

Exodus
July 8, 2007
Chapter 20

I. Credentials

Ex 20:1-2

20:1 And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. NIV

Verse 1-2 First we see that it is God speaking and then His credentials for given these commandments to the people.

Verse 2 "You" and all the second person pronouns are singular in this chapter. They are personal...from the Lord to us.

II. The Ten Commandments

Commandment #1

Ex 20: "You shall have no other gods before me. NIV

Conceptually, there can be only one God. If there were two, then which one created the other? If God is unlimited, then how can there be two unlimited beings? One would limit the other. NOTE: The "before me" translation has been much debated. It could mean "in addition to me," "in opposition to me," or "besides me." In the end, the practical application is not changed.

Commandment #2

Ex 20:4-6

4" 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. 5 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, 6 but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. NIV

The sin of Chapter 32, the Golden Calf incident, is that the Israelites made an idol of the LORD. By creating such an idol, they exert their "control" over God. When non-LORD idols are made, they represent some false god, which implies a loss of trust/worship in the true God.

Verse 5 "Punishing the children for the sin of the fathers" does not mean that one will be punished because your father sinned. It does mean that the sin of the fathers affects their children. The child has a tendency to repeat the same sin. Then the child will

be punished for that sin, whether learned from a parent or from somewhere else.

Verse 5 In humans, jealousy is often seen as negative as it leads to over protection and irrational behavior. When we speak of God as being jealous, he is jealous that we follow Him fully, because that is the way in which we can achieve optimal happiness.

Verse 6 “Thousand [generations]” is really thousands sometimes this is stated as thousands, sometimes as thousand generations.

Commandment #3

Ex 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. NIV

To assure that they do not inadvertently misuse the name of the LORD your God, the Jews write G-d and L-rd leaving out the vowels. Unfortunately, the Jew could misuse the name of the LORD even when spelling it G-d. What are some of the ways in which we can misuse the name of the Lord?

Commandment #4

Ex 20:8-11

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 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. 11 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. NIV

This is probably the commandment most discussed. Today, every day is to be holy to the Christian (see Romans 14:5 and Col 2:16-17). Note: There is a subtle difference between the NIV and other translations. The NIV implies that we remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy. Other translations tell us to remember the Sabbath, probably its significance, and to keep that holy

Commandment #5

Ex 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. NIV

As with many of the commandments, breaking this one was worthy of the death penalty in ancient Israel. While undoubtedly God wants us to honor our parents, the commandment and the severe penalty are likely implemented for an additional practical reason: Parents were supposed to teach children; a rebellious and stiff-necked child does not learn. Note:

Deut 4:25-26

25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time — if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed.

NIV

Commandment #6

Ex 20:13 "You shall not murder. NIV

This commandment and the next two are recording the Masoretic text as having only six consonants each. Each is only two words in Hebrew and could be translated as no murdering, no adultery, no stealing. Of course in Matt. 5:21-22, Jesus expands this sin based on thoughts only, not actual acts.

Commandment #7

Ex 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery. NIV

This law is specific that you cannot have sex with a married person unless you are that person's spouse and is apparently aimed at protecting marriage. It also is a proxy for describing our relationship to God, where worshipping other gods is called adultery.

Commandment #8

Ex 20:15 "You shall not steal. NIV

This one would seem to establish property rights...or at least one's inability to take property rights from someone else without due process.

Commandment #9

Ex 20:16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. NIV

This should not be constrained to giving testimony in some legal proceeding. It would also include talking with elders or others in authority and in any other official dealings, such as making a contract today. General lying is not really covered in this commandment, but is elsewhere in the law (see Lev. 19:11).

Commandment # 10

Ex 20:17 "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." NIV

While Jesus points out that thinking is involved in the other commandments, this one is pure thought. That is why when Paul gets to this commandment in Rom. 7:7, he realizes that he has no chance to keep the law fully.

III. Talk to Moses, not Us!

Ex 20:18-20

18 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance **19** and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." **20** Moses said to the people, "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." NIV

Verse 18 The implication is that they stayed at a distance greater than they needed to stay.

Verse 19 The LORD had offered to speak directly to the people. They do not want any more of that. As such, we have the establishment of the priesthood as intermediaries with God.

Verse 19 God has saved this people repeatedly by now. Yet, they do not trust in Him. While this is not as visible a rebellion as some of the other ones, this is still rebellion (#5). Basically, the Israelites are not ready for what God has offered them. Why?

Verse 20 Part of Moses' point is that sinning and being near God do not go together. Apparently God was showing that He could be scary so that they would have good reasons not to sin.

IV. The LORD Comes in Holiness

Ex 20:21-26

21 The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. **22** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: **23** Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

24 "'Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. **25** If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. **26** And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.' NIV

We see Moses is getting closer to God, but the people are not. God appears to have accepted the request of the people as the LORD is no longer speaking to the people, per their request, but is speaking to Moses. Moses will now take the laws to the people rather than God speaking them.

So, the LORD starts giving the law and rules of worship to Moses. Per the request of the people, Moses will bring this law to them. We will discuss the law next time.