

0294

Exodus 20:1-17

Exodus: journey to the promised land

Sunday, July 31, 2022

### Text

**And God spoke all these words, saying,**

**<sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

**<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.**

**<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

**<sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.**

**<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

**<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.**

**<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.**

**<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.**

**<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.**

**<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

**<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”**

### Prayer

-Covid

-Miriam Schmid

### Introduction

It is incredible how influential the Ten Commandments have been in our society.

They are at the bedrock of Judeo-Christian morality.

They have become part of our popular culture through art.

Numerous paintings depicting Moses with a white beard holding up the two stone tablets.

In 1956, Cecil B. DeMille made his epic film “the Ten Commandments” starting Charlton Heston.

That was actually the second Ten Commandments film DeMille directed as he also made a silent film in 1923.

We see the Ten Commandments in contemporary writings.

What’s more, The Ten Commandments have become a common motif in books and articles.

There’s the Ten Commandments of leadership.

The Ten Commandments of finance.

The Ten Commandments of weight loss.

The Ten Commandments of cooking.

They’re often written in a similar format to the King James Version of the Ten Commandments with “thou shalt not” as the preface for the command.

Moses being given the two stone tablets at Mt. Sinai is perhaps the Biblical scene that is most commonly known to our culture.

Over the last few years, we’ve seen the Ten Commandments as a source of controversy as groups have brought lawsuits against courthouses and other places in the public square where the Ten Commandments are displayed.

Perhaps the most significant legal challenge came against a Ten Commandments display at the Texas state capitol. It went all the way to the Supreme Court who ruled in 2005 that the commandments were not a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

While everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments., unfortunately, not everyone actually knows the Ten Commandments.

In a 2007 study by Kelton Research, more respondents could list off the ingredients of a McDonald’s Big Mac than knew the Ten Commandments.

Surveying 1,000 Americans, 80 percent remember that a Big Mac has two all beef patties but less than 60 percent remembered “thou shalt not kill.”

The survey also found just 45 percent could recall the commandment “Honor your father and mother” while 76 percent remembered the Big Mac ingredient lettuce.

The Ten Commandments are one of the most important sections of the Bible.

So what we’re going to do today is to give a little bit of background for the Ten Commandments and then we will talk about the Ten Commandments.

I said in the beginning that the Ten Commandments are an idea that is prevalent in our culture.

But the commandments are not given in a vacuum.

I make frequent references to the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis. The covenant included the promise of offspring, the promise of honor, and the promise of land.

This was totally done at God’s initiation.

And Genesis famously records that Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness.

So part of the promise was offspring.

We see that God has delivered on that process.

The Israelites have grown into a huge multitude of people.

And in the exodus event, we see God also delivering on the promise he had made to Abraham of land.

At the beginning of Exodus 19, the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:1 tells us it’s just three months after God had delivered them from Egypt.

And it was at Mount Sinai where God instituted this covenant with Moses.

The covenant follows patterns of other covenants or treaties in the ancient world beginning in 20, verses 1-2:

**And God spoke all these words, saying,**  
**<sup>2</sup>“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

So we see a preamble to the covenant.

God is making a statement about who he is. He is the redeeming God, the rescuing God. He is the God who fulfills his promises.

And he will make this covenant with Moses and part of the basis of the covenant is in the law that God gives.

In the Old Testament, there are 613 laws given.

The Ten Commandments are the beginning of introducing that law.

Now it's not that the law was the basis of a person's right standing before God.

As we said, the Israelites already were the people of God by virtue of God having chosen them.

And through Abraham, it was faith that was the basis of a person's righteousness.

But as the people of God, in pursuit of the land that God had promised, the law was the way in which God wanted his people to conduct themselves in the world.

There are several reasons for this.

First, it would distinguish the Israelites as the people of God.

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**therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-6).**

The law points to the holiness of God.

The law shows the righteous character of God. Since God is righteous, so are his laws.

There is nothing arbitrary to the law.

If we were to continue reading after Exodus 20, we get into sections that give specific instructions on the building of the Tabernacle, the tent which represented God's presence with his people that the Israelites were to travel with during their desert journey. Most of the second half of Exodus revolves around the tabernacle, building it, the specific measurements and furnishings for it.

We get into the book of Leviticus, and there are laws given in regards to the sacrificial system, the various Israelite Holy Days, and the priesthood.

We also see laws in regards to jurisprudence and due process.

Again, the law is good.

1 Timothy 1:8

**we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully**

So with that little bit of background, we come to the Ten Commandments this morning.

The First Commandment

**<sup>2</sup>“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

**<sup>3</sup>“You shall have no other gods before me.**

Again, God reminds the Israelites that it was he and he alone who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

The plagues that God had brought upon the Egyptians showed God's power and dominion.

The Lord God who is the delivering and saving God is not going to compete with all of the fake gods of other religions.

This commandment is a logical starting place. Belief in the Lord. Without that, nothing in the rest of the law matters to a person's salvation.

The Lord does not accept second place.

And it's a blessing that he does not. He is our creator and sustainer. He gives life and purpose.

For our society today, we see in the first commandment that the Bible does not allow for any religious plurality.

Without this first commandment, the other nine don't matter to our lives. We have to begin with a true belief in the Lord.

## The Second Commandment

**<sup>4</sup>“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

This command forbids idols of any kind.

What is an idol?

An idol here is an object that is made in the likeness of God, either made of wood or metal or any other sort of image.

It was common in ancient religions to worship idols.

The danger in idol worship is that in the ancient worldview, it was the belief that the idol being worshiped possessed divine power itself.

Part of the heart of idol worship was the manipulation of the gods. People would bring items or sacrifices before their idols which they believed guaranteed certain blessings.

The Lord is indebted to no one.

It's blasphemous to think God is beholden. It's blasphemous to worship objects that are made by hands as though the object possessed divine power.

The Bible says that no one can see God.

In Exodus 33:20, God said to Moses:

**you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live**

Part of this second command also relates to the first command.

We are not to have any other gods before him. We are not to have any other gods in competition with him.

Idol worship violates that.

God says that he is a jealous God.

And that jealousy is not a sin because it is God being jealous for what is his, what he created, what belongs to him.

While most modern Americans are not making physical idols, we can also make idols of the heart. We can make idols that we put on a pedestal above the Lord.

This is one of the things I talk about more than anything else, but we can make idols of money, of health, of family, of ourselves. As John Calvin said, the human heart is a factory of idols.

It is sin and it is also leading us away from life and purpose as it goes away from the true source of all that is good.

The Third Commandment.

**<sup>7</sup>“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.**

It seems that part of the meaning of this command involved swearing oaths by the Lord’s name.

But a person could make such an oath and yet fail to follow through. God doesn’t want his name invoked with falsity.

However this commandment is more broad than only applying to oaths.

It also involves misusing the Lord’s name.

Psalm 29:2

**<sup>2</sup>Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.**

In the beginning of the Lord’s prayer, Jesus addresses God the Father and says:

**“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name (Matthew 6:9).**

God’s name is to be hallowed. It is to be spoken in reverence.

There are still Orthodox Jews who won’t say the word God out of concern that they’ll never say his name with due reverence.

It’s a far cry from our society, where people often don’t say the name of the Lord in reverence.

In fact, people say it as a profanity. People curse by it.

We hear it all the time.

We must keep in mind the awesome holiness of the Lord when we invoke his name.

The Westminster Confession of Faith.

*The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works.*

So that's one aspect of this third command.

But another way people speak the name of the Lord in vain is by misrepresenting God theologically.

We misuse the name of the Lord when we speak for God in ways that are not true to how God has revealed himself in scripture.

People often speak about God and what they're doing is giving their opinion about how they think God should be.

I hear people who talk about the love of God as though it gives us a license to sin. That none of it matters because "God is love."

God is love and we should praise him that he is. But God is also a God of holiness and righteousness. And when we emphasize God's love to the exclusion of his other attributes, we are distorting God.

That's just one example.

We see this vanity at the heart of the original sin.

God originally gave one commandment.

**"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."** (Genesis 2:16-17).

But his words were twisted.

Genesis 3:1

**"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"**

He never said that.

But then Eve responded by further misrepresenting the words of the Lord.

Genesis 3:2-3

**<sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”**

God gives the command. The serpent says “Did God actually say.” First distortion. Eve says that they may eat of the fruit of the trees but they cannot eat or even touch the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. That’s the second distortion. God had never said they couldn’t touch the tree.

And the serpent undermines the consequences that God had spoken.

Genesis 3:5

**You will not surely die.**

Twisting and contradicting the Word of God.

Listen to the ways people talk about God.

It’s a pattern that constantly happens.

Twisting his words. Speaking on his behalf in false ways.

Terrible sins.

In undermining the consequences of God’s word, we make God out to be a liar and there is no deceit in the Lord. He is true to his word.

This is part of the reason why it’s so important to have such reverence for the scripture.

Because people are imperfect but God’s word is perfect.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

**<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

Unfortunately, our society has poor Biblical literacy today.

When we study the Israelites, we see that it had consequences for them and we also suffer consequences in our world for a lack of reverence and training in God’s word.

## The Fourth Commandment

**<sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

We are to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

**in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,**

On the seventh day, God ceases from his work of creation.

And we are called to one day in seven to rest.

The command to keep the Sabbath actually predates the Ten Commandments. The Lord originally gives this command in Exodus 16 when he is instructing the Israelites to collect bread. Every Friday, they would collect twice as much so that they could rest on the seventh day.

Verse 10 says:

**On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.**

The rest was intended for everyone within the Israelite community.

I'll pause for a second and make another general point about the Ten Commandments and their uniqueness.

God's law applied to everyone.

No one was above the law.

It wasn't the same in other ancient systems.

Rulers and kings did not have the laws apply to them.

With the Sabbath, it is both a blessing, and somewhat of a challenge.

it's a blessing in that God gives us a day to rest.

God tells us to rest.

But there's also a challenge in truly keeping a Sabbath because it can be so tempting in taking a day off to feel like you're going to get behind.

Anyone else ever feel like you don't have time to rest?

We are called to work hard. Hard work is a good thing and it is honoring to the Lord. Work predates the fall.

But we must also rest well.

It's a day that is set apart and holy.

The heart behind the Sabbath is trust in God's provision. That we can give of our time to him and that we will have enough, that we will still get enough done.

It can be easier said than done sometimes.

There's much more I'd love to say on this subject. Lord willing, I'd love to preach an entire sermon on Sabbath sometime.

The Fifth Commandment

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**<sup>12</sup>“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.**

This command starts to get at our relationships with other people and it starts with the most basic. That of a child to their parents.

As we are all under the dominion of the Lord, a child is under his or her parents.

Leviticus 19:3 says:

**<sup>3</sup>Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father**

In the convent community, children had a special relationship to their parents because it was the parents who were ultimately responsible for training their kids in the ways of the Lord.

Sadly, we see generation after generation where parents do not teach their children in the ways of the Lord. And that generation then knows less of the word of God, and the problem can get worse from one generation to the next.

Quoting from Deuteronomy 6:6-7

**<sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house**

In its historical context, part of the purpose of this command was on the necessity of a child to take care of their parents in later years. It was essential to the social order.

This command concludes with saying that a person should honor their father and mother so that: **your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.**

The point of that isn't in regards to individuals living long lives.

The point of that command is the continued perseverance of the people of God within the land.

And we will see in Israel's history that this did not happen.

The Sixth Commandment

**<sup>13</sup> "You shall not murder.**

During the ministry of Jesus, we find out that all of the laws of the Old Testament boil down to love of God and love for people.

In the gospels, a lawyer approaches Jesus and asks him what the greatest commandment is.

Jesus responds in Matthew 22:37-40

**"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

Love God and love people.

Murder violates the greatest commandment on both fronts.

Obviously it shows a failure to love people.

But it also shows a lack of love for God because man is created in the image of God.

And we do not have the right to take the life of one of God's image bearers.

Now there are military conflicts in the Old Testament that are justified.

And in cases of defense, as unfortunate as that is, lethal force is justified.

The Old Testament had certain law violations that were capital offenses.

So what this command is getting at is in frivolous, indiscriminate, unprovoked murder of another.

Life is precious and sacred.

The Seventh Commandment

<sup>14</sup> **“You shall not commit adultery.**

As with the Sabbath command, this command was rooted in creation.

Genesis 2:24

**a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

God created marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

As a result, adultery is forbidden.

There's a lot of marriage language in the Bible about the relationship between man and God.

In the Old Testament, we see Israel as the bride and God is the groom and Israel is consonantly unfaithful.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the groom and the church is the bride. And it ends with a wedding! And at that wedding, all things are finally made right.

Ephesians 5:25 tells us that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

It's meant to be a picture of sacrificial love.

God is always faithful to his people.

Adultery entirely undermines that union. It undermines the structure of the family.

The eighth commandment

<sup>15</sup> **“You shall not steal.**

Stealing dishonors the fruit of other people’s labor and effort.

Part of the sin of theft is that it’s the belief that another’s possessions are what is needed for a person’s sustenance.

Stealing dishonors the person from whom we are stealing. It undermines work whereby we could have legally and legitimately gained the money to acquire that which we had desired. And it dishonors God and the provisions that he has made for us and says that it wasn’t enough and that the only way to have enough is to take.

The ninth commandment.

<sup>16</sup> **“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

As with some of the other commands, this one relates to legal proceedings. That a person could not be a false witness against another. When that happens, justice is undermined.

I saw a story a couple years ago about two men in New York who were convicted of kidnapping and sexual assault in 1991.

The woman finally admitted that she had lied about it.

Truth is essential to justice.

The command also applies to lying in general. That we undermine our integrity when we deceive.

As the commandments reveal to us what the Lord values, God is a God who values honesty because God is a God who exclusively speaks truthfully.

There is no deception in God. It’s because God is always honest and truthful that we can have confidence in his fulfillments of his promises. God has spoken what he will do.

The Tenth Commandment

<sup>17</sup> **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”**

Now it's not a sin to want something.

Covetousness here is coveting that which is not yours.

So you shouldn't want your neighbor's house.

You shouldn't want your neighbor's spouse.

Once again, the Ten Commandments are God's introduction to the law.

As we've already said in our study, Jesus says that all of the commandments, including these ten commandments boil down to our love for God and our love for people.

### Conclusion

Anytime you have a ten point sermon, that's always a lot to chew on.

But how are you doing at the Ten Commandments?

It's been awhile since I've done this.

But just think about these commandments.

Don't take the Lord's name in vain. Ever done that?

Don't lie. Ever lie? Of course you have.

Don't covet. Check that one off.

Don't murder. Now you might think you're good on that. But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compared anger to murder.

And there are so many justifications we can have to be angry. To look down upon another person. We break all of the commandments. And those are just the basic things. And those are just the sins we actively do.

We cannot follow the commands of the Lord. And those are the basics!

The Good News of the gospel is that Jesus kept all of the commands and the entirety of the law, perfectly. He was righteous and Holy and good.

And the righteousness that we cannot earn Jesus gives to us and all we have to do is believe in him, trust in him. To know that he is the righteous savior who makes the unrighteous righteous, who makes the ungodly Godly, who makes the unholy, holy.

The Ten Commandments were that which instituted the Old Covenant. Jesus ushered in a New Covenant. The New Covenant is not given to us as a law but by a savior. Not stone tablets but flesh and blood. Jesus instituted communion as the sign of the New Covenant.