

## GOD'S PRIORITY

Exodus 20:3

April 19, 2009 Sunday pm

### INTRODUCTION

- A. On November 17, 1980, the Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky law that required the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms. The Supreme Court gave the following reason for their decision. The Ten Commandments were “plainly religious and may induce children to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and to obey the commandments.” (The Rebirth of America, Nancy DeMoss editor, 1986, p.82).
- B. Today there is a bill to place a monument with the Ten Commandments on the grounds of our State Capitol. The bill passed the Oklahoma House and is awaiting Senate action (article attached). We probably need them in our heart more than at our State Capitol.
- C. God's covenant with Israel is found in Exodus 19:5-6.

**Exodus 19:5-6** <sup>5</sup> Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

- 1. This is a “conditional” contract ( “If”—“Then”) binding both God and Israel to certain obligations.
  - 2. God obligated Himself to make Israel His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
  - 3. Israel's covenant conditions are spelled out in ten words we call commandments found in Exodus 20.
  - 4. The first four are vertical and govern man's relationship with God while the last six are horizontal and govern man's relationship with other people.
- D. Today let's investigate Israel's first covenant condition. It's found in Exodus 20:3 (read). Notice two things.

### I. THE “REQUIREMENT” FOR THIS COMMANDMENT.

- A. In the New Testament era, people were very religious. The apostle Paul discovered this when he visited Athens --Acts 17:22-23.  
**Acts 17:22-23** <sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.**
  - 1. The Old Testament era was no different. In Moses' day, everyone worshipped something—Sun, Moon, Nile, etc.
  - 2. The first commandment takes this predisposition toward religion for granted. It doesn't attempt to prove God's existence but instead concedes it--Hebrews 11:6.  
**Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**
  - 3. The question then, isn't whether or not you believe in God, but rather what kind of god do you believe in?
  - 4. You see, it isn't sufficient just to be religious. Our religion must be rooted in the worship of the one true God or it's nothing more than idolatry.
- B. When God gave the commandment He wasn't suggesting that we could simply make Him one of our loyalties or gods.
  - 1. Before” is also translated “besides.”  
**Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,**

2. God doesn't just want "a place" in our lives. He demands "first place."

## II. NEXT NOTICE THE "REASON" FOR THIS COMMANDMENT.

A. Why did God start with this commandment?

1. First, because true "spirituality" begins with having a right relationship with God.

a. Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler is an example of this.

i. He asked which is the greatest commandment.

ii. Jesus answered by quoting the last six (Horizontal).

iii. He claimed to have kept these. He was saying his relationship with other people was what it was supposed to be.

iv. Jesus sensed his real problem was in his relationship and allegiance to God. In order to test who or what he really trusted in, Jesus told him to give away his riches.

v. He couldn't because that's what he really trusted and loved. They were his god.

vi. Who or what do you really trust or love?

b. Christians can be guilty of failing to keep this commandment. How?

i. Not so much by worshipping many gods but rather in the way we worship and serve the one God. For example we are often guilty of divided loyalties.

**Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**

ii. Jesus' answer.

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV) <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

2. Secondly, this commandment is first because true "morality" begins with God and finds its basis in God.

a. Without God morality is based either on "subjectivism" ("If it feels good, do it") or on "collectivism" ("When in Rome, do as the Romans do").

b. True morality is based on "Thus says the Lord"--it's based on God's character expressed through His Word.

B. This commandment, then, must be first because it gives priority to God as our "object of worship" and "basis of morality".

## CONCLUSION

**Joshua 24:15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."**