

“God Gets First Place”

Exodus 20:1-3

Pastor John Miller

I. Introduction

A. Why study the Ten Commandments?

1. They were given over 3,500 years ago
2. Three reasons:
 - a) “God spoke all these words” (v. 1)
 - 1) If God is speaking, we need to listen
 - 2) We must listen reverently
 - 3) We must listen obediently
 - a. Illustration- In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled that the Ten Commandments could be posted on the walls of public schools in Kentucky
 - b) Because they are commandments, not suggestions
 - 1) Although they were given to Israel, they are universal
 - a. A foundation for all moral and ethical law
 - b. Given from God, the moral law giver
 - c) Because they are written in stone by the finger of God
 - 1) Not with chalk or an erasable blackboard
 - 2) Like God, they are immutable
3. Without God, there can be no transcendent, absolute objective moral standard
 - a) The Ten Commandments start with God, and He is the fixed starting point
4. We need God and His words
 - a) Perhaps more than ever in our history as a nation
 - b) Without God and His laws, we are hopelessly lost
 - c) We are left to “every man doing what is right in his own eyes”
 - d) God’s laws are for our good to liberate us and to love and live

B. What is the background and setting for the Ten Commandments?

1. God gave His moral law, ceremonial law, and civil law
2. All but one of the ten laws are found in the New Testament
3. What is the purpose of the ten laws?
 - a) To reveal God’s holiness
 - b) To restrain evil
 - c) To reveal our sin and our need for a savior
 - 1) (Romans 7:7)
 - 2) (John 1:17)
 - 3) Jesus came not to destroy the law...
 - 4) As Christians, Jesus is our righteousness. We have His Holy Spirit.
 - a. (Romans 8:4)

C. The Law’s two divisions

1. Our love for God (vv. 1-4)
2. Our love for others (vv. 5-10)

3. Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was
- D. We now come to the first commandment
 1. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (v. 3)
 2. I want you to note the three things about this first command
 - a) It has an assertion
 - 1) The reality of God
 - b) It has a prohibition
 - 1) The priority of God
 - c) It implies an invitation
 - 1) The personality of God

II. The Assertion (The Reality of God) (Exodus 20:2)

- A. “I am the Lord thy God...” (v. 2)
 1. God asserts His reality
 - a) Illustration- (Genesis 1:1)
 - 1) It refutes atheism because the universe was created by God
 - 2) It refutes pantheism, for God is transcendent to that which He created
 - 3) It refutes polytheism, for one God created all things
 - 4) It refutes materialism, for matter had a beginning
 - 5) It refutes dualism, because God was alone when He created
 - 6) It refutes humanism, because God, not man, is the ultimate reality
 - 7) It refutes evolutionism because God created all things
 - b) “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God” (Psalm 14:1)

III. The Prohibition (Exodus 20:3)

- A. We see the priority and the primacy of God
 1. Nothing must come before God in our hearts and lives
 - a) God must have first place
 2. The danger for Israel?
 - a) Egypt, Canaan
 3. Every person has a god or gods. We all worship something.
 4. Here, in the first command, God says you must worship Him exclusively. Why?
 - a) Because of who He is
 - 1) “I am”
 - 2) He is eternal
 - 3) He is self-existent
 - a. (Exodus 3:14)
 - 4) God said to Moses, “I am who I am”
 - a. His power
 - 5) It is Jesus
 - b) “The Lord your God”
 - 1) He is a personal God
 - 2) Only He can satisfy
 - c) Ask yourself what it is that you worship. What is your God?
 - 1) The god of self

- 2) The god of money
 - a. Illustration- The rich young ruler
- 3) The god of pleasure
 - a. Food, wine, etc....
 - b. (Philippians 3:19)
- 4) The god of fashion
- 5) The god of popularity
- 6) The god of possessions/materialism
 - a. The foolish farmer
- 7) The god of sports
- 8) Your family, your job, your house, your car
 - a. These are all false Gods and cannot satisfy
5. Because of what He has done (v. 2b)
 - a) God redeemed Israel from Egypt
 - b) We as Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (the cross)
 - c) Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)
 - d) Only one God and only one way to God (Jesus)

IV. An Invitation

- A. It is the positive side of the negative prohibition, "you shall have no other gods before me"
 1. R. Kent Hughes called this "a positive grace"
 2. The positive, clear implication is "you shall have me"
 3. If we reject all false gods for the true and living God, then He becomes "thy God"
 4. There is God's grace and goodness
 5. Jesus said, "no man can serve two masters"
 6. The first commandment is a call to choose
 - a) Illustration- Elijah, "choose this day whom you will serve"
 7. The true and living God must reign on your heart and life without a rival
 - a) "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"
 - b) God must have first place!

V. Conclusion

- A. Pray and take some time to reflect
- B. Repent
- C. Return to the Lord
 1. He will forgive you and be your God
 - a) God wants to have us so we can have Him!