

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

9-30-20

Exodus 20

Foundation for the Ten Commandments - Verses 1-2

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

20:1 Why were the Ten Commandments necessary for God's new nation? At the foot of Mount Sinai, God showed his people the true function and beauty of his laws. The commandments were designed to lead Israel to a life of practical holiness. In them, people could see the nature of God and his plan for how they should live. The commands and guidelines were intended to direct the community to meet the needs of each individual in a loving and responsible manner. By Jesus' time, however, most people looked at the law the wrong way. They saw it as a means to prosperity in both this world and the next. And they thought that to obey every law was the way to earn God's protection from foreign invasion and natural disaster. Keeping the law became an end in itself, not the means to fulfill God's ultimate law of love.

Our relationship to God - Verses 3-11

³"You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴"You shall not make for yourself an image 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 parents 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. ⁷"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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.

20:6 The Israelites had just come from Egypt, a land of many idols and many gods. Because each god represented a different aspect of life, it was common to worship many gods in order to get the maximum number of blessings. When God told his people to worship and believe in him, that wasn't so hard for them—he was just one more god to add to the list. But when he said, "you shall have no other gods before me," that was difficult for the people to accept. But if they didn't learn that the God who led them out of Egypt was the only true God, they could not be his people—no matter how faithfully they kept the other nine commandments. Thus, God made this his first commandment. Today we can allow many things to become gods to us. Money, fame, work, or

pleasure can become gods when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity, meaning, and security. No one sets out with the intention of worshiping these things. But by the amount of time we devote to them, they can grow into gods that ultimately control our thoughts and energies. Letting God hold the central place in our lives keeps these things from turning into gods.

20:7 God's name is special because it carries his personal identity. Using it frivolously or in a curse is so common today that we may fail to realize how serious it is. The way we use God's name conveys how we really feel about him. We should respect his name and use it appropriately, speaking it in praise or worship rather than in curse or jest. We should not take lightly the abuse or dishonor of his name.

20:8-11 The Sabbath was a day set aside for rest and worship. God commanded a Sabbath because human beings need to spend unhurried time in worship and rest each week. A God who is concerned enough to provide a day each week for us to rest is indeed wonderful. To observe a regular time of rest and worship in our fast-paced world demonstrates how important God is to us, and it gives us the extra benefit of refreshing our spirits. Don't neglect God's provision.

Our relationship to others - Verses 12-17

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

20:12 This is the first commandment with a promise attached. To live in peace for generations in the Promised Land, the Israelites would need to respect authority and build strong families. But what does it mean to "honor" parents? Partly, it means speaking well of them and politely to them. It also means acting in a way that shows them courtesy and respect (but not to obey them if this means disobedience to God). It means following their teaching and example of putting God first. Parents have a special place in God's sight. Even those who find it difficult to get along with their parents are still commanded to honor them.

20:16 To "give false testimony" means to lie in court. God knew that Israel could not survive unless its system of justice was incorruptible. We should be honest in our private dealings as well as in our public statements. In either situation, we "give false testimony" by leaving something out of a story, telling a half-truth, twisting the facts, or inventing a falsehood. God warns us against deception. Even though deception is a way of life for many people, God's people must not give in to it!

20:17 To covet is to wish to have the possessions of others. It goes beyond simply admiring someone else's possessions or thinking, "I'd like to have one of those." Coveting includes envy—resenting the fact that others have what you don't. God knows, however, that possessions never make anyone happy for long. Since only God can supply all our needs, true contentment is found only in him. When you begin to covet, try to determine if a more basic need is leading you to envy. For example, you may covet someone's success, not because you want to take it away from him,

but because you would like to feel as appreciated by others as he is. If this is the case, pray that God will help you deal with your resentment and meet your basic needs.

The people are afraid of the thunder, lightning, and smoke - Verses 18-21

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." ²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

20:18 Sometimes God speaks to his people with a majestic display of power; at other times he speaks quietly. Why the difference? God speaks in the way that best accomplishes his purposes. At Sinai, the awesome display of light and sound was necessary to show Israel God's great power and authority. Only then would they listen to Moses and Aaron.

20:20 Throughout the Bible we find this phrase: "Do not be afraid." God wasn't trying to scare the people. He was showing his mighty power so the Israelites would know he was the true God and would therefore obey him. If they would do this, he would make his power available to them. God wants us to follow him out of love rather than fear. To overcome fear, we must think more about his love. First John 4:18 says, "Perfect love drives out fear."

Dos and don'ts for worshipping God - Verses 22-26

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, or your private parts may be exposed.'

20:24-26 Why were specific directions given for building altars? God's people had no Bible and few religious traditions to learn from. God had to start from scratch and teach them how to worship him. God gave specific instructions about building altars because he wanted to control the way sacrifices were offered. To prevent idolatry from creeping into worship, God did not allow the altar stones to be cut or shaped into any form. Nor did God let the people build an altar just anywhere. This was designed to prevent them from starting their own religions or making changes in the way God wanted things done. God is not against creativity, but he is against us creating our own religion.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE WORDS OF JESUS

Exodus 20:3-17

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me."

Jesus said: Matthew 4:10 "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an image."

Jesus said: Luke 16:13 "No one can serve two masters."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God."

Jesus said: Matthew 5:34 "Do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne"

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

Jesus said: Mark 2:27-28 "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother."

Jesus said: Matthew 10:37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder."

Jesus said: Matthew 5:22 "Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."

Jesus said: Matthew 5:28 "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal."

Jesus said: Matthew 5:40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

Jesus said: Matthew 12:36 "Everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken."

The Ten Commandments said: Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Jesus said: Luke 12:15 "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed."