVE” anything that he has made his god is that God is a jealous God. Should it be any wonder that one who would love mankind to much that he would sacrifice his “ONLY BEGOTTEN SON” for their spiritual well-being would also be an extremely jealous God.

What does God mean by stating that he will “VISIT INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH *generation*”? Is it not true that no sin can nor will be accounted against the children of the sinner? Sin is the failure to honor God, sins of omission, or the transgression of God’s law, as God has told us through the words of the beloved apostle:

I John 3:4 “WHOSOEVER COMMITETH SIN TRANSGRESSETH ALSO THE LAW: FOR SIN IS TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW.”

Each individual will answer for his own sins and only his own sins as God assures us through the words of:

Ezekiel 18:20 “THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE. THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHER, NEITHER SHALL THE FATHER BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE SON: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE UPON HIM, AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED SHALL BE UPON HIM.”

There are two possible explanations, both of which we can see are true. There are more consequences of the sins committed by man beyond the loss of the soul of the sinner. We see this readily in the case of an alcoholic, drug user, gambler, etc. in that his wife and his children will suffer, frequently for more than one generation. In addition the children reared in a home that does not respect God, as in a home that worshiped idol gods, as did Israel, will, usually, continue in their parent’s footsteps. In the same way many who are members of denominations, worshiping God in vain do so because that was what they were taught at home. Therefore the consequences of the father’s sin will carry on from generation to generation.

v.6 “AND SHEWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS OF THEM THAT LOVE ME, AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.”

Even those who love God and keep his commandments need his mercy because none of us can live lives that are sinless and therefore acceptable unto God. We all sin:

Romans 3:23 “FOR ALL HAVE SINNED, AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD;”

Consequently we need his grace and mercy and we have been assured by the Son of God, himself of God’s love and mercy:

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John 14:23 "JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS: AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM."

And we are provided the avenue of prayer after repentance of our sin to restore our relationship with the Father by the forgiveness of our sins, (**Acts 8:22, James 5:16**).

v.7 "THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE **LORD** THY GOD IN VAIN; FOR THE **LORD** WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLess THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN."

When we think about taking the Lord's name in vain, what do most of us, most often, think of about? We think of cursing. Is that the only way that we can take the name of God in vain? No. Following the same thoughts as found in the first two commandments the third is not specific to any single act or form of disrespect but rather considers a number of things whereby we can show a lack of respect for God. For example:

Isaiah 48:1 "HEAR YE THIS, O HOUSE OF JACOB, WHICH ARE CALLED BY THE NAME OF ISRAEL, AND ARE COME FORTH OUT OF THE WATERS OF JUDAH, WHICH SWEAR BY THE NAME OF THE **LORD**, AND MAKE MENTION OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL, *but* NOT IN TRUTH, NOR IN RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Judah was swearing by the name of the Lord, mentioning God in their conversation but "NOT IN TRUTH, NOR IN RIGHTEOUSNESS." They claimed the rights of children of God but they had no respect for Him or His law. We exhibit the same characteristic when we conduct ourselves in the manner that Jesus condemned:

Matthew 7:21 "NOT EVERY ONE THAT SAITH UNTO ME, LORD, LORD, SHALL ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."

So other examples of disrespect for God and His law would be those who refuse to do His commandments, those who teach false doctrines in His name and many other acts common to man, even those who are not sincere in their worship to God. From notes by brother Harrell Davidson, (1) we must recognize God's deity, (2) we must recognize His spiritual nature, (3) these should create reverence and respect in our hearts for God. Otherwise we will take the name of God in vain.

v.8 "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY."

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Before this universe existed, there was God who is spirit. When he created man he also gave him a spirit. So time must also be set aside for spiritual things, including worship to God. God rested from His labors in the creation (**Genesis 2:2**) on the seventh day of the week so Israel was given the seventh day of the week as the day that they were to rest from their labors. Under God's current covenant with man; in keeping with all things pertaining to God being first in our lives, we are commanded to worship on the first day of the week, not the seventh (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2**). We preach on the necessity of all members of the Lord's kingdom to assemble for worship on the day God has set aside for that purpose and this commandment underscores that necessity God's requirement for our obedience. God who does not change (**Malachi 3:6**) will bless those who remember Him in worship on the day He has proscribed. Observe with me the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 58:13-14 "IF THOU TURN AWAY THY FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, *from* DOING THY PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY; AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE **LORD**, HONOURABLE; AND SHALT HONOUR HIM, NOT DOING THINE OWN WAYS, NOR FINDING THINE OWN PLEASURE, NOR SPEAKING *thine own* WORDS: THEN SHALT THOU DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE **LORD**; AND I WILL CAUSE THEE TO RIDE UPON THE HIGH PLACES OF THE EARTH, AND FEED THEE WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB THY FATHER: FOR THE MOUTH OF THE **LORD** HATH SPOKEN *it*."

Today, just as in the time of the Mosaic Covenant, if we turn our "FOOT FROM" Sunday, "FROM DOING THY PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY; AND CALL" Sunday "A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE **LORD**", "THEN SHALT THOU DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE **LORD**" and the Lord will bless us accordingly.

v.9 "SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOUR, AND DO ALL THY WORK:"

Man was created with the need and responsibility to work. Even before that Adam and Eve were expelled from God's garden they were given work to do.

Genesis 2:15 "AND THE **LORD** GOD TOOK THE MAN, AND PUT HIM INTO THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO DRESS IT AND TO KEEP IT."

But it is also necessary that man not work all the time. God has also ordained that man's work is to be set aside for spiritual things and spiritual needs including the worship of God.

v.10 "BUT THE SEVENTH DAY *is* THE SABBATH OF THE **LORD** THY GOD: *in it* THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MANSERVANT, NOR THY MAIDSERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT *is* WITHIN THY GATES:"

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No work was to be accomplished on the Sabbath. Even the beasts and any stranger, one who was in the household but not a Jew, were to be included in God's prohibition to work on the Sabbath. The legalists of the Jewish elders and scholars spent 100's of years interpreting and applying every "jot and tittle" of the Mosaic Law to their time. In their definition of "WORK", as related to this command, they did as man often does and went beyond what God required. We see this in the problems that Christ encountered with the Pharisees, the legalists of His day. One record is in **Matthew 12**. The Pharisees:

"...ASKED HIM, SAYING IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH DAYS? THAT THEY MIGHT ACCUSE HIM." **Matthew 12:10**

While it is true that under the Mosaic Covenant they were not to gather manna on the Sabbath (**Exodus 16:22ff**) and one was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day (**Numbers 15:32-35**) Jesus instructed them that instead of strict prohibition of any activity on the Sabbath some common sense should be applied.

Matthew 12:11 "AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, WHAT MAN SHALL THERE BE AMONG YOU, THAT SHALL HAVE ONE SHEEP, AND IF IT FALL INTO A PIT ON THE SABBATH DAY, WILL HE NOT LAY HOLD ON IT, AND LIFT *it* OUT?"

There was work that was necessary and then there is general work that was to be set aside under the Mosaic Covenant. The same common sense applications should be made to the worship of God on the first day of the week under the Covenant of Christ. On Sunday there is work that can be necessary and can be accomplished without absenting ourselves from the opportunity to worship God as we have been commanded. The very first thing that comes to mind is the 15-20 cows that had to be milked morning and evening of every day when we lived on Granddad's farm. That was done but we didn't go to the field to work instead of going to worship God, we were in the assembly of the saints as God requires (**Hebrews 10:25**). There are many other examples that we could name. The problem comes when we allow our work, our greed perhaps, or anything else to come between us and our worship to God.

v.11 "FOR *in* SIX DAYS THE **LORD** MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM *is*, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY: WHEREFORE THE **LORD** BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT."

Israel is given the reason that God is commanding them to honor the Sabbath day. It is the day that He rested after completing the creation. It benefited God and He has given it to man to benefit us as well.

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This verse and those that are related also objectively refute any and all attempts to have God creating the universe by evolution over millions and billions of years. The scripture is referencing seven solar days, days that came to be when God divided the light from darkness:

Genesis 1:5 “AND GOD CALLED THE LIGHT DAY, AND THE DARKNESS HE CALLED NIGHT. AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE FIRST DAY.”

v.12 “HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER: THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND WHICH THE **LORD** THY GOD GIVETH THEE.”

This fifth commandment is one that transitions the emphasis of the ten commandments from man's relationship with God to man's relationship with mankind. A child's respect and honor for God will begin with their respect and honor for their parents. Unfortunately in today's world this concept seems to be totally foreign to most people. Their children are not taught respect and honor for parents. Many are taught that God is this Someone who loves everybody and doesn't require anything except acknowledgment of His existence, if they are taught anything at all. Most children today are being raised by day care workers, television and schools with parents paying very little attention to anything else except making money and enjoying life. We have these words in both the Old and New Testaments:

Proverbs 6:20 “MY SON, KEEP THY FATHER'S COMMANDMENT, AND FORSAKE NOT THE LAW OF THY MOTHER.”

Ephesians 6:1-3 “CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD: FOR THIS IS RIGHT. HONOUR THY FATHER AND MOTHER; WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE; THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH THEE, AND THOU MAYEST LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.”

v.13 “THOU SHALT NOT KILL.” (murder)

Those who claim to be pacifists and those who do not study the entire revelation of God regarding the taking of human life misapply this commandment and the intent behind it. This is especially true regarding capital punishment and the participation in warfare. The literal translation of the word that Moses was directed to record is “do murder”. The English Standard Version and the New King James Version both read “THOU SHALT NOT MURDER.”

Capital punishment is ordained of God. This is in harmony with other scriptures, such as:

Genesis 9:6 “WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED: FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE MAN.”

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Exodus 22:20 "HE THAT SACRIFICETH UNTO *any* GOD, SAVE UNTO THE LORD ONLY, HE SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED."

Acts 5:5 "AND ANANIAS HEARING THESE WORDS FELL DOWN, AND GAVE UP THE GHOST: AND GREAT FEAR CAME ON ALL THEM THAT HEARD THESE THINGS."

God has used warfare to punish evil doers throughout the history of mankind. One of the first records is that of Abraham going to war to rescue Lot (**Genesis 14**). Almost as soon as they crossed the Red Sea Israel had to go to war against the Amalekites as we saw in **Exodus 17**. They continued in warfare to conquer the land that God had promised them throughout their history. We could incite literally hundreds of examples.

Under the New Testament Law of Christ our duty to rulers and country to serve as our country's leadership requires is included in:

Romans 13:1 "LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD."

I Peter 2:13-14 "SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO EVERY ORDINANCE OF MAN FOR THE LORD'S SAKE: WHETHER IT BE TO THE KING, AS SUPREME; OR UNTO GOVERNORS, AS UNTO THEM THAT ARE SENT BY HIM FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF EVILDOERS, AND FOR THE PRAISE OF THEM THAT DO WELL."

Murder, however, is not warfare and warfare is not murder though murder can be committed under combat conditions. Murder is perpetrated from a condition of the heart of man, never done in self-defense, or for any reason other than evil intent. Murder goes beyond the physical act of killing someone:

Matthew 5:22 "BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT WHOSOEVER IS ANGRY WITH HIS BROTHER WITHOUT A CAUSE SHALL BE IN DANGER OF THE JUDGMENT: AND WHOSOEVER SHALL SAY TO HIS BROTHER, RACA, SHALL BE IN DANGER OF THE COUNCIL: BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL SAY, THOU FOOL, SHALL BE IN DANGER OF HELL FIRE."

I John 3:15 "WHOSOEVER HATETH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER: AND YE KNOW THAT NO MURDERER HATH ETERNAL LIFE ABIDING IN HIM."

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Murder includes motive, intent and emotion; Jesus taught that whosoever is angry with his brother, is in “DANGER OF THE JUDGMENT”. He was not talking about a normal anger that we might have for just cause because we are also admonished to “BE YE ANGRY AND SIN NOT.” (**Ephesians 4:26**). He was talking about the kind of anger that John equates with hate, a deep, all consuming kind of anger that is unjustified and not always under control.

v.14 “THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTRY.”

In spite of the fact that this sin is condemned by God; across this country false brethren, preachers, elders, and others have the sin of adultery present in their families. This sin is present and excused among the members of the church in many places. Many others are in sympathy with those who find themselves living in an adulterous marriage and have done everything that they can think of, including trying re-define the word to justify people living in this life of sin. Consequently the sin of adultery is winked at, condoned and even defended in many churches that profess to be of Christ or swept under the rug and ignored in far, far too many more.

Under the Mosaic Covenant the penalty was death by stoning.

Leviticus 20:10 “AND THE MAN THAT COMMITTETH ADULTRY WITH *another* MAN’S WIFE, *even he* THAT COMMITTETH ADULTRY WITH HIS NEIGHBOR’S WIFE, THE ADULTERER AND THE ADULTERESS SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH.”

This was the basis for the scribes and Pharisees trying to trap Jesus into a conflict with the Mosaic Covenant in:

John 8:4-5 “THEY SAY UNTO HIM, MASTER, THIS WOMAN WAS TAKEN IN ADULTRY, IN THE VERY ACT. NOW MOSES’ IN THE LAW COMMANDED US, THAT SUCH SHOULD BE STONED: BUT WHAT SAY THOU?”

Under the Mosaic Covenant the penalty for adultery was stoning but God shows mercy under the Law of Christ and did not enjoin such punishment for this sin upon mankind today. That mercy doesn’t reduce the magnitude of adultery as a sin but does provide a way of escape from eternal condemnation. Just as is true of any child of God who commits sin, we can repent, change our lives and pray God for his forgiveness, being assured that our prayers will be heard. Under the Law of Christ the sin of adultery is not an unpardonable sin in God’s eyes. And under the Law of Christ it is only adultery or fornication that can break God’s, once for all time covenant of marriage. Divorce for fornication or adultery is allowed but not required, Jesus tells us that by making an exception:

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Matthew 19:9 “AND I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL PUT AWAY HIS WIFE, EXCEPT *it be* FOR FORNICATION, AND SHALL MARRY ANOTHER, COMMITTETH ADULTERY: AND WHOSO MARRIETH HER WHICH IS PUT AWAY DOTHTH COMMIT ADULTERY.

And marriage by a person divorced for other than fornication or sexual immorality is a adulterous marriage.

v.15 “THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.”

The eighth commandment deals with theft, theft of any kind. We can steal another person’s possessions, we can steal our employer’s time, and some folks can even eat an apple from the produce display in the supermarket and think nothing of it. Punishment for theft under the laws that God has given mankind has been different under different circumstances. Achan and his household were destroyed because he stole goods that were to be consecrated to God (**Joshua 7:24-25**), Micah was forgiven because he restored the 1100 shekels of silver that he stole from his mother (**Judges 17:2-3**), Judas’ theft was apparently known and ignored (**John 12:6**).

Clarke in his commentary includes fraud, knowingly taking advantage of someone in business, deception that creates material gain of any sort under this commandment. Under the new covenant the Apostle Paul does as well and writes this in:

I Thessalonians 4:6 “THAT NO *man* GO BEYOND AND DEFRAUD HIS BROTHER IN *any* MATTER: BECAUSE THAT THE LORD *is* THE AVENGER OF ALL SUCH, AS WE ALSO HAVE FOREWARNED YOU AND TESTIFIED.”

v.16 “THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR.”

Who is our neighbor? All are our neighbors (**Luke 10**). Jesus taught that the second most important law of God is that we should love our neighbors.

Mark 12:30-31 “AND THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS *is* THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. AND THE SECOND *is* LIKE, *namely* THIS, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. THERE IS NONE OTHER COMMANDMENT GREATER THAN THESE.”

So how could we obey the commandment to love our neighbor and defraud, lie about or even for our neighbor? The wisdom of God tells us:

Proverbs 12:17 “*He that* SPEAKETH TRUTH SHEWETH FORTH RIGHTEOUSNESS: BUT A FALSE WITNESS DECEIT.”

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Proverbs 19:9 “A FALSE WITNESS SHALL NOT BE UNPUNISHED, AND *he that* SPEAKETH LIES SHALL PERISH.”

What all could be included in that which is condemned by God in this commandment? Could we not include slander, perjury, falsehood, lying and even much that is gossip? In the great chapter in Romans on love Paul writes this:

Romans 13:8-9 “OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER: FOR HE THAT LOVETH ANOTHER HATH FULFILLED THE LAW. FOR THIS, THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, THOU SHALT NOT KILL, THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, THOU SHALT NOT COVET; AND IF *there be* ANY OTHER COMMANDMENT, IT IS BRIEFLY COMPREHENDED IN THIS SAYING, NAMELY, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.”

v.17 “YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR’S HOUSE; YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR’S WIFE, NOR HIS MALE SERVANT, NOR HIS FEMALE SERVANT, NOR HIS OX, NOR HIS DONKEY, NOR ANYTHING THAT *is* YOUR NEIGHBOR’S” (NKJV).

What does the word covet or covetousness mean? To covet means to (1) “to desire wrongfully, inordinately or without regard to the rights of others”. Covetousness means to be someone who covets as a major focus of their normal lives. God has summed up his commandments regarding the relationship of man to man with an admonition to control our thoughts. No man can see a covetous heart. Only God and the person who suffers from this malady will be aware of its existence in their heart. But it will lead them to sin in other ways. This is the meaning behind what James writes:

James 1:14-15 “BUT EVERY MAN IS TEMPTED, WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY OF HIS OWN LUST, AND ENTICED. THEN WHEN LUST HATH CONCEIVED, IT BRINGETH FORTH SIN: AND SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH.”

The Apostle Paul records what is probably the strongest condemnation of covetousness that we find in the Law of Christ:

Ephesians 5:3 “BUT FORNICATION, AND ALL UNCLEANNESS, OR COVETOUSNESS, LET IT NOT BE ONCE NAMED AMONG YOU, AS BECOMETH SAINTS;” **v.5** “FOR THIS YE KNOW, THAT NO WHOREMONGER, NOR UNCLEAN PERSON, NOR COVETOUS MAN, WHO IS AN IDOLATER, HATH ANY INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF GOD.”

Read **Exodus 20:18-21** – Israel’s Fear of God

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v.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.”

Can you imagine standing at the foot of a 7500 foot mountain and observing the thunderings, lightnings, the trumpet blast every time that God spoke, the smoke that probably resembled a volcano about to erupt?

The purpose was to strike godly fear and awe in the hearts of the children of Israel. God wanted them to understand the necessity of obeying the commandments that He was giving them. We study this record to remind us that we also must stand in awe and fear God today. As the Psalmist writes:

Psalms 89:7 “GOD IS GREATLY TO BE FEARED IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SAINTS, AND TO BE HAD IN REVERENCE OF ALL *them that are* ABOUT HIM.”

And Jesus commands us:

Matthew 10:28 “AND FEAR NOT THEM WHICH KILL THE BODY, BUT ARE NOT ABLE TO KILL THE SOUL: BUT RATHER FEAR HIM WHICH IS ABLE TO DESTROY BOTH SOUL AND BODY IN HELL.”

Because:

Acts 10:35 “BUT IN EVERY NATION HE THAT FEARETH HIM, AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS, IS ACCEPTED WITH HIM”

v.19 “AND THEY SAID UNTO MOSES, SPEAK THOU WITH US, AND WE WILL HEAR: BUT LET NOT GOD SPEAK WITH US, LEST WE DIE.”

The Israelites were so afraid of God that they ask for a mediator. They want Moses to speak with God and then relay to them what God requires. This request was granted and underscores that fact that man needs a mediator today as well. That mediator, of course, is Christ. He tells us:

John 14:6 “JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.”

Paul confirms Jesus Christ and Him alone as our mediator between us and God:

I Timothy 2:5-6 “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.”

Exodus Chapter Twenty

v.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.”

There are three observations we can make from this verse.

Moses first tells the people to fear not and then tells them that God has come that “HIS FEAR MAY BE BEFORE YOUR FACES.” What does he mean? How is it that we can fear God without fearing God? The first “FEAR” refers to the kind of fear that would incapacitate them; that would cause them to shake in terror, unable to think or act. This kind of fear will not serve God’s purpose. The kind of fear, or awe, that we should have toward God is more like what we would call a healthy respect, the kind of fear and reverence that would cause us to obey God, yet seek his presence. This kind of fear is described by the wisdom of God this way:

Psalms 4:4 “STAND IN AWE, AND SIN NOT: COMMUNE WITH YOUR OWN HEART UPON YOUR BED AND BE STILL.”

Secondly God has come to prove them. When we prove something or somebody we test them to see what the result or their reaction will be. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in:

II Corinthians 8:8 “I SPEAK NOT BY COMMANDMENT, BUT BY OCCASION OF THE FORWARDNESS OF OTHERS, AND TO PROVE THE SINCERITY OF YOUR LOVE.”

He was challenging them to follow the example of the brethren at Macedonia who “FIRST GAVE THEIR OWN SELVES TO THE LORD AND UNTO US BY THE WILL OF GOD.” in order to prove to him and to God the “SINCERITY OF YOUR LOVE.”

The third reason that he spoke to them directly was to put the fear of God in them that they might “SIN NOT.” He wanted to put the fear of God in them because they were his chosen people and he wished to preserve them as his children. He wishes the same for us today and that is why we find the Apostle Peter saying to Cornelius:

Acts 10:35 “BUT IN EVERY NATION HE THAT FEARETH HIM AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS, IS ACCEPTED WITH HIM.”

v.21 “AND THE PEOPLE STOOD AFAR OFF, AND MOSES DREW NEAR UNTO THE THICK DARKNESS WHERE GOD *was*.”

The people of Israel now are not so eager to confront God. They have seen the manifestation of His power and majesty. So they stand “AFAR OFF” and let Moses go to the mountain to speak with God.

Exodus Chapter Twenty

Read **Exodus 20:22-26** – Israel Has No Excuse

v.22 “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.”

The children of Israel have no excuse. Jehovah, God of Heaven has humbled himself to speak with them directly. They have seen the presence of God manifested by the fire, the lightning, earthquake and thick darkness and He has spoken the “ten words” or “ten commandments” directly to them in addition to writing them on two tablets of stone. He wishes Israel to humble themselves in return; working, living as faithful servants of Almighty God as the prophet writes in:

Isaiah 57:15 “FOR THUS SAITH THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE THAT INHABITETH ETERNITY, WHOSE NAME IS HOLY; I DWELL IN THE HIGH AND HOLY *place*, WITH HIM ALSO *that is* OF A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT, TO REVIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMBLE, AND TO REVIVE THE HEART OF THE CONTRITE ONES.”

Where two or three are gathered together in His name Jesus has promised to be there (**Matthew 18:20**). Should our attitude be in our worship to God this morning be any different? No, we are in the presence of God and the Son of God is with us.

v.23 “YE SHALL NOT MAKE WITH ME GODS OF SILVER, NEITHER SHALL YE MAKE UNTO YOU GODS OF GOLD.”

Again He reminds them that they are not to make themselves any graven image, even one that represents Jehovah God. Just as the Apostle Paul related to the Athenians:

Acts 17:24 “GOD THAT MADE THE WORLD AND ALL THINGS THEREIN, SEEING THAT HE IS LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS;” **v.25** “NEITHER IS WORSHIPPED WITH MEN’S HANDS, AS THOUGH HE NEEDED ANY THING, SEEING HE GIVETH TO ALL LIFE, AND BREATH, AND ALL THINGS;” **v.29** “FORASMUCH THEN AS WE ARE THE OFFSPRING OF GOD, WE OUGHT NOT TO THINK THAT THE GODHEAD IS LIKE UNTO GOLD, OR SILVER, OR STONE, GRAVEN BY ART AND MAN’S DEVICE.”

v.24 “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 Chapter Twenty

God specifies to Israel how he is to be worshipped, just as he has throughout time. Abel worshipped by faith (**Hebrews 11:4**) because he heeded the commandment of God that he had learned by hearing the Word of God. We today must be of the same mind. We must worship God "IN TRUTH AND IN SPIRIT" (**John 4:24**), in truth; as God has commanded; in spirit as with the right attitude and the right humble frame of mind.

v.25 "AND IF THOU WILT MAKE ME AN ALTAR OF STONE, THOU SHALT NOT BUILD IT OF HEWN STONE: FOR IF THOU LIFT UP THY TOOL UPON IT, THOU HAST POLLUTED IT."

No hewn stone was to be used. Working the stones of the altar with tools would cause the altar to be polluted. This is why that when Israel entered into the land of Canaan Joshua did as God and Moses had commanded them.

Joshua 8:31 "AS MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD COMMANDED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF MOSES, AN ALTAR OF WHOLE STONES, OVER WHICH NO MAN HATH LIFT UP any IRON: AND THEY OFFERED THEREON BURNT OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD, AND SACRIFICED PEACE OFFERINGS."

v.26 "NEITHER SHALT THOU GO UP BY STEPS UNTO MINE ALTAR, THAT THY NAKEDNESS BE NOT DISCOVERED THEREON."

The heathen and later Israel as they started to imitate their pagan neighbors would build their altars up high and/or on high places. One thought is that they believed that higher one gets the more they feel close to God. The word altar in our modern language comes from a word that means a "high place" or a place that is "elevated". But the Hebrew word translated altar does not mean that it means to slay or kill and refers to a place of sacrifice, not a place raised or elevated.

The reason given by God was that when the priest stepped to the altar to present the sacrifice it would be an abomination to God for his nakedness to show under his priestly robes. Of course, this thought leads me to another that many people would consider impertinent today. That is "what does God think about people coming to worship him in short skirts, string strap tops and other manners of dress that leave about as much skin showing as is covered".