

THE PENTATEUCH II: EXODUS

WEEK 4

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① THE DECALOGUE

Loving God
Loving Others

② THE GOLDEN CALF

Replacing God
Israel's Leadership

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The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) has a quick but essential introduction:
Exodus 20:2-I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

There are a few reasons for this:

- ① This is a standard format in all of Scripture, linking imperatives to indicatives (Cf. Declaration preceding Covenant of Circumcision)
- ② God is linking himself to a very specific historical act, which becomes a benchmark for centuries (recall History theme)
- ③ God is linking his moral demands to his incredible power
- ④ God is laying claim to them, morally, because he redeemed them from slavery to be his treasured possession, nation of priests (Cf. 19:5,6)
"treasured possession" ... denotes a private royal fortune to be used according to the king's own discretion and interests in contradistinction to the general reserves needed for governing his realm (Deut.7:6; 14:2; 26:18). in other words, Israel will be the King's "private property" personally owned for his personal use. (Waltke 2007, 407)

The first and most essential commandments involve getting right *who is God*.
(Cf. Deut 6:5)

Exodus 20:3-6—You shall have no other gods before Me. 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. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

NB: The language of jealousy is closer to the righteous anger of a cuckold husband. (Cf. Ezekiel 16, Hosea)

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- As the center of all being, everything funnels towards God. He is the proper object of our worship, adoration, and submission.
- Since God is the creator, our ethics flow out from how he created the world and us
- Worship of any aspect of the created order debases Him and us (his Images).
- The first sin involved trusting Satan's (another "god") word over God's; i.e. our actions flowed out of our beliefs
- Neighboring ANE religions had radically distinct moral outlooks (Cf. Lev 18:3,24), either permitted or encouraged by their cultic practices.

The first two commands are related but distinct. Together these clearly exclude all idols. The way they're distinct comes out here:

Deut 4:12; 15-18—Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. . . So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth.

Why then would God permit himself to appear as a man in Christ?

Stereotypically, conservative Christians indicate that this means using 'God' as an exclamation or some kind of swearing.

Exodus 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.

What do you think?

- Kaiser (1990) writes, "The 'name' ... stands for so much more than the mere pronouncing of his title of address. It includes (1) his nature, his being, and very person..., (2) his teaching or doctrine..., and (3) his moral and ethical teaching."
- The way names work in the ancient world suggest that this has much more to do with lowering God and his nature *in toto* rather than the utterance of a certain sound (Cf. Ex 6:3)
- In particular, most interpreters observe that the prohibition is against false prophecy or people summoning God's name inappropriately in oaths—adding a layer of "protection" to their own words.
- I think the flippant 'Oh my God!' and 'Jesus Christ!' used as exclamations are not good. Yet, such examples are neither the point of this verse, nor as serious as the camels swallowed by many fussy Christians.

What should our relationship be to the following?

Exodus 20:8-10- Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Cf. Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:27; Romans 14:15; Colossians 2:16

Recall the gap hypothesis for Genesis 1. The following passage makes it very hard to maintain:

Exodus 20:11-For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Why?

- The only thing that theory has going for it is that the word 'was' in Gen 1:2 could be read 'became' but that only includes *the earth*. (not the heavens, sea, etc.)
- This passage uses nearly identical language to Gen 1:1. It's settled if 'create' and 'made' are synonymous in Hebrew (as in English).
- This passage forces us to give some measure of accord to the seven days—even if we draw a perfect connection to modern science.

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In what ways do these express God's moral character? Bonus for using Scripture!

V	Honor your Father & Mother
VI	You Shall Not Murder
VII	You Shall Not Commit Adultery
VIII	You Shall Not Steal
IX	You Shall Not Bear False Witness

This commandment is probably the most difficult to keep. This is the only commandment (in social ethics) that explicitly strikes at the heart.

Exodus 20:17- You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Waltke (2007, 433) observes:

The commandment points out the weakness of the Torah, which is helpless to change the depravity of the human heart as Paul testified from his own lament in Romans 7. One may strive and keep outward commandments pertaining to human relationship, as indeed the rich young ruler did (Mark 10:17-31), but the tenth commandment shows up the futility of trying to attain righteousness by keeping the Torah. Indeed, a Torah that cannot effect righteousness is doubly painful, for it both frustrates and condemns. Thus, the Ten Commandments anticipates an expectation for a new covenant, a covenant that will effect righteousness in the heart.

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One of the most striking portions of this narrative is here:

Exodus 32:1,4b- Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god [(b)] who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." . . . [(a)] This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

There is a blatant replacement operation here both regarding (a) God's historical work and (b) his future leadership.

A key explanatory piece is that *sin makes us insane*:

- Isaiah 44:15-17—Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, “Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god.”
- Romans 1:21-23 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Cf. Developed vs Undeveloped Cultures

Some brief remarks on “idolatry movement”-

- ① In the last few years there has been an inordinate amount of ‘idol’ talk (pun intended?), most likely inspired by Tim Keller’s *Counterfeit Gods*.
- ② I don’t think this is bad *per se* but I think it ends up being misleading, drawing our eyes to the law rather than to Christ.
- ③ There are a few (< 5) direct warnings about idols proper
- ④ The only time the New Testament uses idols in this analogical sense, it refers to *money*:
 - Colossians 3:5- “dead to . . . greed, which amounts to idolatry.”
 - Matthew 6:24-“No one can serve two masters. . . ”
- ⑤ Ironically, *money* actually receives a ton of air time in the New Testament!

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Aaron is an example of how NOT TO LEAD. What are some examples?

Here are a few details that demonstrate Aaron's weakness in this episode:

EXO 32:4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. (*Leading From Behind*)

EXO 32:5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." (*Soft Leadership*—too little too late)

EXO 32:22 "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil" (*Blaming the Flock*)

EXO 32:24 "I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf." (*Rationalizing and/or Diminishing Own Role*)

Moses explicitly takes up the task of interceding in behalf of Israel (32:30), even to the point of sacrificing his own life (32:32).

Noteworthy what God accepts:

EXO 32:12 “Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’?”

EXO 32:13 “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. . .”

“Moses defends *the Lord* before the Lord” (Blackburn, 173)

- ① Blackburn, W. Ross. *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus*. IVP, 2012.
- ② Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 2: Exodus*, edited by Frank Gaebelein. Zondervan, 1990.
- ③ Ndjerareou, Abel. "Exodus," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo. Zondervan, 2006.
- ④ Waltke, Bruce K. and Charles Yu. *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. Zondervan, 2007.