



FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM | *The Story of Israel*
the books of EXODUS & LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

CLASS INSTRUCTIONS

Every Class will have Biblical reading for preparation. However, *we will not read the whole text in classes.* Please **pre-read** before the class. *Take Home Review Sheets* for notes will be provided on a weekly basis.

Regarding Health and Safety, we will sit in comfortable distanced seating during class – and it is recommended that masks be worn to your seat and as you leave.

#FALL 2020

LESSON SCHEDULE

1.	9/8	Introduction to the Class and the Exodus of Israel
2.	9/15	Bondage and the Rise of the Deliverer Exodus 1-2
3.	9/22	The Call of the Deliverer Exodus 3:1-4:23
4.	9/29	Liberation Begins Exodus 5:1-6:30
5.	10/6	The Prophet and The Power of God Exodus 7:1-10:29
6.	10/13	The Prophet and The Power of God (2) Exodus 11:1-12:51
7.	10/20	The March to Freedom Exodus 14-15
8.	10/27	The Journey of Complaint and the Testing of the People Exodus 16-17
9.	11/3	Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver Exodus 18-19
10.	12/1	Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code Exodus 20
11.	12/8	Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and Capital Crimes (Exodus 21).
12.	12/15	Covenant Ordinances: Holiness (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): <i>"You must be holy" involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithe</i> (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34).
13.		The Covenant Calendar Special days of the Tabernacle (Ex. 23:14-17; 31:12-17; 34:18, 21-26; 35:1-3; Lev. 16:1-34; 19:30; 23:1-44; 25:1-24; 26:2): The Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:1-3; Lev. 19:30; 23:1-3; 26:2); The Sabbath Year (Lev. 25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-24); *The Passover (Lev. 23:4-5); The Festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 34:18; Lev. 23:6-8); The Festival of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14); The Festival of Harvest (Lev. 23:15-22); The Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25); The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32); The Festival of Tabernacles (Shelters) (Lev. 23:33-44).
14.		Continued The Covenant Calendar

Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code | Exodus 20

The Decalogue (i.e. the Ten Commandments) is one of the keys to understanding the Old Testament. It is both the beginning and the heart of the Mosaic Law. Around these ‘ten words’ as they have been called, it is possible to group most of the provisions of the ‘book of the covenant’ in chapters 21-23, and around the book of the covenant in turn to group the rest of the Torah, like an introductory summary of the Law. In other words, these ten commandments are the essence of the Law outlined for us first, and then the more detailed documentation of the Law will follow. The designation, however, was given by God Himself (Ex. 34:28).

It is also significant that verse 1 of chapter 20 begins by informing us that these commandments were not indirectly given to the Israelites, but were spoken by God directly: “Then God spoke all these words, saying ...” (Exodus 20:1). They were first spoken orally to the people (Exod. 20; Heb 12:18-21). Also, they were written on two tablets of stone by the very hand of God (Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; Deut. 5:22). And the first tablets were broken by Moses (Exod. 32:19) and were re-written by God (Exod. 34:1, 28-29).

In their original setting, they were designed to keep Israel pure and distinct from the surrounding nations. And in so doing, they would bring Israel, and all people, to Christ (Gal. 2:16-21; 3:11). They are a revelation of the will of God (Rom. 2:18) for Israel. And as is often pointed out in the New Testament, they were a revealer of sin (Rom. 3:19-20, 4:15, 5:20, 7:7; 1Cor. 15:56). And in so doing, they were to be a restraint on evil (Rom. 7; 1Tim. 1:8-11). They do not give power but set a clear standard and provide a resume of morality – condensed statements of how to live successfully. In one sense, the rest of the Bible comments, amplifies, interprets, warns, and gives historical examples of those who kept or broke them and of the consequences. As such, then, they are a roadmap to happiness – each could be phrased as a beatitude (Deut. 5:29; 10:12-13). The God who made us knows how best we should operate to know maximum happiness.

The Structure of the Decalogue | It is noticeable that there are only three positive statements made in verses 2-17, while the remaining statements are negative—or prohibitions. This has led some to view the commandments as having a three-fold division. Seen in this way, the commandments can be outlined in this way: Israel’s Worship (vss. 2-7); Israel’s Work (vss. 8-11); and Israel’s Walk (vss. 12-17). This is the general outline which will be assumed in our study of the commandments.

However, some have grouped the ten commandments into two sections. In general, the first division is more important than the second (Matt.22:37-40). The first four deal with duty toward God (2-7) and the last six deal with our duty toward our fellow human beings (8-17). And it has been noted that love is a common thread that links the commandments together (2Tim. 1:5; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14)

The Characteristics of the Commandments

As we consider the Ten Commandments as a whole, there are several characteristics which are noteworthy.

- (1) The content of the commandments is not new. Kaiser points out that while the commandments are formally given as God’s Law here, the Book of Genesis reveals the fact that these formalized laws were already followed, or assumed as a moral standard:
 - a. Despite its marvelous succinctness, economy of words, and comprehensive vision, it must not be thought that the Decalogue was inaugurated and promulgated at Sinai for the first time. All Ten Commandments had been part of the Law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Genesis. They are:
 - i. The first, Genesis 35:2: ‘Get rid of the foreign gods.
 - ii. The second, Genesis 31:39: Laban to Jacob: ‘But why did you steal my gods?’
 - iii. The third, Genesis 24:3: ‘I want you to swear by the Lord.’
 - iv. The fourth, Genesis 2:3: ‘God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.’
 - v. The fifth, Genesis 27:41: ‘The days of mourning my father are near.’
 - vi. The sixth, Genesis 4:9: ‘Where is your brother Abel?’

- vii. The seventh, Genesis 39:9: 'How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?'
- viii. The eighth, Genesis 44:4-7: 'Why have you stolen my silver cup?'
- ix. The ninth, Genesis 39:17: '[Joseph] came to me to make sport of me ... but ... he ran. ...'
- x. The tenth, Genesis 12:18; 20:3: 'You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.'

Of course, the Bible narratives do not pause to moralize on and establish law but instead, they presume they reader understands that the orders of creation have already given the demands. Still, there is the point that these commands have been written and are now in a covenant that Israel has agreed to keep.

- (2) The Decalogue is in the form of the suzerainty-vassal treaties of that day in the ancient Near East. Archeologists have discovered that there were certain literary forms by which treaties were made between the king and his subjects. Comparing the Decalogue with these Near Eastern treaties reveals that the same suzerainty-vassal treaty form was employed in the covenant which God gave Israel.
 - a. ... God reveals Himself precisely in those moral commandments. To Israel, the 'book of the covenant' is a definition of the terms under which God, as a great monarch, accepts Israel as His subjects under a 'suzerainty treaty' ... The 'great king' stated his identity, outlined what he had done for his prospective vassal, promised future protection and, on the grounds and basis of this, demanded exclusive loyalty and laid down certain obligations for his subjects. Often lists of curses and blessings are appended: these too are familiar from the Old Testament (Cole, pp. 150, 153).
- (3) The Decalogue, while similar in form to other Near Eastern treaties, is still unique and different in its content. While some see similarities between the Law of Moses and other Near Eastern treaties, such as the Code of Hammurabi (i.e., in the use of the formula 'if someone ... then. ...'), they are different in that the Mosaic covenant is based upon religious belief, while the Code of Hammurabi (and others) is not:
 - a. "The entire code of Hammurabi does not contain a single religious idea, not even in the laws concerning temple prostitutes and magic' (Inleiding tot den Bijbel, p. 27).
 - b. The purpose is not to inculcate godliness, but rather to regulate social relationships. And Israel's laws are, according to Wildeboer, more imbued with a spirit of mercy. But we must not forget that Hammurabi's code was intended to be a legal rather than a religious document (Gispén, p. 186).
- (4) The Decalogue is more than a constitution; it is God's standard for Israel's culture. As I was studying the commandments, it suddenly occurred to me that God was prescribing, to a large degree, the culture of the nation Israel. By giving Israel the Decalogue, God was prescribing the moral base for their culture. Remember that Israel had just emerged from the Egyptian culture. As a persecuted minority, the Egyptian culture, to which the Israelites had been exposed for 400 years, was perhaps easier to shrug off when they left that land. On the other hand, the Canaanite culture was surely not one which was to be adopted by God's people. Thus, God gave the Law to Israel to dictate not only individual conduct, but to establish a corporate code of behavior, a new culture, if you would. When God saved Israel, He did so as a nation.

R. C. Sproul's comments about the grace evident in the Old Testament Law is worth note:

We cannot deny that the New Testament seems to reduce the number of capital offenses. By comparison, the Old Testament seems radically severe. What we fail to remember, however, is that the Old Testament list represents a massive reduction in capital crimes from the original list. The Old Testament code represents a bending over backwards of divine patience and forbearance. The Old Testament Law is one of astonishing grace (R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1985, 148).

Astonishing grace? Originally the standard was, "The soul that sins shall die." Adam and Eve had the death penalty pronounced upon them because of their partaking of a forbidden fruit. That was not murder, rape, or kidnapping; it was disobedience to a simple command of God. In our society, it would

hardly rate as a misdemeanor, let alone be considered a felony, worthy of the death sentence. The Law, then, greatly reduced the number of offenses which were punishable by death. Once again, we find that the Law had an incredibly positive dimension.

To keep the commandments to a concise summary statement, God found it easier to list the few prohibitions (negatives) than to attempt to enumerate every positive freedom under the Law. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He could have walked about the garden with them saying, "This, Adam, and Eve, is a Jonathan apple tree. You may eat of its fruit." "This is a MacIntosh apple tree, of which you can eat as well." "And this is an Alberta peach tree. You may eat its peaches. ..." This could have gone on for a long time. Finally, God could then have said, "Now as for this one tree, you cannot eat of its fruit, lest you die." This method would have emphasized the freedom which they had in the garden, but it would have made the Book of Genesis a whole lot longer. And so, for the sake of brevity, God simply said, "You may freely eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, lest you die" (Gen 2:16-17).

In Exodus 20 God expressed the essence of the Old Testament Law in ten principle statements. Here, our Lord summarized the Law even more concisely, expressing its essence in two statements. If we were asked to capture the essence of the Law in but one word, based upon the response of our Lord in Matthew chapter 22, what would that one word be? Without a doubt, that word would have to be love. The Law can be summarized in this simple way: Love (1) God; and (2) your neighbor.

Now, is love a positive or a negative concept? Primarily, it is a positive concept. Secondly, it is a negative one. The reason is that love is exclusive, we love someone or something over something else. Thus, love is positive, but it has negative implications. This is precisely the way we should view the Law. It is essentially and fundamentally positive, although this positive dimension has negative implications. Finally, the Decalogue is positive because God purposed that the demands of the Decalogue would be fulfilled by one Israelite—the Messiah—not the nation.

In Exodus chapter 19 we learned that the giving of the Law was related to Israel's calling to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (v. 6). Israel was called to manifest God to the world by being a "kingdom of priests," and a "light to the Gentiles" (cf. Isa 42:6; 60:1-3). To do this Israel must keep the Law of God, not to be saved, but to manifest the character of God. If Israel were to represent God, they must be like God. The Law defined how God's holiness would be manifested in the lives of men and women. When the Israelites failed to obey God's Law, they also failed to manifest their God to the nations.

However, God never had any delusions that Israel would ever live up to the standard set by the Law. After the Law was given (for the second time) in Deuteronomy, God said, "Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). Later, Joshua said, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression of your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." And Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him" (Jos 24:19-22).

The history of Israel is the account of how one generation after another failed to live up to her high calling and according to the standard of the Law. We learn from the New Testament that God knew Israel would fail and thus planned to fulfill His promise to Abraham another way.

Though Christians do not believe obeying the law in its perfection is required for salvation (for Paul said we have never, c.f. Rom 3:10-23), we still view the 10 Commandments as the foundation of God's moral law. Jesus called people to an even higher standard by obeying the commandments not only in their actions but also in their hearts. For instance, Jesus quoted the command to not commit adultery (Ex 20:14, Deut 5:18) as the basis of what the kingdom was all about.

Breaking down the commandments:

Israel's Worship | The first several commandments kept the Lord God as the focus. God created the world and everything in it. He knew what was required for a successful, holy life. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

- "You shall have no other gods before me.
- "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Exodus 20:2-7).

The initial commandments start with the relationship with the "Lord your God" (Exodus 20:2). God told his people he was their Lord, Master, and their Creator God. They should have no other gods, and they should not make idols. They should not misuse his name. These commands were a dramatic change from the Egyptian view of deity. During captivity in Egypt, they worshipped Pharaoh and other Egyptian deities like Ra, Anubis, and Osiris.

You may have noticed a warning regarding the importance of obeying the commandments; disobedience would result in "punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:4-5). God wanted his people to know that their choice either to obey or disobey his commands would influence their lives and even the lives of their grandkids. This warning may seem vindictive, but it wasn't meant to be harsh; any more than warning a kid walking along the edge of a sheer cliff face, "If you get too close to the edge of the cliff, you could fall and break your neck and die." The warning is not harsh. It is realistic, serious injury is likely in such a dangerous situation. And rejecting God's commands would have serious consequences.

Israel's Work | The Sabbath provides a bridge between their relationship of worship of God and the following commandments, which address their relationship of work with God. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:8-11).

God commanded his people to take the Sabbath for their benefit. God "blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." This phrase in the 10 Commandments is a quote from the creation account in Genesis 2:3, "Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested." God wants us to delight in His Word, enjoy his creation, celebrate beauty and love, and rejoice in the harvest. God intended for his people to enjoy their relationship with Him and each other by valuing the Sabbath. The Law itself was for Israel alone (31:16) but it was given for man (Mark 2:27).

Israel's Walk | Leaving captivity in Egypt meant establishing a new society. The law established healthy boundaries based on respect for God and other people, rather than on brute strength. Read through these laws and imagine how they would help develop a healthy community.

- **Honor Your Father and Mother.** Our relationship with our parents is the foundation for our future relationships and choices. Here's how Paul explained to new believers in Ephesians that the choice to honor your parents has consequences like enjoying a long life. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise— 'so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1-3). Parents are their kids' first teachers. Kids learn to honor their parents by seeing their parents honor God and His commandments.
- **Do Not Murder.** Then God commanded his people to not murder. Because people are made in the image of God, life has value. Murder is an intentional act that says that a person's life has no

value compared to another's priorities. An interesting note is that God did not say, "Do not kill." Hebrew has nuances that consider the difference between murder and an accidental death or an act of war.

- **You Shall Not Commit Adultery.** God commanded his people to be faithful in marriage and to respect other people's vows as a model of faithfulness in relationship with God. Adultery devalues the commitment made between a husband and wife and to God. Interestingly, God's command to not commit adultery was an equal standard for men and women. In the New Testament, Jesus called his followers to faithfulness in marriage (Matthew 5:27-28, Mark 10:11-12). Paul explained that sexual immorality was avoided by being faithful to one's spouse. "But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).
- **Do Not Steal.** God's people were also commanded to not steal. In a time when "might makes right," they were to respect each other's property rights.
- **Do Not Lie.** Living in a healthy community meant respecting others' boundaries. Lying devalues and disrespects another person by not telling the truth.
- **You Shall Not Covet.** "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17). Why would God include coveting in the same list as murder, stealing, and adultery? God knew that coveting a neighbor's servant, ox, or wife was a steppingstone to ungratefulness and discontentment – even lying, stealing, murder, and adultery. Focusing on what others have diminishes our ability to appreciate the good things in our lives.

NEXT WEEK | 12/8 | Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and Capital Crimes (Exodus 21).