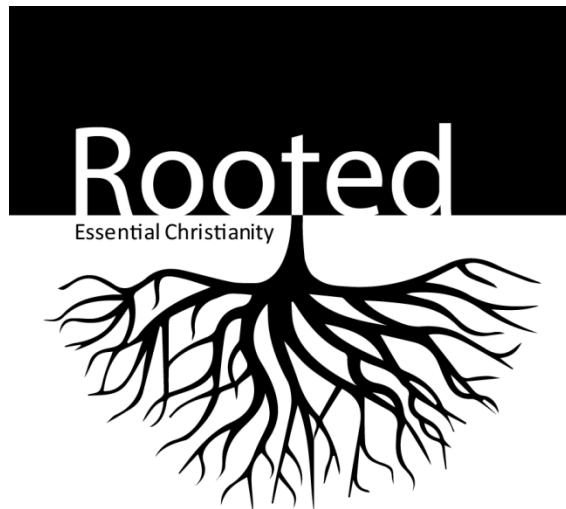




The Ten Commandments

Part 3 – No Other Gods

Exodus 20:1-3

You shall have no other gods before me.

The first commandment is unique in the ancient world. God commanded exclusive worship and in doing so simultaneously announced that there are no other gods. There is no god but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was a radical idea in the ancient world. The sinful mind of man cannot conceive of a cosmos populated by a single Creator and Sovereign God. But it is this one and only God who thunders forth from Sinai; who commands the loyalty of his people.

The First Commandment stands today as surely as it did so many generations ago. Idolatry is a heinous sin. And while contemporary westerners may flatter ourselves with the idea that we have rid ourselves of the vulgar idolatries of primitive cultures we are no less awash in a pantheon of our own making. Rather than Baal or Ashteroth or Dianna our gods are more pervasive and addictive: money, sex, applause, comfort, security, success, and all the other things that command our affection and trust.

God stated that his chief intention in delivering his people was so that they would worship him. Previously their worship had been corrupted by the inclusion of idols. Such practices not only robbed God of glory but did violence of the souls of his people.

The command to have no other gods but God is an invitation to salvation. As the preamble (Ex. 20:1-2) makes clear this God who commands our worship is also the God who delivers us out of slavery. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who sent the Holy Spirit to abide with his people forever. He is the God who by grace alone reconciles idolaters to himself through the dying and rising of Christ.

Main Idea: There is no god but God and he is worthy of undivided loyalty and love.

1. God expects full obedience to his commandments

“I am the Lord your God...” (Exodus 20:2)

- The Ten Commandments represent God’s unchanging and eternal standard. When he gave the moral law to his people at Sinai he did so in a solemn ceremony complete with dark smoke, thunder, lightning, and trumpet blast. The setting and circumstances illustrated the gravity of the moment. God’s grace toward his people demonstrated in his covenant of grace in no way diminishes his expectation that they would joyfully obey his law.
- “Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God” (Deut. 8:20).
- “Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deut. 12:28).
- “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it” (Ps. 119:35).
- “...but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom. 2:8).
- “If you love me you will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15).

- “Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:4).
- “God’s commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5:3).

2. God calls his people to reject all other gods.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” – This commandment is not acknowledging the existence of other gods.

- This commandment is unique in the ancient world. There is no parallel in any of the religions of the time which all allowed and even prescribed the worship of multiple gods. In delivering his people from captivity in Egypt God designed the plagues to be object lessons displaying the non-existence of their many gods.
- The universe is not full of gods as so many of the ancients believed. Even today in such religions as Hinduism, primitive animism, and some forms of Buddhism the belief persists that there are many gods. But the Scriptures are consistent in denying the existence of multiple gods (Gen 1-2; Isaiah 45:21; 1 Cor 8:4; Gal 4:8).
- Sophisticated westerners often flatter themselves with the idea that they are too enlightened to believe in a universe haunted with many gods. But while the forms and expressions certainly change, the fact of idolatry continues.
- How can we know if something has become an idol?
 - A) The Trust Test
 - “Whatever thy heart clings to and relies upon, that is properly thy God.” – Martin Luther

B) The Resources Test

- In what or whom do you invest your most precious commodities? To what degree does money and time hold sway over your heart?

C) The Anger Test

- What makes you angry? The loss of status, time, comfort?

3. God calls his people to undivided loyalty and love.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” – This commandment is not meant to establish an order of priority among multiple gods.

- In saying that we must not have any gods “before me” God is not saying that we may have other gods so long as he is number one in priority.
- God has, at times, likened his relationship to his people to a marriage (Hosea 2:2; Eph 5:22ff). There are obvious differences. But there are clear similarities. The greatest similarity has to do with the sort of exclusive loyalty called for in marriage. When a husband and wife are wed they make promises to be exclusively loyal to one another. They promise to forsake all others. That is precisely the sort of loyalty God expects from his people; his bride.
- A more literal rendering would be “in my presence” or “before my face.” The point is meant to communicate a complete prohibition on idolatry of any kind. Everything that is done occurs before the face of God. God is everywhere and sees everything and we are to have no idols wherever he is.

Worshiping the one true God means worshipping the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the God who spared not his own Son but gave him up for us that our sin would be atoned for. God loved us so much gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).