

## **EXODUS 20:1-3 NO OTHER GODS**

Deut 4:33

Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, and survived? We have to be struck by this question. God had spoken to a nation as the people stood at the foot of the mountain of God observing and in awe of the lightning, thunder, the trumpet blasts, the fire and the smoke. It struck terror in their hearts. Fear dominated them, but they still survived before the immortal invisible God only wise. This was God's intention, to make the people have a high, holy, fear of Him. They were at the great mountain which shook. God was showing His authority. God spoke to His people, they heard, and they survived. That is the mercy and grace and miracle of God.

We come now to what may be the most widely known passage in all of the Old Testament. These verses have been read, pondered, and memorized more than any others. The average person, even non-church goers, know something of the 10 commandments. These 10 words that came out of the darkness and fire were binding on those people 3,500 years ago. It was a nation that was just being formed. This covenant defined and bound Israel to God and played a founding charter for the rest of the law pertaining to details of life. Israel was formed as a nation to worship God. They were now bound to the one true God. These commands are given by God to a people who have been delivered out of bondage. In the previous chapter, God was demonstrating His holiness and His character, what He is like. They reflect the manner in which His people are to be holy. What better way to follow that introduction to His holiness by bringing forth this covenant. They were to know God and be transformed into His likeness and that effected every area of their lives. This is a covenant with the Creator. God was actually speaking to them, letting them know who He is and what He expects them to do.

As for us, the ten commandments are as binding on us today as they were on the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. They are very relevant. We too must respond to the words that God has spoken.

### **THE TEN WORDS----GOD HAS SPOKEN HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE 10?**

In Al Mohler's new book, Words From The Fire, Mohler suggested several realities to be a framework for our thinking.

1. As a result of God speaking, there are certain realities.

#### We know He has spoken

If God spoke, then people must hear what their Creator has said.

This is a personal revelation and it is more than information, it is meeting the living God. God revealed His mind and will.

The fact that He has revealed Himself to us, is the greatest knowledge that any human could ever have. We can't act like

we don't know and be ignorant. All people are accountable for what they have heard. What remains is whether one will obey.

We know only because of His mercy

Everything we know is by His mercy, for no one could have known unless He spoke. He did not have to reveal Himself in any way. But He did do this and it showed what a merciful God He is by communicating in human language.

We have to speak

Because God has spoken, would we want to keep it quiet and not tell anyone? We are to tell the truth and make it clear. He spoke, so we must speak.

It is all for our good

Although God gives warnings and judges, the people are to hear the warnings, obey the Word, and not suffer the consequences of disobedience.

It is for our redemption

God has been a redeeming God from the very outset. He took Israel out of Egypt which was redemption.

We must obey

Because He allows His people to hear the very Word of God, He has demands to obey His commands. His words are given so they will hear and obey.

We must trust

Because God has spoken His Word, we are to trust in His Word.

We must witness

If God has spoken, it comes with a commission

2. Law and grace

What relationship do we as Christians have with the 10 commandments? Does the Law have any authority over us in comparison to the covenant of Christ? This does present a complexity. If one believes in continuity, they have to keep in mind the difference between Israel under the law and the church under the covenant of grace. If one believes in discontinuity, he has to see that the law of Christ fulfills the law of Moses and extends it. In the NT, nine of the ten commands are repeated. It is a continuity/ discontinuity.

There is grace in the law. To receive these words was definitely grace from God. There is restraint in the law that we should be thankful for. This law was given without confusion.

3. Law fulfilled in Christ

Christ came to fulfill the law and we could not do that. In fact, the law kills us. The law hurts us, but it makes us see our need for it to be fulfilled, and that is in Christ. That is how we can have a right standing before God. Christ's righteousness is placed upon us.

Because of that, we have the privilege of entering the very throne room of God, something the Israelites could not do at that time.

4. Law as teacher

We are no longer under the law but we are taught by the law.

It first, drives us to Christ. The reformers debated whether there were two uses or three uses of the law. Luther and Calvin agreed that the law is used to show sin. The second use they also agreed on that the law was to be used for civil use. The third use is the one they

disagreed on. Are we as Christians to use the law to teach us today? Calvin taught that the law is used for Christians. Luther denied it. But he did not deny it in practice. He taught and preached the ten commandments.

## **1. INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER            V 1**

A covenant had different parts to it. It would have an introduction, an historical prologue, and the terms of it. This first part is the introduction to the covenant.

### **A. A LAW OF GOD'S MAKING**

The Source is God and His words are from Him. This is the infinite eternal Majesty of heaven and earth. There is power from the King of kings.

### **B. A LAW OF HIS OWN SPEAKING**

The Words God has had many ways to speak to man. But God had never spoken like this before. Perhaps 20:2-17 is spoken to Moses and all the people at the foot of the mountain. The reaction of the people in verse 19, "speak to us yourself" implies they just heard God speaking and they tell Moses to not let this happen again. God's voice was too much for them to hear.

This law God had given to man before (it was written in his heart) but sin had so tainted that knowledge, that it was necessary to revive the knowledge of it. It was made evident by the way He spoke. These key foundational laws were not new or fresh in that they were totally ignorant of them. Knowledge of God's law was not completely effaced from man. There was a law from the fall, to Noah, to Abraham, to Sinai. It was not absent. People knew it was wrong to murder, to steal, to lie, etc. They did not live oblivious to the law. The commandments were known in the conscience of man. Even pagans knew of the law.

But now, the law is made visible. It is etched upon their minds as they experience the character of God. God is great, powerful, and holy as the mountain is shaking.

We also must be impressed as His voice speaks from Sinai. We have to be awed by His power, presence, might, and glory. We realize our weakness and frailty. He is a speaker of holiness. We should fear and tremble at His brightness as they and Moses stood before Him. We cannot be flippant or live in a careless way. We must make much of this awesome display. His law highlights the need of a savior. We have sinned against everyone of His commandments We can't approach His holiness for we are worthy of death. But behold, we have the Mediator, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

## **2. HISTORICAL PROLOGUE                            V 2**

### **A. WHO GOD IS**

I am Yahweh--6:6, 7:5 This is the self-existent one, independent, eternal, and the fountain of all being and power.

### **B. WHAT GOD HAS DONE**

He had done so many things for them already. He had established a relationship with them. I am your God. This God delivered His people from oppression and is providing for them everything they needed. He was the God in covenant with them.

As for us, we must see Christ here. Christ leads His people out of bondage to sin. God's redeeming purpose is reflected here even in the giving of the law.

### **3. TERMS OF THE COVENANT (1<sup>ST</sup> COMMANDMENT) THE FRAMEWORK FROM WHICH THE OTHERS ARE UNDERSTOOD V 3**

#### **A. MONOTHEISM**

There are to be no other gods before Him. Not Baal, Dagon, Zeus, Allah. There is one God and only one God. What is definitely assumed here is monotheism. Monotheism cut against the grain at that time.

Israel was to be set apart from the surrounding nations. They were to worship only Yahweh. Israel had lived in Egypt for over 400 years, and Egypt was polytheistic. God defeated those gods in quite a demonstrable way. The plagues claimed victory over those gods.

It meant that Yahweh was the only one worthy of worship.

This first commandment gets to the heart of what it means to be God's people. They had been around false gods and they would go to a land which was dominated by many gods. They must keep this statement ever before them and they did as they repeated the shema everyday. That was "the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

There are many false gods in our day, such as paganism, world religions, and cults. These gods are finite and not omnipotent, nor omniscient, nor omnipresent, nor sovereign. Secularization has taken the place of God and that is the god our culture worships.

#### **B. TOTAL ALLEGIANCE DEMANDED**

Dare we have other gods. Sometimes our families can be gods.

Sometimes our jobs can be gods. Ministry can even be a god.

Above all those is pride which makes a god of self. This can be the biggest danger for it gives the glory and honor to the self.

We must have the right perspective or we break the first commandment.

God is the sovereign God and we are in His power. There must be a response from us, for Mt Sinai demands the deepest respect and our undivided attention. We were created to give Him glory.

Obedience is the best way to show our allegiance and love for God.

#### **C. EXCLUSIVITY**

In our time, like past history, pluralism and culturalism seem to reign.

It is quite unpopular to say that Christianity is the only way. It is so narrow. Of course Christ is one who expressed that clearly.

John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Cor 8:4-6

There is only one God, one Savior, one gospel.

God was saying: "You dare not bring even the acknowledgement of any other so-called god into my face." This is monotheism.

The one true, monotheistic God revealed Himself in Christ. In Christ we truly come to know what it means to fulfill the first commandment.

**We need to preach and teach people in our nation the first commandment.**