

Ex. 20:1 And God spake all these words, saying,

It's important to note that God spoke ALL of these words. These laws will form the reference for the people to recognize sin in their lives as well as provide "protection" from the consequences of making uninformed, bad choices regarding how to live life.

(11/05) I had never noticed before, but Courson points out that God is speaking for all the people to hear. Moses has come back down the mountain.

Ex. 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Ex. 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

The first command is the foundation of all the other commands. If the people do not accept God as their LORD and Deliverer, there is really no motivation for obeying the rest of His words. He is the one and only GOD. They are to have no other gods before Him. That implies that He is to have the most important position, be the highest priority, and be the point of reference upon which *every* area of life is focused and guided. If we truly recognize God as LORD—the one and only—the other commands will become a piece of cake. The problem is that we all have a problem with giving anyone the position of Lord in our lives above self. I've often heard reference made to other things we make gods in our lives, but I think the key truth is that we constantly struggle with dethroning self. Your LORD determines your actions. More often than not, even the "best" Christians struggle with taking self off the throne.

It also means that we are not to have any other gods in the face of His presence—and He is everywhere present.

Psalms 139:7–12 “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

This again emphasizes that He is the one and only true God. We may choose to follow the leading of false gods, but there is no other true God.

Ex. 20:4 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:

Ex. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, 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;

Ex. 20:6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The next command is not to make any graven/carved image/idol of anything in heaven above, or earth below, or in the waters under the earth. Our propensity is to want to be able to visualize/see to believe. Then, once we have a focal point, the obvious next step would be to show honor and respect—bow down. God knows us inside out. Even if they were to try to justify an image as representative of God, the act

of bowing/worshipping/reverencing anything that we can interpret through human ability lessens the truth of who God is--a divine being/power totally outside our comprehension and understanding. If we can fit Him into our frame of understanding, then He is no longer God!

Is. 55:8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Is. 55:9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

"I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." More often than not we think of jealousy with negative connotation. I think of this as another statement of God's great love for us. He is jealous for the love and obedience of His people.

It should be noted that in context the subject is the worship of God. It is not a command that forbids artistic expression of the beauty of God's creation. It forbids the making of anything to represent the God that we worship.

He wants what is best for us and wants us to recognize that. When we look to anyone/anything else for answers, we are going to be disappointed to say the least. He doesn't want us to put ourselves in a position to receive less than all that is ours thru acceptance of His love and provision. When we choose to follow other gods (really self), then we are building our lives on a lie which will impact in turn the lives of our children and in turn their children etc. It's interesting that the LORD used the designation of the 3rd & 4th generations. I just realized that those would be the normal generations of a man's lifespan at that time upon whom he would have direct impact.

When God said He would "visit" the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, He was saying that He would "oversee or "look at" (from the Hebrew) that iniquity and its effect upon their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In other words, it was to be expected based on the example and teaching of the fathers.

On the other hand, those who love Him and keep His commandments can expect God's love to be evident to their children for generations. The more submissive and obedient we are, the stronger the foundation for our progeny. God shows over and over again in the scripture how He is willing to be merciful and temper judgment in response to the desires of those who love and obey Him.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Ex. 20:7 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.

The next commandment forbids misusing or "taking in vain" the name of the LORD. This again relates to the core truth of the first command. The LORD God is the One and Only, including all the attributes that accompany the name/title--holy, righteous, protector, provider, judge, etc. One who is willing to "make light" in using God's name is reflecting the attitude in his heart—his unbelief and unwillingness to give God the position of LORD in his/her life. One who is at the point of cursing with God's name is again declaring that he is lord of his own life and could care less what is important to God—i.e. that His name be revered, respected, honored.... He warns that the misuse of His name will not be overlooked; He does not consider this a minor infraction.

Today's culture is filled with this. Satan has accomplished a terrible thing in that the name of God is used in so many ways that aren't actually cursing but yet aren't at all reverencing Him or even acknowledging Him as God. The phrase "O my god" can be found even on the tongues of many believers. It is definitely using His name in vain (for evil, falsely, empty of meaning; worthless).

(7/06) I was listening to Chuck Missler recently and my paraphrase of his idea is: Taking God's name in vain is more than just verbal expression. If we claim relationship to Him, our actions should show Him honor and obedience or we are taking His name in vain. I had never made that kind of connection to this specific commandment before, but I agree with the application.

Ex. 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Ex. 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

Ex. 20:10 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:

Ex. 20:11 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.

The next command is to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. The key word here is *remember*. This would seem to refer to Genesis 2:3.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

(3/10) The principle is not new. The Sabbath was set apart by God long before He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Making observance of the Sabbath a command for His people is what is new.

I think verse 11 is also a strong affirmation that creation happened in six literal days. God is telling them that He worked for six days in the creation process and rested on the 7th day. After six days of work each week, they too were to rest (they and their animals and servants and any foreigners in their midst) in remembrance of God's creation. It was important that they not forget the reason for their existence and to take time to rest and meditate on just who the LORD their God is. This is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day as holy—It was to be set apart and devoted to Him, the truest expression of holiness.

I know we are no longer under the law, but I think we have truly harmed ourselves by allowing this commandment to basically fade from view. We have allowed our "holy days" to become full of so many distractions that we never have a whole day to truly focus on the LORD. This in turn directly impacts our growth in the LORD and effectiveness in His service. This is especially true of those in the "ministry" or employ of the church. If possible, each person should establish for his own benefit a day that is totally devoted to the LORD—that includes me.

Ex. 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

The next command is to honor your father and mother. God is the Master Creator who allows each individual to be created through an act of love (if as God intended) between two people, a man and a woman. These parents provide the love, protection, guidance, etc. necessary for our well being as we grow from child to adult. They invest of themselves unselfishly and sacrificially for our benefit (or at least should). They are our earthly guardians as designated by God and deserve our respect/honor as such. When you obey and honor your parents, you should be practicing lifestyles that are conducive to a long and healthy life. These commands are being given with an expectation that one's parents will follow/obey God's commands and decrees which will in turn result in long, healthy lives because the foundation of these commands and laws is God's love. The command ends with a reminder that the land they would inherit would be a gift from God.

Ex. 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

The next command is not to murder. I think this is the taking of life with deliberate intent. God is the giver of life and the only authority for the taking of life. God breathed His breath to give life to Adam and Eve. Each breath we take is a reminder of our Creator. Only He has the authority to remove the breath of life. If we choose to disobey, again we are rejecting God's authority. By the way, you can be a murderer without being the actual perpetrator of the act—i.e., David and Uriah (2Samuel 11).

Ex. 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

You shall not commit adultery is the next command. God's perfect plan is one man for one woman. Adultery is having intimate relations with one who is not your husband/wife. I guess the idea of having more than one wife was a way of justifying one's self in the light of this command. But then we have Solomon and all his concubines, etc. It's obvious all through the Old Testament scriptures that the consequences are serious and unavoidable each time man goes outside God's plan—but it doesn't stop "godly" men from going with their lust rather than obedience to God. The word *adulterate* means "to make inferior or impure by adding a harmful or prohibited substance." That is just what adultery does to a marriage--it infects a relationship and begins to destroy it. Frankly, that's exactly what happens in our spiritual relationship to the Father when we choose to add things that are harmful and forbidden to our lives. Again, the core truth of the command is focused on our relationship to God. We will either accept His authority because of who He is, knowing that He will only command us in light of His attributes for our own benefit, OR we will reject that authority and disobey. Again, it's a matter of the heart.

Ex. 20:15 Thou shalt not steal.

The next command is not to steal, or take anything that doesn't belong to you. The Hebrew includes the idea of taking what is not yours through the use of deceit (i.e., Jacob). God, who numbers the hairs on our head, is our provider. He will give us ALL that we need (and much of what we want) if we will simply "trust and obey." When we steal, we are making the statement that God is not sufficient or able. Again, we are going back to a heart attitude in our relationship with the Father--the root of every command given so far in my opinion.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew for the word "steal" also includes the idea of kidnapping. I had never thought of this commandment in that light before.

Ex. 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

"You shall not bear false witness (give false testimony) against your neighbor." Why would someone lie about someone else? Because of selfishness, pride, resentment, fear or the opportunity for personal benefit—all of which reflect a heart attitude that is unaccepting of or discontent with God's sovereignty or provision in our own lives.

Ex. 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

"You shall not covet...." To covet is to want for yourself something which belongs to someone else. The Hebrew indicates that we shouldn't even desire or take pleasure in something that belongs to our neighbor. I'm sure we cross the line more often than not in this regard. This again is a direct response to feeling that God hasn't provided for you sufficiently.

I think it all boils down to the fact that there is one root sin—PRIDE—rejecting God as LORD with all authority and sovereignty in our lives. If we are living in obedience and trusting in Him, we will be happier and healthier. His guidelines are for our benefit and protection.

Ex. 20:18 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.

Ex. 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Ex. 20:20 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.

Ex. 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was*.

Evidently, the mountain continued to display the physical evidences of God's presence, which kept the people in fear. They kept their distance and asked Moses to relay God's message to them. They did not want to have God speak directly to them because of their fear.

The way the chapter is worded makes it sound like Moses and Aaron came back to camp before the commandments were given and Moses went back up the mountain to receive the laws and decrees concerning specific situations in governing the people. (revised 3/10)

Moses explained that they did not need to be afraid. God's motive in displaying such power with His presence was to make such an impact on them that they would not want to disobey Him because of who He is. So, while the people stayed at a distance, Moses goes back into the thick darkness of God's presence.

Usually, when I think of God's presence, I think of light. God descended in fire so intense that it produced a thick dark cloud. Darkness always pictures gloom and fear and lack of direction. I think it is interesting that when God is defining sin, it is presented in such an atmosphere as to picture the consequences that would follow if

one chose to disobey. He was inspiring a healthy “fear” to deter those He loved from disobedience.

Ex. 20:22 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.

Ex. 20:23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

Ex. 20:24 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.

Ex. 20:25 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.

Ex. 20:26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Then God instructs Moses to instruct the people further. They are to remember that in their view God spoke to them from heaven. He is to instruct them again that they are not to make any gods of silver or gold. Then they were told to make an altar of earth on which to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace/fellowship offerings of their sheep and cattle to God. These offerings are to be made at the places where God makes Himself known to them through special acts of provision/protection. They are warned to use only natural stones (not those touched with tools; the ones in the natural state that God made them) if they built the altar with stone; this would keep it undefiled. They are also warned not to approach the altar using steps since this might cause them to expose nakedness. Every detail surrounding the worship of Almighty God was to represent purity, holiness, righteousness and reverence.

The sacrifice represents very visibly that sin cannot be forgiven without the shedding of innocent blood. They are to use only material made by God (in its natural state) and not contaminated by sinful man’s attempts to improve on what God has provided. God’s provision is always sufficient. The matter of nakedness I think is important since this was the state in which man recognized after his disobedience that he should now feel shame and guilt before the Father.

I know it is our heart attitude that matters the most in our worship of God, but I think we have missed out in the area of worship by becoming so lax in our presentation of ourselves. When we go to God’s house for worship, we should be preparing our mind and heart attitude by preparing our person to reflect the proper respect and reverence for the one being worshipped.

The last part of verse 24 is intriguing. I think it is a statement that emphasizes the special position of the Jewish people. God is telling them that at any place the name of God is recorded/honored/remembered, it will be recognized that He is the God of Israel who will bestow blessing as He promised. It doesn’t mean that they won’t be punished as needed, but they don’t have to fear that they will lose their position as His chosen people.