

# CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
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## DHW BIBLE CLASS

### LESSON 15

### EXODUS

### CHAPTER 20

## INTRODUCTION

God told Moses that if the people would hear His voice and keep His covenant, then they would be “a peculiar treasure,” “a kingdom of priests,” and “an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6). This covenant God made with Moses and the people of Israel is not a completely new covenant that cancels the previous covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17). The covenant God made with Moses here at Mount Sinai, commonly known as the Mosaic Covenant, is a covenant of law that expresses the intention of God in our relationship with Him and with one another.

The giving of the law begins here with the Ten Commandments, literally, “ten words.”<sup>1</sup> These “ten words” give the fundamental moral laws regulating our relationship with God and with man. Considering them together, the Ten

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<sup>1</sup> These “ten words” or the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue (another given name) are repeated in Deuteronomy 5:6-21).

Commandments encompass a vertical and a horizontal relationship. We learn straightaway that in life, man’s relationship with God and with his fellow-men is all that matters — God oriented, and man-oriented. Some people have criticised these moral laws as being too restrictive. But a proper study of these laws will show that they are not restrictive but in reality liberating. The eight commandments which are stated in the negative form actually focus on the limits of a person’s conduct to the extent that it does not undermine another person’s freedom.

One more characteristic of these “ten words” is that they are written as absolutes. The keeping of these commandments is not conditioned by any external force or situation. The motivating or compelling force is the LORD God, the combination name of the ever present and personal LORD (*Yahweh*) with the Almighty Creator God (*Elohim*), and that is sufficient ground for all to obey the commandments. In addition, the LORD God reminded the children of Israel that He had delivered them out of Egypt and out of the “house of bondage” (20:2). In view of the mercies of God, Israel should keep His covenant.

The commandment “Thou shalt not,” and the word “thou” is addressed to the second person singular. The second person pronoun in the English language “you” has no equivalent. It tells us that the commandments concern every individual and not Israel as a whole.

The study of this chapter should bear fruits of repentance and re-consecration to the Lord our God and improve our relationship with our fellow men.

### OUTLINE

#### A. GOD GAVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS TO ISRAEL (EXODUS 20:1-2)

1. The Originator of the Ten Commandments is God (v.1)
2. The Motivation for keeping the Ten Commandments is God (v.2)
  - a. The acknowledgement of the LORD God (2a)
  - b. The reminder of the deliverance from bondage in Egypt (2b)

#### B. THE FIRST PART OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:3-9).

1. The people must not have other gods before the LORD God (v.3)
2. The people must not make unto themselves any carved image of anything (vv.4-5)
  - a. The people must not bow down themselves to any image nor serve them (v.5)
  - b. The LORD God is a "jealous God"
  - c. God would "visit the iniquities of the father upon the children

to the third and fourth generation"

- d. God would show mercy unto thousands who love and obey Him
3. The people must not take the name of the LORD their God in vain (v.7)
4. The people must keep the Sabbath holy unto the LORD (vv.8-11)
  - a. Six days shall the people work (v.9)
  - b. The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD (10a)
  - c. No member of the family must work on that day (10b)
  - d. The reason for keeping the Sabbath holy is because God hallowed it (11)

#### C. THE MIDDLE PART OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:12)

1. The people must honour their parents (11a)
2. The LORD God promises long life in the land they live (11b)

#### D. THE FINAL PART OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:13-17)

1. The people must not commit murder (v. 13)
2. The people must not commit adultery (v.14)
3. The people must not steal (v.15)

4. The people must not lie (v.16)
5. The people must not covet after other people's possessions (v.17)

**E. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS AWESOME APPEARANCE BEFORE ISRAEL (EXODUS 20:18-21)**

1. The people were terrified when they saw the awesome sight of the mountain on fire and the thundering voice of God (v.18)
2. They acknowledged Moses as their mediator between God and them (v.19)
3. Moses allayed their fear and explained God's purpose (v.20, 21)

**F. GOD'S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING WORSHIPPING HIM (EXODUS 20:22-26)**

1. God sanctified Moses before the people (v.22)
2. God reiterated that they must not make gods of silver and gold (v.23)
3. God instructed them on the manner of worshipping Him (vv.24-26)
  - a. They should build an altar of earth at the place God would show them to offer their sacrifices to God (v.24)
  - b. If they make an altar of stone they must not carve it (v.25)
  - c. The altar must not have steps leading to it (v.26)

**COMMENTARY**

**The LORD our God is One LORD**

*Thou shall have no other gods before me* (20;3). This commandment singles out the religion of Israel as monotheistic — the belief in one God. This sets Israel apart from all her neighbouring countries, which worshipped a plurality of gods, namely, of the Egyptians and the Canaanites.

This commandment forbids the worship of other gods. In reality, there are no other gods. People may worship other gods which are figures of their imagination; these are man-made gods. As Christians, we know this.<sup>2</sup> But there is one and only one God, and He is *Yahweh, El Shaddai* — the LORD God Almighty, who revealed that of Himself to Moses and Abraham.<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis is, not just to establish that there is only one LORD God, but it is also a call to undivided allegiance, loyalty and commitment to Him, as expressed in the phrase "before me". The command is not just to the children of Israel, although it was first

<sup>2</sup> In his discussion about food offered to idols, Paul mentioned that idols are no gods although they are called gods. *But to us, Paul wrote, there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him* (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

given to them through Moses. The word “thou” (second person singular, used by the KJV translators) applies universally to every individual. The duty of man is to worship His Creator God, who is *Yahweh*, for “all the earth is mine” (19:5). Not to do so renders him guilty of sinning against God by breaking the greatest commandment of all.<sup>4</sup> The penalty of sin is death and everlasting separation from God. But there is a way of salvation, and it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came and gave His Life by the shedding of His blood on the cross for every sinner. Confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that God had raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved.<sup>5</sup>

As Christians, our total allegiance and commitment to the LORD God is unquestionable and indisputable. Paul aptly reasons in his epistle to the Romans, that by the mercies of God, we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1, 2). He calls for a total sacrifice or commitment of our life to God. We are unworthy and deserving of death, but God saved us whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So this call to

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

acknowledge the LORD God and worship Him only, totally, completely and wholeheartedly is our logical response. No other person, not even our parents, wife, children, and friends or even other things such as our career, pastimes and money should come before God. This is an expression of our love to God, for He is GOD.

### **Worship No Carved Image**

*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them* (20:4, 5). This second commandment is akin to the first in that it prohibits man to worship the True and Living God thru man-made images or objects; for GOD is Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit & in Truth as our LORD Jesus taught the disciples. Man must not make any carved object to represent the true God. Each man may claim that his man-made image or idol is a true representation of God, and that he is worshipping the same God as the Jews and Christians. This second commandment forbids such way of worshipping the LORD God.

This **sin of idolatry** was later committed by the Israelites (Exodus 32). The people of Israel became impatient because Moses was too long up on the mountain with God. They called Aaron to make a god to lead them. Aaron made a golden calf, and they said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (v.4). They made a golden calf to represent the LORD God, clearly

breaking God's second commandment. Later, the Israelites sinned again. This time they worshipped the brazen serpent instead (2 Kings 18:4), which was once used by God for healing the people who were bitten by the fiery serpents (Numbers 21:6-9).

The Roman Catholic church has made carved images of the crucifix of the Lord Jesus Christ, and pictures and idols of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and they worship these images. They explained that they do not worship the images but what they represented, which is an excuse. The commandment clearly and categorically declares that we must not make any carved image of God or anything and bow down and serve them (meaning, worship them). Roman Catholics bow, kneel and pray before these images.

We must be watchful over ourselves that we do not commit the same sin by using any other objects to represent God or the Lord Jesus Christ, in particular, the emblem of the cross. If we hang a cross in our homes to remind us of Christ, it is not breaking this commandment. Just like pictures in books, which are drawn to tell the story of Jesus. We break the commandment when we make these into objects of worship. In this regard, some even worship the Bible. This is nothing but idolatry.

The interesting basis of this commandment is that God says that He is a jealous God. The word "jealous" in Hebrew is a strong word. It is in its

present form here as referring to God. It is a word that expresses a very strong feeling. It is however, unlike the kind of jealousy humans have which is sometimes petty and suspicious. The jealousy described of God portrays Him like One who cares and loves another when the latter's devotion is being drawn away. God will not permit another to usurp His place of devotion to Him and if that happens, because of His holiness, the person is deprived of the care and affection, which He would bestow on him. God is a jealous God for His people.

If anyone who is the object of His love, breaks this commandment, it is tantamount to hating God, and the consequences of his sin would affect future generations. This cannot mean that children are punished for the sins of their parents. Scripture clearly teaches that each individual is responsible and accountable for his sins.<sup>6</sup> Each soul is accountable for the final judgement and punishment upon himself. No one is punished by God for the sins of another. But that does not mean the consequences of our sins do not affect other people. The mad man takes a machine gun and shoots at others, who suffer as a result of his sin. Drunkards and drugs addicts affect not only

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<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 18:20 The **soul** that **sinneth**, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

themselves, but their families and even others. On the other hand, for those who love God and would live righteously before Him, God would show mercy for countless generations.

### **Honour the Name of God**

*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain (20:7).* This is the third commandment. The name of a person is associated with the reality of his personality, character and conduct. Therefore, his name is not to be taken lightly. The name of God is the embodiment of His Personality and Being. It must not be taken lightly. This commandment prohibits the profane and careless use of God's name. To use the name of God "in vain" is to use it without any grounds, emptily and without any basis, to use it carelessly and frivolously.

Every child of God bears the name of God. Every Christian bears the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a child of God, we must be careful how we speak and behave. We must not utter profane words that would bring dishonour to the name of God. We must not dishonour God by misrepresenting Him to others. God's name has to be honoured, praised, blessed, extolled and exalted, celebrated and magnified. This breach of this commandment is so serious that it will not be unpunished. The LORD states very clearly that He would punish the offender. What the punishment might be, the LORD did not reveal. But the offender will be punished for sure. We must therefore be very

careful that we do not take the name of the LORD our God in vain. This requires that we know Him more and not be careless in our speech and ways.

*(To be continued next lesson)*

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Exodus 20:1-7;  
Deuteronomy 5:6-11; 10:12; 1  
Corinthians 8:1-6

**TUESDAY:** Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew  
12:1-13; John 7:23; 9:14

**WEDNESDAY:** Exodus 20:12-17;  
Matthew 5:21-32; 15:3-6; 19:18-19;  
Colossians 3:5

**THURSDAY:** Exodus 20:18-21; Isaiah  
41:1-3; Matthew 10:30-31

**FRIDAY:** Exodus 20:22-26;  
Deuteronomy 27:5-6; Luke 18:9-14

**Discussion Questions**

1. What was the basis on which the  
LORD required Israel to keep His  
words?

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2. Does the first commandment imply  
that there are “other gods”?

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3. Does 20:4 mean that one cannot  
make any visual images (painting,  
sculpture, and the like) of anything at  
all? Explain.

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4. What “other gods” take us away from  
wholehearted devotion to the LORD?

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5. How can we be guilty of misusing God's name?

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6. How can we observe God's Sabbath today?

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7. How do we honour our parents?

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8. How would you interpret the promise given to those who honour their parents?

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9. What positive value does each of the sixth to the tenth commandments reflect?

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10. In what way is coveting against God?

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11. How would you describe true fear and the feeling-fear?

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12. How would you summarise God's rule for altars?

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13. Are God's laws a curse or a blessing to mankind?

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