

Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 8:58 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Exodus 20

"Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me!' (Exodus 20:1-3)

Remember last week, in Exodus 19, when Moses and the children of Israel were standing at the base of Mt. Sinai, the "mountain of God," preparing for the appearance of God before them--and God told Moses to remind the people how "they themselves saw what He (God) had done to the Egyptians, and how He bore them on eagles' wings (from Egypt, through the Red Sea, through thirst and hunger in the desert, and over enemy forces), and brought them to Himself"! And then He said that "if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant, then they would be His possession among all the peoples (of the world!)...and a kingdom of priests (by being 'mediators' to the rest of the world), and a holy nation"! The people responded by saying: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And then they saw the LORD descending on Mt. Sinai (in a "theophany")...in fire and smoke...with the whole mountain quaking violently...and the sound of the trumpet growing louder and louder... and (then!) the voice of God!

And so, with this lesson, the people are about to hear what the LORD, their God, would require of them, as His "chosen people"! Beginning with the Ten Commandments, the "moral principles" of God's law! And the "climax" of the entire book of Exodus!

The Ten Commandments are commonly grouped into two categories: the first four (vs. 2-11) dealing with man's relationship with God, the other six (vs. 12-17) dealing with his relationships with others. Constable notes that God intended them (the commandments) "to govern the life of the nation, not just the behavior of individual Israelites"! And the people were to obey them both because of who He (God) was (and is)--"the LORD your God"--and based on what He had done ("bringing them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery")!

First and foremost, they were to have "no other gods before Him"! "Other gods" were non-existent pagan gods which, MacArthur notes, were made in the form of idols, and shaped by the minds of their worshipers"! The Israelites were to be totally faithful to God alone! And Moses would take it further, in Deuteronomy 6:4-15: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today (speaking of all the law) shall be on your heart! You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way...and you shall watch yourself that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him...!"

Jesus would later say in Matthew 4:10 (when Satan took Him to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give them all to Him, if He would fall down and worship him!): "It is written that you shall worship the LORD your God and serve Him only!" And He would later add (in Matthew 22:34-40)--speaking to the Pharisees--"You shall

love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind!
This is the great and foremost commandment!"

And so, the first commandment was always intended to go much further than simply "not having other gods before you"!

While the first commandment forbids worshipping a false god, the second commandment forbids worshipping the true God in a false manner! "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth!" MacArthur notes that "the mode or fashion of worship appropriate to only one Lord forbids any attempt to represent or caricature Him by use of anything He has made"! Among other things, that there is no image that we could create that could accurately portray God! Calvin wrote that "our religious worship must be governed by the power of faith, not by the power of imagination"! And that the use of images and human control over them would only infringe on the freedom of God to manifest Himself when and how He sovereignly determined!

"Taking the Lord's name in vain" (the third commandment) has to do with using His name in such a way as to bring disrepute upon His character or deeds! God's will is that we "hallow" His name, as Jesus taught His disciples in what is known as "The Lord's Prayer"!

Command #4--to "remember the Sabbath, and to keep it holy"--was given to commemorate not only the seventh day of the week, when God "rested" from His creation acts, but also to observe it as the day when God brought the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). MacArthur notes that the Sabbath was thus the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, whereas Christians are under the "new Covenant," and set aside the first day of the week to remember the resurrection of Christ (which give us "eternal rest"), with no command to observe the Sabbath.

And so, the first four commandments, dealing with man's relationship with God!

The fifth commandment--to "honor your father and your mother"--extends the relationship with God to others and, significantly, begins in the home with this commandment, which is picked up as well in the New Testament, in Ephesians 6:1-2, where Paul writes: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"! And then quotes Exodus 20:12--"Honor your father and mother (but adds: which is the first commandment with a promise!), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth"! Calvin wrote that, "in sum, we should look up to those whom God has placed over us, and treat them with honor, obedience, and gratefulness--and bend our minds to the habit of submission"!

Commandment #6, "not to commit murder," most basically, upholds the "sanctity of life" principle! But Jesus takes it further, in Matthew 5:21-22, when He said: "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder...but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court...(noting that anger and hatred define the same sinful motives of the heart that can ultimately lead to murder)!"

"You shall not commit adultery!" Commandment #7! Again, Jesus explained that the "moral content" of the law goes well beyond the act of adultery; in Matthew 5:27-28, He says: "You

have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for he has already committed adultery with her in his heart"! Wow!

Then there's commandment #8--"You shall not steal!" Taking what's not your own! (And, as noted by Jesse last night, it was originally related to "slave trading"!)

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor!" Commandment #9! Jesse labeled it as "obscuring what God is doing in the world and in your life"!

And, finally, Commandment #10--"You shall not covet your neighbor's...(whatever)! A "root attitude" (again, in the heart!) which "springs" many sins in word and deed against a neighbor! Ephesians 5:3 say, "But immorality, or any impurity or greed, must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints!"

And so, the last six commandments dealing with our relationship with others--all of which we see somehow picked up and more fully explained, and expanded, in the New Testament!

Romans 13:8-10 says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself!' Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law!" (reiterating Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-40)

And so, the question is asked: Do the Ten Commandments still apply to us--and our world--today?

Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified!"

Followed up by Galatians 3:24--"Therefore the Law has become our tutor (or "schoolmaster") to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith!"

And so, the answer is "yes"! They apply! But are we somehow then "freed from the Law," since as believers we're "not under law but under grace"? Paul poses a related question, in Romans 6:15--"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!!!" And he goes on to say, in verse 19, that we now need to "present our members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification"! And so, the law, the "law of Christ," in this sense, applies!

Interestingly, Roy Aldrich wrote in his paper, "The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatement in the New Testament," that "none of the Ten Commandments reappear in the New Testament for this age of grace as 'Mosaic legislation,' (but) all of the moral principles of the ten laws do reappear in the New Testament in a framework of grace"! (That says it well and affirms our own analysis above as to how the moral principles of the Mosaic law are picked up in

the New Testament through the "law of Christ"! The moral principles and implications, in the New Testament, in fact, go even further!)

Longman and Dillard wrote, in their "Introduction to the Old Testament," that the Christian must think through contemporary ethical issues with the Ten Commandments as a guide, e.g., how does the commandment not to steal apply to computer theft? And how does commandment not to kill apply to the abortion pill?"

Bernard Ramm writes that "the influence of the Ten Commandments on Western morality and law is beyond calculation! They have come to be recognized as the basis of all public morality"! (Still?) By contrast, Joyce Baldwin notes "how tragic it is that it is now illegal to post a copy of the Ten Commandments in any American public school classroom"! (And that seems more in line with where things are headed in our world!)

Well, this is only the start of looking into God's law, the Mosaic covenant, and their implications for us as given in Exodus!

May God be with you all!

Lowell