

WHEN GOD MADE THE RULES; THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Text: Deuteronomy 5:7-21

In all of my sermons from my zipper Bible, this is perhaps the biggest undertaking. I want to discuss one of the most pivotal famous stories of the Bible, The Ten Commandments. It took two books, Exodus and Deuteronomy to tell us the entire story. Then it required the book of Numbers to explain the journey toward the giving of the Commandments and journey beyond the commandments. Leviticus gives the full ramifications and definitions of how the commandments were to be carried out. God had miraculously led the children of Israel from Egypt, through the Red Sea and were now heading for the Promised Land. Israel came to a dead stop! It was a necessary stop at Mount Sinai. Orders were given Moses: *"And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death"* (Exodus 19:12). A series of trumpet sounds were given with a final long, loud blow of a trumpet and then the Bible says, *"...Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice"* (Exodus 19:19c). This puts us in mind of when God spoke to John in the last book of the Bible: *"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me..."* (Revelation 4:1a). From the walks of God with Adam and Eve in the garden until the fellowship we have with God in the New Jerusalem, God is always wanting to communicate with His people!

God called Moses up to the mount and there gave him ten commandments. While in the mountain, the children of Israel under the leadership of Aaron made a golden calf declaring, *"...These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"* (Exodus 32:4c). Moses came down off the mount, threw the two tablets of commandments on the ground before the naked, dancing people. He then ground the golden calf to powder and made the children of Israel drink it, followed by the death of three thousand Israelites. When the laws of God are broken, death always follows! Moses was called to come back before God in the mount. During this interim, Moses prayed the intercessory prayer for Israel. He was commanded to come

back up the mount before God with two tablets and God wrote the laws back on these new stones. It is important to note that some time during one of these excursions, God gave Moses the blueprints for the tabernacle (Exodus 26:30; Hebrews 8:5). When Moses came down the second time from the mount, he was shining with the glory of God so strongly that his face was covered with a veil. These were the holy commandments of God, revealing the true holy and good nature of God. In my attempt to explain what these ten commandments mean, I want to break them down into three areas: Worship, Work and Relationship.

I. Worship

A. Don't look for another god.

Deuteronomy 5:7: *"Thou shalt have none other gods before me."* What is God saying? I Corinthians 8:5 and 6 says, *"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us 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."*

B. Don't invent another god.

Deuteronomy 5:8: *"Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."*

A few years ago I read a book by Tim Keller entitled, Counterfeit Gods. He gave what may be the best definition of idolatry I have ever read: "What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

"A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought. It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving 'face' and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your

morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry.

“When your meaning in life is to fix someone else’s life, we may call it ‘codependency’ but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, ‘If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.’ There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is worship.”

C. If you accept the true and living God, He accepts you.

Deuteronomy 5:10, *“And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”* James said, *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up”* (James 4:8,10).

D. Honoring the name of God is inextricably linked to worship.

Deuteronomy 5:11: *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”* If we love God we must consider the mere mention of His name as something sacred. We are not to use this inspired proper noun lightly. We are not to use expletives and we dare not attach His holy name to a curse on anyone. We are not to frivolously use His name to express astonishment. We are to bless His name and use His name to bless others. Honoring the name of God is the very approach we use to pray, as taught by Jesus in Matthew 6:9. The Psalmist affirms this as well in Psalm 100:4.

II. Work

A. God is setting a precedent, dividing work from rest (Deuteronomy 5:12).

B. Work hard as a reminder of how hard God worked to bring you to Himself.

Deuteronomy 5:13: *“Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work.”* Exodus 20:11: *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* Man was made on the sixth day and the next day God rested as if to say, “Let’s enjoy each other and appreciate what I have done for you.” *“And He [Jesus] said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”* (Mark 2:27).

C. Rest completely to illustrate the complete helplessness to save yourself (Deuteronomy 5:14; Titus 3:5).

D. Thank God everyday and take one day to remember you are free and God gave you this freedom (Deuteronomy 5: 15).

III. Relationship

In Deuteronomy 5:16-21, God showed us the value and responsibility of relationship:

A. Honoring your parents is reflecting our responsibility to honor God (Deuteronomy 5:16). In doing so, God increases the quantity and quality of life.

B. Not killing is recognizing that only God has the ability to give life and only God has the authority to take life (Deuteronomy 5: 17).

C. Faithfulness to our spouse is a continual reminder that we are in permanent covenant with God (Deuteronomy 5:18).

D. Not stealing is saying Amen! to God's ability to meet our every need (Deuteronomy 5:19).

E. Being a truth-teller is a constant reminder that God's Word is true and He never lies (Deuteronomy 5: 20).

F. Not coveting is accepting with joy the complete provision we have in Christ (Deuteronomy 5:21)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.