

Exegetical Lessons 301–400 on Exodus

When I exegete a book, I tend to get very bogged down in the details and so, I decided to develop a series of a few short lessons on various books of the Bible, where I attempt to simply deal with the primary points of each verse without getting too bogged down in detail. Each lesson is 4–5 pages long and designed to be read at one sitting. Although it is always nice to have a Bible open when studying this, I have, in almost all cases, included the relevant Scripture within the study.

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Lesson 301: Exodus 19:14–18c

The Fire and Smoke on the Mountain

At this point in time, Moses is preparing Israel to hear the voice of God. God will speak the Ten Commandments so that all Israel will be able to hear Him.

Exodus 19:14–15 [So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."](#) (ESV)

Moses and the people are at the Mountain of God. They are being purified; and God is going to speak to them.

The people were going to be ceremonially clean, so their clothes would be washed, they would be washed, and they were not to have intimate relations with their wives.

Exodus 19:16a [Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning,...](#) (NKJV)

Suddenly, the environment of the mountain changes drastically on the morning of the third day.

Before this, all of the purification rites have already taken place.

Exodus 19:16b ...that there were thunderings and lightnings,... (NKJV)

There is great thundering and lightning. The word used for *thunderings* is the masculine plural noun *qôlôt* (תִּלְקָה) [pronounced *kohl-OHT*]. In the plural, this word means, *sounds, voices, noise; loud noises, thunderings*. Strong's #6963 BDB #876. We also have the masculine plural noun *b^êrâqîym* (מִיִּקְרָב) [pronounced *beh-raw-KEEM*], which means, *lightenings, lightning flashes*. Strong's #1300 BDB #140. This whole thing is quite dramatic. What the Israelites could see and hear would have struck fear in their hearts. Recall that, when God reveals Himself through signs and miracles, it is always appropriate to the size of the crowd, whether that is one person or two million people. Everyone can see the lightnings and hear the thunderings. Let me suggest that this is more intense than any of these people have ever seen before.

The thunder and lightning and the dark cloud all speak of judgement. Jesus Christ was judged under a thick cloud of darkness so that even people witnessing the crucifixion could not see it occurring. Even the boldest of people have some sin, some shortcoming that they would be embarrassed to have other people know about. Much, much worse than this is the idea of a perfect Jesus Christ coming in contact with the penalty for our sins. The degradation and the pain and the suffering which He endured on our behalf is something which God would not allow anyone to see. Therefore, Jesus was covered with a thick darkness.

Exodus 19:16c ...and a thick cloud on the mountain;... (NKJV)



The word translated *thick* is the fairly common adjective *kâbêd* (כָּבֵד) [pronounced *kaw^b-VAYD*], which means, *heavy, overweight, abundant, numerous, dull; hard, difficult, burdensome, grievous; severe; very oppressive*. Strong's #3515 BDB #458. This thick cloud is a manifestation of God; and this thick cloud hangs all over the mountain. I believe that the people sense a Presence and it makes them very uneasy (as we will see).

What appears to be the situation is, there is a rainstorm taking place right

on the mountain itself, whereas Mount Sinai appears to be a live volcano, possibly ready to explode.

The Black Smoke of a Volcano (a photograph); from [Zastavki.com](https://www.zastavki.com); accessed December 20, 2023. This is sized to be used as a wallpaper.

Exodus 19:16d ...and the sound of the trumpet was very loud,... (NKJV)

The word for *sound* is Qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*]. It means, *sound, voice, noise*. Strong's #6963 BDB #876. Now, no one is playing a trumpet. However, there is a very loud sound which the people can only describe as the sound of a trumpet.

Even though the NKJV has *the trumpet*, there is no definite article here.

David Guzik: *Beyond all one could see, hear, and feel, then came a long, loud blast of a trumpet, a trumpet coming not from the camp but from heaven itself - no wonder all the people who were in the camp trembled.*¹

Generally speaking, there were two reasons for a trumpet: (1) the males are all being summoned to fight in a war; or (2) a very important announcement is being made. In this case, it is the second reason. I say this, but bear in mind, this is a sound *like* a trumpet. That is simply what the people hear. The great announcement to be made is Exodus 20.

There is actually sound like a horn in the atmosphere which is heard throughout the world. I came across a number of videos on YouTube where a person is hearing this weird, horn-like sound somewhere off in the atmosphere. Describing the sounds being heard is quite difficult to do; so that a sound like a trumpet is the best that we can come up with. These YouTube videos could be very similar to what is taking place here.

Exodus 19:16e ...so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. (NKJV)

All of this that the people are seeing, hearing and experiencing is very unnerving. They are extremely afraid. They are so afraid that they are trembling. This is an experience of sensory overload to them.

¹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Exodus 19:16.

Exodus 19:16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. (NKJV)

Throughout Scripture, we will see that God tends to be very theatric. He is looking to implant strong visuals in the hearts of the Israelites. Ideally speaking, this makes a lasting impression on them (however, even such an impression will wear off).

Below the surface of the earth, the tectonic plates are shifting. There is possibly molten rock under the surface below Mount Sinai, and there are gases and black smoke escaping from the mountain. For some reason, there are sounds like loud horns in the atmosphere.



Moses speaks with God (Gerard Hoet – 1728); from [Rob Bowman](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:17a And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God,... (NKJV)

Moses brings the people forward to the mountain, but keeping the prescribed distance from it.

Here and elsewhere, Moses continues to act as a mediator between man and God. God must go through a man and this is why Moses and Aaron both appeared before Pharaoh. Aaron, as we have studied, was not God's first choice—his presence destroyed the analogy of just one man standing in the gap between man and God. In that case, it was the analogy of Jesus Christ the prophet, speaking God's Word to man.

At this point, Moses is both the prophet and the priest; representing man to God (as a priest) and God to man (as a prophet). Moses alone stood in the gap between them just as Christ alone stands in the gap between us and a holy God. It is only when we are purified in Him and by Him² that we can stand before God.

Moses is a type of Christ; and Jesus is the antitype (the fulfillment of the type).

² Recall that Moses *consecrated* the people (Exodus 19:14)

The people had been camped out near Mount Sinai, and Moses brought them forward, out of their camps, to meet their God. Throughout most of the plagues, Israel was bypassed by God, so they did not fully appreciate His greatness. At this point, the sons of Israel are frightened.

Exodus 19:17b ...and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (NKJV)

Moses cordoned off the mountain; the people are not to come up onto the mountain. They are not to come that close to God (that is, a manifestation of God). However, they are to stand there at the foot of the mountain so that they can see and hear all that is going on.

Moses had designated the mountain itself off limits. There was a boundary set up around the mountain and the people stood outside of this boundary at the foot of the mountain. Because of one of the verbs used earlier in this chapter, it appears that there is a sloping plateau around the mountain (or on one side of the mountain).

To the people, the mountain represented the place of God; or the place where God manifested Himself. The people certainly did not have a complete understanding of the nature of God. However, they would have had some basic information. God was associated with this mountain; the people could come up to the base of the mountain but no further; and even to be able to do that, they must be ceremonially cleansed. They learned by this the perfection and holiness of God (which we all fall quite short of).

Exodus 19:17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (NKJV)

Moses was clearly expecting God to speak to His people. They were here at the foot of God's mountain; so shouldn't God speak to them? I do not know that the people were expecting this to happen.

Exodus 19:18a Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke,... (NKJV)

The mountain smoked, something that the people had never seen before. It was not just a bit of smoke coming up here or there; the entire mountain was enveloped in smoke.

Exodus 19:18b ...because the Lord descended upon it in fire. (NKJV)

The reason that this was taking place was, God had descended upon the mountain. He is said to be in fire because God is judgment; and fire represents judgment.

We do not know exactly the form that the fire was in. Was it like a forest fire on the mountain? Was it a series of lightning strikes from above? Was it some molten metals being cast into the air? Whatever the people could see, it appeared to be like fire.

The fire here speaks of judgement in the Bible and smoke often represents the propitiation of God. The people had been ceremonially cleansed, allowing God to be propitious toward

them. God would judge the Lord in our stead, and this is the true basis for God being able to be propitious toward us.

Propitiation means an *appeasement*; God is *appeased, satisfied, conciliated*. What is taking place represents God being propitiated (appeased, conciliated) by the judgment spoken of by all of the fire on that mountain.

The people of God are at the foot of Mount Sinai. Some very strange sights and sounds are before them.

Exodus 19:18c *Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace,...* (NKJV)

The smoke associated with God was going up, as if a great oven. Although I would guess that there is very little vegetation on this mountain, it is covered in smoke or enveloped by smoke.

Lesson 302: Exodus 19:17–19

Natural Phenomenon Which is Similar

The sons of Israel are standing before Mount Sinai, and there is fire and smoke on the mountain.

Exodus 19:18d *...and the whole mountain quaked greatly.* (NKJV)

In addition, the mountain was quaking. It would have been loud, the people would be seeing movement of the mountain itself, and they felt the shockwaves of it. They could see the mountain move and they could feel the ground beneath them shake.

In our society, people who have never even seen California or Japan know what an earthquake is. That is because of the kind of world that we live in. We have newspapers, television reports and magazines, all which deal with the phenomenon of earthquakes. For Israel, an earthquake would be a very rare event; something that many Israelites would not even know about. Therefore, their vocabulary does not have a specific word for the quaking of a mountain. The word found here is *chârad* (חָרַד) [pronounced *chaw-RAHD*], and it means *tremble, shake*. This describes what the mountain did. This figure of speech—giving an inanimate object an action or an emotion normally attributed to animate objects—is called personification. This word was used more because they did not have a regular word to mean *quake, earthquake*.

A translator or commentator has observed that this mountain is behaving very much like a volcano. It is not out of the question for that to be the case, even if there is no evidence of volcanic activity in that region today (earthquakes are often associated with volcanic activity).

God's presence causes the great geological disturbance because of the strength of His presence. God, in Scripture, often uses that which He has already made. Let me suggest

that God moved the Arabian Plate and that the smoke on and around the mountain came from volcanic activity. God possibly even moved the Israelites from Egypt to this mountain specifically because of the geological activity which was going to take place at this time.

We do not tend to associate Saudi Arabia or anywhere around there with volcanic activity.

However, Wikipedia reads: *The Red Sea rifting began in the Eocene, and the separation of Africa and Arabia occurred approximately 25 million years ago in the Oligocene, and since then the Arabian Plate has been moving toward the Eurasian Plate. The opening of the Red Sea rift led to volcanic activity. There are volcanic fields called the Older Harrats, such as Harrat Khaybar and Harrat Rahat, cover parts of the western Arabian Plate. Some activity still continues especially around Medina, and there are regular eruptions within the Red Sea.*³

The Israelites have moved east of the Red Sea (and, east of modern Medina), but these things are close enough to have activity where some of these faults are which can affect areas which are quite a distance away.

According to Norfolk.gov: *A magnitude 5.5 eastern U.S. earthquake usually can be felt as far as 300 miles from where it occurred.*⁴

I am simply offering this as one possible explanation (which I believe to be correct). Although God is able to certainly produce such things out of nothing; throughout much of Scripture, he appears to use our natural earth and its resources for His demonstrations of power. There are some miracles which are flat out miracles, like the changing of water into wine; but many others have underlying natural explanations.

To the people here, the exact nature of the events was not an issue (miracle or natural). They were right in the midst of this, and it was quite unnerving.

Some commentators, struggling with God's ability to perform miracles, did at one time attribute this to the natural phenomena of volcanic activity. Others have pointed out that there are no traces of volcanic activity on the Sinai Peninsula, so another explanation which has been given. Barthel (a very liberal commentator) suggests that Moses somehow invented or discovered gun powder and set off a few charges to get everyone's attention (Barthel came up with some very odd theories, so odd, I wonder why I even mention him).

I have suggested that Mount Sinai has a natural amphitheater adjacent to it. Furthermore, it would possibly be a mountain which shows signs of volcanic activity (all we have in context is smoke, but no actual eruption). However, all of this is close enough to the plates beneath the Red Sea, for this to be interconnected.

³ From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Plate accessed December 20, 2023.

⁴ From <https://www.norfolk.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2556/Earthquake-Information> accessed December 20, 2023.

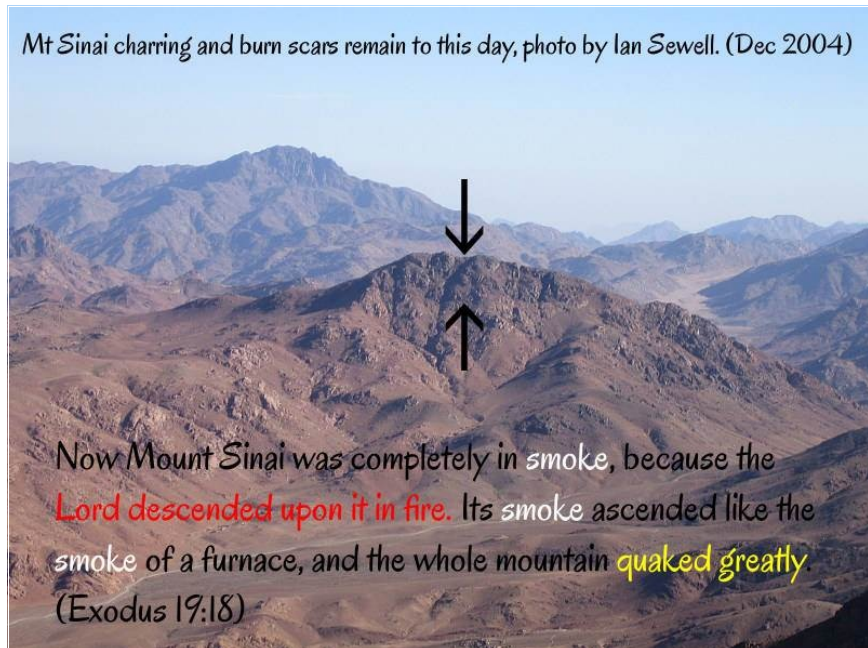
When you don't have any real faith in God, there are not a lot of alternatives. This is one thing that I don't get—but then I have never really spoken to any *Christian* liberals on this topic—who or what is their god? He is like the wizard of Oz? Is he like the man behind the curtain who really is without any supernatural powers, but subject to the universe in which He finds Himself? Or have they arbitrarily decided that He has chosen not to ever work in miraculous ways, contrary to Scripture? Maybe I am wrong on this point, but it seems to me that because they have never witnessed a spectacular miracle (or something which they could identify as a miracle) they have concluded that miracles, therefore, have never occurred.

For me, it is much easier to take the position, if God was able to create the earth and all that is in it; then it is logical that He can overrule, from time to time, the laws of nature which He set up. And He is also able to time His plan the coincide with natural phenomenon as well (I believe that is the case here).

Mt. Sinai charring and burn scars remain (a graphic); from [Some Jesus Things](#); accessed November 1, 2023. Quite frankly, I have no idea if this is Mount Sinai; but there should be some mountain similar to this in that region. Some have suggested that Mount Sinai was a volcano.

Exodus 19:18 **Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.** (NKJV)

Mt Sinai charring and burn scars remain to this day, photo by Ian Sewell. (Dec 2004)



As I have suggested on previous occasions, God's signs and miracles are appropriate for the audience. Here, there are as many as two million onlookers (it is not clear if all Israel was here or just the men came forward). They can all feel the earth shake and they can all see the smoke. They can all hear the horn-like sound. No one is left out. They all experience the same thing.

In any case, all that happened on the mountain would have been visible to all of the people. God made His Presence fully known by the sons of Abraham who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:19a [And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder...](#) (NKJV)

A trumpet is heard; it is extremely loud and it appears to be moving about. More likely, this is a sound which can only be compared to a trumpet. There are a number of sounds recorded on YouTube and similar media sources which report *trumpet sounds*. There is a news report of odd sounds in Oklahoma ([video](#)); personal recordings from south-central Alaska ([video](#)); and five skyquakes ([video](#)). Interestingly enough, someone that I am connected to on Facebook recently posted a video where they are hearing similar sounds in the air, and are wondering, “What is this?”

One Jewish rabbi notes that, usually, when a ram’s horn (or trumpet or whatever) is blown for a long time, the volume begins to drop off. Here, it appears to get louder or it retains its intensity.

All of this is very theatrical. Recall that God has been speaking to Moses all along (and even to Aaron); but at this point, God has turned Mount Sinai into a unique and frightful weather event where there is thunder, lightning, fire, and a sound like a horn. The ground that the sons of Israel are standing on is shaking. There is probably volcanic activity associated with the mountain. So God is preparing the people for an amazing event. This series of events is even greater than God appearing to Moses before and giving him directions for interacting with Pharaoh.

Exodus 19:19b [...Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.](#) (NKJV)

For whatever reason, Moses is attempting to communicate with God; and the people heard Moses’ voice followed by great thundering. We do not have any idea as to the content of Moses’ speech. If I were to guess, he is calling out *Y^ehowah Elohim!* But we really have no idea.

Exodus 19:19 [And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.](#) (NKJV)

There is the sound of a very loud trumpet blast, as God is about to speak to the people.

Exodus 19:17–19 [And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was](#)



completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. (NKJV)

Moses has no idea about what is coming exactly. He has interacted with God for perhaps three months now (all that we have studied takes place over a relatively short period of time). All Israel has seen things that are hard for us to even imagine. And Moses has gone up and down Mount Sinai and God has spoken to him on the mount, giving Moses specific instructions about purifying the people to meet God. However, there is no indication that Moses has any idea what is coming next. If you know a little bit about the book of Exodus, you know that God is going to speak to this people, giving them the Ten Commandments. But if you are studying this for the first time, then you have no idea what is coming up next, unless you have read ahead. Similarly, Moses does not know what is about to take place.

Lightning and Smoke (a photograph); from [Kelley Latta Ministries](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

Lesson 303: Exodus 19:20–22

More Warnings Given to the People

The people of Israel are all standing before the Mountain of God.

Exodus 19:20a **Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain.** (NKJV)

All of the fury of the weather about the mountain appears to signal that God is coming down upon this mountain.

God needed for Israel to understand the gravity of the situation; to understand somewhat of His might and power. God required that man feared and respected Him (something that we lack today in much of the United States). Had there just been a clear day with perhaps a rainbow and a garden of flowers and birds singing nice things in the background, then the Hebrews would not grasp how momentous this event was; nor would they have developed any fear or respect for God. The Hebrews had to be close enough to hear God call Moses up to the top of the mountain.

Because God is a Spirit and because God is omnipresent, when we speak of God coming to the top of Mount Sinai, we are really referring to a manifestation of Him. God is choosing to manifest Himself as being there. God is not confined to our universe in any way. He made the universe that we live in and designed all of the laws of physics which define space, time and matter (the three things which God created simultaneously in Genesis 1:1).

Exodus 19:20b **And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain,...** (NKJV)

With an indescribable voice, God calls out to Moses, summoning him up to the summit of the mountain. I am assuming that this was an audible voice. Who else heard it? We are not told.

Exodus 19:20c ...and Moses went up. (NKJV)

Moses goes up the mountain.

It would seem that the conditions previously described—the thunder and lightning and the trumpet sound—that all of this is still going on. I would assume that these conditions continue while Moses is on the mountain. These things would have held the attention of the Israelites as we move forward to the giving of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 19:20 Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. (NKJV)

God manifests His Presence at the top of the mountain and calls Moses up. Moses continues to act as a mediator between God and man.

Exodus 19:21a And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people,... (NKJV)

The word translated *warn* is actually the Hiphil imperative of ‘ûwd (עוּד) [pronounced *gûd*] (I am using *g* to refer to a guttural sound) and it means *to bear witness, to testify*; in the Hiphil according to BDB, it can mean *to protest, to affirm, to solemnly warn*. Strong’s #5749 BDB #729.

God has already instructed Moses about the boundaries around Mount Sinai. He was to reiterate this warning to the sons of Israel, not to try to come up the mountain.

In the final verse of this chapter, Moses will go down and say these things to the people.

Exodus 19:21b ...lest they break through to gaze at the Lord,... (NKJV)

A personal note in the realm of linguistics: I have never liked the word *lest*; because it is Old English and rarely used in today's English, I believe that it needs to be replaced. However, it is the perfect, one-word translation of the conjunction pen (פֶּן) [pronounced *pen*]. The simple one-word translation for pen (פֶּן) is, *lest*. When the translator was feeling particularly robust, he would translate this word *lest...peradventure*. However, we can get by with splitting it into a more modern *that...not*. For instance, ...**that they not break through to gaze at the Lord,**...

Exodus 19:21a-b And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord,... (NKJV)

Moses has climbed up the mountain, perhaps to its very summit; despite all of the thundering and lightening, and the sound of trumpet blasts from above.

It appears that there might be some people who have decided that they might want to climb up this mountain to view God. We have something which is analogous to the high priest entering the holy of holies. Moses is the high priest and on the mountain, he is in the presence of God, within the inner veil (this is an analogy, not a direct parallel). The people are outside and are not allowed to come into the holy of holies because their cleansing is ceremonial but not real. In the same way, Jesus Christ alone could go to the Father, having given His life for our sins. Just as there are people today who are so arrogant as to think they can come to God with their puny and filthy good deeds; there were Israelites who thought they could follow Moses up the mountain and come into God's presence (they were thinking of doing this). Their true uncleanness in the presence of God's perfection would have caused them all to die. So Moses had to head back down the mountain to warn the people; because God was not willing that any of them should perish. God needed for the people to know the limitations of their relationship with Him. He could not have some person talking out of the side of his mouth saying, "Well, hell, I am just as good as Moses. I'll go up there myself."

The people are not allowed to go up onto the mountain to see God. Because of their sins, they cannot approach God in any way, apart from God's very specific instructions. This does not indicate that they are any worse than anyone else (at this point). If you or I were in the crowd, the same instructions would have applied.

Exodus 19:21a-b [And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord,..."](#) (NKJV)

This appears to be God the Father speaking of the Revealed God (Who is Jesus and has manifested Himself upon the mountain).

Exodus 19:21c [...and many of them perish.](#) (NKJV)

If the people tried to come up the mountain, they would perish.

In the next chapter, the people will appear to be very afraid of God and this seems like an odd thing to warn the people about. (Who would do such a thing?) However, the depths of evil of the Exodus generation are just beginning to be revealed. These warnings are legitimate, as this is a very rebellious generation. When God tells them, *Do not do X*; many among them now want to do X.

God has already given this directive to Moses (vv. 12–13). So, already, Moses has set up the perimeter line, over which the people were not to cross. He has overseen the purification of the people, as well as the warnings. Furthermore, I would think that these people are scared out of their minds right now. Nevertheless, it appears that God wants Moses to double-check the people.

Being omniscient, God knows what the people are thinking. He also knows all that Moses has done. In fact, God knew in eternity past all that Moses has done and was going to do. God allows Moses to approach Him, despite his past.

Exodus 19:21 *And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. (NKJV)*

God wants Moses to prepare the people for an experience which they have never had before. They will actually hear God’s voice. Exodus 20 is God speaking audibly to His people. This experience is going to frighten the hell out of these people (that is just an expression); a people who, nevertheless, are going to continue to rebel against God.

Exodus 19:20–21 (NKJV)
(a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:22a *Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves,... (NKJV)*

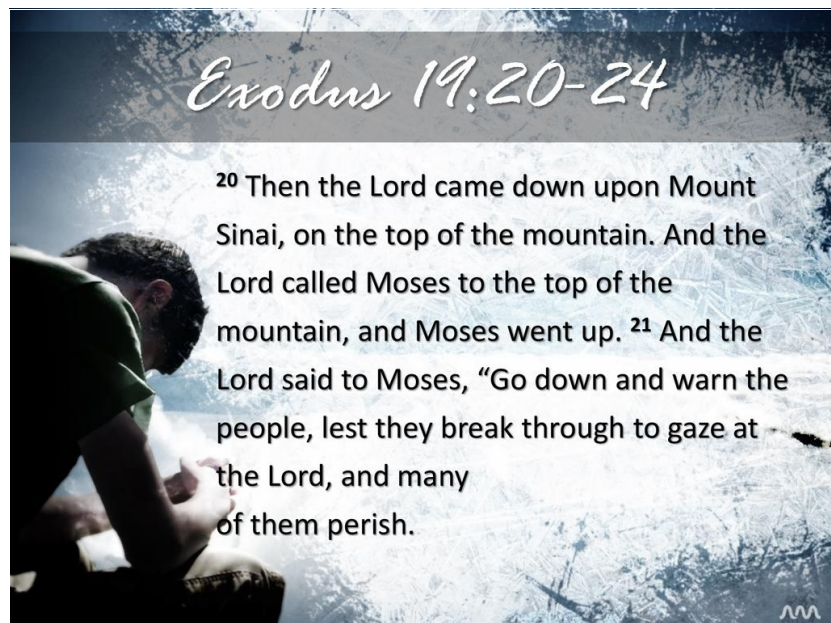
There have been previous references to a nascent Sabbath in the Scriptures; and there has certainly been a priesthood which has existed since Noah exited the Ark (which priesthood is not very well-defined in Scripture). Although these things will be clarified and specified for nation Israel in the Law, they already exist in some form.

Throughout Genesis, the patriarchs were involved in priestly duties; and Moses’ father-in-law was a priest. So the concept of a priesthood was not unknown to these people. Also, recall that people of Israel skipped the 7th day when it came to collecting manna. So there was some understanding of the Sabbath day even prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law.

God tells Moses is to speak to the priests specifically and to tell them to ceremonially cleanse themselves.

The priests were not necessarily the family of Levi at this time (recall that Moses father-in-law, not even a Jew, was a priest in Midian) and although they were not coming up the mountain either; they had to be particularly careful about being ceremonially cleansed.

Exodus 19:22a *Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves,... (NKJV)*



It is fascinating that Moses speaks of the priests here, because the Law will define priests as only those coming from the line of Aaron. So, prior to the giving of the Law, there were men who were called priests. Moses' father-in-law is called a priest; the people of Israel are called a *kingdom of priests* (v. 6); and this is the first mention of a subgroup of Israelites known as priests. So, prior to God's full description of what the priesthood in Israel would be in the Mosaic Law, there was some sort of priesthood which already existed.

Therefore, there has been an organized group of men called priests in Israel, and they are somewhat different from the priesthood which God will organize in Leviticus (and in the final chapters of Exodus). How this nascent group of priests arose, who they are, and exactly what functions they have is unknown to us. I would postulate that they are likely the patriarchal figure of each extended family (remember the first Passover?). Animal sacrifices existed right from the time of the ark. Whoever these priests were, they represented man to God and they would offer up animal sacrifices before the people (this offering of animal sacrifices is likely their most important function).

That there is a nascent priesthood in existence already is simply an educated guess on my part. This notion is based upon this reference to priests here in v. 22 along with a few references to animal sacrifices throughout the book of Genesis. How and when they operated while the Jews were in Egypt is unknown to us. How the original priests organically developed is also a matter of speculation.

Recall that, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a family priest. We recently studied how he came on the scene and told Moses, "You cannot be judging each and every dispute that two million people are going to have. You need to farm out this work to wise and honest men."

Perhaps a temporary priesthood arose for the same reason. Let me suggest that Jethro, or Aaron, or someone like Joshua suggested to Moses, "You cannot offer up every single animal sacrifice. This has to be in the hands of other men." Given that the priests are mentioned here, it seems like that there is a temporary group of priests set up by Moses at this point. This is *not* specifically stated in the Scriptures. Another (and more likely) possibility is, the Israelites themselves had some sort of an organized priesthood prior to Moses coming on the scene. Whatever their origins, these are men whose position as a specialized priesthood is recognized by God right here.

Israel has been 2 or 3 months in the desert-wilderness; and Moses set up a court system which the people could access. There is no reason why a similar situation could have been done for the priesthood as well. Or, in the alternative, perhaps a priest system already existed in Israel.

Who exactly this temporary priesthood consisted of and what exactly their function was, beyond offering up animal sacrifices, we do not know. All the details of this nascent priesthood are not recorded, I believe, simply so that we do not confuse the Levitical priesthood (actually, the Aaronic priests) with whatever priesthood existed previously.

Exodus 19:22a *Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves...* (NKJV)

God has a warning for this nascent priesthood:

Exodus 19:22b *...lest the Lord break out against them.*" (NKJV)

God warns that even those who see themselves as representing Him; even they are subject to divine discipline. They are to prepare themselves for what is to come, which would mean, they are to consecrate themselves (set themselves apart ceremonially).

Exodus 19:22 *Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.*"

Referenced here is the pre-Levitical priesthood. We do not know from where this priesthood arose. These may have been the heads of families who acted as priests; or these men could have been chosen by Moses. This pre-priesthood is a temporary measure, just as that tent of the Lord (not the Tabernacle of Exodus 40) was a temporary place where Moses would meet with God.

A tent of sorts and a priesthood of sorts are already in existence; but these things will become very well-defined in the Law God will give to Moses.

Exodus 19:21–22 *And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them."* (NKJV)

Some people in Israel were contemplating going onto the mountain, despite all that has happened, and God warns Moses about this.

The Christian Community Bible understands this in a slightly different way. Christian Community Bible (1988): *When Yahweh had come down to the summit of Mount Sinai, God called Moses who went to the summit where Yahweh said to him, "Go down and give this warning to the people, lest they rush to see Yahweh and many of them perish. Even the priests who come near Yahweh must purify themselves lest Yahweh break out against them."* (vv. 20–22) So, Moses has already been to this summit and he has already warned the people (specifically the priests)—according to the Christian Community Bible.

Exodus 19:20–22 *Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them."* (NKJV)

Exodus 19:20–22 Y^ehowah came down upon Mount Sinai over the top of the mountain. Then Y^ehowah called to Moses to the top of the mountain—and so Moses went up. Y^ehowah then said to Moses, “Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to Me [lit., Y^ehowah] and see [My glory] and [as a result] many of them perish. Also [tell] the priests, those who come near to Me [lit., Y^ehowah], they must consecrate themselves so that I do not [lit., Y^ehowah does not] break out against them.” (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Moses comes up the mountain at least twice at this point (vv. 3, 14, 20).

God has warned Moses about some of the people coming up the mountain to Him. Moses will say, “Listen, I have already warned the people about this.”

Exodus 19:20–22 Y^ehowah came down upon Mount Sinai over the top of the mountain. Then Y^ehowah called to Moses to the top of the mountain—and so Moses went up. Y^ehowah then said to Moses, “Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to Me [lit., Y^ehowah] and see [My glory] and [as a result] many of them perish. Also [tell] the priests, those who come near to Me [lit., Y^ehowah], they must consecrate themselves so that I do not [lit., Y^ehowah does not] break out against them.” (Kukis mostly literal translation)

This is going to seem odd to Moses for God to tell him this again, and then require him to speak to the people. However, there must be people who, when God begins to speak, will rush onto the mountain. I would suggest that these are people who would be demonically influenced. They are there; God knows that they are there, and God wants to make certain that such people will keep their behavior in check by their own human volition. The primary reason that God cannot have people doing this is, there cannot be a half dozen people make a rush for the mountain and die in the process while God is giving the Ten Commandments. That just would not work. God will require their full attention and it has to be based upon the function of their collective volition.

Exodus 19:23a **But Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai;... (NKJV)**

God has told Moses to go down and warn the people about coming onto Mount Sinai, lest they die. Moses has so warned the people. Moses responds to God, saying that the people are unable to come up the mountain.

Exodus 19:23b **...for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain... (NKJV)**

What God did was the Hiphil perfect of ^ʿûwd (נִוַּד) [pronounced *gûd*] and it comes from the unused root *to repeat* and it means *to testify, to bear witness, to reaffirm, to reiterate; to solemnly admonish*. Strong’s #5749 BDB #729.

Moses reminds God that He had told them over and over to cleanse themselves and that they were not to come up the mountain. Moses was assuming that a few clear, simple directives are all that are needed to keep the Hebrew people in line.

Moses points out that God admonished them not to come up the mountain, and that He set a border around it.

Exodus 19:23c *...and consecrate it.* ” (NKJV)

Consecrate is the 2nd person singular, Piel perfect of qâdash (קִדַּשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-DAHSH*]. It means, *to regard as holy, to declare holy or sacred; to consecrate, to sanctify, to inaugurate with holy rites*. This verb contains the 3rd person masculine singular suffix, which gives us, *...and consecrate [or, regard as holy, declare holy or sacred] it.*” It refers to the mountain.

Moses says that he is very aware that God has consecrated this mountain (that is, the mountain had been set apart from all else). Moses is indicating that the people are aware of this as well.

Throughout the Old Testament, there is a constant separation between the carnal and the holy, between the unclean and the consecrated thing. This separation is constantly reinforced throughout Scripture. It is never suggested that, “You’re over halfway there, so come on aboard!” Something is either holy or it is not; it is cleansed or unclean.

God has already told Moses to do this; and Moses has already done this. This information has been solemnly given to the people.

Exodus 19:23 *But Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.’ ”* (NKJV)

This is such an odd conversation between God and Moses; however, there must be a reason to explain why God further questions Moses about this. Are there people down below who might suddenly come up the mountain? Are they that fearless and disobedient? That appears to be the case.

God will tell Moses, “Go down [anyways], and bring Aaron back up here. But no one else.”

In Moses’ mind, these things have already been taken care of (and he tells God this). God responds with some very strong language.

Exodus 19:24a *Then the Lord said to him, “Away! Get down... ”* (NKJV)

God answers Moses with two very terse, Qal imperatives. The first is hâlak^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means, *go, come, depart, walk; advance*. Strong’s #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229. The second is yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced *yaw-RAHD*], which means, *descend, come down, go down*. Strong’s #3381 BDB #432.

In no unclear language, God again tells Moses to go back down the mountain.

Exodus 19:24b ...and then come up, you and Aaron with you. (NKJV)

God tells Moses that he can come up the mountain and that, on occasion, Aaron can come up the mountain. However, this is qualified by the words *with you*. So, Moses may come back up the mountain; but he must bring Aaron with him.

Remember the scene, that God is about to speak to all of the people; to give them the Ten Commandments. Prior to this, God wants both Moses and Aaron up with Him on the mountain.

Of course, God is not actually on the mountain; He is simply manifesting Himself as if He is on the mountain.

Exodus 19:24c But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord,... (NKJV)

However, no one else is allowed onto the mountain. They are not to break through the boundary to come up to see God.

A word used twice, here and in v. 22, has been *pârats* (פָּרַץ) [pronounced *paw-RATS*] and it means *break through, burst out, break in pieces, break out violently in swift judgement*. Strong's #6555 BDB #829. It is in the latter sense that this is used (see also 2Samuel 5:20 1Chronicles 14:11 15:13 Psalm 60:3 106:29). In v. 22 and 24d, this verb is used of God breaking out in violence against the people.

In v. 23c, there is a similar but different verb when used of the people. It is the Qal imperfect of *hâraç* (סָרַח) [pronounced *haw-RAHS*] and it means *pull down, break in pieces, destroy*. Strong's #2040 BDB #248. There is a barrier between God and man and the people are not to break down that barrier.

Exodus 19:24c But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord,... (NKJV)

God does not specifically define the Aaronic priesthood until Exodus 28; so what is God doing talking about priests within Israel? Do they already exist?

The Pre-Levitical Priesthood

1. There are only thirteen mentions of *priest* (s) prior to Exodus 28. In Exodus 28, God will define the Aaronic priesthood. Most of those previous thirteen passages will be unhelpful to us in defining the priesthood prior to the Law.
 2. Based upon the animal sacrifices which were offered up right after Noah and his family exited the Ark, and based upon priestly activities named up to the to the mention of Melchizedek the High Priest, it is clear that there was some kind of
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The Pre-Levitical Priesthood

- priesthood prior to the book of Exodus. This preexisting priesthood is not the same as the priesthood defined in Exodus 28.
3. Many commentators suggest that these were heads of family which acted as priests. This theory is based, in part, upon Jethro, the father-in-law to Moses, and his position within his own family (he appears to be both the patriarch and the priest of his family). This is a very reasonable theory.
 4. We know that there is a general concept of a priesthood already in existence. Moses' father-in-law is thrice called a priest (Exodus 2:16 3:1 18:1).
 5. It seems very likely that priests, in general, offered up animal sacrifices, based upon their organization which is developed by God in Exodus 28–29 and Leviticus 1–7 (they are described elsewhere, but these are the principle passages).
 6. Because God speaks of priests in vv. 22 and 24 in this chapter, we know that there was some sort of a nascent priesthood or pre-Levitical priesthood.
 7. These priests, whoever they were, are spoken of by God as separate from the rest of the Hebrew people, as a different grouping or as a sub-group of the Hebrews.
 8. We have no idea how they developed. They may have existed in Goshen for a time. Did Pharaoh discourage these animal sacrifices or this priesthood? We don't know, but we do know that more work was piled upon the Hebrew people beyond what they were capable of doing. The priests from that time may have been worked too hard by the Egyptians to really practice their trade; but they may have returned to the calling after the Egyptian army was destroyed in the Sea. This is logical speculation on my part.
 9. Just as Jethro's suggestion led to the creation of a court system to relieve some of the pressure from Moses, it would not be impossible that Jethro (or someone else) to have suggested something similar when it came to priests. I say this, making several assumptions:
 - a. Whatever priesthood existed for the Israelites died out when under Egyptian slavery.
 - b. Moses began acting as a priest by offering up animal sacrifices.
 - c. Moses put this responsibility back on a nascent priest group at some point.
 - d. I offer this as one possibility. This would allow for previous priesthoods to have existed.
 10. It is very likely that the priesthood existed previously in Goshen when Joseph brought his family to live there. Maybe this priesthood continued even though Israel was enslaved. Maybe, at some time, the priesthood died out under slavery.
 11. That a nascent priesthood existed—even among the Hebrew people—is certain; but its exact parameters are not known. God clearly recognized them, as He speaks of them in vv. 22 & 24.
 12. Nevertheless, God will specifically define a priesthood for Israel the nation in Exodus 28–29 and Leviticus 1–7.

There also seems to have been a tent of God prior to the construction of the Tabernacle; just as there was a priesthood in existence prior to the formal establishment of the Levitical priesthood.

The portion of v. 24 that began this dissertation is:

Exodus 19:24c **But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord,...** (NKJV)

Despite all of the preparations that have been made, it appears that there might be a rebellion brewing among the people, where some priests and others are thinking about climbing up this mountain of God.

Moses does not realize this nor do the people, but God is about to speak to all of them. There cannot be any interruptions from a few individuals who want to rush onto the mountain.

Exodus 19:24d **...lest He break out against them.**" (NKJV)

If people come up the mountain, unauthorized, then God will break out against them (even if these men are priests). This suggests that God would do such men harm (and probably kill them).

Throughout the Bible we have instances of where God either speaks of Himself in the 3rd Person *or* He speaks of another Member of the Trinity. One Member of the Trinity is speaking to Moses here (I would assume, God the Son, the Revealed God); but He warns that God the Father (or the Holy Spirit) would break out against any intruder who tried to climb the mountain after them.

Exodus 19:24 **Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them."** (NKJV)

It appears that the primary reason that God calls Moses up to this mountain is to specify who exactly may come up the mountain and who may not. Bear in mind, this is the first that the people have come to the Mountain of God, and God has set up some very specific ground rules and now He is reiterating those rules.

Moses Forbids the People to Follow Him (a watercolor James J. Tissot, 1896-1900), Kept at the Jewish Museum, New York; from [Jesus Walk](#); accessed November 1, 2023. Moses and Aaron are standing apart from the people.



Exodus 19:25a [So Moses went down to the people...](#) (NKJV)

After what appears to have been a very short time on the mountain, Moses comes back down to the people.

When Moses has trouble following directions; God brings Aaron into the picture. Aaron will represent the man-ward side of Jesus Christ and Moses the God-ward side of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 19:25b [...and spoke to them.](#) (NKJV)

The simplest explanation for this discussion between God and Moses is, God really had the concern that, there were some people who were ready and willing to come up the mountain to see what was going on. If that is true, then this odd conversation between God and Moses makes perfect sense.

The people will develop a much stronger sense of reverence and fear *after* God speaks to all Israel, giving them the Ten Commandments audibly. However, it is possible that, at this point in time, there was less of that fear and reverence.

Exodus 19:25 [So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.](#) (NKJV)

God knows the hearts of His people. He knows that there are some of them who will, during the giving of the Ten Commandments, suddenly rush up the mountain. They would die as a result. God also knows that, with one more warning, the people will not do this. Moses seems to think that this is not necessary; and God knows that it is very necessary. Sometimes some prohibitions must be reiterated in order for all to hear them and obey them. Moses has got it, Moses understands that the people cannot come up the mountain. However, there are a handful of the people who do not have this prohibition firmly in their souls. God tells Moses, "Go tell them again not to do this." Since God is telling Moses to do this, it is necessary.

V. 25 marks the end of chapter 19. Moses speaks to the people one last time prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments.

If you follow this narrative in the Hebrew, it would be easy to get the wrong impression as to the exact set of events. What will follow in the next chapter are the Ten Commandments. One could easily understand this as Moses coming down the mountain and giving the people the Ten Commandments (that would be a misinterpretation). More literally, v. 25 reads: **And so goes down Moses unto the people and so he says unto them.** Usually, what would follow these words is, the content of what Moses would say. In the original text, there is no space or chapter break between this and Exodus 20:1, which reads: **And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before Me."** (Exodus 20:1–3; ESV; capitalized) It would be easy to interpret this as Moses coming down the mountain and giving the Ten Commandments to the people himself. Now, in v. 22, it will be crystal clear that God spoke aloud to the people of Israel. God, in speaking with Moses on the mountain again, says, **"Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, You (pl) yourselves have seen that I have talked with you (pl) from the skies."** (Exodus 20:22b; CGV with quotation marks)

What I have done here to used a form of logic to zero in on what is being said. Normally, after a sentence like v. 25, we would expect to read the content of what Moses said. We could mistakenly continue with the point of view until we reach Exodus 20:22, which indicates that God spoke the Ten Commandments to all Israel audibly. That means that we must come back here to v. 25 and interpret it slightly differently. Therefore, in my own translation, I have added the words *these things* to the end, to indicate that was the content of what Moses had to say.

Exodus 19:25 **Moses then went down to the people and he said [these things] to them.** (Kukis mostly literal translation)

These things refer back to the things which God told Moses this second time he is on the mountain.

The form of logic which I used here is known as an indirect proof. You take an hypothesis and follow it out. If you come to a point where you have a contradiction (either an internal contradiction or a contradiction to the hypothesis), then the initial hypothesis must be wrong to begin with.

Parallels Between Exodus and Acts (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed August 11, 2017.

Giving of the Law at Sinai (Exodus 19)	Filling of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2)
Sons of Israel came together at Mount Sinai	Believers were gathered in an upper room
Loud trumpet sound (19:16)	Noise like a violent, rushing wind
Smoke of a furnace	Tongues of fire
3000 killed by Levites for engaging in idolatry (32:28)	3000 made spiritually alive through faith in Christ

These are some interesting parallels. Don't know if these parallels are intentional on the part of God the Holy Spirit or not. It certainly does provide a contrast between Law and grace.

Lessons 305–306: Exodus 19:1–25

A Review of Exodus 19

I will use the Legacy Standard Bible translation below. The Legacy Standard Bible (©2021) is the update for the New American Standard Bible (©2020). In working with the LSB as of late, I have noticed that it has slightly fewer footnotes than the NASB. The NASB modernized the language of the ASV considerably. Also, over the years, there is an interesting evolution in the name of God in the Old Testament:

The Evolution of ASV → NASB → LSB:

And Jehovah said unto him, Go, get thee down; and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto Jehovah, lest he break forth upon them. (Exodus 19:24; American Standard Version, 1901)

Then the LORD said to him, “Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break out against them.” (Exodus 19:24; New American Standard Bible, 2020)

Then Yahweh said to him, “Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break out against them.” (Exodus 19:24; Legacy Standard Bible, 2021)

Chapter 19 Index

	Introduction
vv. 1–6	Israel at Sinai/Moses goes up the mountain/Israel to be a priest nation
vv. 7–9	The people agree to what God says/Moses goes back up the mountain
vv. 10–15	God defines the boundaries for the mountain/the people are cleansed
vv. 16–25	Moses goes back up/God sends him back down

Introduction: Exodus 19 is one of the most important chapters in the book of Exodus, but it is rarely thought of as such, seeing that it is in the shadow of Exodus 20 (where the Ten Commandments are given). Everyone knows about the Ten Commandments; few know much about the events which led up to the Ten Commandments.

In this chapter, Moses reminds the people of how God brought them to this place and to Himself. God is infinite and outside the limitations of time and space; however, there are times when He appears to confine Himself to a specific time and place. God will so manifest Himself on Mount Sinai. God brought all Israel to Mount Sinai. Personally, I believe that all of the amazing sights and sounds are possibly very natural and related to Mount Sinai just at that point in time in the earth's history.

What takes place there—the shaking of the ground, the thick black smoke and the sound of trumpets—are all natural phenomenon which occur today; and God brought Israel to that place where all of that was going to be taking place at that exact moment in time. Whether God kicked this set of events off, or whether they just occurred naturally, we do not know, but these things will all be associated with Israel meeting God on this mountain. Obviously, no one is able to see God, but they will be able to feel the earth shake, they will see the thick black smoke coming from the mountain, and they will hear the loud sounds which appear to be horns. All of the primary senses are going to be engaged by these things. All of these things taking place all at once are going to make a lasting impression on the Exodus generation. If any generation of Israelites has a reason to fear God, this generation does—but, surprisingly, they don't. Now they will be fearful, but their fear is emotion that will simply come and go.

Also in this chapter, Israel's place as a nation in the world is explained. They will become a priest-nation to God, a nation which represents all mankind to God. Despite being a relatively small nation, Israel will be pivotal in world history (which modern Israel still is, in many ways, even though it is no longer a priest nation or a client nation to God).

There were many powerful nations at this time (circa 1445 B.C.), but can you name any of their rulers (besides the pharaoh of Egypt)? Do you know what these nations have done? Probably not. So, do you know anything about a shepherd named Abram who moved from Iraq to Canaan? Even today, millions of people know something about Abram (Abraham); whereas, they know nearly nothing about the great and powerful nations that existed at this same time or about any of their rulers (who would have seemed to be great and mighty at the time).

Application: The real movers and shakers of any generation are men with a spiritual relationship with God. Kings and various rulers may seem to be powerful at the time, but their influence fades from history; while the influence of men like Abraham and Moses continue even to this day.

God begins in this chapter to define what Israel will be as a nation. At this point in time, properly speaking, Israel is a very large number of people, but they do not occupy the land yet which God has given them. As soon as they go into Canaan and take that land, then they will be considered a national entity. At that point, Israel will have a national relationship with God.

At this point in time, Israel is about to hear the voice of God. They must be prepared for this.

There is a great deal of importance attached to the ceremonial cleansing of the people and the isolation of Moses as being the only intermediary between the people and God. He will go up and down Mount Sinai, but if anyone else gets too close, they will die. Moses is a type of Christ, being the only one who may stand between God and man. At times, Moses will be accompanied by Aaron. As a pair of sanctified men, they represent the Hypostatic Union.

Despite all of the thick clouds, and the thundering and the lightning, God will call Moses up the mountain and he will go. At the end of this chapter, even Aaron, as the high priest of the land, be allowed to come up the mountain.

Let's begin our brief review of this chapter:

Israel at Sinai/Moses goes up the mountain/Israel to be a priest nation

Israel left Egypt on the 15th of the first month.

Exodus 19:1 [In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on this day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.](#) (Legacy Standard Bible)

We do not know what part of the third month we are in, but if this is the beginning of the third month, then we are only one month and two weeks from Egypt. We have spent a considerable amount of time on this section. I lean toward this being the case, given that the 15th day has been once referenced in Exodus (Exodus 16:1) and once implied (Exodus 12:6).

In any case, the amount of time between Israel leaving Egypt and now is very short.

Exodus 19:2 [Then they set out from Rephidim and came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.](#) (LSB)

Rephidim was quite the remarkable place. The second no-water test occurred at Rephidim; and Israel had to fight against Amalek. See Exodus 17 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

From Rephidim, Israel traveled to the desert-wilderness of Sinai. This would indicate that they are close to where God wants them to be. They are camped in front of Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:3 [Now Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel:](#) (LSB)

You may recall that Jacob and Israel is the same person. On occasion, *Jacob* represents the carnal side of his descendants and *Israel* represents their spiritual side. The *house of Jacob* refers to those who are spiritually separated from God (even though these people are all believers); and the *sons of Israel* represents those who are in fellowship with God.

God spoke to Moses from the mountain and He was given instructions for Israel. God will remind the people of Israel of how they got here; and then God will tell them what they will be to Him as a nation.

Exodus 19:4 ['You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.](#) (LSB)

God reminds Moses (who will remind the people) that God destroyed Egypt and the Egyptian army. God also brought Israel to this place, as if they had flown there on eagles' wings. The fact that all Israel is now before Mount Sinai is an amazing set of circumstances.

I believe that the reason God brought them there to Mount Sinai at this point in time is, there would be a number of natural things occur on Mount Sinai that every Israelite will experience. Israel would feel tremors beneath their feet, they would see the dark clouds over Mount Sinai (which will exhibit signs of volcanic and/or storm activity); and they would hear the horns (a strange but natural phenomenon which occurs even today).

Exodus 19:5 'So now then, if you will indeed listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;... (LSB)

God warns the people to listen to His voice and to keep His covenant. God would see His covenant with Israel as a single document; while we understand it to be a series of covenants that began with Abraham.

God promises Israel that they will be His treasured possession among all the people of the earth. That is, God would make Israel into a treasured possession, something not true of any other country to this point in time. God can make a promise like this, because all the earth is His.

Nation Israel and the people of Israel will be God's people on this earth.

The relationship between ourselves (as gentiles) and Israel is clearly laid out back in Genesis 12:3 (God is speaking to Abraham): "I will bless those who bless you [Abraham and his descendants of the promise], and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (ESV) This is why no nation should tolerate antisemitism. This is the key to why the United States is so blessed and protected today (despite our many shortcomings). Nations like the Soviet Union (now Russia) and Communist China have had various plans of attack against the United States for decades now. It is only God's grace which has preserved us. We are a nation with close ties to nation Israel and to the people of Abraham. It is this attitude which has saved the United States over and over again.

Back to the narrative in Exodus 19:

God continues to speak to Moses about nation Israel:

Exodus 19:6 ...and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (LSB)

At this point in time, Israel is essentially two million people wandering about in the desert-wilderness. However, this nation is known to God and God has a place where He will plant them (which place He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

God is telling Moses what he is to tell the elders, and the elders will teach these things to the people.

Israel is to be to God a kingdom of priests and a nation set apart from all other nations. God is calling upon Israel to be His priest nation.

A priest acts as an intermediary between man and God. God can have no direct contact with man because man is a fallen creature. However, God allows man to have representation before Him, and that representation is a priest (this is no longer the case). Obviously, any priesthood of men will be imperfect. At some point in the far future, Jesus would become the true High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16 5:1–10 7:17⁵ Psalm 110:4).

As a nation, Israel will act as a priest for all other nations on this earth. The way to God is through nation Israel. It is not specifically through nation Israel, but through the truth that nation Israel preserves, which is the truth about the Revealed God (by the *Revealed God*, I mean an understanding of God in the way that He specifically reveals Himself to man).

From Israel will come the Scriptures, which Scriptures will preserve and protect all of their years on this earth as a priest nation. Israel will reach out to other nations and tell them of their God, Y^ehowah, Who is a God of righteousness and forgiveness (however, God cannot forgive if that forgiveness compromises His righteousness).

Because Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will take upon Himself our sins, God can forgive us without compromising His essence.

The people agree to what God says/Moses goes back up the mountain

Exodus 19:7 [So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words which Yahweh had commanded him.](#) (LSB)

Moses called together the elders of the people, and he spoke these words to them. They were to listen carefully to God's words and then to teach these things to their various tribes.

Exodus 19:8 [And all the people answered together and said, "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to Yahweh.](#) (LSB)

When the elders gathered before Moses and heard these words they said, "All the Y^ehowah has said, we will do!" And apparently all of the various subgroups who were taught these things had the same response.

⁵ A very large portion of Hebrews is given over to explaining the priesthood of Jesus.

Moses, continuing to act as an intermediary, brings back this response to God.

Exodus 19:9 Yahweh said to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever.” Then Moses told the words of the people to Yahweh. (LSB)

It appears that this is a second time on or near the mountain when God spoke to Moses. He promises to come to Moses in a thick cloud.

When God speaks to Moses in Exodus 20, it will be loud enough for all the people to hear. God is going to give Moses the Ten Commandments and the people of God will hear God speak.

It is fascinating that God calls for the people to believe in Moses forever. Moses is the person recording these words (or he is directing Joshua to record these words), so believing Moses forever means, to believe these words which have been recorded. We are able to study these words written down 3500 years ago, because nation Israel preserved them.

Christians today still value these words recorded by Moses.

God defines the boundaries for the mountain/the people are cleansed

Moses again speaks to the elders and they break the people up into groups and tell them what God has said to Moses.

Exodus 19:10–11 Yahweh also said to Moses, “Go to the people and set them apart as holy today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day Yahweh will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. (LSB)

God is going to speak to Moses and He will allow all Israel to hear His words. Therefore, they must be ceremonially purified before Him. Even though the people are not going too close to the mountain, they will hear God’s voice, so they must be cleansed for that.

The people will not actually see God, but they will see how God manifests Himself upon Sinai.

Exodus 19:12 “And you shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. (LSB)

There is to be no access to the mountain for the people. If anyone even touches the mountain, God requires that they be executed.

Exodus 19:13 'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or surely shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." (LSB)

God calls for anyone violating this command to be stoned or shot through (with an arrow). Even an animal which touches the mountain was to die. So, if a person gets too close to the mountain and touches it, he is to be executed by the Hebrew people. However, they are to be executed from afar (the people are not to touch such a person, as he is unclean).

When God gives the signal, which is the sound of a ram's horn with a very long blast, the people are to approach the mountain, yet remain outside the boundary the Moses has defined for them.

Exodus 19:14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and set the people apart as holy, and they washed their garments. (LSB)

Moses is receiving these instructions on the mountain itself. He comes down from the mountain and is going to prepare the people to be ceremonially clean before God.

First thing that they will do is wash their garments. This is a ceremonial cleansing.

Exodus 19:15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." (LSB)

This was to take place on the third day after Moses tells them what is going to happen.

The men were not to even have relations with their wives. That even is considered to make a man unclean (at least, under these solemn circumstances).

Moses goes back up/God sends him back down

Exodus 19:16 So it happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. (LSB)

On the third day in the morning, there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud all on the mountain; and the people heard the very loud trumpet sound. They had never heard a blast as loud and as long as this one before.

I would submit to you that all of these are natural processes related to tectonic plates being moved about, and molten rock moving closer to the surface. This also appear to take place underneath an ominous set of storm clouds. God timed their trip so that they would arrive to Mount Sinai just as all of this natural phenomena is taking place.

Exodus 19:17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (LSB)

Moses brings the people out of their camps to the foot of Mount Sinai for the purpose of meeting God. Obviously, no one will actually see God; but they will see manifestations of God's Presence.

Up to this point in time, Moses has always acted as a go-between them and God. Today, this was going to change. No one would have the close contact that Moses would have, but it will be close enough for the people. It will be too close, in fact. As we will find out, the people will not like this.

Exodus 19:18 [Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because Yahweh descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. \(LSB\)](#)

All of this smoke and fire speak of judgment. The relationship between man and God is always based upon justice. God's righteousness and justice must always be preserved, even in His interaction with man. Even though we often hear about God's love, that is an anthropopathism, because there is nothing lovely about us.

As the people move closer to God and God moves closer to them, judgment is key. No one is blissing out saying, "I can feel God's love because we are so close to Him!" The people are filled with fear. God's justice can either approve or condemn. No matter how many cleansing ceremonies have taken place, each individual man knows of his own shortcomings and why God should curse him.

Exodus 19:19 [And the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder; then Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. \(LSB\)](#)

The sound of the trumpet continues and it keeps getting louder. Moses apparently tries to speak, but God replies with thunder.

Exodus 19:20 [And Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. \(LSB\)](#)

What appears to be the case is, Moses is high on the mountain, and he comes down to a summit; and then God calls him back up.

Exodus 19:21 [Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to Yahweh to see, and many of them perish. \(LSB\)](#)

God warns Moses about the people, that they may come too close to the mountain. Moses is to go down and warn them—again.

Basically, the idea is this: God is a God of justice, and no one standing before Him is clean.

Exodus 19:22 ["Also let the priests who come near to Yahweh set themselves apart as holy, lest Yahweh break out against them." \(LSB\)](#)

Apparently, Israel had some sort of a priest system which was probably organized, but it is not a system that we know much about. The concept of the priesthood is similar to what will become the Levitical priesthood: priests stand between man and God.

Exodus 19:23 [And Moses said to Yahweh, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain, and set it apart as holy.’”](#) (LSB)

Moses apparently tells God, “You already told us about this and how the mountain was to be set apart from Israel. The people already know this. I told them all about it.”

God is fully aware of what Moses has already done. However, let me suggest that there were some people from among the Israelites who were ready to violate this prohibition of God's. God could not have any distractions during the giving of the Ten Commandments (next chapter).

Exodus 19:24 [Then Yahweh said to him, “Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break out against them.”](#) (LSB)

God tells Moses to go down and come back up with Aaron. Apparently, Moses was to again warn the people again not to come too close to the mountain.

Exodus 19:25 [So Moses went down to the people and told them.](#) (Legacy Standard Bible)

Moses goes down the mountain and warns the people again.

Lessons 307–308: Introducing Exodus 20

Ancient Law Codes

The Ten Commandments, because they are unique and remarkable, are going to require an extensive amount of introduction. After the Ten Commandments, there is going to be a great deal of time spent on the other laws and ordinances given by God.

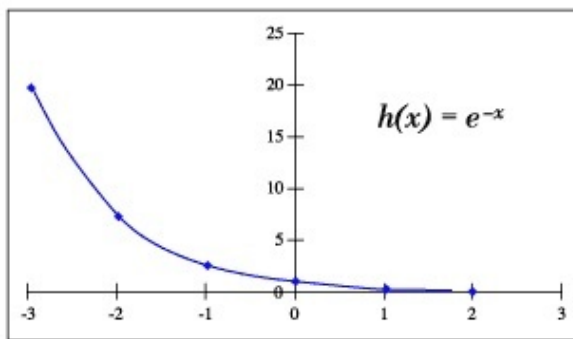
It is at this point that we begin Exodus 20, which is the beginning of the dictated Law of God. Most of what we read from this point forward are God's words, God's laws and God's dictates (with some narrative included). There have been many false statements made about the Mosaic Law and its origins; therefore, there is considerable introductory material to understand.

Back in Genesis 11 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), we follow out the line of Shem (one of Noah's sons) all the way down to Abram (Abraham's given name at birth). There are nine generations of elders, beginning with Shem and going to Terah (Abraham's father). You may recall that these men are said to live longer than we do. In our lives, one generation dies out and they are replaced with the next generation (the greatest generation has almost all died out and my generation, the baby boomers, is about to die out; and we will be

replaced by the Millennials and the post-Millennials). That was not the case for these nine generations. For the most part, they were all alive when Terah was born; and they pretty much all died out before Terah died. Something like this has never happened before or since.

At the time of Terah (Abraham's father), the nine generations of elders were alive on this earth after the flood. However, during Terah's lifetime, these men were beginning to die out. It was actually a very strange thing. All of the men who had been alive during the flood and after were all dying out together in the same generation. There were eight generations between Shem and Abraham and all of them lived an unusually long lives.

However, there was a gradual decline in their lifespans during those nine or ten generations (ten generations if you include Shem and Abraham).



Exponential Curve (a graphic); from nku.edu; accessed June 19, 2024.

Interestingly enough, the decline in their lifespans is an exponential function with a negative exponent. Such a graph is preserved in this paragraph. The graph looks like this and many human, animal and plant functions show exponential increases (positive exponent) or decreases

(negative exponent) which conform to such a curve. The decrease in the age of these men conforms to such an exponential curve. All life has a close personal relationship with the exponential function. Somehow, the writers of Genesis seemed to intuitively know about this kind of curve thousands of years before logarithms and exponential equations found their way into the mathematical consciousness.

So all of these men (the nine generations of them) are born at different times, but they all die out in the same generation (because each succeeding generation has a decreased lifespan). Nine generations of men, all born at different times, nevertheless died out in the same generation.

While these men are dying out, God speaks to this person Abram, who lived in Ur of the Chaldees. God said to him, "Leave your country, and your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who treats you with contempt. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1b–3; WEB)

This is quite a remarkable prophecy that continues to be true today. While Abram was alive, there were many well-known families and groupings: there were Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites, Hivites, Arkites, and Sinites. However, these were not

families or nations that God chose to bless. God chose to bless the Israelites, who come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, you know some Jews or you know of Jews, but you don't know any Canaanites or Hittites or Jebusites, etc. The Jews are God's people. The others were not. God first promised to preserve the Jews and then He preserved the Jews. God's laws (known today as the Mosaic Law) helped facilitate their preservation.

So we have two concurrent sets of events. God calls Abram; but at the same time, all those with close ties to Noah, Shem, Ham or Japheth began to die out (that is, the nine generations of elders).

Let me suggest that, when it came to right and wrong, these nine generations spoke with much the same voice (that is, they were all pretty much in agreement with one another). However, suddenly, all of these old voices of wisdom are gone. They all die out during the same time period. God knows that He must choose a man through whom His wisdom will be preserved and revealed to all the nations.

Codes of Law

After Terah and the rest of those generations died out, leaders would rise up and they would try to determine what laws would be best for their people. Men were well-respected if they could put together a set of laws which seemed fair and just. I have heard the term philosopher-king reasonably applied to such men. If any society was able to function in accordance with these laws, so much the better. These various sets of national laws are very similar to what we call the laws of divine establishment today. The laws of divine establishment are laws which are for humankind, not just for Christians and not just for Jews.

There are many critics of the Bible who make bizarre claims like, Moses essentially copied his commandments and writings from other sources. Now, interestingly enough, Moses would have been an expert in foreign cultures and laws. He received the greatest education that any person could have received in Egypt; and he thrived in this learning (Acts 7:22). As a matter of fact, there were actually many previous sources for ancient law, and Moses would have had access to many of them. However, this does not mean that he copied the laws of ancient Babylon (or, whatever).

Some of these legal codes which have been preserved. I know that the date of the Torah to be around 1450 B.C. I am not sure about the other laws. There is a great deal of documentation for the Mosaic Law being recorded when it was. One fundamental difference between the Mosaic Law and any of the other ancient law codes is, the level of preservation. The Mosaic Law was preserved by men who had the specific job of replacing worn out manuscripts, which has been written on very perishable materials, with new copies on new materials, which were in turn replaced with newer copies. This preservation process began soon after the giving of the Law and continues right now, even today. Today, these laws are preserved through modern printing in hundreds of languages. At

the same time, the existing ancient manuscripts which are the basis for the Law and the Prophets are preserved as well.

The oldest actual manuscripts of the Old Testament go back to approximately 200 B.C. and are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was commonplace to replace old manuscripts with new ones, at which time the old ones were then destroyed. These words were preserved by both Jews and Christians; and in many ancient languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Koine Greek and Latin) and in virtually all major modern languages (the Bible can be found translated into any major world language). Although various groups and denominations differ as to how to understand, interpret and apply the Mosaic Law, we do not have any important differences when it comes to the actual text. What we study as Christians could be based upon Jewish, Protestant or Catholic translations. There is little difference as to the actual text.

The only difference is the approach and interpretation. For instance, there are several different views of the fourth commandment (keeping the Sabbath), but the text and context of the fourth commandment are the same no matter what kind of Bible you pick up. In my verse-by-verse studies of Exodus, where multiple translations are recorded and consulted, there are far more differences between a modern paraphrase and the old King James Version, than there are between a specifically Jewish translation and a specifically Catholic translation. Check any verse in any chapter of Exodus—the chapters I have done are linked from this master document: **Exodus Links** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) ([Folder](#))—and you will see that I have typically reproduced the work of many translators (for each passage, I might use 50 of the 90 or so translations that I refer to) and what is most fascinating is, most of these translators do not appear to have any sort of theological bias seeping into their translation (the Jehovah's Witness translation is a glaring exception to this, which is why I do not include their translation side-by-side with the others).

Regarding the various translations, you would be hard-pressed to find any passage where you could make the claim that one translation is very Catholic, another is very Jewish and another is very Protestant.

Below, where I have given some examples, you could not say, *this is clearly a Protestant translation* (or a Jewish or a Catholic translation). No matter who is preserving and translating the text, there is a scholarly attempt to be accurate and reasonably consistent.

Rather than simply make this claim, let me give you an example of this general lack of theological bias (I arbitrarily chose fourteen translations of Exodus 20:1–2 using seven of my own general classifications) (if there were any notes or section headings, I included these with the translation):

Thirteen Translations of Exodus 20:1–2:

Ancient texts: (These are English translations from the languages Hebrew, Latin and Aramaic)

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so says Elohim all the words the these, to say, "I [am]
Y^ehowah your Elohim Who brought you out of a land of

Revised Douay-Rheims⁶

Egypt out from a house of slaves. (Kukis slavishly literal translation made directly from the Hebrew)

And the Lord spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (A translation made directly from the Latin)

Aramaic ESV of Peshitta

God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am Mar-Yah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (A translation based upon the Aramaic text)

Limited Vocabulary Translations:⁷

Bible in Basic English

And God said all these words:

I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the prison-house.

Easy English

The 10 commandments

Then God spoke all these words:

'I am the LORD your God. I brought you out of Egypt, out of the country where you were slaves.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V.

God said to the people of Israel:

I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves.

The Living Bible

Then God issued this edict:

"I am Jehovah your God who liberated you from your slavery in Egypt.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

The Heritage Bible

See Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 4:13 where the words, The Ten Commandments, appear, and 10:4 where they are called Ten Words, and Deuteronomy 5 where the Ten Commandments are listed again.

And God spoke all these words, saying,

I am Jehovah, your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out from the house of servitude.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New American Bible (2002)⁸

Then God delivered all these commandments:

⁶ Also known as the 'you' version; found here: <http://www.cormacburke.or.ke/node/1054>

⁷ Many of these Bibles fall into 2 or more categories. The CEV, for instance, is [approved](#) by the Catholic Church, it is a limited vocabulary Bible, and it is a paraphrase, for the most part.

⁸ Found here: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM

"I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.

[1-17] The precise division of these precepts into "ten commandments" is somewhat uncertain. Traditionally among Catholics ⇒ Exodus 20:1-6 is considered as only one commandment, and ⇒ Exodus 20:17 as two. Cf ⇒ Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

Then God said all these words:

⌘ "I am *ADONAI* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the abode of slavery. (Kukis note: it is the tradition of the Jewish Bibles to use *Adonai* or *Lord* rather than the proper noun *Yahweh* (or, *Y^ehowah*)⁹

Kaplan Translation

The First Two Commandments

God spoke all these words, saying:

I am God your Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, from the place of slavery.

God spoke...

The Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy 5:6-18.

I am God...

This is a commandment to believe in God (Sefer HaMitzvoth, Positive Commandment 1; see Josephus 3:5:5; Philo, Decalogue 1:385). Others, however, state that belief in God is too basic to be an actual commandment (Ramban on Sefer HaMitzvoth, loc. cit.).

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible

The Ten Commandments

Then God spoke all these words:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ·where you were slaves [from the house of bondage].

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Brenner's Mechanical Trans.

...and "**Elohiym**^{Powers}" spoke all these words saying, I am "**YHWH**^{He Is}" your "**Elohiym**^{Powers}", who made you go out from the land of "**Mits'rayim**^{Two straits}", from the house of servants,...

Modern English Version

The Ten Commandments

Now God spoke all these words, saying:

⁹ This is my own opinion as to the pronunciation of the Sacred Name.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

First of all, I could not do this with any other law code anywhere from any era (we might find one or two English translations of it). And secondly, you should notice that, despite the various classifications and approaches, there are no remarkable differences between the translations, despite there being many differences. Even in Catholic Bibles, you are not going to be reading the text and come across a passage where they clearly inserted some of their specific doctrines into the text (at least with the books I have translated word-by-word, verse-by-verse, I have not come across this). The same is true of Jewish translations and of Protestant translations. The translations are simply translations and theological bias does not enter into it (there may be some exceptions to this, but I have never seen any).

When it comes to preservation and near universal acceptance, the Bible has no equals. In fact, it has no contenders. The Bible is studied in virtually every nation in the world today, except where it is outlawed (and even where the Bible is outlawed, people still study it). Communism has made concerted efforts to destroy Christianity, yet, in every communist dictatorship there are always Christian cells.

Interestingly enough, no one is offering up a religion based upon ancient Egyptian law or upon ancient Sumerian laws. (Islam, by the way, came along 2000 years after the Law of Moses, and yet, it seems to be more barbaric and ancient by comparison.)

There are several differences which occur to me regarding the Mosaic Law and other ancient law codes: (1) The Ten Commandments have no historic comparison. You can select any law system and similar laws may be found, but not all ten, not so organized, and often written for very specific situations (as opposed to the universality of the Ten Commandments). (2) The laws given to Israel are all-encompassing. Every aspect of their lives is dealt with, and often for different reasons (for instance, the dietary laws primarily preserved the people of Israel in an era prior to refrigeration). (3) The detail of historic scholarship regarding the Mosaic Law is not found with any other law code. In fact, one of the most referred to codes, the Law of Hammurabi, does not even exist in its entirety. About a third of it is missing.

Let me suggest that the many ancient rulers were often wise elders, having lived hundreds of years. These men would often try to develop a law code which closely adhered to the time of Noah, to the concepts of right and wrong known during the time of Noah. Some peoples were very moral and had a desire to do that which was known to be right in the eyes of God. This would not be all peoples, but it would be true for some nations.

Cuneiform law

I do not want to go into great detail about these various forms of law, but they should be at least superficially discussed. Judaism and Christianity are inaccurately accused of

simply copying these other laws and traditions (there are many internet memes about this). There is simply no truth to this trope.

From Encyclopedia Britannica: Cuneiform law [is] the body of laws revealed by documents written in cuneiform, a system of writing invented by the ancient Sumerians and used in the Middle East in the last three millennia BC. It includes the laws of the majority of the inhabitants of the ancient Middle East—especially the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Elamites, Hurrians, Kassites, and Hittites—who, despite many ethnic differences, were in contact with each other and developed similar civilizations.¹⁰

Notice the explanation of Encyclopedia Britannica: these civilizations developed very similar laws because they kept in contact with one another, developing similar civilizations as a result. Ancient history instead suggests that far more often, these civilizations were at war with one another.

Another and better explanation for the similarity of these law systems is, they all come from the thinking and morality of Noah and Noah's three sons. For hundreds of years, these people had almost an innate understanding of what law ought to be, as they had elders among them who actually knew people who went all the way back to the ark. Because of this very similar culture going back to the elders who go all the way back to Noah, their cultures are going to have great similarities when it comes to morality and law, even though these groups of men separated as per the Tower of Babel in Genesis 10 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Nevertheless, all of the men had a connection to the ark (men who actually knew Shem, Ham or Japheth) died out during Terah's lifetime (Terah is Abraham's father). This nine generations of elders all died out within the same generation, one generation before Abram.

Encyclopedia Britannica understood that the similarities between these laws was uncanny, but how could they explain that? So they suggest that these various nations simply kept in touch with one another. But the actual explanation is, their elders learned a morality from the same source—Noah and his three sons.

These groups of ancient laws include:

The code of law found at Ebla (2400BC)

Code of Urukagina (2380–2360 BC)

Code of Ur-Nammu, king of Ur (c. 2050 BC). Copies with slight variations found in Nippur, Sippar and Ur

Laws of Eshnunna (c. 1930 BC)^[2]

Code of Lipit-Ishtar (c. 1870 BC)^[3]

Babylonian law

Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BC in middle chronology)

¹⁰ From <https://www.britannica.com/topic/cuneiform-law> accessed January 2, 2024.

Hittite laws, also known as the 'Code of the Nesilim' (developed c. 1650–1500 BC, in effect until c. 1100 BC)

(I took this list directly from [Wikipedia](#)).

Regarding these ancient laws, more information can be found here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ancient_legal_codes

I was going to cover these all, but I don't really know how edifying that would be. I might say a few things about the Code of Hammurabi (which is perhaps the most quoted code when it comes to a modern slandering of the Mosaic Law).

None of these codes have a Ten Commandments (or five commandments or twelve commandments). What critics do is, take a list of 300 laws from the Code of Hammurabi and they pick and choose three or four of them which outlaw a specific kind of murder or a specific kind of stealing, and then say, "Moses took from these laws." He did not. The universality of the Ten Commandments is not found in those other laws. Furthermore, the laws which we will study were all given directly from God, not from Moses.

One cannot find such a universal list of the most fundamental laws anywhere else in human history, even though we can find full or partial lists of ancient laws online. Some people will try to stylize some set of laws and try to update the Ten Commandments in some way, but the end result is always inferior to the original.

Lesson 309: Introducing Exodus 20

The JEPD Theory

In Wikipedia, when listing the various ancient laws, they post this:

Law of Moses /Torah (10th–6th century BC)

Yet what we are studying in Exodus 20 takes place in approximately 1445 B.C. If Moses is the author, then he would be writing around 1445 B.C., not in the 10th century B.C. (or later). If someone wrote this after the 10th century, then this is certainly *not* Moses.

There are two predominant views of the Law of Moses: (1) It was written by Moses when the Bible says it was (circa 1445 B.C.). (2) Or, it was written by several people (or groups of people) and then assembled by other groups of people, and introduced to the Jewish people somewhere between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C. (Wikipedia assigns these dates to the Mosaic Law). Interestingly enough, in Wikipedia's [entry](#) *Book of Exodus*, they claim the writing of the Mosaic books did not even begin until the 6th century B.C.

The second interpretation is known as Documentary Hypothesis or the JEPD theory. JEPD stands for *Jehovah, Elohim, priests, Deuteronomy*). Their hypothesis is, two men (or two groups of men) produced some side-by-side manuscripts. The Jevovist wrote chapters where the word *Jehovah* was used a lot; the Elohimist wrote chapters where the

word *Elohim* was used a lot. Did these two men know one another? We don't know. Were these two groups (if these chapters were written by groups of men) knowledgeable of one another? We don't know.

The priests (who somehow already existed, but apparently without written authority) possibly wove these two sets of documents together; and maybe the priests just did their own thing, writing the book of Leviticus (which has a lot of information about the priestly class). This theory, for some reason, also assigns a different author to the book of Deuteronomy. So, there are a minimum of four men involved in this process, and, who knows, maybe a dozen or more? Does anyone know how many men there were, or who they were, or when exactly they existed? Nope. None of that is known.

We have the collected opinions of various named rabbis going back thousands of years, but the production of the most fundamental text in the Old Testament—we don't know who did it or when they did it (that is, if we believe the JEPD theory).

This odd theory originally came about when historians determined that Moses had no access to writing materials back in his day (an assumption which turned out to be false).

We have just studied nineteen chapters of the book of Exodus. Has it appeared at any time that you were reading two different authors? There is only one incident which is repeated. When Moses had his first meeting with Pharaoh, we see this presented from human viewpoint (where the threats made by Egypt seem overwhelming to the Hebrew leaders) and then we see this same meeting from the divine point of view (where the threats made by Egypt have no long-term impact). This, by the way, is my interpretation of those two chapters (I have not really checked around to see if anyone else came up with the same idea).

In the JEPD hypothesis, there was also a priestly group who submitted their Leviticus chapters and maybe another group (or person) which wrote Deuteronomy (and maybe not). Somehow, all of this got mixed together into four or five books (depending on how you understand Genesis to be worked into this mix), and this final version, was completed somewhere between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C. In one place, Wikipedia gives that range; in another place, Wikipedia claims that this process did not even begin until the 6th century B.C. My reason for emphasizing this discrepancy is to emphasize that there is no true agreement on this theory.

At some point in time, long, long after the time of Moses, this well-edited conglomeration of writings was presented to the Jewish people as if these writings had been done by Moses many centuries previous. The theory is, the Jewish people simply accepted them and treated these writings as if Moses had written them many centuries previous. "Moses wrote these and here it is 800 years later, and we have never seen these writings before, but now you are telling me that Moses wrote this? Okay; sure. We completely accept that."

I first heard about this theory in Josh McDowell's book, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. My initial reaction was, *this is absurd, why did Josh McDowell spend so much time discussing this goofy theory?* I had not heard of this theory until I read McDowell's book. Well, it turns out that many (possibly most) seminaries actually teach this theory as truth.

First of all, and most importantly, there is not a shred of evidence for this theory anywhere. Choose any single aspect of this theory, and you will find no evidence for it at all, except that there are some chapters of the Mosaic Law where the name *Elohim* is found more often than the name *Jehovah* and vice versa. There is also a verse of Scripture where someone discovers the Law, at a point in time when the Law had not been used for awhile (perhaps a generation)—these two things are the sum total of the evidence for this theory.

Documentary Hypothesis claimed to have *solved* two basic problems: (1) it explained how the Mosaic Law could be written even though Moses has nothing with which to write (again, this was a false assumption). (2) It explained why some chapters of the four books of Moses use one name of God more often than another. **However, what this theory does most effectively is completely undermine the authority and accuracy of the Scriptures by suggesting that Moses did not write them.** That is the actual unstated purpose of such theories (the same things are supposed about New Testament writings—particularly the gospels).

There are many problems which this theory introduces. Let's assume that JEPD is true and see where such an assumption leads us. Israel, at some point, either began its very complex set of rituals or changed over from its original religious structure to the religion of this manuscripts said to be written by Moses (and the JEPD theory claims were not really written by Moses). Here is the most fundamental problem. Most of us know what religious people are like. When a people are doing X for centuries and then someone comes along and says, "We need to do Y instead," are you aware of any group of people anywhere at any time who simply went along with it? A good example of this are the Mormons. There was the Protestant Christian religion, which most of America practiced, and then Joseph Smith came along and claimed to have these sacred golden tablets (no one ever saw these tablets, by the way) with a new set of doctrines for Christians. What happened was, Joseph Smith peeled off a number of people who followed him, and this group continues even to this day. They are not a majority of Christian-type believers; and they never have been and they never will be. This is typical. When a charismatic leader comes along, he can often ensnare a group of people—even a large group of people—and sometimes that cult continues and sometimes it dies out when the leader dies out. But the JEPD theory says all Israel used to do one set of acts of worship with one set of doctrines; but then, at some moment in time, there would be a whole new worship package and everyone adhered to this new worship package. If you know anything about religious people, that would never, ever happen, ever. At best, this new worship package might become a popular cult, and there would be two sets of worshipers—those who favored the old religion and those who favored the new religion (which is being falsely sold as the original Mosaic religion). It is quite illogical to think that any nation would simply accept a whole new worship package and simply go along with it.

The practice of the Jewish faith involved carefully manufactured artifacts. It involved a complex set of holy days. The rituals, as we will find out in Leviticus, were extremely specific and complex. It would have required a great deal of study to figure out what gets done when. How exactly does a people follow a few simple rituals and then suddenly, their religious acts become 100-times more complicated. How exactly is this sold to the people? Or, why would the priests place this burden on themselves?

Or, there is the possible option that nothing changed. That is, Israel had from the very beginning a super-complex worship package. Then, hundreds of years pass and then suddenly, the faked document of the fake Mosaic Law appears (between the 10th and 6th century B.C.). Let us assume that it did not change anything. As we are going to find out—sometimes painfully—that the Mosaic Law system was extremely complex. The sacrifices and rituals and feast days etc. etc. are not something you simply learn in a few hours and then you follow them. The documents which describes when do you do this and when you do that would have to already be in existence at the foundation of that whole worship package. These practices are far too complex not to be done without actual instructions. But if such a document already existed, then no new document package of rules and regulations would be needed. If what you need is already in existence, and it says the same thing as a new set of documents, then why would anyone accept a new document? Of what necessity is this new document?

If such writings did not exist previously, then where did Israel's extremely complex set of laws come from? If these laws and practices are already in existence, did no one think to write them down except hundreds of years later? And not just one person wrote them down, but essentially a committee developed them over perhaps a few hundred years. But we do not know the names of anyone from this committee nor do we have any of the original manuscripts which were used to undergird the Mosaic documents. What we have is a frankly bizarre theoretical solution for a situation which does not require a solution.

This theory, besides not having any evidence, produces far, far more questions than it answers; and it produces far more problems than it alleges to solve. Essentially, in order for the JEPD theory to be true, one of two things had to have happened: (1) the entire nation would abandon one religious package and take up with another very complex religious package; or (2) unnecessary documents were produced to justify practices which had already been in existence for hundreds of years (it is unclear, under this theory, whether there existed some founding documents or not). It would have been impossible for a system as complex as the practices found in Y^ehowah worship to not have any founding documents from the beginning. It would also be impossible for a very religious nation to have one set of worship practices and then, essentially overnight, change those practices dramatically.

There is another big problem with the JEPD theory. As we will find out, about a third of the book of Exodus will be about Tabernacle worship (obviously, we are not there yet). But, do you know what did not exist in the 10th to the 6th centuries B.C.? Tabernacle worship. The people who supposedly developed the faked Mosaic documents never saw the Tabernacle and never participated in Tabernacle worship. They only knew the Temple

(which David planned and Solomon built). So the people who put these documents together never actually went to the Tabernacle (it did not exist at that time that the JEPD documents were produced); and their parents did not go to said Tabernacle worship and their grandparents did not go). Yet, somehow the decision was made, to write long detailed chapters about something that they had never seen before, something which the writers actually knew nothing about.

Let me simplify and condense these arguments.

JEPD Theory Options

Option One: Israel had a very simple religious package in the beginning but then, somewhere between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C., changed everything due to these new documents which were discovered. Centuries of one set of religious practices were completely abandoned and replaced by a completely new set of practices, which practices were extremely complex. These “newly discovered” documents changed everything. So their religious practices changed virtually overnight, but there is absolutely no record of this taking place; and this violates everything that we know about religious people. Something like this would have never happened.

Option Two: Israel’s practices remained unchanged; so the fake Mosaic documents changed nothing. There are two problems associated with this: (1) Israel’s system of worship could not have occurred without lengthy documentation (as we will find out); so (2) if this documentation is already in existence, then why are new documents developed and sold to the people as authentic when such documents already existed? Why are these new documents needed?

Option Three: The Mosaic documents, which we are studying, existed from the beginning. They provide a cohesive and complex religious system which the Jews followed from the very beginning. All of their complex religious practices started with Moses in 1445 B.C. and continued to A.D. 70. The people actually observed Moses going onto Mount Sinai to receive instructions. The people also observed Moses enter into his own pre-Tabernacle (also to be discussed later). This is essentially what the Bible teaches. Moses, at the time of the exodus, began to write. The people were very aware of these writings and these writings formed the basis for Israel’s worship package.

There is one more thing. From the 10th century forward, Tabernacle worship ends and Temple worship begins (David planned this out and Solomon executed it). Over a third of the book of Exodus concerns itself with the Tabernacle. Why would someone fake documents and spend most of their time describing the Tabernacle and worship around the Tabernacle, which no one faking these documents has ever seen before?

If the JEPD theory were true, why is there no record of any of this taking place, despite the bulk of the Old Testament being the best kept records of any ancient nation ever?

The JEPD theory provides solutions for problems that do not really exist; and then it introduces a whole new set of problems which have no explanation (such as, how do you

get a large set of religious people to completely change all or most of their beliefs and practices?).

I know that some of those reading this have no idea that such a great controversy exists. I recall reading Josh McDowell's second *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, and he seemed to go on and on and on about this weird theory (which, at the time in my Christian life, I had not heard anything about). The theory seemed so odd to begin with, I had no idea why McDowell was spending so much time on it. With more research, many years later, I come to find that this is a relatively well-accepted theory (not by me or by conservative theologians; but has nevertheless found its way into many seminaries).

Interestingly enough, very few pastors or commentators actually teach anything about the (so-called) original J documents or E documents. A pastor-teacher who does this will see perhaps a quarter (or more) of his flock suddenly disappear—overnight. I am telling you that if a pastor-teacher taught JEPD on one Sunday, the next Sunday, his congregation would be decimated. Some pastors have found this out the hard way. What I am telling you is, there are some pastor-teachers who actually believe this theory, but they would never teach it.

Often, when reading commentary that assumes the JEPD is a true theory, many readers will simply discard that commentary. If the author is wrong about this fundamental aspect of the Law, then how many other things is he wrong about? So, when a commentary begins to talk about the Jehovist origins of one chapter, and the Elohimist origins of another, that commentary is often shelved and never taken down again.

Illustration: Let me offer up a parallel situation. You are confused by love, and a friend of yours strongly recommends a book about love. Well, you get a copy of this book and find out that the author believes that there are perhaps 57 genders beyond male and female. How seriously are you going to take this author? When the author references gender #3, so you keep reading or do you chuckle to yourself and discard that book?

So, just in case I have not made my position clear, it is this: Moses is a real person and he wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy during the time that these events take place. You may recall that Exodus 15 had to have been written right then and there, because it contains a song written by Moses which all Israel sings, that song being based upon God's defeat of the Egyptian army. My point being, there are many chapters of Exodus written right then and there, immediately after the incidents take place. We will find a number of internal proofs in the book of Exodus as we continue forth.

When introducing the book of Exodus, I explained that Moses is the original author of this material, and we have since supplemented that with additional proofs (such as, Exodus 15). This can be found in the Introduction to Exodus ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) or in the first lesson or two of our weekly study ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). When we come to the chapters on the Tabernacle, I will speak about this theory again. A third of the book of Exodus makes no sense (the third that deal with Tabernacle worship) if the JEPD theory is valid.

I am spending a lot of time introducing the Ten Commandments. How are they relevant to us today?

With Exodus 20 and through the book of Leviticus (and, later, the book of Deuteronomy), we have the laws and rituals which Israel was to follow for the next 1400 years. It is easy to become confused by these multiple laws. It is a very complex and intricate system.

From Wikipedia: *The Jewish tradition that there are 613 commandments (Hebrew: גִּירַת תּוֹצֵמַת , romanized: taryag mitzvot) or mitzvot in the Torah (also known as the Law of Moses) is first recorded in the 3rd century CE, when Rabbi Simlai mentioned it in a sermon that is recorded in Talmud Makkot 23b.*¹¹

How is 21st century man to understand the laws given to Israel?

1. The entire Old Testament is instructive to the Church Age believer. The Old Testament is also God-breathed. It is a serious mistake for the contemporary believer to only study the New Testament.
2. What we will study can become quite confusing, and people can be beaten down with false arguments, if they do not understand what is taught in these chapters. For instance, pro-homosexual types will argue, “You eat shrimp right, and you like shrimp? Well, then, homosexuality is legitimate.”
 - 1) You may not get the connection, but a number of animals are presented in the Old Testament as unclean and, therefore, are not supposed to be eaten.
 - 2) Homosexuality is clearly presented as a sin in the Old Testament.
 - 3) Therefore, people with an agenda say that these two things must rise or fall together.
 - 4) “Are shrimp unclean? Do you eat shrimp?” And when you have no idea how to answer this, they follow up with, “Just like that is old fashioned and does not apply to today’s world, so it is with the Biblical restrictions on homosexuality. Those are simply prejudices from an era long ago.”
3. So that there is no misunderstanding, there are laws in the laws of God which stand forever; or the principles behind them stand forever. Killing, stealing, desiring what others have, and homosexual acts—these things are always sins; they are wrong to do, no matter what period of time we live in. Exodus 20–22
4. In fact, such laws are properly practiced by all mankind. Jews and Christians and people of other faiths and backgrounds follow these laws and principles. The specific morality which we are about to study is fundamental to the laws of divine establishment (laws which have a wider application for all mankind).
5. There were a great many rituals found in these pages of the Law, and those

¹¹ From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_covenant accessed December 2, 2020.

How is 21st century man to understand the laws given to Israel?

- rituals are specifically for Israel to be followed until what they represent—Jesus Christ and His offering for sin—comes to pass in time. Then the shadows of the future give way to the reality of that future. The Levitical offerings provided for the Jewish people *a complete Christology*. Leviticus 1–7
6. The animal sacrifices are known as types and Jesus offering Himself up for our sins is the antitype. The animal sacrifices are the shadow image of Jesus giving Himself for us—the reality of those animal sacrifices. Hebrews 8–9
 7. The various celebrations look forward to Israel's future and to Jesus the Messiah. Exodus 23:10–19 Leviticus 16:1–34 23:1–44 25:1–22
 8. The Tabernacle, its rituals and its furniture point, toward Jesus the Christ. Exodus 25:10–40 26:1–37 27:1–21 30:1–10, 17–38 Leviticus. 24:1–9
 9. These things are all a part of the old contract, which has been replaced by a newer, updated contract. Hebrews 8:1–7 **The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who ministers in the sanctuary and true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. And since every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, it was necessary for this One also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." Now, however, Jesus has received a much more excellent ministry, just as the covenant He mediates is better and is founded on better promises. For if that first covenant had been without fault, no place would have been sought for a second. (BSB)**
 10. There are also laws which actually preserve the lives of the Hebrew people, which were appropriate for that time period, but not for today. They lived during a time of pre-refrigeration and a time when preservation of most food items was quite limited. There are foods which are more prone to carrying diseases when not properly preserved. So the *unclean* foods list was not a human history ban on these foods, but pertinent to Israel in its day and time. By avoiding such foods, Israel avoided the contaminates which came with them. Leviticus 11 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#))
 11. We are no longer under these regulations. Colossians 2:16–17 **Therefore let no one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a festival, a New Moon, or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the body that casts it belongs to Christ. (BSB)**
 12. The preservation of the Jews is a real thing. How many Elamites do you know or Philistines? How about Sumerians? There have been dozens of ancient nations and peoples contemporary with the Jews who no longer exist.
 13. A very important point: neither Jews nor gentiles in the Old Testament were saved by obeying the Mosaic Law. They were saved by believing in the God revealed in the Mosaic Law. Just as my knowledge of Jesus Christ was not complete when I believed in Him; so the knowledge from the Old Testament

How is 21st century man to understand the laws given to Israel?

- about the Revealed God was also incomplete. Nevertheless, when a person believed in God as God revealed Himself, he was saved. Genesis 15:6
14. Jesus the Christ = the Revealed God. John 6:35 8:12 10:9, 11 11:25–26 14:6 15:5 Exodus 3:13–14
 15. The Mosaic Law was given to the Jews at the beginning of the Jewish nation; the Mosaic Law was fundamental to their foundation and continuance as a nation. It described how their nation should be governed. Exodus 20–40 The book of Leviticus
 16. The Mosaic Law was not given to the gentiles nor was it given to the church. Romans 3:19–20 Galatians 2:16, 19 3:10–14, 22–25
 17. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with the moral principles of the Mosaic Law.
 18. The Jews, under the economy of Israel, were under the Law. Galatians 3:22–25 **But the Scripture pronounces all things confined by sin, so that by faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law became our guardian to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.**
 19. Jews today are not under the Mosaic Law, nor do they place themselves under the entire Mosaic Law. Most notably, they no longer offer up animal sacrifices and they no longer have a Tabernacle or a Temple (although, we should not be surprised if a Temple is built in Jerusalem in the near or far future). If ancient Jews observed the practices of current-day Jews, they would be flabbergasted (and vice versa). There are very few similarities between the rituals of the Old Testament and the rituals followed today in modern-day Judaism. The modern-day Passover would be completely unrecognizable to the ancient Jew.
 20. Nation Israel does not follow the Mosaic Law today (although there are some similarities, such as the observance of the Sabbath).
 21. We as gentiles learn today from the Mosaic Law the basic tenets and concepts of the laws of divine establishment. See the **Laws of Divine Establishment** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

If all of this material is brand new to you, then let me point out that the Ten Commandments is only a small portion of the Mosaic Law. However, they do provide for man a fundamental moral/law code. It is the final commandment that so many people in the United States need most to heed.

The primary purpose of my teaching Genesis through Deuteronomy is, it is important for the believer to understand the Law of Moses (which, strictly speaking, is Exodus through Deuteronomy).

Exodus 20 is the giving of the well-known Ten Commandments, which is also called the *declogue*, and known to some as the *freedom code*. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. pointed out, there are people who have never picked up a Bible before and have never read even a

portion of the Bible who could name at least five of the Ten Commandments (that was in his day; today, maybe only two or three of them).

They are not called the Ten Commandments until Exodus 34:28 (see also Deuteronomy 10:4). Unlike most of the Law, all of the Israelites heard God give the Ten Commandments audibly. In fact, a great deal of the previous chapter was given over to them simply being prepared for such a direct encounter with their God.

The people will hear the ten commandments but that will be all that they can bear.

The commandments given by God cover three basic categories: (1) our relationship with God, (2) the Sabbath (which might be considered an aspect of our relationship with God), and (3) our relationship with our fellow man (which are the last 6 commandments).

The first category identifies to Whom our allegiance is due and why. Even though this is the Law, it is given specifically to Israel (Exodus 19:3 Leviticus 26:46 Romans 3:19 9:4) and not to the Gentiles (Deuteronomy 4:8 Romans 2:12–14) and not to the church (Acts 15:5, 24 Romans 6:14 Galatians 2:19). Nevertheless, the mandates herein stated, with the exception of one, remain in effect for all time. In fact, most of these commandments, particularly those dealing with people, are strengthened in the New Testament.

The commandment which no longer remains in effect is the mandate to keep the Sabbath. This was to teach the Hebrews that they could do nothing for salvation. God had provided for their every need in eternity past and they were to reflect upon that for their day of rest. The fact that we can do nothing and that God has done everything on our behalf is one of the central themes of the Bible in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Sabbath was analogous to salvation—the Jews could enter into God's rest by believing in the Revealed God (Jesus Christ).

At this point, we may want to examine...

The Purpose of the Ten Commandments

1. The commandments were designed by God to show that man was a sinner, that he did not measure up to God's standards, and that he needed a savior. **Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator [Moses], until the seed should come on the scene [concerning] whom the promise had been made...But the Scripture concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to the faithful ones** (Galatians 3:19, 22).
2. We have been kept under Law temporarily, which would lead us to Christ, until the doctrine of salvation came to us. **Before the coming of the doctrine, however, we were kept under law, having been embraced and under subjection to the doctrine which should afterwards be revealed. Therefore, the Law has become our tutor [our school bus] taking us to Christ** (Galatians 3:23–24).
3. The Ten Commandments provide for us a basic freedom code; a code of law for

The Purpose of the Ten Commandments

all man to live under. It provides a framework for behavior. Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are delegated by God. Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves...For because of this, you also pay taxes, for [these rulers] are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them; tax to whom tax [is due]; custom to whom custom [is due]; fear to whom fear [is due]; honor to whom honor [is due]. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, You will not commit adultery, you will not murder, you will not steal, you will not covet—and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, You will love your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:1–2, 6–9)

4. The Ten Commandments cannot provide salvation. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? No way! For if law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law (Galatians 3:20). [We keep] knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified (Galatians 3:16).
5. Jesus actually expanded the Ten Commandments. When it comes to murder, we are not even to have hatred in our hearts, as that is mental murder. When it comes to adultery, we are not to even lust after another woman (other than our wives) in our hearts. Therefore, the Ten Commandments do not actually define sin (although by them our sinfulness is revealed). As we will see in the examination of each commandment, such as the prohibition of murder and adultery, that God's definition of right and wrong are much more extensive than what is contained in the decalogue (for instance, Matthew 5:21–28 Colossians 3:5–10).
6. If a country was going to institute a set of laws, the final 6 commandments would be essential to the protections of the freedoms of its citizens.
 - a. As an aside, you may think of these laws as not providing freedom but providing punishment for wrongdoers. That is the same thing, essentially, as providing freedom for most of society, which is law-abiding.
 - b. There is little freedom in a society where you must constantly protect yourself and your family and your property from others.

Obviously, this doctrine could be blown up considerably.

It is likely that you have heard, at some point, that Moses copied Hammurabi's Babylonia Code of Law. That is completely false and ridiculous. We will be studying the Law of Moses (more properly, the Law of God); and you are going to find it to be quite different in content and organization from Hammurabi's code (most of which you can find on the

internet¹²). Hammurabi's code reads like case law. Or, like someone just started writing down a bunch of laws, very much tied to that day and age. The Mosaic Law will begin with the primary and most essential laws—which laws stand up to this very day. Then, throughout the next few chapters of Exodus, these laws will be further expanded. God will apply those laws to a variety of circumstances as related to that time period.

When it comes to the application of these laws, there will be a few similarities between the Mosaic Law and other ancient law codes. These similarities are based upon two things: (1) there would have been a similar concept of law and morality among mankind, almost as though these laws were written on man's heart; and (2) the circumstances and environment of ancient Babylonia and ancient Israel were very similar—therefore the application of these principles of laws would seem similar. They had farms, slaves and domesticated animals. Therefore, the basic Ten Commandments were specifically applied to the regulation of such things.

Was it possible that Moses was aware of the code of Hammurabi? I think the chances of this are very likely. Moses received the greatest education of his time, inasmuch as he was being prepared to become the King of Egypt. His education would have been diverse, wide-ranging, and it would have including anything from the outside world that would have seemed to be pertinent to his studies to become a future pharaoh. Acts 7:22–25
Exodus 2:11–25

In doing my research, I was surprised to come across this statement:

*The Encyclopedia Britannica: The best known ancient code is the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi. The Romans began keeping legal records, such as the Law of the Twelve Tables (451–450 BC), but there was no major codification of Roman law until the Code of Justinian (AD 529–565), which was compiled long after the dissolution of the Western Empire.*¹³

The best known ancient code of law is the Ten Commandments; followed by the rest of the commandments which came out of the basic ten. Hammurabi's code may have predated God's commandments to Moses (and to all Israel), but they are not better known or more revered.

Stop random people on the street and ask them if they have heard of the Ten Commandments and if they could name any of them, I am guessing that half of the people could. Ask these same random people about the code of Hammurabi or even quote from his code, and you will get blank stares from perhaps 99 out of a hundred.¹⁴

¹² Not all of it was preserved.

¹³ From <https://www.britannica.com/topic/law-code> accessed October 18, 2023.

¹⁴ I did not run an actual survey on this, so these numbers are pretty much made up. But the gist of my point is true. People know something about the Ten Commandments; they know nearly nothing about Hammurabi.

What seemed to be a real thing in ancient history was, developing a code of law for a nation. This was nearly a universal pursuit. Since the flood and the Tower of Babel, mankind moved all over the globe; and man soon organized into national units. This would have just seemed like a natural thing to do. Part of the greatness of a national entity would have been its system of laws and governance. The morality of their laws had to be generally accepted by all. Why would Charley Brown want to obey the law if he disagreed with half of them? Obviously, this aspect of a society would be ranked far behind the strength of their army and the size of their territory; but, there would come a point where there must be law and administration.

I must admit that, for many years, I did not understand prophets and the like speaking to the political leaders of their day and criticizing their morality. In the back of my mind, I have often wondered, what's the deal? Why do they do that?

However, let me suggest two reasons: (1) people do not want to obey the law of the land when it is written and enforced by hypocrites. If the law only applies when they want it to and to the people they want it to, then there is no real law. This is happening today in the United States. Martha Stewart was put in jail for insider trading; but Democrat politician Nancy Pelosi was not. How do you respect the law, when it is intentionally applied to only some of the people? So, leaders with immoral lives caused their leadership and their laws to be ignored. (2) For a long period of time, the primary celebrities of a national entity were their leaders. Therefore, when they exhibited immoral behavior, it was not abnormal for the population to imitate them and their rank behavior.

I will not list the entire Code here.

The Code of Hammurabi

(c. 1700 B.C.E.)

Note: The Code of Hammurabi was a compilation of almost three hundred laws on every aspect of life. Much can be learned both about Mesopotamian life and ideals through these laws. It should be kept in mind that we cannot be sure how well enforced these laws were, but it is safe to say that a powerful king in ancient Mesopotamia thought these were the laws that would guide a just society. This code was not an entirely new set of laws, but a compilation and revision of earlier law codes of the Sumerians and Akkadians

Prologue:

. . . When Marduk (God of Babylon) sent me to rule the people and to bring help to the country, I established law and justice in the language of the land and promoted the welfare of the people. At that time I decreed:

Justice

1. If a man brings an accusation against another man, charging him with murder, but

The Code of Hammurabi

- cannot prove it, the accuser shall be put to death.
2. If a man has accused another of laying a spell upon him, but has not proved it, the accused shall go to the sacred river, he shall plunge into the sacred river, and if the sacred river shall conquer him, he that accused him shall take possession of his house. If the sacred river shall show his innocence and he is saved, his accuser shall be put to death.
 3. If a man bears false witness in a case, or does not establish the testimony that he has given, if that case is case involving life, that man shall be put to death.
 4. If a man bears false witness concerning grain or money, he shall himself bear the penalty imposed in the case.
 5. If a judge pronounces judgment, renders a decision, delivers a verdict duly signed and sealed, and afterward alters his judgment , they shall call that judge to account for the alteration of the judgment which he has pronounced, and he shall pay twelve-fold the penalty in that judgment; and, in the assembly, they shall expel him from his judgment seat.

Property

6. If a man has stolen goods from a temple, or house, he shall be put to death; and he that has received the stolen property from him shall be put to death.
7. If any one buy from the son or the slave of another man, without witnesses or a contract, silver or gold, a male or female slave, an ox or a sheep, an ass or anything, or if he take it in charge, he is considered a thief and shall be put to death.
8. If any one steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefor; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death.
9. If any one lose an article, and find it in the possession of another: if the person in whose possession the thing is found say "A merchant sold it to me, I paid for it before witnesses," and if the owner of the thing say, "I will bring witnesses who know my property," then shall the purchaser bring the merchant who sold it to him, and the witnesses before whom he bought it, and the owner shall bring witnesses who can identify his property. The judge shall examine their testimony--both of the witnesses before whom the price was paid, and of the witnesses who identify the lost article on oath. The merchant is then proved to be a thief and shall be put to death. The owner of the lost article receives his property, and he who bought it receives the money he paid from the estate of the
10. If the purchaser does not bring the merchant and the witnesses before whom he bought the article, but its owner bring witnesses who identify it, then the buyer is the thief and shall be put to death, and the owner receives the lost article.
11. If the owner do not bring witnesses to identify the lost article, he is an evil-doer, he has traduced, and shall be put to death.
12. If the witnesses be not at hand, then shall the judge set a limit, at the expiration

The Code of Hammurabi

of six months. If his witnesses have not appeared within the six months, he is an evil-doer, and shall bear the fine of the pending case.

13. (I did not find this one)
14. If any one steal the minor son of another, he shall be put to death.
15. If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.
16. If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the major domus, the master of the house shall be put to death.
17. If any one find runaway male or female slaves in the open country and bring them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.
18. If the slave will not give the name of the master, the finder shall bring him to the palace; a further investigation must follow, and the slave shall be returned to his master
19. If he hold the slaves in his house, and they are caught there, he shall be put to death.
20. If the slave that he caught run away from him, then shall he swear to the owners of the slave, and he is free of all blame.
21. If any one break a hole into a house (break in to steal), he shall be put to death before that hole and be buried.
22. If any one is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death.
23. If the robber is not caught, then shall he who was robbed claim under oath the amount of his loss; then shall the community, and . . . on whose ground and territory and in whose domain it was compensate him for the goods stolen.
24. If persons are stolen, then shall the community and . . . pay one mina of silver to their relatives.
25. If fire break out in a house, and some one who comes to put it out cast his eye upon the property of the owner of the house, and take the property of the master of the house, he shall be thrown into that self-same fire.
26. If a chieftain or a man (common soldier), who has been ordered to go upon the king's highway for war does not go, but hires a mercenary, if he withholds the compensation, then shall this officer or man be put to death, and he who represented him shall take possession of his house.
27. If a chieftain or man be caught in the misfortune of the king (captured in battle), and if his fields and garden be given to another and he take possession, if he return and reaches his place, his field and garden shall be returned to him, he shall take it over again.
28. If a chieftain or a man be caught in the misfortune of a king, if his son is able to enter into possession, then the field and garden shall be given to him, he shall take over the fee of his father.
29. If his son is still young, and can not take possession, a third of the field and garden shall be given to his mother, and she shall bring him up.
30. If a chieftain or a man leave his house, garden, and field and hires it out, and some one else takes possession of his house, garden, and field and uses it for

The Code of Hammurabi

three years: if the first owner return and claims his house, garden, and field, it shall not be given to him, but he who has taken possession of it and used it shall continue to use it.

31. If he hire it out for one year and then return, the house, garden, and field shall be given back to him, and he shall take it over again.

These are not all of the laws. In fact, we do not have all of the laws. We are missing #66–99 (of 282 laws). This certainly gives an idea as to the very specific nature of these laws. After the Ten Commandments, there will be many applications of these laws, and those will be more similar to the Hammurabi code.

I do not denigrate these laws in any way. They are reasonably well-thought out for that period of time, as are most ancient law codes. They are simply not the source of the Mosaic Law.

I took these laws from two sources:

<https://f5webserv.wright.edu/~christopher.oldstone-moore/Hamm.htm>

<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp> both accessed March 6, 2024.

There is one more thing to cover here, and this is to set us up for God speaking the Ten Commandments. To whom was God speaking?

At this point, God is speaking directly to Israel. This is not actually made clear until we get to Exodus 20:22, which reads, *And Yahweh said to Moses, “Thus you will say to the sons of Israel, ‘You + yourselves have seen that I have talked with you + from heaven.’ ”* (Updated Bible Version 2.17; I added in quotation marks). *You +* means *you all, you (plural)*. When did Israel see this? In Exodus 20:2–17 (the very words that we are about to study).

Exodus 20:22 helps us to frame this entire chapter. Moses is *not* telling the people what God said to him in Exodus 20 (which could be one understanding of Exodus 19:25). Moses did come down from Mount Sinai and he did speak to the people, and he told them what God told him in Exodus 19:21–24.

So Moses comes down from Mount Sinai and speaks to the people and tells them, “Do not rush the mountain; do not come close to this mountain.” And then, while Moses is there with the people, God speaks aloud to them all (to Moses and the people).

Part of any confusion which may result from Exodus 19:25 (*So Moses went down to the people, and told them.*—UPDV 2.17) is Moses’ natural economy of language. When he records this information, he does not repeat the things which God said to Moses from vv. 21–24. We saw this during the plagues where God told Moses what to say and then Moses came down and said these same words to Pharaoh. We only read the words once. We did not read them as God speaking to Moses; and then reread them when God spoke

the same words to Pharaoh. Moses quoted these words only once, and we understood from the context that the same words were spoken twice).

When it comes to the Ten Commandments, we simply go right into it. What we do not have here is, *and right after Moses spoke to the people, telling them what God said, then God spoke the following words aloud, so that Moses and the people standing there with him could hear them.*

This was quite an amazing event, and Moses does not think to set us up for it. We figure out exactly what happened by going to v. 22 of this chapter.

The Ten Commandments

This entire event of giving the Ten Commandments was set up in the previous chapter. The people of Israel are encamped at Mount Sinai, out in front of the mountain. Moses has gone up and down the mountain at least twice so far; having spoken to God. God gave Moses 2 days to purify the people, so that has been what has taken place in the two days previous to this. There are thick clouds, thunder and lightning all around the mountain. God gave Moses some last minute instructions, to tell the people not to come close to the mountain, and Moses did that. That takes us to the end of Exodus 19.

God now speaks, and all Israel can hear Him.

Exodus 20:1a [And God spoke all these words...](#) (NKJV)

To speak is in the Piel imperfect; the intensive stem because of the gravity of the situation.

God is speaking all of these words to the people of Israel directly.

The final words of the previous chapter are: [And Moses came down unto the people and so he said to them.](#) Because of these final words, it is very easy for a person to interpret this as Moses coming down and saying these things to the people. “God spoke all of these words...” Even though we lack the words *to say* (which act like quotation marks in the ancient Hebrew), they are not always found when a person speaks.

The Ten Commandments were *not* originally given orally by God to Moses *and* to the people of God. God tells Israel, through Moses, “You all better back up a bit.” Moses tells this to the people and then God speaks.

Now, later, God will speak through Moses to the people. The Ten Commandments are first given by God to the people; and then this will be followed up with the judgements—that is, specific offenses of the law will be given along with judgements (or the punishments) of the same in Exodus 21:1–23:13. In many ways, the judgments later given by God directly to Moses will expand on the Ten Commandments. The judgments which follow the Ten Commandments will be spoken by God to Moses, and then by Moses to the people (as per the request of the people in Exodus 20:18–19).

The Ten Commandments are not written on the tablets of stone right at this time but rather given audibly to all the people of Israel. Later, God will write them in stone with His *finger*. It appears that only the ten commandments were written upon the stone, but not the myriad of other laws given by God to Moses directly. These first tablets are those which are broken into pieces when Moses returns to find the children of Israel practicing idolatry in his absence.

Lesson 312: Exodus 20:1–2, 18–22 God Spoke the Ten Commandments Aloud

So far, in Exodus 20, we have only gotten this far:

Exodus 20:1a [And God spoke all these words,...](#) (NKJV)

There are two basic ways to understand this chapter: (1) God speaks to all of the people of Israel and they hear the Ten Commandments directly. Everyone there hears the Ten Commandments audibly. Or (2) things are so crazy with noise and lightning, that the people ask that Moses go up the mountain to hear these words and then come down and tell them.

Option #2 requires that the people of Israel believe that they somehow have options in the way that they receive the Word of God, and then they express their preferences to Moses. They will, in fact, express their preferences to God, but only after they have directly heard the voice of God.

The first interpretation requires the people to hear the Ten Commandments and pretty much freak out as a result. Up to this point in time, Moses has been the faithful communicator, telling the people what God wants them to do. He has been doing this from his first meeting with the elders back in Exodus 4 until now (I bet the seems like a long, long time ago, but in real time (by that, I mean, Exodus time), that was only a few months ago).

The first interpretation is correct. Exodus 19:25 reads: [And Moses came down unto the people and so he said to them \[all these things\]](#). That is, Moses relayed the information found in chapter 19 to the people (Moses spoke to the elders and they conveyed this information to the groups that they were responsible to).

But then, God speaks to the people of Israel all directly.

Exodus 20:1a [And God spoke all these words,...](#) (NKJV)

From this point forward, God speaks the Ten Commandments to the people (which dissertation we have not yet studied). At the end of God speaking audibly to all of the people of Israel, this is what happens next:

Exodus 20:18–19 *Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us [anymore], lest we die."* (ESV; capitalized) I added the word *anymore* to express what is happening.

What just happened to the people of Israel was one of the most frightening things that these people have ever experienced. God spoke directly to them. God spoke the Ten Commandments to all Israel. God speaking to them along with all of these other noises and sound effects really shook them up. They tell Moses, "*You speak to us; don't let God speak to us, or we will die.*" In other words, "We do not want to hear God say anything else to us directly."

Exodus 20:20 *Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of Him may be before you, that you may not sin."* (ESV; capitalized)

The idea is, God spoke to the people directly, causing them to fear Him, so that they not violate these Ten Commandments. The idea is, they would be too afraid to violate God's commands.

Moses takes up for God, at this point, and here in v. 20, he speaks extemporaneously. Throughout much of Exodus, from Exodus 4–19, God speaks to Moses and Moses speaks to the people. Moses did not go off-script, as it were. God spoke to Moses then Moses spoke these words to the elders of the people (as per Exodus 19:3–7). For the most part, Moses did not simply speak his own words, but this is what he does in v. 20:

Exodus 20:20 *Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of Him may be before you, that you may not sin."* (ESV; capitalized)

Moses understands what has taken place, he knows that the people are all shook up, and he attempts to calm them down. God did not tell him to say any of this; Moses just thought to say this on his own (not realizing that what he said was not true).

The times where we have Moses just speaking with authority are quite rare in the book of Exodus. On the other hand, this will be pretty much the entire book of Deuteronomy. Most of the time in Exodus, Moses is speaking the exact words of God, either to Pharaoh or to the people of Israel.

Moses tells the people not to be afraid and that God is testing them. Their fear/respect for God is to guide them away from sinning against Him. It won't.

Exodus 20:21 *The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.* (ESV; capitalized)

Remember how Mount Sinai was cordoned off, to keep the people from off of the mountain? At this point, the people step back. They don't want to be anywhere near this

mountain. They don't want to take any chances with taking a step too close to it. They have just heard God's voice and they are deeply affected by it. "Don't let God speak to us! Go, listen to God's words and then you tell us, Moses!"

Therefore, Moses approaches the mountain, intending to go up. The people step back; Moses steps up. He went to where God was, which was the thick darkness which subsumed the mountain (my interpretation here).

Exodus 20:22 **And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You [pl.] have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you [pl.] from heaven. (ESV; capitalized)**

From that point forward, God speaks to Moses, telling him what to say. Here is where we fully understand that God was speaking directly to the people. **"This is what you will say to the people of Israel: 'You [all] saw for yourselves that I [God] spoke with you [all] [= the people of Israel] from heaven.'** "

Now, normally, I don't like to jump ahead like this and reveal what is going to happen 20 verses down the line. However, it would be easy for someone reading this, to look only at Exodus 19:25–20:2 and get it in his head that I have misinterpreted this passage. Then, from this point, down to v. 22, be skeptical of whatever I write. If you mistakenly think that I am mistaken in my overall take, and we cannot proceed without clearing up this correct interpretation.

It is easy to follow a logical many-step process and get stuck back on step 2, even though the logical steps move forward 10 steps after that. So, it is important to get the person stuck on step 2 unstuck (in this case, we are reading enough so that you understand that God, for most of Exodus 20, is speaking directly to the people).

R. B. Thieme, Jr. ran into the problem constantly when he taught. Particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. When explaining a particularly difficult concept, he would go back and repeat the introductory material many times until he was certain that his congregation was getting it. A pastor-teacher who meets with his congregation 8x a week could do this. However, when committing such information to written form, repetition does not work.

God speaks directly to the people (Exodus 20:18–21)

God speaks these words (the Ten Commandments) directly to the people, after which we read:

Exodus 20:18 **All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain in smoke. And when the people saw this, they trembled and stood at a distance [from the mountain]. (Berean Study Bible)** Bracket insertion is from me.

The people just heard God speak the Ten Commandments and they are all shook up.

Exodus 20:19 “Speak to us yourself and we will listen,” they said to Moses. “But do not let God speak to us, or we will die.” (BSB)

The people tell Moses, “Let’s go back to doing things this way: you speak to God, you tell us what God says. Please don’t let God speak directly to us anymore!”

Exodus 20:20 “Do not be afraid,” Moses replied. “For God has come to test you, so that the fear of Him may be before you, to keep you from sinning.” (BSB)

Moses attempts to calm the people down, and he speaks extemporaneously. What he says is actually wrong, because the people will sin against God later on in this book.

Exodus 20:21 *And the people stood at a distance as Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.* (BSB)

The people step back from the mountain, and Moses steps forward, onto the mountain.

Therefore, based upon what we have studied, we must interpret this chapter like this: God speaks to all Israel, so that every person in Israel actually hears God’s voice audibly. Every person hears the Ten Commandments spoken directly to them by God. This frightens the people considerably, and they ask Moses for God not speak to them directly. This interpretation requires no fancy footwork, no convoluted explanation, etc.

Now that we know God is speaking these words aloud to the people of Israel, we can officially begin the exegesis of this chapter (again):

Exodus 20:1a *And God spoke all these words,...* (NKJV)

All the words which God is speaking is vv. 1b–17. Vv. 18–21 will be narrative, which includes Moses and the people speaking with one another. At v. 22, God speaks again, but it will be specifically to Moses; and God will tell Moses to speak these same words to Israel (something that we do not read in vv. 1–2 of this chapter).

Exodus 20:1b–2a *...saying: “I am the Lord your God,...* (NKJV)

When giving the Ten Commandments (which is what the first half of this chapter is), the speaking of these words comes from the entire Godhead. Therefore, it begins with *Elohim said...* Elohim is often used for the Godhead (all 3 members of the Trinity). This plural noun, however, uses singular verbs, and God identifies Himself as *Jehovah your Elohim*.

Interestingly enough, *your* is the 2nd person masculine singular suffix, indicating that, even though God is speaking to all two million Israelites, He wants them to know and understand these words as individuals. *I am speaking to each and every one of you*, is the sense here.

Exodus 20:2b *...Who brought you out of the land of Egypt,...* (NKJV)

God tells the people, “I brought each and every one of you out of Egypt to where you are standing right now.”

Throughout these times in the desert-wilderness, God reminds the Israelites on a regular basis that it was He Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. You think that seeing all of those miracles up close would have had a permanent affect on these people, but that is not the case. As we will observe, this is the whiniest group of ninnies that we will every become acquainted with. There are maybe a half dozen men who will reach any level of spiritual growth; but there will be some 2,000,000 who keep on being mixed up beyond belief. This is despite all they have seen and heard.

Stop for a moment here and ask, *why did this information not stick? Why did these people experience these great miracles, these great acts of God—miracles that every one of them saw with his or her own eyes—and yet, they do not seem to advance spiritually? They have seen great miracles for the past few months, and yet, they are not advancing spiritually. Why?*

We advance spiritually by what is in our souls. We advance spiritually by the doctrinal information that we know and believe. If Bible doctrine is circulating in our souls, then we are growing. It is just like having blood circulate throughout our bodies. Our blood takes the nutrients necessary from the food that we eat and takes it to the right place for physical growth and improvement. The parallel is simple. Doctrine presented by a doctrinal teacher (in this case, God or Moses) is like the food that we eat. The nutrients of that food is like the Bible doctrine which then circulates throughout our souls.

We advance spiritually on the basis of truth which is believed, *not on the basis of empiricism*. These people saw some amazing things, but never put it all together. They did not connect the essence of God to the things which God did. They were unable to put the promises of God side-by-side the acts which they had all observed. The people of Israel were unable to connect God’s guarantee of logistical grace to the manna which they received every single day while living out in the desert-wilderness (except for Saturdays, of course). They never developed an understanding of Who God is. They did not know what God would do, despite being told these things. As a result, these people were unable to understand God, to trust God, and to act in accordance with the character of God.

Understanding Who God is and how He acts in relation to us is necessary for spiritual advance. Merely seeing logistical grace is not enough. You must believe in God’s logistical grace.

I do not know what is going to happen in the future. I admit that, on some occasions, I am rather apprehensive about the future. But who controls human history? Jesus Christ. Who guides the protects client nation USA? Jesus Christ. Because I know the character of God, I better understand that the future is in His hands—despite the precariousness of pretty much everything related to the United States right now (I write this in 2024).

Let me draw an analogy. When we are children, we depend upon our parents. We know that we can go to our father or mother and they are going to make everything alright. Or, if one of them has no character, then we can generally depend upon the other one (and we learn who we can trust very early in life). As children, we did not know what was going to happen in the future; but we knew who we could turn to for help, protection and guidance. Now that we are adults, God is our Father. If we have learned any doctrine, we know that we can go to Him for help, protection and guidance. In fact, we know that we can do that, even if we make an awful mess of our lives.

If you have been a believer for any period of time, then you have observed and understood that God has been acting in your life in many ways. Now let's say that you run into a problem, one of life's speed bumps, as it were. Have you doubted God then? If the observations of your life were not imprinted on your soul as spiritual principles, then every problem that you face makes you question God. However, if you understand Who God is and what your relationship is to Him, then you adjust to life and life's curves as you face these things.

Let me suggest another analogy. I was a geometry teacher and I insisted on teaching proofs. This was very difficult for many students, and they often felt as if they were running head first into walls trying to figure out what I was teaching them. It was not sinking in. Then that day came, and the student got it, and he (or she) would say, "Holy crap, Mr. Kukis, I understand what you have been teaching us all this time!"

There are times when each of us has this moment, when doctrine and our lives intersect, and we say, "Holy crap, God, I understand what you have been teaching me all of this time!"

This helps to explain why the disciples of our Lord saw Him do miracles and healings every day and yet, they did not understand what was happening when He was crucified—even though He told them three times what was going to happen. The disciples scattered in fear (John being the exception). This is because they did not connect what they saw Jesus do with Who Jesus is. The disciples did not begin to put things together until after the resurrection and after their faith-perception kicked in. That is, there were things about Jesus which they needed to understand and believe. Once that took place, their lives made much more sense.

This is what we have so far: Exodus 20:1–2b [Elohim spoke all of these words, saying, "I \[am\] Y^ehowah your Elohim; \[it is\] I Who brought you out from the land of Egypt,...](#) (Kukis mostly literal translation)

The word *you* is a 2nd person masculine singular suffix in the Hebrew. God speaks to each person individually (even though He is speaking to all Israel). Every person has his own experience in being brought out of Egypt. God is trying to get them to connect what they understand about Him to their own personal experience to that point in time. "God brought me out of the land of Egypt, out from bondage, and He has provided me with food and

water, even though we are traveling through an uncultivated land. Maybe I can depend upon God in the future.” This is what the people of Israel should be thinking, individually.

At church, there may be a half dozen people that you know. Each day that you interact with them, saying *hello* (or whatever), you know about your own life. You know what has brought you to this point in your life at church. Well, these people that you interact with have also had a series of life incidents which brought them to that point in church as well. They have also received a few kicks while they were down. Some of them are hanging there by the thinnest strand of doctrine, but they are there. God, by using the 2nd person singular suffix is recognizing all that has happened to each individual to bring him (or her) to that point in their lives where they are now free and He (God) is speaking to him (to each individual believer in Israel).

Exodus 20:1–2b [Elohim spoke all of these words, saying, “I \[am\] Y^ehowah your Elohim; \[it is\] I Who brought you out from the land of Egypt,...](#) (Kukis mostly literal translation)

One point brought out by R. B. Thieme, Jr., which I have not seen anyone else do prior to his time, it bring out the relationship between the decalogue (= the Ten Commandments) and freedom. Prior to even giving the Ten Commandments, God ties these commands directly to Himself and He also ties them directly to the freeing of the Israelites from the bondage to Egypt. This is the beginning of Jewish freedom and the first thing that they hear under freedom from bondage to Egypt is the Ten Commandments. A nation which operates under the framework of the Ten Commandments is a nation which is free. These commandments protect the volition, the property and the relationships between people so that each person can have a maximum amount of freedom without infringing on the freedom of others. “These are your limits, as a people. These are your boundaries. Stay within these boundaries, and you will enjoy great personal autonomy.”

Some people struggle with the concept of freedom being directly tied to restrictions. The freedom of the Hebrew people is tied directly to these restrictions, known as the Ten Commandments. Such people complain, “If I have restrictions, then I no longer have true freedom.” But it is the application of these restrictions which provides our freedom.

Between you and your next door neighbor is a property line. You have a certain amount of freedom concerning what takes place in your yard; but when you cross over into your neighbor’s yard you have no freedom, only limitations. Your lack of freedom in the yard of your next door neighbor preserves your neighbor’s freedom. This is why we do not steal, murder or commit adultery. Such restrictions provide those around us with greater freedom.

Exodus 20:2c [...out of the house of bondage.](#) (NKJV)

The people of Israel were slaves; and God brought them out of that slavery.

When God speaks to anyone—especially in this era—He often identifies Himself with some specific set of acts. That is, God often takes the past experiences of the hearer and ties

it to His Person. Ideally speaking, the experiences which God affirms helps to explain to the Israelite exactly Who He is.

Lessons 313–314: Exodus 20:1–2

The Doctrine of Freedom

At this point in the book of Exodus, God is speaking audibly to all Israel.

God brought this people out of Egypt. Every single person hearing Him has experienced being set free from bondage to Israel.

Exodus 20:1–2 [And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. \(NKJV\)](#)

Throughout the Old Testament, there are parallels. The entire exodus event relates to us and to God saving us. We are all in the slave market of sin. We have no way out of this slavery. We cannot purchase ourselves from the slave market of sin. No one can purchase us unless that person is outside of the slave market of sin. We are born with a sin nature; and Adam’s original sin has been imputed to that sin nature at birth. At some point in time, we begin to sin and we continue sinning for all of our lives. We cannot take ourselves out of this slave market of sin; we cannot take anyone around us out of the slave market of sin. This has to be accomplished by an outside force (just as God brought Israel out of Egypt, using Moses, as an outside force).

Moses represents Jesus Christ, our Savior. The theological term for this is *typical*. Moses is the type (the shadow form) and Jesus is the antitype (the fulfillment of the shadow). Moses is a real person, and what we are told about him is actual history. However, he is also a type (a shadow image).

Jesus is born outside the slave market of sin. He is born without a sin nature (this is the purpose of the virgin birth; as the sin nature is passed along by the father of the child, not by the mother). Because Jesus is born without a sin nature, Adam’s original sin did not automatically attach itself to the infant Jesus. There was no place for Adam’s sin to be imputed to, as Jesus is born without a sin nature. Jesus lived His entire life without committing a single sin.

So, you see how the Exodus event is analogous to our personal salvation; to us being purchased by God the Son, taking us out of the slave market of sin. We do not have the coin of the realm to purchase our own freedom, but God the Son does. We are in the slave market of sin; Jesus comes from outside the slave market of sin.

Exodus 20:1–2 [God spoke all of these words directly to the people of Israel, saying, “I am Jehovah your God. I am the One Who brought you out from the land of Egypt, taking you out of bondage. \(Kukis paraphrase\)](#)

God has removed the people of Israel from Egypt; He has taken them out of slavery and He has given them freedom. However, this freedom does not mean, "Now, you get to do whatever you want. Go crazy!"

Freedom is not absolute and it does not exist in a vacuum. In today's society, freedom requires property ownership, authority, and some form of law (which the authority enforces).

The people of God now belong to God. He has purchased them off the slave market of sin; but now they are indebted to Him (just as we are indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ for saving us). This freedom given the people of Israel is not absolute, just as our freedom in Christ is not absolute.

Ken Reed is the pastor of the Lake Erie Bible Church (I believe that they are just outside of Cleveland, Ohio, if memory serves).

This doctrine is all about what freedom is and what it is not.

Doctrine of Freedom (by Ken Reed)

I. Introduction.

1. Freedom or liberty is a concept that is often used but little understood by the human race.
2. While volition (free will) is freedom to make choices, the possession of volition in and of itself does not make one free, either physically or spiritually.
3. Though volition is independent in its function, it still remains dependent upon and confined to the parameters within it is able to operate.
4. This is easily demonstrated by the institution of slavery.
5. Even the sovereign will of God is enslaved to His absolute righteousness and justice. That is, God cannot act outside of his absolute righteousness.
6. Most people believe that being free is doing what you want to, when you want to, etc., but that is a fallacy.
7. As Scripture will reveal, true freedom is tied directly to authority and one's willingness to acclimate to the standards of said authority.

II. Vocabulary.

1. Hebrew vocabulary:
 - 1) châphash (נָפַשׁ) [pronounced *khaw-FASH*] is a verb used 1x. It means, *to be free or loosed as opposed to being restrained or bound; free as opposed to a slave*. Strong's #2666 BDB #344.
 - 2) chûph^eshâh (נְפֻשָׁה) [pronounced *choof-SHAW*], a feminine noun used 1x. It means, *liberty or freedom*. Strong's #2668 BDB #344.
 - 3) choph^eshîy (נְפֻשִׁי) [pronounced *khof-SHEE*], an adjective used 17x. It means, *a free man as opposed to being a slave or a captive; being exempt from burdens or service*. Strong's #2670 BDB #344.

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- 4) d^erôwr (דָּרוֹר) [pronounced *dehr-ORE*] is a noun used 8x; liberty or freedom; release from bondage; when followed by a לָ (lamedh) it means to proclaim liberty or freedom to someone.
- 5) Several other Hebrew words that are not strictly in this family are used to denote various concepts related to freedom.
2. Greek vocabulary:
 - 1) ekluô (ἐκλύω) [pronounced *ek-LOO-oh*] is a verb used 6x in the New Testament. It means, *to loose, to unloose, to set free; to dissolve, metaphorically, to weaken, to relax*. Strong's #1590.
 - 2) eleutherô (ἐλευθερώω) [pronounced *el-yoo-thehr-OH-oh*] is a verb used 7x. It means, *to make free; to set at liberty; to exempt or liberate from liability or bondage*. Strong's #1659.
 - 3) eleuthería (ἐλευθερία) [pronounced *el-yoo-ther-EE-ah*] is a noun used 11x. It means, *freedom or liberty*. Strong's #1657.
 - 4) eleútheros (ἐλεύθερος) [pronounced *el-YOO-ther-oss*] is an adjective used 23x. It means, *free, freeborn, freed from slavery, exempt, unrestrained, not bound by an obligation*. Strong's #1658
 - 5) Like the Hebrew, there are other Greek words employed to express concepts of freedom that are not strictly translated/defined as freedom or liberty.
- III. Definition and description.
 1. Freedom is the quality or state of being free; exemption or liberation from slavery, imprisonment, restraint, or the power and control of another.
 2. It allows open access, admission or use of that available.
 3. It is the independent ability to make decisions apart from any previous cause or antecedent/preliminary determination of another.
 4. While freedom and liberty are nearly synonymous terms, freedom emphasizes the lack of restraint or repression, while liberty implies previous restraint.
- IV. Freedom and God.
 1. God is revealed to be the ultimate self-determining agent. Ephesians 1:11
 2. Out of God's self-determination, He formed a creation that reflects and reveals Himself. Romans 1:19-20
 3. The freedom of God is exercised and observed in the government of the moral creatures whom He created.
 4. God's freedom, the exercise of which must be compatible with His essence, determined to create free moral agents whose eternal destiny would be decided by themselves and the use of the freedom He provided.
 5. This view of God's freedom and the freedom of those whom He created must be maintained in the face of exaggerated and unscriptural views of sovereignty.
 6. Any view that God's sovereignty, by an eternal divine decree, determined a fixed destiny of His moral creation without regard to individual choice reduces the concept of freedom to null and void. Deuteronomy 30:19, "I

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call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse (the two options of reality given to men). So choose (bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced *baw-KHAHR*]; to choose, elect, select, decide for; denotes a careful, well thought-out choice; it is the same verb used of God choosing for Himself, Deuteronomy 7:6, et al) life in order that you may live, you and your descendants"; Compare Joshua 24:15 Proverbs 1:29

7. That God chooses/elects certain members of the human race into His plan and that man can choose/elect for His plan, denotes a self-determining action by both parties that is reciprocating and establishes the volitional bases of agreement between both parties necessary for a union to occur.
8. God provided moral creatures with the ability to make decisions on their own and these decisions, not God, determine their eternal destiny.
9. This is the purpose of Divine institution #1, volition; the freedom of choice.
10. God desires that His creation enjoy the freedom of will that He Himself possesses.
11. God placed the Laws of Divine establishment in order to protect freedom and insure the proper function of volition.
12. Again it is noted that while God has maximum freedom, even He is bound to act only in a manner compatible with all the attributes of His essence.

V. Physical freedom.

1. Physical freedom is contrasted to the institution or status of slavery.
 - 1) Slaves possess volition, but are not free to do as they will in all circumstances.
 - 2) Another, the master, controls their life.
 - 3) Slavery as an institution is not condemned in the Bible. Genesis 24 (Abraham and his servant); Philemon (which teaches grace orientation between the master and slave)
 - 4) In fact, the Divine viewpoint states that if one becomes a Christian as a slave, they are to remain acclimated to that station of life unless God makes freedom available, at which point then they should accept it. 1Corinthians 7:21
 - 5) One could become a slave in the physical realm via:
 - (1) Capture during war. Deuteronomy 20:10–11 1Samuel 4:9 1Kings 9:20–22
 - (2) Purchase. Exodus 21:1-11 Leviticus 25:44-46
 - (3) Insolvency/bankruptcy. Exodus 21:1–6 Deuteronomy 15:12 Leviticus 25:47
 - (4) Criminal activity. Exodus 22:1-3
 - (5) Birth. Exodus 21:4 Jeremiah 2:14
2. Authority as it relates to physical freedom:
 - 1) Freedom never means the unbridled ability to do anything and everything that a person wants.
 - 2) All normal members of any society must recognize that their freedom ends where the freedoms of others begin. Exodus We have freedom to

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- worship in America as we see fit, as long as it does not infringe upon the freedom of others to worship.
- 3) Laws and authority are necessary restraints upon personal freedom in order to ensure the maximum freedom and good for all.
 - 4) Failure to abide by establishment laws that various authorities put in place will result in a loss of freedom.
 - 5) Therefore, freedom demands the responsible use of one's freedom in order to maintain the status quo.
 - 6) Personal freedom demands that we respect:
 - (1) Other persons.
 - (2) Other's privacy.
 - (3) Other's possessions.
 - 7) Apart from authority and self-discipline, freedom ceases to exist.
 - 8) Authorities in the Divine institutions provide the framework within that one exercises their freedom.
 - (1) Volition – we are the self-determining authority in our choices. Philemon 14
 - (2) Right man/Right woman – the husband is the authority over the wife. Ephesians 5:23
 - (3) Family – parents are the authority over the children. Ephesians 6:1
 - (4) Job – master/steward/boss is the authority over the servant/employee. Luke 12:42
 - (5) The establishment chain-of-command – civil authority is established to provide protection of the masses and the Establishment chain-of-command is ordained by God. Romans 13:1–7 1Timothy 2:1–3 1Peter 2:13–17
 - (6) Nationalism – each nation is an authority over itself and citizens so that geographic/political freedom is available in history for men to freely pursue God. Acts 17:26-27
3. The military and physical freedom.
- 1) The military under the Divine institution of Nationalism, is designed to prevent outside aggressors from robbing the populace of its freedom.
 - 2) When external forces threaten freedom, the demand for self-sacrifice to insure freedom may become necessary. Nehemiah 4:11-23 (Israel/Jerusalem under restoration after the Babylonian dispersion of 586 B.C.)
 - 3) The military is the agent that purchases and maintains freedom for the individual.
4. Physical freedom is necessary for the proper function of volition and the resolution of the Angelic Conflict.
- VI. Spiritual freedom (a.k.a. Freedom in Christ).
1. All men are born spiritual slaves via the Sinful trend of Adam. Romans 6:20 See Doctrine of the [old sin nature/sinful trend of Adam](#).
 - 1) This is due to our position in Adam. Romans 5:12,19
 - 2) Adam was free prior to the fall. Genesis 2:16-17,25
 - 3) Spiritual slavery is a result of the fall and state of all prior to

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- salvation. Romans 6:17; Galatians 4:9; Titus 3:3
2. Phase 1 salvation (Salvation adjustment to the justice of God) is freedom purchased by the work of Christ on the cross. Galatians 3:13 Titus 2:14 1Peter 1:18–19
 - 1) Slaves must be redeemed by someone who is free, and Christ was qualified to do so via His unique relationship with God and freedom from the Sinful trend of Adam and sin. Romans 8:2 2Corinthians 5:21
 - 2) Christ is “The Freeman” and hence, mankind’s kinsman redeemer (see Doctrine of [Kinsman Redeemer](#)).
 - 3) The price of redemption is called His blood. Ephesians 1:7 1Peter 1:18–19
 - 4) Faith in Christ provides phase 1 freedom. John 8:35–36 Acts 13:38–39
 - 5) The believer is exhorted to exploit that freedom and not enter into slavery again. Galatians 5:1
 - 6) Prior to salvation, the Sinful trend of Adam ruled the life in the realm of spiritual death and the body just acted out the corrupt desires of the sin nature. Romans 5:19
 3. Christ’s work effecting our phase 1 freedom was designed to also provide maximum freedom for phase 2 to include any form of legalism. Galatians 5:1ff
 - 1) Phase 2 spiritual freedom is directly related to the truth of Bible doctrine. John 8:32
 - 2) The Word of God is called the Law of Liberty. James 1:25
 - 3) Spiritual freedom in time is contingent upon pursuit of Bible doctrine. Psalm 119:45 John 8:31–32
 - 4) It is contingent upon proper orientation to the Spirit of liberty/filling of the Holy Spirit. 2Corinthians 3:17
 - 5) The true blessing of freedom comes from the application of Bible doctrine that the believer pursues. James 1:22-25
 - 6) The mature believer who understands and functions within the guidelines of Bible doctrine, experience a freedom that others can only dream.
 4. Spiritual laws and restrictions govern true freedom.
 - 1) Spiritual authorities are the protectors/guardians of our freedom (Acts 20:28), just as authorities in the physical realm (Romans 13:4), since all authority is from God. Romans 13:1 Hebrews 13:17
 - 2) Failure to abide by the laws results in loss of freedom. Romans 13:4
 - 3) As believers, we are not to infringe upon the freedoms in Christ bestowed upon other believers to include:
 - (1) Partaking of things associated with idols as illustrated by the dietary code. 1Corinthians 8:4-8 cp. Romans 14:1-4
 - (2) The same goes for observance of holidays. Romans 8:5-6

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- (3) The bottom-line application is that believers are to respect other believer's level of spiritual growth and understanding as seen in the term "weak in faith". Romans 14:1
 - (4) "Weak in faith" does not refer to Sinful trend of Adam disobedience or rejection of Bible doctrine, since this demands separation (2Thessalonians 3:14), but refers to those ignorant of the freedoms of Bible doctrine as seen in the term "doubts/diakrinô (διακρίνω) [pronounced *dee-ak-REE-no*]/can't discern/distinguish/ differentiate" in Romans 14:23 that denotes the intellectual evidence or proof necessary for faith to act upon is absent.
 - (5) This application is designed to maintain harmony between new members of the particular local church and those already grounded in the principle of freedom. Romans 14:1a cp. vv. 17-20
 - (6) The higher application is for the stronger believer to abstain from any activity that would knowingly violate the conscience of a new member while in their presence. 1Corinthians 8:9-13 Romans 14:14-15, 20-21 See Doctrine of [Stumbling](#).
 - (7) This is designed to give all members of the church maximum individual freedom to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, while working out their own phase 2 salvation. 2Peter 3:18 cp. Philippians 2:12
- 4) It is the Word of God that is our military/defense for freedom. Hebrews 4:12 Ephesians 6:11-17
 - 5) Isolation of the Sinful trend of Adam (being in the filling of the Holy Spirit) is the law that all are to operate under in pursuit of freedom. 1Corinthians 9:24-25 cp. the Royal Law of Divine Love James 2:8 cp. 1Corinthians 13:8, 10 Galatians 5:13-14
5. Phase 3 freedom for believers is the ultimate in human freedom. Romans 8:21
- 1) It is eternal freedom from the Sinful trend of Adam via the new resurrection body. Romans 7:24 1Corinthians 15:42
 - 2) We will have the entire realm of Bible doctrine in our new brain computers and within our souls. Hebrews 8:10-11
 - 3) Since absolute righteousness and justice is the standard used to generate perfect maximum freedom, those believers who do it right in time and finish their course, will be rewarded with the wreath of righteousness hailing them as the true champions in the cause for freedom. 2Timothy 4:8
- VII. Abuses and enemies of freedom.
1. Liberty is not license. Galatians 5:13 Romans 6:15 1Peter 2:16
 2. Legalism. Acts 15:10 Galatians 2:4 5:1-9

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3. The flesh/Sinful trend of Adam. Proverbs 5:22 Galatians 5:13
 4. False teachers. 2Peter 2:18-19
- VIII. Conclusions.
1. The understanding of physical freedom provides the background by which one may understand spiritual freedom.
 2. The majority of men, including believers, do not exercise their right of freedom and therefore are not truly free. John 1:10 1Corinthians 9:24
 3. They are slaves to some viewpoint, system, activity, etc. that proceeds from the sinful trend of Adam and not from being in the filling of the Holy Spirit and adhering to Bible doctrine.
 4. The result of failure to deal with the sinful trend of Adam via doctrine is enslavement and death. Romans6:23 8:6
 5. Paradoxically, those who determine to enslave themselves to God and Divine viewpoint are set free. Romans 6:22
 6. To whatever extent the believer is oriented to God he is free.
 7. In areas of ignorance or intentional disregard of Bible doctrine, the believer remains a slave.
 8. Doing what you want in life such as the frantic search for happiness i.e., pursuing funsville, pursuit of the opposite sex, money, power, details, etc., does not make for a free or happy believer.
 9. The happiest and freest people on the planet are those with maximum doctrine in subjection of themselves to the Law of Liberty. **Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.** (1Peter 2:16; ESV)

Doc. of Freedom
Lake Erie Bible Church
P-T Ken Reed
Reviewed October, 1999
Revised Sept., 2007
Revised Jan., 2010

We are studying this doctrine here because the Ten Commandments provide freedom for a national entity.

From <https://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/download/doctrines/> accessed March 20, 2024. Some minor editing done.

What follows is three main points from R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom.

Portions of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom

- A Principle of Human Freedom.
- 1 Freedom is the status of human volition as the uncaused cause of human function. Live and let live is the principle of freedom. Freedom is legitimate

Portions of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom

self-determination. It is exemption from necessity apart from human consent. Freedom is self-fulfillment. Freedom is exemption from arbitrary control and exploitation. Freedom is related to privacy, property, and authority. Therefore, it emphasizes the need for the laws of divine establishment which define legitimate authority, designed for the protection of freedom.

- 2 The second concept that comes from volition in the soul is privacy, which is the environment for the establishment of freedom. Freedom always demands that the individuals under it have their privacy. This includes for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ the privacy of the priesthood. You have a double privacy.
- 3 Freedom includes the right to possess, enjoy, benefit, or to make profit from the acquired things of this life, that is, the true concept of property. Property is defined as the sum total of one's possessions, tangible and intangible. Under freedom, the individual has a right to make a profit and to possess personal and real property. Ownership means any valuable right or interest which can be considered as a source of wealth.
- 4 Freedom includes authority. Authority under the laws of divine establishment include personal volition, marriage, family, government. Authority without freedom is tyranny. Freedom without authority is anarchy. Under the laws of divine establishment, freedom and authority are mated. You cannot have one without the other. Freedom without the authority of doctrine is antinomianism. Authority without the freedom of the royal priesthood is legalism.
- 5 Both life and property are sacred under the laws of divine establishment. The laws of divine establishment recognize the sacredness of property, privacy, and life as the function of human freedom. Therefore, human cannot exist or be effective apart from human responsibility. The freedom of a nation is no more effective than the morality, virtue, integrity, and sense of responsibility of all of its citizens. Freedom and authority must coexist on the basis of integrity—the virtue and values attained by a nation in any given generation of its history.
- 6 There are two enemies of freedom to the national entity.
 - a Criminality is the internal enemy to freedom. Law enforcement is the part of establishment designed to apprehend and punish criminals. Once a person is convicted of a crime, they have no rights under the Scriptural view of law until they have served their sentence. Capital punishment is authorized by the word of God as the greatest control of criminality when properly practiced, Genesis 9:5–6 Matthew 26:52 Romans 13:3–4 Exodus 21:12 Numbers 35:30
 - b The external enemy to freedom are other nations. There are two general categories of nations: those that are power oriented and function under some system of tyranny, and those nations that are

Portions of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom

- freedom oriented and function under the laws of divine establishment. Without Jesus Christ ruling the earth at the second Advent, there will always be wars. Freedom from power oriented nations comes from freedom through military victory.
- 7 The greatness of a nation can only be measured by the virtue of its freedom and the integrity of its authority.
 - a Psalm 119:45, "And I will seek freedom, for I seek Your doctrines, O God."
 - b John 8:32, "and you shall know the doctrine, and the doctrine [truth] shall make you free."
 - c Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free; therefore keep standing fast and do not become entangled again in the yoke of slavery." In context, this refers to slavery to the arrogance skills, slavery to legalism and activism, slavery to the dictates of the sin nature.
 - 8 Freedom and equality cannot coexist.
 - a Freedom can neither guarantee nor manufacture equality in the human race. Some use freedom to advance under the principle of self-determination; others use freedom to retrogress. There is no equality in heaven. Eternal reward is determined by the use of volition in time.
 - b Freedom is a reality and equality is a myth. The function of freedom guarantees inequality. Equality is the device of the arrogant and the disoriented person. Forced equality is not only the policy of tyrants, but is the basis for Satan's eschatological cosmos diabolicus.
 - 9 Freedom is the motivation of the grace-oriented person who follows the principle of live and let live.
 - 10 Freedom is the policy of God in the creation of the human race to resolve the angelic conflict. The very fact that God created us with volition indicates that He intended us to exercise our free will as a part of the angelic conflict.
 - 11 Freedom should be dogmatic and inflexible about the essentials of life, and flexible and pliable about the non-essentials. Therefore, freedom is common sense and orientation to reality.
 - 12 Freedom must have content of thought. Spiritual thought content is revealed in the Word of God.
- B** Summary of Establishment freedom as over against Spiritual freedom.
- 1 Establishment freedom is the heritage of physical birth. Spiritual freedom is the heritage of regeneration.
 - 2 Spiritual freedom is can function with or without establishment freedom, depending upon the circumstances of life. Establishment freedom or lack of it is related to public modus operandi in the nation, while spiritual freedom is invisible. It is related to the privacy of your royal priesthood under the filling of the Holy Spirit and the metabolization of doctrine.

Portions of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom

- 3 Establishment freedom is based on human morality and virtue, both in thinking and action as illustrated by the function of law enforcement and the military establishment.
 - 4 Spiritual freedom is non-meritorious, because it is related to the divine initiative of antecedent grace in eternity past and the provision in time of the four spiritual mechanics.
 - 5 Establishment freedom recognizes the principle that freedom without authority is anarchy and authority without freedom is tyranny. Freedom is the virtue of its people and the integrity of its authority.
 - a Human freedom emphasizes self-determination in the function of human volition, and takes responsibility for one's own decisions.
 - b Therefore, human freedom demands a personal sense of responsibility in all citizens, believers and unbelievers, and subordination to all legitimate authority in life, e.g., parent, coach, teacher, professor, police officer, judge, senior officer, or boss.
 - c Human freedom is relative, based on the type of government and the policy of a nation or empire for its citizens.
 - d Human freedom is a merit system which depends on law enforcement, self-restraint, self-discipline, thoughtfulness of others, and freedom through military victory. Human freedom is no stronger than the thinking or mental attitude of leadership at the local, state, and national levels.
 - 6 Therefore, spiritual freedom is an absolute. The carnal Christian does not have spiritual freedom; only the believer who is said to be spiritual has spiritual freedom.
 - 7 The greatest decision of human freedom is to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. However spiritual freedom, by way of contrast, requires that you make constant decisions to live your very own spiritual life. Therefore, as the Romans put it: WINQIT QUI PATITUR, translated "He is a winner who perseveres."
- C The Relationship of Human Freedom to Christianity.
- 1 Knowledge of doctrine frees the believer from slavery to the old sin nature, permitting him to accurately live the Christian way of life, John 8:32. Doctrine frees us to have a relationship with God in time.
 - 2 Jesus Christ provided us with spiritual freedom to serve God and advance to maturity, Galatians 3:13, 5:1.
 - 3 Believers are said to have "a glorious freedom," Romans 8:21.
 - 4 This freedom is related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, 2Corinthians 3:17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is [spiritual] freedom."
 - 5 The "Word of God" is called the law of liberty because it defines the believer's freedom to glorify God through Bible doctrine, James 1:25, 2:12.
 - 6 Positive volition to Bible doctrine is the basis for freedom in the client nation, Psalm 119:45. This is why freedom is part of our national heritage.
 - 7 The Ten Commandments are the Magna Charta of human freedom,

Portions of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s Doctrine of Freedom

- Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 5:6. The Year of Jubilee, wherein everyone started all over every fifty years, was designed to maintain and perpetuate the freedom of a nation, Leviticus 25:10.
- 8 As the Mosaic Law provided freedom in the Age of Israel, so today the Holy Spirit provides freedom in the Church Age, 2Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:2-4.
- 9 Slavery was a national issue in Jeremiah's day, Jeremiah 34:8-17. Jeremiah constantly warned against soul slavery. The people's souls were shackled, and slavery of the soul always ends up in physical slavery or death.
- 10 Eternal liberty belongs to the children of God, Romans 8:21. Our eternal freedom is related to the doctrine of redemption, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18-20.
- 11 Experiential sanctification provides daily freedom to serve God, Romans 6:16-20; while positional sanctification provides freedom from slavery to the old sin nature, Romans 6:7. If you're going to serve God, you must have freedom from the old sin nature, even though the old sin nature is still in you.
- 12 Bible doctrine learned and metabolized under operation Z provides freedom from soul slavery, John 8:30-36; James 1:25, 2:12.
- 13 Therefore, liberty is the modus vivendi of Christianity, Galatians 5:13; 1Peter 2:16. That means that every believer, even with a small amount of doctrine, ought to understand freedom, free enterprise, patriotism.
- 14 Legalism seeks to enslave the believer and destroy that liberty, Galatians 2:4. This is why false teachers, though in slavery themselves, promise freedom to their victims, 2Peter 2:19.
- 15 Freedom provides that stability of soul necessary for both occupation with Christ and worship, 2Chronicles 29:31.
- 16 Since salvation and the inculcation of doctrine provide freedom for the soul, human slavery does not hinder the believer from serving God, 1Corinthians 7:20-23. This is why Paul told believer slaves to not break out of slavery, for they are God's freemen and can continue to serve God. And to those who were free, he told them to consider themselves God's servants, free to serve Him. Galatians 3:28 teaches the same principle.
- 17 Citizenship in a national entity provides freedom, Act 22:28.

These notes came from the lectures of R. B. Thieme, Jr. in 1986, 1987 and 1995. His entire doctrine of Freedom is more extensive than this.

I could find two other related doctrines to this.

Other Links to the Doctrine of Freedom

Freedom in the Christian Life ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) (from grace notes)

Freedom is not Free ([PDF](#)) (from Grace Bible Church)

Lessons 315–316: Exodus 20:1–3

A Summary of the Law of Moses

We continue studying the first two verses of Exodus 20 along with the concept of the Mosaic Law.

Exodus 20:1–2 [And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. \(NKJV\)](#)

Even though the first five books of the Bible are called *the five books of Moses, the Law, the Torah*; every one of these designations should have an asterisk next to it. Moses did not write Genesis. In fact, God spoke much of Exodus from chapter 20 forward and all of Leviticus (apart from Leviticus 9–10). If we focused on the Law of God, most of it would be found in the final third of Exodus and almost all of the book of Leviticus and, interestingly enough, almost all the book of Deuteronomy (which was written by Moses). It is Deuteronomy which informs us, early on, as to the extent of the inspiration of Scripture. Someone might allege that only the direct words of God, as found in the passages just cited, could be considered the inspired word of God. However, nearly all of Deuteronomy was written and then spoken by Moses, yet it carries with it all the force of the Law previously given. If the actual words of Moses can be considered the Law of God, then how can we understand his words as being anything other than inspired? (This sounds like a very good topic to expand upon in the introduction of Deuteronomy, whenever we get that far.)

Since we are beginning with an extended portion of text which are words directly from God, we are getting prepared for that. That is why we have an extensive introduction to this chapter.

Many of these doctrinal websites and doctrinal churches depend heavily upon the original work of R. B. Thieme, Jr. I don't say this by way of criticism, but to give credit where credit is due. That does not mean that there is no original work or study involved here.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

Law of Moses

I. Introduction

The Law of Moses is divided into three parts, or codes, as follows.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

Code I, The Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17, contains the laws of divine institution and establishment, including the moral law. This is the Magna Carta or Bill of Rights of human freedom.

Code II, The Ordinances, or the spiritual code, included a complete Christology¹ also called the doctrine of Christ, and was designed to present Christ as the only savior. Included in the ordinances is a shadow Christology and a shadow soteriology also called the doctrine of salvation. These ideas are presented in the descriptions of the tabernacle, the holy days, the Levitical offerings and the daily activity of the priesthood.

Code III, The Judgments, was the social code. The divine laws of establishment applied to social living. Questions of diet, sanitation, quarantine, soil conservation, taxation, military service, how to spend a honeymoon, what to do about divorce, slavery, inheritances, etc., were all covered. It was a complete set of laws.

Kukis note: It is adherence to these laws which helped to preserve the people of Israel from the Exodus to this point in time (God preserved Israel naturally and supernaturally over the centuries).

Kukis note: I have long wanted to subdivide this section, but have not yet crafted a way to do it.

The Law of Moses is called the book of the covenant: Exodus 24:7, 8; 34:27, 28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 9:9, 11, 15. There is a written addendum to the Law in Deuteronomy 29.

The prophecy regarding the breaking of the covenant is found in Deuteronomy 31:16, 20; Jeremiah 22:9. The book of the covenant is the subject of Jeremiah 11; but it is not to be confused with the new covenant with Israel discussed in Jeremiah 31 to 33.

In the teaching of world history in universities, Hammurabi's code is set forth as the shining example of law giving in human history. The Law of Moses is far more comprehensive and far reaching.

Kukis note: The Mosaic Law has been studied continuously from its being given to this point in time (you are studying it right now). You can find the Code of Hammurabi on the internet. I recall there as being about 300 laws and about a hundred of them are missing. They are not, in any way, a precursor to the Mosaic Law. Moses did not copy them; the Jews did not copy them. What they have in common is they were given a few hundred years apart. People farmed and people had slaves in that era, so there are laws in both systems dealing with farming and farm animals and slavery. That is what both sets of laws have in common.

II. Recipients of the Law of Moses

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

The Law was given to Israel: Exodus 19:3 Leviticus 26:46 Romans 3:19; 9:4.

The Law was specifically not given to Gentiles: Deuteronomy 4:8 Romans 2:12-14.

Born again believers of the church age are not under the Law. Therefore, the Mosaic Law was never given to the church: Acts 15:5, 24 Romans 6:14 Galatians 2:19.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law: Matthew 5:17, "...I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill..." He fulfilled the commandments by living perfectly under the Law. His perfect life fulfilled Code I. The Ordinances, Code II, were fulfilled by Christ's death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session. The Judgments, Code III, were fulfilled by Christ as He observed the law of the land by living under divine institutions and establishment.

Kukis note: When Jesus was accused of violating the Law, He was actually violating some tradition followed by the Jewish people (such as, some additional restriction given for the Sabbath). Jesus never violated the Mosaic Law; but He violated rabbinic traditions.

Jesus Christ is the end of the Law for believers: Romans 10:4.

Believers in the church age are under a higher law of spirituality: Romans 8:2-4; Galatians 5:18, 22, 23 1Corinthians 13. The believer who functions under the filling of the Holy Spirit takes up where Christ left off and fulfills the Law.

III. Limitations of the Mosaic Law

The Law cannot provide justification either for individuals or for groups: Galatians 2:16 Romans 3:20, 28 Acts 13:39 Philippians 3:9.

The Law cannot give life: Galatians 3:21.

The Law cannot give God the Holy Spirit nor the divine power and energy from the Holy Spirit: Galatians 3:2.

The Law cannot solve the problem of the sin nature: Romans 8:3. While there were laws of punishment in varying degrees, and fear of punishment helps keep people in line, the Law does nothing to provide victory over sin.

IV. Present Purpose of Mosaic Law

The commandments provide laws of human freedom and provide a divine standard to which the sinner can compare himself and his actions and recognize that he is a sinner and needs a savior: Romans 3:20, 28 1Timothy 1:8, 9.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

The ordinances are designed to communicate God's grace in salvation and restoration to fellowship.

The social code is designed to provide a true concept of a national function and freedom under the laws of divine establishment. (Kukis note: the laws of divine establishment describe how a nation ought to be organized and what moral code they should follow.)

V. Salvation in the Old Testament

Salvation is the adjustment a person makes to the justice of God when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as savior. The justice of God was satisfied when Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross. This makes it possible for God to reconcile the believer to Himself and to impute righteousness to the believer. Genesis 15:6

Kukis note: Since *Jesus the Christ* was the name given to the 2nd Person of the Trinity over the period of the life of Jesus, God must reveal Himself to man in some way prior to the incarnation. I have used the term, *the Revealed God*. In whatever way God has revealed Himself prior to the incarnation. The person who believes in that revelation of God is saved. So, Jonah could speak to the Assyrians about the God of Israel (Who is Jesus Christ), and when they believed Jonah, they were saved. Some random person could be watching an animal get sacrificed according to the Mosaic Law and he might trust in that God requiring that. That person is saved when he believes. Just as the Holy Spirit revealed to you or me Christ Jesus and we believed in Him, the Holy Spirit had to reveal God in some way prior to the incarnation.

The gospel is the information provided in the Bible to give us the facts about God's provision for us.

Kukis note: The gospel is enough information about God (and since the public ministry of Jesus Christ, about Jesus) which the hearer can then choose to believe and be saved.

The death of Christ on the cross was predetermined by the decisions of the divine decrees so that, from the standpoint of Old Testament times, Jesus Christ's substitutionary atonement was certain to take place, even though the actual efficacious sacrifice had not yet occurred. The justice of God was satisfied.

Old Testament believers received Jesus Christ as Savior as He was revealed in Old Testament times. Sometimes He was called Elohim, Jehovah-Elohim or Jehovah also called God our righteousness, etc.). Whenever there was positive volition at the point of God consciousness, God provided gospel information to the individual.

Kukis note: That gospel information could be actual words about the God of Israel or it could be a ceremony (like the slaughtering of the lamb for Passover). After a person heard the words or observed the ceremony, he could then choose to believe in the God

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

behind those words, behind that ceremony; and that person was then eternally saved.

The first statement of the gospel is recorded in Genesis 3, at the time of original sin, man's fall. When Adam and Eve fell, they only had one count against them which is negative volition to the command regarding good and evil. Good and evil is the plan of Satan; so knowledge of good and evil is knowledge of Satan's plan. Adam and Eve, in their innocence in the garden of Eden did not need to be introduced to Satan's plan or to be inculcated with it. Therefore, this one tree was forbidden.

Kukis note: The knowledge of good and evil from this tree was the ability to then understand Satan and Satan's take on good and evil. Prior to eating from this tree, the thinking of Satan would not have been known to Adam or the woman.

Eve partook of the tree in innocence (she had been deceived), and Adam partook in cognizance (he understood that he was violating God's single command made directly to him). He had seen the first sinner, Eve, disobey God, but he took part anyway. Remember, there was no immorality involved here, because at the time they were neither moral or immoral. Their sin was merely rejection of what God had commanded. This brought instant spiritual death.

At this instant, man no longer ruled the world; Satan became the ruler of this kosmos. The coup d'état was complete; and man was now subject to Satan as far as this world is concerned. Mankind immediately became marked with the mark of Adam, the sin nature.

Kukis note: The sin nature is always passed down from the man to his son or daughter. This is because Adam knowingly violated God's direct command. Let me suggest that Adam was choosing Eve over God when he ate the forbidden fruit.

To the question, Which came first, personal sin or the sin nature? The answer is that personal sin came first and caused the existence of the sin nature. The human spirit was cancelled out in the sense of spiritual death.

For the rest of the human race, the sin nature is inherited at birth, so the sin nature is present before there is any opportunity for personal sin. Adam's sin is imputed to us, so that we are born with two strikes against us. "For as in Adam all die ..." (1Corinthians 15:22) Note: We are not called sinners because we sin; we are sinners because we are born, with a sin nature, by having Adam's sin imputed to us.

This is the reason that God, with His character of absolute justice and righteousness, is not free to enter into a relationship with us unless it can be done without compromising His integrity. That is only possible if all the sins of the world are judged and the penalty for them is paid for.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

The Lord has found a way to save mankind.

Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.”

The seed of the woman is the title for the Lord Jesus Christ in virgin birth. The sin nature and Adam’s imputed sin is passed down through the male; and Christ was not born of a male female relationship. He was able to avoid that result of the curse. The lamb of God had to be without spot or blemish.

At the second advent of Christ, the head of Satan will be crushed, and he will no longer rule the world. Christ will rule the world and Satan will be imprisoned for 1000 years.

The pattern of salvation in the Old Testament is exactly the same as the pattern of New Testament salvation. Genesis 15:6 **Abraham believed God, and God imputed it to him for righteousness.** Imputed righteousness means that God’s justice has been satisfied. This verse is found in the context of Romans 4:1-4.

Comments:

- There never was a time and there never will be a time when God is not saving mankind. Romans 10:13; 2Peter 3:9
- The gospel was clearly declared in Old Testament times. Romans 1:1-4; 1Corinthians 15:3-4; Acts 3:18. The passage in Isaiah 53:5, 6 has exactly the same boundaries as are found in 1Corinthians 15:3. Daniel 12:2–3 has the boundary of the resurrection.
- Regardless of age or dispensation, man is always saved in the same manner which is positive volition to the gospel expressed in a non-meritorious way which is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12; Galatians 3:6-8
- Positive volition existed in Old Testament times, both at the point of God consciousness and the point of gospel hearing. Exodus 33:7; Genesis 15:6
- While revelation from God is progressive, reaching its peak with the New Testament scriptures, it has always been, nevertheless, sufficient for salvation of souls at all periods of time.
- The object of faith in salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 3:26. However, the revelation concerning Christ varies in different ages.
- Jesus Christ was first revealed as savior at the time of man’s fall, Genesis 3:15. He is represented as the seed of the woman.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

- Jesus Christ is usually revealed in the Old Testament by shadows. The tabernacle feasts, are the modus operandi of the Levitical priests.

Another means of revealing Christ was through inanimate revelation, that is, through things in nature like the burning bush, the rock, the Shekinah glory, or through the typology of the furniture in the tabernacle (Numbers 17:7). The mercy seat, the hilasterion, was the place of propitiation in the Holy of Holies.

Kukis note: The Jewish people (and some gentiles) would be aware of these things due to the reading of Scripture (which apparently began in the desert-wilderness). They saw the burning bush in their mind's eye. They knew about the Mercy Seat through the reading of Scripture, as only the high priest actually saw it.

The Levitical offerings were witnessing by ritual. The burnt offerings taught propitiation, with emphasis on the word of Christ, the lamb of God. The meal and fruit offerings revealed the person of Christ on the cross. The peace offering taught about the barrier between God and man being removed.

The gospel was presented in the Old Testament directly in theological teaching. Isaiah 53 was straight doctrinal teaching which showed that Christ carried our guilt as well as our sins.

- Once the reality is come, we have the New Testament, which is historical Christology.
- According to Isaiah 55:6, salvation in the person of Jesus Christ, is always available. Acts 4:12
- Many conversions are recorded in the Old Testament, including:

Noah was declared just in Genesis 6:8, 9, and was said to have righteousness in Hebrews 11:7. Hebrews 11 shows the spiritual life of Old Testament believers. The Old Testament imputation of righteousness is seen in Psalm 24:5 and Isaiah 61:10.

For Abraham, compare Genesis 15:6 with Romans 4:1-4

Job gave perfect testimony to salvation in gospel form described as –Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Job 19:23-27.

Many Gentiles were saved in the Old Testament. The citizens of Nineveh responded to the gospel when Jonah preached to them. Jonah 3:5-10, Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:32. See also Romans 9:24, 25; 30-33. See Daniel 4:34-37 regarding the salvation of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Law of Moses (from Grace Notes)

Some minor editing was done by me, along with some textual additions and verses added.

¹ *Christ* comes from the Greek word *Christos*. Its Old Testament equivalent is *Messiah*.

From <https://www2.gracenotes.info/topics/law-of-moses.html>; © 2017 Grace Notes; accessed June 20, 2019.

In general, the Ten Commandments are a mixture of spiritual, moral and legal laws. Relationship to God is covered in the first four commandments and relationship to man is covered in the rest. Our personal relationship with other men and property rights are covered in the last six commandments. These are not specific laws but general principles designed for the nation Israel. The Ten Commandments are a framework upon which is based many of the other 600+ laws given us throughout the Pentateuch. These more than 600 laws which are found in the Law of Moses may be condensed to these Ten Commandments and the Ten Commandments may be summarized as our Lord did: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it, You will love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:35–40; Deuteronomy 6:5 Leviticus 19:18).

A perfect man would have perfect love toward God and toward man. Knowing this, how could any man with some shred of personal honesty claim to keep the Law? I look at these two simple commands and I immediately recognize my personal inadequacies and my certain need for a Savior.

The Ten Commandments have real significant spiritual value today (such as you will have no other gods before Me; such as the implications and applications of you will not make for yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth); and some are absolutely necessary for a lawful society (You will not murder; you will not steal). Some portions of the law are strictly our moral duty toward our fellow man (You will not commit adultery; you will not covet); our moral duty toward God (you will not use the Lord's name in emptiness).

Application: The entire basis of one political party today—the one trying to sell the American people on socialism and fairness—is countered by the final commandment, *you will not covet*. If you obey that commandment, you are no longer interested in people who are much wealthier than you are.

Application: If you do not covet, then you understand that you ought not judge people on the basis of their wealth. An extremely rich person may or may not be greedy; he may or may not be immoral. If you judge someone to be greedy and immoral simply because he has wealth, then you are violating Jesus warning *do not judge others*. I have known many people who automatically think the worst of a businessman, lawyer, CEO, or millionaire—they simply assume what they have done is immoral and illegal. People in

these realms do not necessarily have any unusual character defects (no more than you or I). It is arrogance and greed and jealousy which cause a person to judge any person who is financially better off than he is.

The Hebrews are given a rationale for the first three commandments. Y^ehowah delivered them from slavery and has promised them from the time of Abraham (but actually from eternity past) the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. We have the additional rationale that there is no other God; those worshipped as gods are demons; not God. **We know...that there is no God but One** (1Corinthians 8:4b). Therefore, they ought to be devoted toward the God Who did that on their behalf.

In this first section of the decalogue, there will be 3 laws specifically about the relationship between man and God. Because these laws are given to Israel, we might suggest that these laws are specifically given to Israel and to no one else. However, every one of these laws finds a parallel in the New Testament (however, the 4th commandment—the command to observe the Sabbath—does not come into the Church Age as a legal obligation for gentiles or for Christians).

The ESV (capitalized) translates Exodus 20:3 as: **"You shall have no other gods before Me."**

The Kukis slavishly literal translation is: **[There] will not be to you elohim others against My faces.**

When translating, there is always the problem of deciding, *how accurate and how literal does one want the translation to be?* Many times when we have the verb *to be* followed by the lâmed preposition affixed to a 2nd person singular suffix (or any suffix), that this can be legitimately rendered *you will have*; or, in this case, *you will not have*; even though the verb is a 3rd person masculine singular suffix verb (that is, *he, she or it is, will be*). So, the most accurate way to render this as, **[There] will not be to you other gods before Me**. It might be reasonable to interpret *other gods* as the subject of the verb, giving us, **other gods will not be to you before Me**. However, sometimes the sense of these words can be obscured by too much accuracy. So, most translations have some form of, **You will not have any other gods before Me**.

It is Y^ehowah Elohim Who purchased these people out of slavery. He redeemed them. Therefore, they belong to Him now. This may seem harsh at first that these people go from one form of slavery to another, but remember what the Lord Jesus reassures us with these words, **"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."** (Matthew 11:30; BSB)

It makes a big difference to the slave as to who owns the slave. Some masters are terrible and some are wonderful (I realize that many young people who read this believe that all slavery is despicable and they cannot relate to degrees regarding this particular topic). Nevertheless, the Hebrew people enslaved to God is far preferable to their being enslaved to the Egyptians. You may recall that pharaoh not only put more work on them than they could bear, but then he punished the Hebrew people for not being able to do the

impossible (this punishment was short-lived, because God still had a plan, despite the negative volition of pharaoh).

If slavery is something that you cannot relate to, then, consider this: if you are over 25, you have probably had a good boss and a lousy boss. There are some terrible bosses out there and everyone has worked on a job for a lousy boss. The very fact that there are lousy bosses out there does not somehow invalidate the concept of having a job. The boss of the Hebrew people is God. They were not to have anyone before Him in this regard.

Lesson 317: Exodus 20:1–4

Worship the True God; Idolatry

Here is how far that we have gotten in Exodus 20:

Exodus 20:1–2 *And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (NKJV; capitalized)*

Vv. 1–2 give us the rationale for Israel to follow the commandments. God bought the Hebrew people out from the slave market; but now, they are beholden to Him rather than to the pharaoh.

This brief introduction leads us to the first commandment:

Exodus 20:3 *“You shall have no other gods before Me. (NKJV)*

The Kukis mostly literal translation reads: Exodus 20:3 *[There] will not be to you other gods [= elohim] before [or, against, besides, in addition to] Me.*

I realize that this translation does not match the intensity of *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. This verse begins with the negative *lô* (לֹא or לוֹ) [pronounced *low*] and the 3rd person masculine singular of the Qal imperfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] and it means *to be, to come to pass*. The subject is not the 2nd person singular or plural; it is the 3rd person singular; therefore, this should be translated, *there will be no, or there will not be*.

This is followed by the lamed preposition which means *to, for, in regards to*. This preposition has as its object the 2nd person singular masculine suffix; therefore it means *to you, for you, in regards to you*.

The word for *gods* is *elohim*; so this could be translated as a singular or plural (strictly speaking it is a plural noun with the *-im* ending). The general rule for all translations is that if this word speaks of the Godhead; then it is capitalized and rendered in the singular as *God*. If context indicates that this is some pagan god or gods, it is then translated, *gods*. In any case it is the exact same word (the ancient Hebrew written language does not have

any capital letters). The Hebrew reader, despite this being the same word, understood from context whether this meant *God* of *gods*.

This verse terminates with the preposition 'al (אל) [pronounced *gah*] (I have used *g* to represent a hard guttural sound—as if you are attempting to remove phlegm from the roof of your mouth—rather than a *g* sound). This preposition means *upon, above, beyond, over, in addition to*. There are no gods *above and beyond* our Lord, so we should have no God *in addition* to Y^ehowah. Translating this preposition *before* seems to leave the door open to having a secondary god to worship below Y^ehowah. Therefore, I prefer the translation *besides* or *in addition to*. There is no other God other than the triune God, Who is one in essence, yet three in person. This is appended with the 1st person, singular suffix, from whence we get *Me*.

The Kukis mostly literal translation is: [\[There\] will not be to you other gods](#) [= elohim] [before](#) [or, *against, besides, in addition to*] [Me](#).

Simply speaking, there is no other god that should be worshiped—not Buddha, Krishna, Allah or Mohammed. These are all demons, either demon-possessed or demon-influenced gods. Behind them stand a whole pantheon of demons who, when these entities are worshipped, the disciple is worshipping these demons.

Even though this commandment is personalized and given only to the Hebrews, it applies to all mankind, regardless of their heritage, their geographical location, or their upbringing. No matter how sincere and how religious a person is, if they are worshipping Allah, they are worshipping a demon or a demon pantheon. This bothers unbelievers and it sometimes even bothers new converts. Such people *feel* that, if you are born in India and your parents and grand parents and ancestors back for twenty generations have only known and worshipped Krishna, and you are a moral, kind, loving individual who has known only Krishna and has no idea that there is another God, that maybe, somehow, this is okay and acceptable in God's eyes. It is not. Krishna is not God and those who worship him/it are worshipping a demon or a demon pantheon. This may not be the place for the doctrine of heathenism, but perhaps just a couple of points might help:

God's Omniscience and the Gospel Message

1. God has the ability to look into any soul and determine whether that person has any interest in the true God of the Universe. God knows the hearts of men. God is omniscient. 2Chronicles 16:9a; Job 34:21 Psalm 34:15 113:6 Proverbs 15:3 Acts 1:24
2. God does look into every single soul and determines whether that person has any interest in Him, because God is able to see the heart of every man. 1Samuel 16:7 Luke 16:15 Acts 1:24a
3. At some point early in a person's life, they become conscious of the concept of God. Romans 1:18–20
4. Some have an understanding of God, but then corrupt this understanding of God. Romans 1:21–23

God's Omniscience and the Gospel Message

5. God gives up on such a person and is not ethically required to provide the gospel message to them. Romans 1:22–25
6. If at any time in a person's lifetime that person desires to know God, then God will reveal Himself to that person as Jesus Christ and will see to it that person receives the gospel (Jeremiah 29:13 John 7:17a).
7. Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit will make this information real to the recipient of the gospel (John 16:7–11 1Corinthians 2:14 2Corinthians 2:14b).
8. If a person has no interest in knowing God, then, logically, God has no obligation to present that person with the gospel, even though He often does.
9. You must understand that an interest in God from a religious standpoint does not mean someone has an real interest in knowing the God of the Universe. Let me illustrate from the point of view of a male. I see thousands of attractive females, many of which I would like to know. However, as soon as I see, for instance, that person put a cigarette in their mouth, I lose interest. To some heathen, as soon as they know one aspect of God's true character, they have no interest in Him. For instance, as soon as they find out that God is perfect righteousness, that He is holy, and can have no contact with sin—that all sin is totally repugnant to His character and must be judged, then they suddenly lose interest in such a *judgmental* God. They do not want to know this kind of a God. When a heathen finds out that all the good deeds of his life add up to jack squat in the sight of God, then he no longer has any interest in this kind of God.
10. Since God only needs to call the elect, He is under no obligation to bring the gospel to one who has no interest in the gospel.

It is clear that virtually every Hollywood actor, director and writer knows who Jesus is, as they repeat His name a considerable number of times in their shows. I have no doubt that if all of the last five years of HBO or Showtime's scripts were checked, the most commonly found proper nouns would be *Jesus*, *Christ* and *Jesus Christ*.

An excellent further study of this is R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s The [Doctrine of Heathenism](#).

For every one of the Ten Commandments, save one, there is a corresponding commandment in the New Testament. We have already looked at 1Corinthians 8:4. This passage goes on to say, **For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords** [the *many gods* refers to demons and demon royalty and the *many lords* refers to human celebrityship and royalty], **yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we through Him** (1Corinthians 8:5–6; NASB1995). If you would like something stronger, then 1Corinthians 10:21: **You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.** (NASB1995)

The second commandment:

Exodus 20:4a **"You shall not make for yourself a carved image...** (NKJV)

The second commandment is a warning against idolatry. It focuses upon the idolatry of specific religious objects, but can be applied to any form of idolatry.

Specifically, there is a warning against the making of an object and then worshiping it. Obviously, that is worshiping the product of your own hands, although that does not have to be the case.

If you somehow have reverence regarding a picture or painting of Jesus; or if you carry rosary beads, or have a statue of Mary hanging down from the mirror in your car, you are being idolatrous. People can even develop a confused relationship with the cross, with the sign of the cross, with the stations of the cross, etc. None of these things are called for in Scripture. They are not magic objects nor are they not good luck charms. If you are going through a very difficult time and you take the cross around your neck and hold it or rub it, thinking that it might give just that little extra oomph when it comes to communing with God or dealing with difficulties in life; that is idolatry. Now, don't get me wrong here. You can wear a cross; you can have crosses among your jewelry; or you can that little ichthus fish thing (as a car sticker or a piece of jewelry, whatever). As long as you do not see it as good luck or as something that might give you just a little more heft when speaking with God in prayer. When it comes to your relationship with God, much of what is the Christian life is taking place within the confines of your thinking. You think accurate Bible doctrine; you act according to accurate Bible doctrine; you use the faith rationales for difficult circumstances. But anything handmade cannot be a part of your worship or prayers. This includes kneeling in front of some religious artifact in church (like a large cross, a statue of Mary, or whatever). There is no place in your church which is just a little more holy and that, if you go to that spot, you've got a better chance to get what you pray for. That is idolatrous thinking. Your prayers from somewhere in your church are no better than prayers made from inside your own house, as long as you are in fellowship.

An idol can also be the product of your own mind or your own thinking or your own research. The problem is not the shape of the cross in your church or as a part of your jewelry. The actual cross of Christ did not look like this: †; it looked more like a T. However, even if you have a religious symbol which is more accurate in shape, that still does not give you some kind of a magical symbol to somehow make your spiritual life better. There are spiritual mechanics and spiritual skills for the believer to employ; and none of these include some sort of religious artifact of any sort.

God has given us a great deal of information about Him in Scripture. We stick with that exact information. We do not take it further into some other realm, based upon our own fantasy thinking.

Exodus 20:4b ...—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above,... (NKJV)

We are not to produce any object that represents any of the unseen world. We do not make an object that we believe represents something in the heavens. This might be angels or God or the throne room of God.

I need to footnote this particular commandment, otherwise, you may become confused later in the book of Exodus. God would require that very specific religious artifacts to be constructed (like the Mercy Seat over the Ark of God). However, these artifacts would be utilized in very specific ways—and these artifacts were never to be worshiped. The last third of the book of Exodus, we will study the making of the furniture for the Tabernacle.

On top of the Mercy Seat (we have not studied this yet) are two angels carved out of gold. One represents the elect angels and the other represents the fallen angels. All of angelic creation will watch mankind and watch Jesus very specifically during His 1st advent.

Now, you may have thought that I was overly harsh when talking about crosses. God will actually use the Ark of the Covenant when Israel walks around Jericho. This was under God's direct supervision. However, when the Jews later appropriated the Ark of God to use in another battle, they failed spectacularly. They grabbed up the Ark as a good luck charm, essentially, and it did not work. Many of them died as a result.

Exodus 20:4c [...or that is in the earth beneath,...](#) (NKJV)

We do not make any images of that which we believe to be living below us. This likely refers to the several compartments of Hades.

The Bible speaks of a great unseen world; and God forbids us to try to make physical representations of it.

Exodus 20:4d [...or that is in the water under the earth;...](#) (NKJV)

There is water under the earth (underground wells), but that is not under discussion here. We are not to make any images related to the unseen world and how it is related to underground water wells. This is somewhat perplexing to me. Here, I think we need to separate the reality (water tables beneath the ground) and the ethereal—the place of men who have died and angels who have been imprisoned—is described as water beneath the earth.

Lesson 318: Exodus 20:4

The Prohibition of Idolatry

The second commandment reads:

Exodus 20:4 [“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;...](#) (NKJV)

V. 4 begins the commandment against idolatry. There is a great, vast reality far beyond what our five senses perceive. It is a realm occupied by our triune God, by angels and by demons. We are not to create anything with our hands which represents these things in the regions which are beyond sight and sound.

Gill sees these images as being common animals on the earth or in the seas who are worshiped. This does not mean that we cannot produce artistic renderings of various animals. We will find out in subsequent chapters that the Hebrew people will have Aaron make a golden calf and they will worship that. That violates the second commandment. However, Christians used to identify one another during times of heavy persecution by using the figure of a fish. They did not worship the fish nor did they worship their drawing of a fish. They used this symbol as a way to identify one another (the letters for Greek word for fish formed the acronym, which stood for: *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior*). That fish might be on a door or etched onto a post. This symbol indicated, at times, that this was a meeting place for Christian believers. There was nothing illegitimate or sinful about the fish symbol.



The Fish Symbol (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed May 1, 2024.

Ι	Ἰησοῦς	=	Jesus
χ	Χριστός	=	Christ
θ	θεός	=	God
ύ	υἱός	=	Son
ς	σωτήρ	=	Savior

Many people in hearing this verse just zip right by it without a thought. They have not built any idols lately, nor do they worship Satan. Therefore, they feel as though everything is fine here.

However, the idols which we create today are of a subtler nature. For some it is wealth and fame; for others position and power; for others it is recognition and admiration; for others it is the accumulation of material things; for others, it is the accumulation of status symbols. Some people build their entire lives around striving for these various idols, attempting to attain them, and being envious of those who have the things that they want. This is a form of idolatry. An idol is in the soul. You do not have to have a Buddha or a Mary statue in your house in order to be an idolater. All you have to do is to put something else ahead of God—that is the essence of idolatry. When that thing placed ahead of God, and if it has some spiritual significance, then it is all the more damnable. Furthermore, there is but one way to know God and that is through His Word. Any person—no matter how religious or how nice and how soft spoken they are—does not want to know God's Word, then he does not want to know God and, by definition, is an idolater.

If you believe the government is capable of taking care of you and giving you good healthcare and equaling out all of the disparities of life, then you are in idolatry. No government can do this. There never has been a government been capable of providing such things. We had a president during my lifetime who honestly believed that he could end poverty (well, it is difficult to determine if a politician is being honest about anything). This president was going to end poverty, despite the fact that Jesus said that this could not be done. This president and every president after him, has been redistributing trillions of dollars, and still there is poverty and even people starving in the United States. Over the decades, the number of people who lack a house has increased.

Many other countries have more poverty than we do, but the United States is a client nation to God, and these other countries are not. It is not that our poverty programs are

working; it is simply the blessing from God that gives us reduced poverty numbers in the United States. But, no matter what, there will always be poverty.

If you somehow believe that socialism is the answer to all economic woes, then you are in idolatry (and, just so there is no confusion on this, Jesus was not the first socialist—that is socialist propaganda from an economic system that rejects Jesus).

For those who reject God, you are automatically by definition in soul idolatry. You either worship things, possessions, culture, yourself, your intelligence, science, the position of man on this earth—you have something that you do obeisance to. Most often, it is self-worship and faith in your own abilities and your own mind. I recall an atheist who still studied religions to find the good that was in them; he did not see that as a contradiction (nor do I). He is arrogant enough to decide that he is able to pick and chose from what Satan has provided and determine which is good, moral and important and what is not.

Whereas I am loathed to make pop culture references, Bob Dylan wrote *you gotta serve somebody*. When you are in idolatry, you are in slavery. Recall, these commandments are the basis and the framework for true freedom (that is, these commandments make it possible for you to live side-by-side other people and still have personal freedom). If you are idolatrous, whether overtly or in your soul, you are under slavery to Satan or to one of his many programs (Satan has a lot of programs).

Now, on the other hand, we are all in this world. We live in a particular country, state and city; we have certain friends; we have a family; we interact with coworkers, people at school, people at church. Being doctrinally oriented does not mean that you have to be an insane fanatic. For the average person, some doctrinal teaching once a day, 30 minutes to an hour and thirty is reasonable. You will spend the rest of the day working, buying food, preparing food, and eating food; sleeping, etc. Also, there will be things taking place within your family which require your attention. There will be games which you might play as a family, projects which you do as a family; or even entertainment which you might enjoy together as a family. All of this is normal and God does not expect you to shirk your family responsibilities. Furthermore, God does not want you to do less than satisfactory job at work so that you might sneak away and study your Bible.

When it comes to the amount of time spent on Bible study, there are exceptions to this. A pastor-teacher, missionary or evangelist may spend more time directly involved in God-stuff; in studying and teaching. You might be a writer and put in a full day of writing (whether that be two hours or four or six). People have to determine, through the filling of the Spirit and Bible doctrine, what God expects us to do, and most of the time, it is all about establishing a balance. We cannot ignore the realities of this world that we live in when establishing that balance. You want to get away to that cabin out in the woods; I want to get away to that cabin out in the woods. However, this is not the practical solution for most people.

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;... (NKJV)

Several pastor-teachers have put together good doctrines with regards to Idolatry. There is no need for me to reinvent the wheel.

Doctrine of Idolatry (by Ken Reed)

1. Definition:

- 1) Idolatry is the exchange of honoring God for honoring any created thing; that is, ascribing divine glory to natural or supernatural phenomena. Romans 1:21-25
- 2) Idolatry is a satanic attempt to substitute false gods and concepts for God's Person and plan. His purpose is to blind mankind with respect to God's plan. He does this by setting up a series of counterfeits. 2 Corinthians 4:3,4 cp. 11:14
- 3) There is religious idolatry (the regimented and ritualistic worship of idols e.g., pagan worship) and practical idolatry (applied idolatry in principle). Compare Deuteronomy 8:19 “...and go after other gods and serve them and worship them...”
- 4) One can apply idolatry in principle apart from assembly. Compare Colossians 3:5

2. Vocabulary:

1) Hebrew:

- (1) ^ʾĒymîym (אֱיִמִיּוֹת) [pronounced *ay-EEM*]; *terrors, idols*. So called because of the terror that they cause to worshipers (Jeremiah 50:38b). Strong's #368 BDB #34. I am not sure if this word actually has the meaning of *idols* or not.
- (2) ^ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִיּוֹת) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*]; *gods, deities; as false gods* (Deuteronomy 29:18; 31:16; etc.) This exact same word is used to mean *God*. Strong's #430 BDB #43.
- (3) Bôsheth (בִּשְׁתָּה) [pronounced *BOH-sheth*]; *an idol that deceives the hope of worshippers and puts them to shame, shameful thing* (Jeremiah 3:24; 11:13; Hosea 9:10) Strong's #1322 BDB #102.
- (4) Mas^êkkîyth (מַסְכֵּיִת) [pronounced *mah-s^êk-KEETH*]; *image, figure, the chamber of images, walls adorned with painted or carved figures of idols* (Ezekiel 8:12). Strong's #4906 BDB #967.
- (5) Nesek^ê (נֶסֶךְ) [pronounced *NEH-sehk*]; *a molten image* (Isa. 48:5c; Jeremiah 51:17) Strong's #5262 BDB #651
- (6) Çemel (צֶמֶל) [pronounced *SEH-mel*]; *a statue or carved idol* (Ezekiel 8:3,5). Strong's #5566 BDB #702.
- (7) Peçel (פֶּזֶל) [pronounced *PEH-cell*]; *a graven image, a molten idol* (Isaiah 21:9 48:5c; Jeremiah 50:38c 51:17). Strong's #6459 BDB #820.
- (8) T^êrâphîym (תְּרַפִּיּוֹת) [pronounced *t^êraw-PHEEM*]; *domestic of*

Doctrine of Idolatry (by Ken Reed)

household gods, small figurines, personal or family gods (Genesis 31:19,34,35; Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2). Strong's #8655 BDB #1076.

(9) Tsîyr (צִיֵר) [pronounced *tseer*]; *an idol* (Isaiah 45:16). Strong's #6736.

2) Greek:

(1) Eidōlóthuton (εἰδωλόθυτον) [pronounced *i-do-LOTH-oo-ton*]; which are *things (meat) offered to idols*. By implication, this is the actual act of idolatry (offering food to an idol). Acts 15:29 1Corinthians 8:1,4,7,10

(2) Eidōlolátrēs (εἰδωλόατρης) [pronounced *eye-doe-lol-AT-race*], which means, *an idolater*. We get our English word *idol* from the first part of this word (the first four Greek words have the same first part). 1Corinthians 5:10,11; 6:9; 10:7

(3) Eidōlolatreía (εἰδωλολατρεία) [pronounced *i-doe-lol-at-RĪ-ah*], which means, *idolatry*. 1Corinthians 10:14 Galatians 5:20 Colossians 3:5

(4) Eídōlon (εἶδωλον) [pronounced *Ī-doe-lon*], which means, *idol, an image (of a heathen god) (for worship), a likeness (of something otherworldly)*; by implication, *a false god, a heathen god*. Strong's #1497. Acts 7:41 15:20, (29) Romans 2:22 1Thessalonians 1:9

(5) Eikōn (εἰκών) [pronounced *Ī-KOHN*], which means, *image, figure, likeness, statue, profile, or (figuratively) representation, resemblance*. We get our word *icon* from this word. Strong's #1504. Luke 20:24 Romans 1:23 Colossians 1:15 3:10 Hebrews 10:1 Revelation 13:14,15; 14:9,11

3. Things that can comprise idolatry:

1) Inanimate objects such as wood, stone, metal, trees, rivers, mountains, etc. Psalm 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isaiah 44:9-20 Jeremiah 10:3-11 Daniel 5:4

2) Animals. Deuteronomy 4:17,18; Romans 1:23

3) People such as ancestors, great leaders, heroes, etc. Genesis 4:17 (Cain, an unbeliever dedicating the city to Enoch); Deuteronomy 4:16

4) Powers of the natural realm such as earth, air (wind), fire, water, etc. Deuteronomy 12:31

5) Heavenly bodies. Deuteronomy 4:19 Job 31:26-28

6) Abstract soul qualities such as righteousness, justice, love, hate, good, etc. Psalm 14:1c; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 1:24

7) Things such as power, wealth, fame, beauty, age, health, etc. Job 31:24,25 Psalm 49:6 52:7 Proverbs 6:25 11:28 Mark 10:23,24 Hebrews 13:5

8) Worshiping God through icons. Isaiah 40:18-20 46:5-7

9) Worshiping the symbol or image itself. Romans 1:23

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- 10) Other gods. Exodus 20:3-5 Deuteronomy 5:7-9
- 11) Satan or angels. Matthew 4:8-10 Luke 4:7-8 Revelation 19:10 22:8,9
4. Idolatry results in negative volition to the gospel. Romans1:18-25
 - 1) This produces false concepts introducing soul idolatry. Romans1:18-21
 - 2) This leads to overt idolatry. Romans1:22-23
5. The development of idolatry in postdiluvian civilization:
 - 1) What forms of idolatry that pre-existed the Noachic flood was wiped out leaving only believers in Noah and his family.
 - 2) The first recorded postdiluvian example of idolatry is found in Genesis11:1-9
 - 3) The time: immediately after the flood.
 - 4) The place: historical Babylon. Genesis10:8-10; 11:9
 - 5) The human instigators: Cush, Nimrod and Samerimus and the Samaritans (Shinar). Genesis10:8-12; Genesis11:1-9
 - 6) The images of idolatry: the city and the tower. Genesis11:4
 - 7) The city = political idolatry; the tower = religious idolatry.
 - 8) The concept: One world order and a one-world religion. Many people today believe that a world government would be the key to a better world.
 - 9) The one world political order is further depicted in Jeremiah 51:7 and Revelation 18 under the code name Babylon.
 - 10) The one world religion is further depicted in Revelation 17 esp. vv.1,4,5 under the code name Babylon.
 - 11) The distinctive characteristics of the cult: mother son. She was known as the goddess of love (Ashtarti, Isis, Diana, Venus, Mary, the queen of heaven). Nimrod (Baal, Brahma, Osirus, Jupiter, Bacchus). Salvation by works, many holidays, prayers for the dead and purgatory, false priesthoods; this organization sponsored the phallic cult.
6. Both the political and religious systems of idolatry are carried over into the Church Age. Revelation 17-18 cp. 2Thessalonians 2:7
 - 1) Christian titles and terminology were adopted.
 - 2) Responsible for the death of millions. Revelation 17:6; 18:24
 - 3) Its concept and philosophy under religiosity dominates the world. Revelation 17:1-2,18

Doctrine of Idolatry Lake Erie Bible Church P-T Ken Reed May 2003; Revised Feb., 2015

From <http://lakeeriebiblechurch.org/doctrine/pdf/IDOLATRY.pdf> accessed June 20, 2019. Some very minor changes by me.

Also see Grace Notes on Idolatry: <https://www2.gracenotes.info/topics/idolatry.html>

No Other Gods (a graphic); from [YouTube](#); accessed May 7, 2024.

The first verse of the prohibition of idolatry is:

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;... (NKJV)

V. 5 will continue this commandment.

Exodus 20:5a ...you shall not bow down to them... (NKJV)

We begin v. 5 with the negative $\text{l\ddot{o}'} (לֹא$ or לֹאִי) [pronounced *low*]. Strong's #3808 BDB #518. Next is the 2nd person singular, Hithpael imperfect of $\text{sh\ddot{a}chah} (\text{שָׁחָה})$ [pronounced *shaw-KHAW*] and it comes from a root word meaning to *sink, to depress*. It means *bow down, worship, prostrate oneself*. The

Hithpael stem is the intensive reflexive, meaning *you will not bow yourself down or you will not prostrate yourself*. Strong's #7812 BDB #1005. This phrase is completed with the $\text{l\ddot{a}med}$ preposition, which means *to* and it is affixed to the 3rd person, masculine plural suffix (*them*). No Strong's # BDB #510.



The people were not to make any images based upon the unseen world, nor are they to worship these images in any way. This certainly applies to statues of Mary, statues of Jesus, or any saint that a person might pray to. We do not pray to saints. Some people pray to Saint Jude, as the patron saint of lost causes and of prayers. If you want to make your prayer a lost cause, then pray to Saint Jude. However, people who have died have not been made into conduits of prayer. We pray directly to God the Father. If you have direct access to God the Father through Jesus His Son, why on earth would you think that going through some human-anointed saint would be better than that?

When we divided up a passages into small phrases, we often lose the flow of the overall passage. However, this verse is going to require a lot of exegesis and explanation because many important issues are raised here. Therefore, even though the second commandment is comprised of vv. 4–6, I will have to break that up into many separate parts in order to cover it properly. Then we will gather up these individual pieces and look at them as a whole.

Exodus 20:5b ...nor serve them. (NKJV)

We do not serve these images or these manufactured gods. They should not be made in the first place; and if there are some idols which exist, they should have exactly no impact on our lives at all.

This is followed by the waw conjunction (which we usually translate as *and*, but it can be translated in a number of different ways). Then, the negative and the Hophal (causative passive) imperfect of 'âbad (אָבַד) [pronounced *gaw^b-VAHD*] follow. The verb means *to work, to serve, to enslave, to labor*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712.

In the first verb (v. 5a), you are choosing to worship these things and the second verb (v. 5b) means that these idols have got their hooks into you and now you are trapped into serving them. This has a wide application to involvement in an apostate church to accumulation of material things. I have known several people who were involved with apostate churches; however, they got in early, received a lot of approbation, and were so high up in the organization that they ended up being enslaved to that organization (I hesitate to use the word *church* in many cases).

Idolatry can refer to material things. Even today, there are specific objects made by man which are highly venerated by man. The examples of a carving of Jesus on the cross; or a statue of Mary, or a statue of a saint have been given.

There are other sorts of idols in modern life. When your efforts are directed toward the acquisition of material things, toward making others think highly of you, toward making a lot of money, toward making others jealous, toward sleeping with as many women as you can; toward gaining as much power as possible in your little realm—you can pursue any of these things and rank them high in your value system. When you expend your efforts pursuing such things; then you become enslaved to them. If you are after any of these things, then you are being caused to work for them.

Some women when they ask a man what their goals and hopes and dreams are, although this sounds very noble and meaningful, but it often means *what salary range do you see yourself in ten years and what kind of material things do you intend to possess?* Allow me to append this remark with, some women consider their future as a family, and would prefer that to take place in a safe home in a safe neighborhood. So, two women could make the same inquiry, one with noble motives and one without.

Maybe you have known someone who has stretched their earnings to a point of social status which has turned around and enslaved that person to a job which they despise, but are enslaved to in order to maintain their level of apparent material wealth. Who hasn't known a male Lothario who began by find women attractive, but with each new conquest finds himself more and more enslaved to the pursuit of the female (and so often, such a man also develops a deep-seated hatred of women). I knew one male that, after a conquest, he confided to me that he could not wait for them to leave his bedroom and house altogether once the sex was over. He wanted to sleep; he did not want to listen to them jabber endlessly.

These examples mirror what we have studied so far in v. 5. The progression is, a person chooses to become an idolater and this momentum takes him to a point where he is then enslaved to that idol.

Exodus 20:5a-b ...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. (NKJV)

The NKJV combines v. 4 into the first portion of v. 5:

Exodus 20:4–5b "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. (NKJV)

Many other translations start a new verse with v. 5 and carry that into v. 6. Once we complete v. 6, we will look back on some examples of different ways to divide up these verses.

Exodus 20:5c For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,... (NKJV)

Here, in v. 5c, God uses an anthropathism. God is not actually jealous; God does not have emotions as we understand emotions. The term *jealousy* is used here to convey the concept that God does not allow for any competition when it comes to worship. We are not to worship other gods; and we are not to worship people.

Jealousy is a sin and God does not sin. This is an anthropathism so that we have a clearer understanding of God's acts based upon our understanding of human motivation (this is motivation which God does not actually have, but motivation which we can relate to). Just as a husband expects his wife to place no man before him and to sleep with no other man, God expects the same of us on a spiritual level. Spiritual faithfulness involves worshipping the one and true God and living in the Word.

This is not the same as respecting other people in our past (or in our nation's past); but they are not to take the place of God in any way. You can certainly admire George Washington or John Adams without the fear of entering into idolatry.

This does not, in some way, forbid a wife from serving her husband.

What follows is quite interesting.

Exodus 20:5d ...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children,... (NKJV)

Then we have the Qal active participle of *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*] and it means *to attend to, to visit, to muster, to appoint*. The British concept of this is, *to sort out*. In this passage and several others, punishment is implied. Strong's #6485 BDB #823.

Vv. 5c–6 give the rationale behind the second commandment. This passage also raises an issue which some theologians have trouble with but which is relatively simple in its concept.

If a generation of Israelites fall into idolatry, God will deal with this iniquity in them and in their sons.

Exodus 20:5e ...to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,... (NKJV)

God will continue to deal with the iniquity of those in the 3rd and 4th generations from an idolatrous generation—if they continue with the sins of their parents and grandparents.

Notice that God specifies, *those who hate Me*. God does not cause bad things to happen just because they are in the line of an idolater. The idolater hates God, because he refuses to obey God's commandments; and very often, his son and grandsons will feel the same way.

Exodus 20:5d-e ...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,... (NKJV)

Here is where we have the problem. Just because a father sins in his idolatry, should God discipline his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren? How can God be just and fair and do such a thing? Therefore, we should take this in points:

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1. God holds us all accountable for the choices that we make from our own volition.
 2. Those who make good choices in their lives often receive blessing because (1) God enjoys blessing believers who have the capacity for it; and (2) God vindicates His Word wherever it is found; even in the soul of the believer.
 3. In the commandment we are studying, good choices would be avoiding idolatry in all its forms.
 4. Combine good choices with spiritual growth (which occurs as we take in the Word), and we reap what God sows.
 5. Those who make poor choices in their lives reap what they sow.
 6. So how do we reconcile these points with Exodus 20:5d-e? Let me offer an illustration. Children are impressionable and when we have children, we are very responsible for much of their behavior, their ideas, their goals, etc. A person who brings their child up in the respect and admonition of the Lord will have a child who, when he is old, will not depart from God's Word.
 7. I have heard of parents say, in their human arrogance, that they will allow their child to attend church if they want to and allow their children to make whatever spiritual decisions that they feel are right for them. As I said: children are very impressionable and when they observe their parents not worshiping God; not having any thought toward God—these actions or non-actions affect the thinking and behavior of a child.
 8. This certainly can extend beyond one's relationship with God. When children
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observe their mother having sleep-over boyfriends, when they observe the cursing of God at the dinner table, when they notice that their parents do not thank God for the food He provided for them, when they realize that there is a place called church where people go to worship God but their parents do not—how do you think they will choose to live their own lives? The parental influence is very great and they will grow up to have little or no thought about Who and What God really is.

9. Parental influence is not an absolute, but since parents have such a tremendous influence over their children, it makes sense that their children will emulate their parents when it comes to various behaviors and actions, which can include not having any faith in God. There are some exceptions and those who pursue God, even though in their young years they have no encouragement to do so; but, for the most part, most children follow their parent's lead. When they have children, they might even be more passive about presenting God's Word. And their children will follow in kind. What this verse indicates is that when a family begins to neglect service to the Lord Who bought them; when in particular, they neglect Bible doctrine, they pass on this attitude for as long as the third and fourth generations. God attends to the judgement onto the third and fourth generation because these people pick up where their negative volition parents lead off.
10. The key to this verse is that very last portion where the verse adds, *of those who hate me*. The key to those that God will attend to with punishment are those who, even after three or four generations, still hate Him as did their grandparents and great grandparents.
11. So, there is a judgment on later generations, but this is often the result of the teaching of the first generation.
12. For more detail, see the **Doctrine of the Four-Generation Curse**.

The **Doctrine of the Four-Generation Curse** comes next.

Lesson 320: Exodus 20:5

The Four Generation Curse

We are studying the commandment which disallows idolatry. V. 4 tells the people not to make any idols and v. 5 says:

Exodus 20:5 ...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,... (NKJV)

The Israelites are told not to make such idols (v. 4) and not to bow down and worship them (v. 5).

But then God talks about visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children down to the 3rd and 4th generations. What is that all about?

Buddy Dano was an assistant pastor at Berachah Church under R. B. Thieme, Jr. Much of the credit for this doctrine should probably go to R. B. Thieme, Jr. Dano's approach shows him to be very influenced by R. B. Thieme, Jr

I have replaced the KJV quotations Dano's doctrine with the more up-to-date World English Bible (WEB). I capitalized the pronominal references to God.

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1. This doctrine is directly stated in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:4-6 "You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me, and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (WEB) This is repeated in Deuteronomy 5, along with the other commandments. Deuteronomy 5:8-10 "You shall not make a carved image for yourself—any likeness of what is in heaven above, or what is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments."
 2. The four generation curse occurred as a part of the rejection of God's grace. Exodus 34:6-7 Yahweh passed by before him [Moses], and proclaimed, "Yahweh! Yahweh, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation."
 3. Numbers 14:18 'Yahweh is slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and disobedience; and He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation.' You will never have the four generation curse where people respond to the grace of God.
 4. The mechanics of the four generation curse are given in Proverbs 30:11-17 There is a generation that curses their father, and doesn't bless their mother. There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! Their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and their jaws like knives, to devour the poor from the earth, and the needy from among men. "The leech has two daughters: 'Give, give.' "There are three things that are never satisfied; four that don't say, 'Enough!': Sheol, the barren womb, the earth that
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is not satisfied with water, and the fire that doesn't say, 'Enough!' "The eye that mocks at his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, the young eagles shall eat it." The problem is the absolute arrogance of the subsequent generations.

5. The four generation curse cannot be understood apart from the law of culpability. Deuteronomy 24:16 **The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.** Jeremiah 31:29–30 "In those days they will say no more, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But everyone will die for his own iniquity. Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. This law simply states that children are not responsible for their parents' sins without culpability of their own. Therefore the four generation curse must take into account this law of culpability.
6. The principle of God's fairness to children is given in Deuteronomy 21:15-17 **If a man has two wives, the one beloved and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firstborn son is hers who was hated, then it shall be, in the day that he causes his sons to inherit that which he has, that he may not give the son of the beloved the rights of the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn; but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he has; for he is the beginning of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.** It is incompatible with God's character for Him to be unfair. God is sovereign, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutability and veracity. It is impossible for a righteous and just God to be anything other than His essence, immutability and veracity adds up to fairness.
7. A principle existed in the Old Testament times which is not in effect during the present Church Age. Namely, maximum discipline for a negative or a rebellious son. There were some teenagers in the Old Testament who would never accept authority and were permanently in a state of rebellion. They were put on trial, and if they were convicted, they were executed, capital punishment was used. The passage referenced here Deuteronomy 21:18–21.
 - 1) Such young people were a part of a revolution, and no revolution is condoned by God.
 - 2) The so-called revolutionary war we fought to establish America as a free, independent nation was a war for independence. It was not based on revolutionary principles. It was not the Revolutionary War. It was a war for independence; it was a war for freedom.
8. The Word of God breaks the four generation curse. Deuteronomy 6:4-13 **Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God. Yahweh is one. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I**

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command you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates. It shall be, when Yahweh your God brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you, great and goodly cities which you didn't build, and houses full of all good things which you didn't fill, and cisterns dug out which you didn't dig, vineyards and olive trees which you didn't plant, and you shall eat and be full; then beware lest you forget Yahweh, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall fear Yahweh your God; and you shall serve him, and shall swear by his name.

- 1) Verse 4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God (ELOHIM) is one Lord (JEHOVAH)." ELOHIM is plural, indicating that the Jews believed in the Trinity.¹ The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all are co-equal and coeternal, possessing the same essence. When all Three are mentioned together the word "ELOHIM," or God, is used. When one Person specifically is mentioned, the word "JEHOVAH," Lord, is used."
- 2) "The Lord our God is one Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of Israel. There is only one God, One Lord in the sense of the King or the Ruler of Israel. Verse 5: "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." The heart refers to the mentality of the soul, which is the authority of the soul. Literally, "with all your soul." You cannot love God with your soul until the commander of the soul loves, because it is the mind that contains the Word of God and all that is necessary for the capacity to love.
- 3) "And with all your might." Literally, "with all your excess." This is the Word of God producing to the maximum capacity in the life. "And these words I command you this day, shall be"... where? In your emotions? NO! The emotions do not contain the Word. "These words shall be in your mind," Deuteronomy 6:6.
- 4) Deuteronomy 6:7 ...and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. The intake of the Word of God should be part of your daily routine at home.
- 5) Deuteronomy 6:8 You shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. Carried around the head, they just pulled it out, unrolled it, and read it. It was the original Jewish training aid.
- 6) Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them [commands, promises, passages] on the door posts of your house and on your gates. A place where everyone could meet, see, and talk about it. And think about it. This is one of several passages that shows how the Word of God breaks the four generation curse.

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- 7) Deuteronomy 7:9–10 Know therefore that Yahweh your God himself is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments, and repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him who hates Him. He will repay him to his face.
 - 8) Psalm 100:5 For Yahweh is good. His loving kindness [or, *grace*] endures forever, His faithfulness to all generations.
 - 9) Jeremiah 31:15–16 Yahweh says: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.” Yahweh says: “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,” says Yahweh. “They will come again from the land of the enemy.
9. In the Millennium maximum knowledge of the Word breaks the four generation curse, Jeremiah 31:29-34. “In those days they will say no more, “‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But everyone will die for his own iniquity. Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. “Behold, the days come,” says Yahweh, “that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them,” says Yahweh. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says Yahweh: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and I will write it in their heart. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will no longer each teach his neighbor, and every man teach his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh;’ for they will all know Me, from their least to their greatest,” says Yahweh, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” In this passage Jeremiah looks ahead to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, at which time the four generation curse will be broken under the New Covenant to Israel. THE PERSONAL REIGN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ON EARTH WILL GIVE THE WORLD THE GREATEST FREEDOM IT HAS EVER KNOWN.
10. In the time of Jeremiah the four generation curse on idolatry reached its peak, and the fifth cycle of discipline was administered by God. Jeremiah 16:10-13 It will happen, when you tell this people all these words, and they ask you, ‘Why has Yahweh pronounced all this great evil against us?’ or ‘What is our iniquity?’ or ‘What is our sin that we have committed against Yahweh our God?’ then you shall tell them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says Yahweh, ‘and have walked after other gods, have served them, have worshiped them, have forsaken Me, and have not kept My law. You have done evil more than your fathers, for behold, you each walk after the stubbornness of his evil heart, so that you don’t

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listen to Me. Therefore I will cast you out of this land into the land that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers. There you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’

11. Exodus 20:6 continues with the second commandment. ... and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.
 - 1) *Showing loving kindness* is the manufacture of grace. We see the grace of God toward those who break away. “...and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” The word “showing” does not mean to show. But what it does say is manufacture something out of something else. In this passage it means to manufacture grace out of the character of God. The Hebrew word here is actually not “mercy,” but grace. Literally, this reads: “Manufacturing grace unto thousands of them that love Me.” The word “love” is the basic word for love, but here it refers to the constant presence and reception of the Word of God into the mind. The word “keep” is literally translated “to guard,” to guard something that is important that belongs to you.
 - 2) Therefore this portion of Scripture should be read this way. “Manufacturing grace unto thousands of them that keep on loving Me, and keep on preserving and guarding My commandments.” How do we guard God’s commandments? By a system of morality? NO! You guard them through the continuous intake of the Word of God as you establish your mind as the authority of your soul for life.
12. How to head off the third and fourth generation curse before it starts: learn doctrine daily and teach it to your children daily.
 - 1) Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge, but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.*
 - 2) Proverbs 1:8 *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,*

¹ It is Buddy Dano’s opinion that the Jews believed in the Trinity. Personally, I do not believe that the Jews understood or believed in the Trinity. The concept of progressive revelation allows for more doctrinal information to be released by God (in the form of divinely inspired Scripture) which allows us to understand more than we did before. When believers began to understand that God was a Trinity, three Persons with the same essence, it became clear, with research, that this did not, in any way, contradict anything in the Old Testament (including Deuteronomy 6:4). Let me add to this information that the canon of Scripture is now closed. Therefore, no new revelation is being added. ANYONE in the Church Age, claiming to have new information from God not found in the Bible, is a lying prophet.

From:

<https://wisdomknowledge.wordpress.com/2010/04/09/the-second-commandment-%E2%80%93-the-four-generation-curse/> accessed June 27, 2019. I edited Dano’s doctrine, replacing the KJV with the World English Bible. I edited some additional text as well.

I noticed that Buddy uses much of Bob’s teaching and writing style and vocabulary. I don’t know what went on that was personal between them (Buddy was an assistant pastor at Berachah), but his doctrinal viewpoint seemed to be straight.

Links to the Four Generation Curse

See also:

The Four Generation Curse ([Bible News1](#)) This has a great many illustrations from the Bible.

Doctrine of the Fourth Generation Curse ([L. G. Merritt](#))

The Four Generation Curse ([Ron Adema](#))

Despite the power, literary dynamic and longevity of the King James Version, it sounds like a foreign language to most young people. For that reason, I rarely use it.

Lesson 321: Exodus 20:6

The Doctrine of Grace

So far, this is what we have studied (God is speaking aloud directly to the sons of Israel):

Exodus 20:4–5b "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. (NKJV)

Vv. 4–5b is the actual second commandment. However, there is additional information specifically for the Jewish people (but it has wide application to gentile nations; particularly, gentile client nations during the Church Age).

Exodus 20:5c-e For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,... (NKJV)

We have just studied the 3rd and 4th generation curse and how to keep it from happening. The gist of it is this: even if the 1st and 2nd generations go off track, if the 3rd and 4th turn back to God (that is, begin growing in grace and knowledge), then they can turn their country around. This is what is key to the United States today in the year 2024. Any person can see that client nation USA is in a very dangerous position. Our national debt is insanely out of control; we have at least 20 million people living in the United States right now who have no allegiance to this country; we have a government out of control, drunk on power, using its power to go after the previous President; our military is fragmented and scattered throughout the world. Fundamentally, however, our problem is spiritual. If we as a nation turn back to God, all of our other problems will take care of themselves. If we don't, then these problems and many others could lead us into national chaos.

Exodus 20:6a ...but showing mercy [or, *grace*, or, *lovingkindness*] to thousands, to those who love Me. (NKJV)

Regardless of who these people are, if they show positive volition toward the God is Israel, then God will manufacture grace to them.

This is only the second time in the book of Exodus that grace is mentioned. That is because Exodus is a book about the Law; not a book about grace.

The first verb is 'âsâh (אָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which generally means *to do, to make* in the widest sense. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. This word has a variety of applications, from being involved in creation (Genesis 1:7 3:1), in doing God's commandments and statutes (Deuteronomy 16:12 30:8), and in performing signs and miracles (Joshua 24:17). We could also translate this, *performing acts of graciousness* or *manufacturing grace* in this verse.

Cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*] is a word which is alternately translated *mercy* and *lovingkindness* by the KJV. It means *grace, gracious*, although the Hebrews did not understand the full impact of this word (remember that divine revelation is also *progressive revelation*; and they had not progressed to the complete vision of God). In the Old Testament we might view grace by the definition *unmerited favor*, because the Hebrews did not fully comprehend the reason behind or justification for God's graciousness and mercy and kindness toward them.

In fact, many Israelites became exceedingly legalistic, not only in their attempt to follow the Law (which is a good thing). However, those with power tried to improve upon the Law and embellish it, in order to receive more blessing from God (but they were not looking for grace, really; they wanted to be rewarded for their zealotry). These legalists had no concept of God's grace. Those who did, like Moses, were grace-oriented men. They realized that their power and strength both lie with God; that God poured out lovingkindness to them far beyond what they could have ever earned or deserved.

Since the cross, we have a better understanding of grace and the reason behind it. R. B. Thieme jr.'s definition of grace is, *all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the cross*. God can only be gracious to us if it does not compromise His attributes of righteousness or justice. These acts of mercy and kindness are unmerited; all the merit is Christ's and what He did on our behalf on the cross. God is only able to be gracious to us because His Son paid for our sins.

Cheçed means grace. I do not know what translation that Ballinger used in this doctrine below. If I reference the text of a verse below, I will provide the source. The best way to grow spiritually while studying this doctrine, is to open your Bible and read the verses which are cited.

Doctrine of Grace (by Jack M. Ballinger)

- I. Introduction.
 - A. Grace is all that God has done to bring fallen and sinful man into a just, perfect, and eternal relationship with Himself, without compromising His divine attributes. God's policy of grace is totally separate from human merit and works.
 - B. Grace is the policy of God and the title of God's plan. 2Timothy 1:9b [God

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- called us] according to His own purpose and grace, having been given us in Christ Jesus before time eternal. (BLB)
- C. Grace completely excludes human merit and works as the basis of access to divine blessing, Romans 11:6 **But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace;**... Romans 4:4 **Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited according to grace but as what is due.**
- D. Grace benefits are bestowed on the basis of faith, Romans 5:1–2 **Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.**
1. Faith is a nonmeritorious system of perception.
 2. The merit (or lack thereof) is never in the faith but in the object of one's faith.
- E. Faith must always be directed toward the teachings of Scripture to secure the grace benefit. Romans 10:17 **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ.**
- F. All three adjustments to God's justice are attained according to grace by faith apart from works.
1. Salvation adjustment to the justice of God. Galatians 2:16 Ephesians 2:8,9.
 2. Rebound adjustment to the justice of God. Rebound restores us to temporal fellowship with God. 1John 1:9.
 3. Maturity adjustment to the justice of God. James 1:21,22 2Peter 3:18. See the doctrine of GAP (grace apparatus for perception).
- G. Bible Doctrine is called **the word of His grace** (Acts 20:32).
- H. Grace can be rejected, which brings divine judgment. Hebrews 10:29 gives the example where one **has insulted the Spirit of grace.**
- I. However, grace always precedes divine judgment. That is, God gives individuals, geographical regions and nations grace before He brings His divine judgment against that individual, geographical area or nation.
- J. Certain phrases show the primacy of grace.
1. **the grace of God** (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 2Corinthians 1:12).
 2. **the word of His grace** (Acts 20:32).
 3. **the true grace of God** (1Peter 4:12).
 4. **riches of His grace** (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7).
 5. **grace to you and peace** (2Corinthians 1:3).
- K. *Mercy* is a synonym for *grace* (2Corinthians 1:3, where *mercy* is grace in action).
- L. Greek vocabulary.
1. Verb, *charizomai* (χαρίζομαι) [pronounced *khar-ID-zohm-ahee*], used 23X. It means, *grant, give, bestow on, deal generously or graciously with, forgive*. Strong's #5483.

Doctrine of Grace (by Jack M. Ballinger)

2. Noun, charis (χάρις) [pronounced *KHAHR-ic*], used 155X. It means, *grace, favor, gift, blessing*. Strong's #5485.
 3. Verb, charitoō (χαριτόω) [pronounced *khar-ee-OW-oh*], used 2X. It means, *to bestow on freely*. Strong's #5487. Luke 1:28 Ephesians 1:6
 4. Noun, charisma (χάρισμα) [pronounced *KHAHR-ees-mah*], which is used 17X. It means, *gift*; used of salvation and spiritual gifts. Strong's #5486. In the Church Age, believers are given a spiritual gift or gifts at the moment of salvation.
- M. The Hebrew equivalent is *chên* (חֵן) [pronounced *khayn*], a noun. It means, *grace, favor, charm*, etc. (Genesis 6:8; Exodus 33:12 in an expression "found grace").
- N. Grace exists in five general categories: saving, living, maturity, dying, and surpassing grace. Those categories will make up the next five major points.
- II. Saving grace is all the Godhead has done to provide eternal salvation (Ephesians 2:5,8,9).
- A. We were called by grace (Galatians 1:15).
 - B. We were justified by grace (Titus 3:7).
 - C. All mankind are candidates for this grace (Titus 2:11 Hebrews 2:9).
 - D. This grace is realized only by faith (Romans 4:16).
 - E. This grace is not received by works (Romans 3:20,24 5:15,16 2Timothy 1:9 Titus 3:7; cf. vs.5).
 - F. The salvation adjustment to the justice of God is our access into all other spheres of grace (Romans 5:2).
 - G. This grace is called positional grace to the Royal Family (Ephesians 1:6).
- III. Living grace (also called logistical grace) includes the believers physical and spiritual provision to make the maturity adjustment to the justice of God.
- A. The physical provision includes food, shelter, clothing, etc. (Matthew 6:25–33; cf. 6:11 Philippians 4:19).
 - B. Living grace includes deliverance and protection so that we can finish our course (2Timothy 3:11 4:7,8,17,18). We will be persecuted, but our enemies cannot keep us from the adjustments to the justice of God.
 1. The first adjustment to the justice of God after salvation is rebound. That is, we get out of fellowship through sinning; and we get back into fellowship by naming our sins to God. 1John 1:9. This is temporal adjustment to the justice of God.
 2. By taking in the Word of God (hearing the Word of God and then believing it), we move toward maturity adjustment to the justice of God.
 - C. Living grace will be tested as with the Exodus generation. They flunked the test (Exodus 17:2,7; Numbers 14:22; Psalm 78:18,41,56; 95:9; Hebrews 3:9; Abraham in Canaan, Genesis 12:10).
 - D. Living grace is provided for all men (sometimes called common grace;

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- Matthew 5:45 Acts 14:17).
- E. Living grace also covers all of the special spiritual assets associated with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the Church (Acts 2:38 10:45 Ephesians 4:7).
 - F. The completed canon, the local assembly, and the pastor–teacher are the grace heritage of the royal priesthood (1Corinthians2:6–16 Ephesians 4:11).
 - 1. God has provided the entire canon of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, as our life textbook.
 - 2. The local assembly is the local church. This is the preferred classroom for spiritual growth.
 - 3. The pastor-teacher, the head of the local church, should have the training and background to teach the Word of God.
 - 4. Just as the believer needs to eat physical food every day, he also needs spiritual food every day.
 - G. We are to be content with our allotment (1Timothy 6:8).
- IV. Surpassing grace blessings in Phase 2 are the blessings, privileges, tests, and Phase 3 blessings associated with seizing and holding spiritual maturity.
- A. Phase 1 is salvation; phase 2 is the spiritual life; and phase 3 is life after death.
 - B. Surpassing grace blessings in Phase 2 results from maximum application of Bible Doctrine over the years (Luke 8:15; cf. vs.14).
 - C. Temporal (overt) prosperity will vary greatly from believer to believer (as illustrated from the extremes in Hebrews 11).
 - D. Surpassing grace blessings in Phase 2 has been distorted into a "riches equals godliness" formula (1Timothy 6:5; cf. 9,10). All mature believers will not have great wealth, perfect health, sexual prosperity, etc.
 - E. Passages like Mark 10:28-30 and 1Timothy 4:8 clearly indicate the promise of temporal blessing for faithfulness.
 - F. The temporal blessings (beyond the living grace needs) will be tested. Example: Abraham in Genesis 22.
- V. Dying grace includes all of the blessings associated with the believer's promotion into heaven (Phase 3). (Means of death is not an issue.)
- A. It includes the spiritual stimulation associated with having a clear conscience regarding most pressing responsibility (2Timothy 1:3).
 - B. It includes the fragrance of memories on the glory road (2Timothy 1:3-5).
 - C. It includes the proper doctrinal perspective concerning Phase 3 (Philemon 3)
 - D. It includes the grace apparatus for perception (GAP) and divine good to the end (Paul executing his apostolic duties).
 - E. The alternative is the sin unto death (Proverbs 8:36; cf. 1John 5:16), which can be cancelled with reversion recovery (incestuous Corinthian).
- VI. Surpassing grace blessings in Phase 3 (SG3) refers to the special blessings and rewards reserved for us in Ph3 (1Peter 1:4).

Doctrine of Grace (by Jack M. Ballinger)

- A. The terminology is taken from Ephesians 1:19.
 - B. It is available to all believers, but not all believers will receive it (1Corinthians3:14,15 9:24–27 Luke 8:14 John 15:5,6 2Timothy 2:5 Hebrews 6:7,8 Revelation 3:11).
 - C. That which is done apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians13 "love") is rejected as human good (1Corinthians3:12-15).
 - D. Bible Doctrine prepares us for every good work (2Timothy 2:21).
 - E. There is a special category of surpassing grace blessings 3 for those who stick with most pressing responsibility to the end (Hebrews 10:32–39 cf. 3:6,14 6:11 Revelation 2:26).
 - F. As the conflict intensifies, follow 1Peter 1:13.
- VII. The Church Age is called the dispensation of the grace of God because of our positional truth (grace; Ephesians 3:1-9).
- A. Union with Christ guarantees every grace blessing for Phases 1, 2, and 3 under the three adjustments (Salvation adjustment to the justice of God, Rebound adjustment to the justice of God, Maturity adjustment to the justice of God; 1Corinthians1:4).
 - B. Each Church Age saint has access to this grace (Ephesians 4:7).
 - C. Paul (the worst sinner, and the twelfth apostle) received this grace in abundance (1Timothy 1:12–16 1Corinthians 3:10 Galatians 2:9).
- VIII. Old Testament saints were under Phase 1, 2, and 3 grace as illustrated by Abraham in Romans4 (cf. Hebrews 11).
- IX. Right woman is a grace provision (Proverbs 18:22). The Hebrew word *chên* (חַן) [pronounced *khayn*], is translated "favor" in the New American Standard, but should be translated grace (cf. 31:30, where *chên* (חַן) [pronounced *khayn*] is incorrectly translated "charm").
- X. Grace orientation:
- A. Is commanded (2Peter 3:18).
 - B. Is associated with correct prayer (Hebrews 4:16, "the throne of grace").
 - C. Should characterize the sacrifice of praise (Colossians 3:16).
 - D. Should characterize the sacrifice of giving (1Corinthians16:3 2Corinthians 8:1-9,19; 9:8).
 - E. Should characterize the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Hebrews 12:28; 13:15).
 - F. Should characterize all our speech (Colossians 4:6).
 - G. Paul demonstrates his grace orientation as the super apostle (1Corinthians 15:10).
- XI. "Greater grace" is provided for the believer who puts the application of Bible Doctrine over personal interests, James 4:6 **But He gives a greater grace** (μείζονα χάριν, which is *meizona charin*.)
- A. The believer who refuses to compromise his norms and standards with the cosmos comes under severe attack and pressure to conform (James 4:4).
 - B. As he/she sticks with the divine viewpoint, refusing to quench and grieve God the Holy Spirit, relying on God for vindication, he/she is up for "greater grace" (the only time the word grace occurs in James).

Doctrine of Grace (by Jack M. Ballinger)

- C. Such a believer, who refuses to conform to societies' sinful trend of Adam standards and who bears up under testing, is called "humble".
- D. To that believer, God gives grace (Proverbs3:34).
- E. The arrogant man rejects and rationalizes divine viewpoint, hoping to get along, but misses "greater grace".
- F. When you opt for the indwelling sinful trend of Adam (flesh) over the indwelling Holy Spirit , you are arrogant and miss "greater grace".
- G. If you have been playing the arrogant world-ling by refusing to apply, implement James 4:7-9.
- H. And the promise of "greater grace" will be yours (vs.10; 1Peter 5:6).
- XII. Misapplications of grace.
 - A. Sinning so that grace may abound. This is a distortion (Romans 6:1,2).
 - B. Legalism distorts salvation and spirituality (Galatians 1:6-9; 2:21; 3:1-3).
 - C. The substitution of ritual for reality (Hebrews 10:29).
 - D. Liberals who label homosexual perversion along with right man/right woman as grace (Jude 4).
- XIII. A description of believers who reject true grace (1Peter 5:12).
 - A. Receiving the grace of God in vain (2Corinthians6:1; cf. Galatians 2:2; 3:4; 4:11).
 - B. Falling from grace (Galatians 5:4, legalism).
 - C. Coming short of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15, mental attitude sin)
 - D. Insulting the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).
- XIV. The Lord is the supreme example of grace because He was totally aware of, and committed to, all truth (John 1:14,17); the First Advent epitomizes grace orientation under the hypostasis and is the example for grace giving (2Corinthians8:9).
- XV. Israel's election is based on grace (Romans11; cf. vs.5, "election of grace").
- XVI. New Testament exhortations related to grace.
 - A. We are to grow in grace and knowledge (2Peter 3:18). This is the highest Biblical imperative, it is our most pressing responsibility.
 - B. We are to be strong in the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus (2Timothy 2:1).
 - C. We are to continue in the grace of God (Acts 13:13, of the Galatian churches before reversionism).
 - D. Stand firm in grace (1Peter 5:12). Believers are under persecution from the cosmos.
- XVII. The salutations and benedictions in the epistles emphasize both the external provisions as well as the mental attitude.
 - A. Salutations include: Romans1:7 1Corinthians1:3 2Corinthians1:2 Galatians 1:13 Ephesians 1:2 Philippians 1:2 Colossians 1:2 1Thessalonians 1:1 2Thessalonians 1:2 1Timothy 1:2 2Timothy 1:2 Titus 1:1 Philemon 3 1Peter 1:2 3John 3 Revelation 1:4.
 - B. Benedictions include: Romans16:20,24 1Corinthians16:23 2Corinthians13:14 Galatians 6:18 Ephesians 6:24 Philippians 4:23 Colossians 4:18 1Thessalonians 5:28 2Thessalonians 3:18 1Timothy 6:21

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2Timothy 4:22 Titus 3:15 Philemon 25; Hebrews 13:25.
C. The last verse in the Bible deals with grace, Revelation 22:21 "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen."

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Ballinger's study of grace essentially outlines the entire Christian life for us.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/grace.pdf> accessed June 20, 2019. © Copyright 1999, Maranatha Church, Inc. I did some minor editing.

Lesson 322: Exodus 20:4–7 Prohibition of Idolatry and Misusing the Lord's Name

We are still on Exodus 20:6a. These verses precede it:

Exodus 20:4–5b "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. (NKJV)

Vv. 4–5b is the actual commandment. Putting a period at the end of this was the right thing for the NKJV to do.

The second commandment is not to involve oneself in idolatry.

Exodus 20:5c-e For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,... (NKJV)

In the middle of v. 5, God begins to explain the consequences of disobeying this commandment. These consequences could extend to later generations. As we have studied, the consequences extend to later generations when they commit the same sins.

The contrast will be between those who hate God and those who love Him.

Exodus 20:6a ...but showing mercy to thousands,... (NKJV)

V. 6a is in contrast to what has come before. V. 5c-e is the 3rd and 4th generation curse; v. 6a is the mercy of God toward those who love Him.

It may be helpful to see how several other translators dealt with this portion of v. 6:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...but showing graciousness and steadfast lovingkindness
Berean Study Bible	...but showing loving devotion
The Complete Tanach	...and [I] perform loving kindness
Concordant Literal Version	...yet doing kindness
Context Group Version	...and showing family allegiance
KJV	...and showing mercy
NIV	...but showing love
NRSV and Owen's	...but showing steadfast love
Orthodox Jewish Bible	...But showing chesed
Voice in the Wilderness	...but showing goodness

The key word here is *cheṣed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means, *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness; steadfast love*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338. The verb is the Qal active participle of *ʿāsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*], which means, *doing, making, manufacturing, constructing, fashioning, forming, preparing; producing*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. Later in this chapter, when God speaks of *making* the heaven and the earth and the seas, and all that is in them (v. 11), it is the same word that God uses here. So God is not *showing* grace, but *making, producing, manufacturing* grace.

Exodus 20:6b ...to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (NKJV)

Note that there are two things required to acquire God's grace: love toward Him and obedience. Christians do not automatically love God. A Christian who is someone who has believed in Jesus Christ. There are many bitter Christians. We know this from personal experience and from Scripture where there are many passages exhorting us not to be bitter. If some Christians were not bitter, then there would be no reason for this exhortation.

In salvation, we are redeemed by what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. Once we enter into our spiritual life, a myriad of things may cause us to be bitter. Nevertheless, the primary reason for being bitter is a failure to grow spiritually. Other reasons, such as a failed loved relationship, a failure in business or disappointing friends and relatives—these are all secondary reasons. But, the key to dealing with a failed love, or a business failure, or disappointing associates is spiritual maturity. It is a simple fact that people and things all around us fail.

Exodus 20:6 ...but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (NKJV)

Love is toward God is not an automatic thing. Unsaved people do not love God. For the unsaved person reading or hearing this, you might take offense at this statement, but God's love is revealed by His sending His Son to die in our stead (John 3:16, 36). We respond to that love by believing in Him. If we reject the greatest gift that God has given us—the gift that God desires all man to take—then obviously we do not love the true God. If we reject God's love through His Son, then we obviously do not love God.

Now, an unbeliever might love the god that he has manufactured in his own soul, but that is idolatry. Worshiping the god which he has created in his own image reveals his love to be a thinly veiled self-love and self-worship. And if it is any consolation, most believers do not love God. Only a small percentage of believers love God and love His Word. The only way we get to know God is through His Word; this is how He reveals His character to us after salvation. The man-woman analogy: you cannot truly be in love with a woman (or a man) whom you do not know. You may be terribly attracted to that person, but that is simple physical attraction at best, lust at worst. That is not love. Often you may see a wonderfully packaged product only to open it up and discover a horrible person underneath all that. The only way you can ever love a person of the opposite sex is to know them and this is also the only way we can love God. Knowing God is key in the mature Christian life. Notice that this is a step up from the Old Testament notion of *fearing and respecting* God. The first indicates salvation or being on the brink of salvation; the second indicates some knowledge and understanding of God.

This does not mean that a person who does not love God and who is not obedient to Him (except with respect to the gospel) receives no grace. All believers are recipients of God's grace (logistical grace is in place for all believers). In life, we receive far, far more grace than we deserve. Furthermore, the very nature of grace means, this is not something which we earn.

Exodus 20:6 [...but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.](#) (NKJV)

Those who obey God's commandments will enjoy grace from Him.

This indicates spiritual growth after salvation. The second half of this is keeping, or guarding His commandments. When we grow spiritually, we begin to understand that what God requires of us is for our own good and for our own benefit. As we learn more about God and His Word we have a better understanding of what is right and wrong (the new Christian and the unbeliever barely even have a clue in this regard), we have a more earnest desire to fulfill His plan for our lives, and therefore have a tendency to be more obedient.

God's response is grace and more grace. As has been covered, we do not deserve this; however, God is under no obligation to pour out His blessings and grace to overflowing upon those who have no appreciation for it. King David and King Saul both occupied the same throne and ruled over the same people. David repeatedly revealed a happy mental attitude and Saul became miserable in his position to the point of mental illness. It is a

matter of capacity. If we have no capacity for blessing, then it doesn't matter what God gives us, it will not make us happy for a sustained period of time. Illustration: for a child's first birthday, he may wake up crabby and crying so you decide to give this child the keys to your new car and the deed to your house. Will that stop him from crying? Certainly not. He has no capacity for these things. A child has not the slightest clue as to what these things are.

On the adult level, there are many people who meet their right man or right woman and even marry them and they are unhappy. Why? They have no true capacity for love. They lie to the other person, they treat them badly, they cheat on them, they belittle them in public and in private—and then they wonder why they are not happy with their mate. They do not have in themselves the capacity for love. Even the unbeliever can develop a limited capacity for right man-right woman love through following the laws of divine establishment (which is what we are embarking upon at this moment). The unbeliever who endeavors to follow God's Law, apart from salvation, if he avoids severe legalism, will have happiness far greater than the unbeliever who is a hedonist and chases after the very elusive god of pleasure. They will both spend eternity in the lake of fire in regret, severe misery and pain—but in the very, very short time that they spend upon this earth, the one who tries to follow God's Law, even ignoring God's greatest commandment,¹⁵ will be happier during this life. This is because God knows human nature—even fallen human nature in the devil's world—and He has made provision for it.

Exodus 20:5c–6 [For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.](#) (NKJV)

This actually has a somewhat different meaning in the Old Testament and the New. In the New Testament, we are in Christ. Christ loves God the Father (from His humanity and from His Deity); and Jesus was obedient to God in all things. Because we are in Christ (as Christians), we share His love for God and His obedience. Therefore, God shows us grace (both logistical grace and saving grace).

The Old Testament believer was not put into Christ (or even *into the Messiah*). When a person acted in accordance with the laws of divine establishment, that person had a better life than those who rebelled against the laws of divine establishment. We studied the laws of divine establishment in **Genesis 12** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). They are also found in Genesis #101–200 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Much of the Mosaic Law that we will study, from this point forward, are essentially the same as the laws of divine establishment.

The believer in the Old Testament could learn to love God; but prior to that, his respect for God (often taught from his parents) and obedience fulfilled what is said here, that God shows His grace to thousands, to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

¹⁵ *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved*; that is a commandment to all unbelievers

Exodus 20:6 However [lit., *and*], [I will] manufacture grace to thousands, to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Israel was blessed by pursuing God and following the laws of divine establishment. When they turned against God, their country fell apart.

The entire 2nd commandment reads:

Exodus 20:4–6 You will not make for yourself [any] sculpted image or any representation [of] that [which is] in the heavens above, or in the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You will not bow down to these images [lit., *to them*] and you will not [be caused] to serve them; for I, Y^ehowah your Elohim, [am] a jealous Êl [= *God*], visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their [lit., *the*] sons; and upon the third and fourth generations [if necessary] of those who hate Me. However [lit., *and*], [I will] manufacture grace to thousands, to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

This takes us to the third commandment:

Exodus 20:7a “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,.... (NKJV)

There are quite a number of interpretations of this third commandment:

New King James Version	“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,...
The Voice	You are not to use My name for <i>your own</i> idle purposes,...
The Expanded Bible	“You must not use the name of the Lord your God thoughtlessly...
Darby Translation	Thou shalt not idly utter the name of Jehovah thy God;...
Complete Jewish Bible	א “You are not to use lightly the name of <i>ADONAI</i> your God,...
New RSV	You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God,...
New American Bible (2011)	You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain [i.e., <i>to no good purpose</i>].
HCSB	Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God,...
Translation for Translators	Do not use my name carelessly (OR, for wrong/evil purposes),...
Common English Bible	Do not use the LORD your God’s name as if it were of no significance;...

Although most of us think we have a grasp of what is being said here, let's exegete this verse somewhat. This verse begins with the negative and the 2nd person masculine

singular, Qal imperfect of nâsâ' (נָסָא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*] and it is another word similar to 'âsâh insofar as it is a word with many varied applications. Its basic meaning is *to lift*; it also means *to carry, to take*. It can refer to lifting up something in order to carry it away (Genesis 21:18 2Samuel 2:32), but it is used in the sense of lifting up one's feet to walk away (Genesis 31:17 42:26); it is used to pick up something and lay it upon someone. In a figurative sense, this word is used when someone lays an oath upon someone else. In other words, they require an oath from someone else (1Kings 8:31). Here, when we say God's name, we are lifting it up before Him. That is, it is as if we are calling upon Him when we use His name. Most translations say *take His name in vain*; which is fine, but the English concept of the word *take* here does not exactly correspond with the meaning of the word *take* as it applies to nâsâ'. This more accurately means that we lift up the Lord's name in vain. Strong's #5375 BDB #669.

The word often translated, *vain*, is shâv' (שָׁו) [pronounced *shawv*]. It means *wickedness, iniquity; destruction, calamity; falsehood, a lie, false report; vanity, emptiness, unsubstantial, worthlessness*. We are not to lift up God's name to worthlessness. We are not to lift up the Lord's name with regard to that which is *empty* and *meaningless*. We are not to lift up His name for a lie or a falsehood. Strong's #7723 BDB #996.

There is a lot more in this verse than just taking God's name in vain. There is no excuse for a Christian to use our Lord's name lightly in vain chatter, in profanity or to liven up a conversation, using God's name or His Son's name to spice up your conversation. We are not to punctuate our conversation with an exclamation using our Lord's name. This is a poor testimony to trivialize the name of the Lord Who bought you.

This verse, I believe, goes further than that. The verb is not a direct reference to speaking. It is lifting up or carrying or taking God's name for that which is empty and meaningless. Let's see if I can illustrate this? When you asked God to give you something sinful or something which was wrong, you blasphemed the name of your Lord. When you ask for something merely to satisfy your lust pattern whether it be materialism lust, sexual lust, approbation lust, power lust—you have lifted up God's name with regards to emptiness.

My point in all of this is, lifting up the Lord's name in vain can be extended in many directions.

Exodus 20:7a [“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,.... \(NKJV\)](#)

Whatever you do to lift up or bring His name (which also means His character and reputation) into a place of meaningless and emptiness, you have blasphemed the Lord Who died for your sins. God is not your best buddy who hangs with you and when you claim some special goofy relationship with Him, you trivialize God and He will hold you as guilty of sin and you need to rebound. **You ask and you do not receive because you ask with wrong motivation so that you may squander [it] on your pleasure lusts** (James 4:3).

Furthermore, this includes taking some meaningless oath in God's name or swearing by God about something. This includes perjury where you have sworn that your testimony

would be true. Thieme lists several areas where God's name is taken into vanity: *May God strike me dead*, *God is my witness* (when you are about to lie about something), and even, *this is God's will*, when you want to get your way in some endeavor.

God's name is not to be used to support a falsehood, to be used for a vain, worthless or empty reason; it is not to be used in pursuit of iniquity or wickedness.

Anytime we use God's name for a vain, meaningless way or for a sinful purpose, we are lifting up His Name in vain.

It is of some fascination to me that the name of Jesus is probably the most used name in the film and television industry today—particularly when the medium is designed for the older teen or adult. I hear this in American film and TV, as well as Australian film and television (and British, to a lesser extent).

I don't hear the name of Mohammed or Buddha or even Moses tossed around; but writers love to use the name of Jesus. I think it is fair to say, *they are without excuse*.

Exodus 20:7b ...for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. (NKJV)

To clear up the final portion of this verse, the verb found is the negative plus the Piel imperfect of *nâqâh* (נָקַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*] and it means *cleanse, acquit, declare innocent, leave unpunished*. God will not allow us to use His name in vain under any circumstance and go unpunished for it. This is our verse which gives us this promise.

To understand the extent to which the Hebrews became legalistic, they would not even pronounce the name of Y^ehowah without an entire procedure to preface it. This went beyond respect to venture into legalism. As a result of this, we do not know the exact pronunciation of God's Old Testament name. We have covered this; but to review, there is no *J* in the Hebrew language, which means that His name was not pronounced Jehovah. There were no vowel points in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament until well after the birth of our Lord, so, although we can work with the consonants of His holy name, we do not know what the vowels were and the resulting pronunciation Y^ehowah is at best an educated guess. God does have a name which is revealed to us in the New Testament and that is Jesus Christ. This is not way it was originally pronounced; that is our English pronunciation. Anyone in any language can believe in Jesus Christ as pronounced in their language and they are eternally saved.

There are some religious groups who write *God* as *G-d*. First of all, no Hebrew word in the Bible had an vowels in it for perhaps 2000 years; and secondly, their word for *God* is never written without vowels. The Hebrew word for *God* is *Elohim*; It is never, ever written, *-l-h-m*. No Jewish person, reading their text, ever skips over the word *Elohim*; they simply say it. The name which they would not pronounce was YHWH, the more personal name for God.

The key is not the pronunciation of His name but in the Work that He did on our behalf. When the Bible exhorts us to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, *name* means *character*,

reputation. One cannot be saved apart from having some sort of basic understanding of what Jesus Christ did on his behalf on the cross. Furthermore, the two names, Jesus (savior) and Christ (messiah), were rarely if ever put together until the New Testament epistles. Anytime a man was closely associated with being God, such a thing was considered blasphemous. Our Lord was continually accused of blasphemy because he exhibited the attributes of deity and took upon Himself certain aspects of deity (e.g., Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped, He forgave sins). Even though most liberals and unbelievers refuse to see Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh, the religious unbelievers of His day fully recognized how He presented Himself and many times take up stones to stone Him for what they perceived as blasphemy because they did not recognize the Lord Who bought them. Although some liberals might admit that Jesus acted very God-like, they do not seem to understand that, Jesus presented Himself as more than just being *God-like*.

God promises punishment for the person who treats the name of God casually.

Exodus 20:7 You will not lift up the name of Y^ehowah your Elohim for vanity [or, *iniquity, falsehood*], for Y^ehowah will not leave unpunished whoever lifts up His name for vanity [or, *iniquity, falsehood*]. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

We are never to use God's name in a trivial fashion; and those who do will not remain unpunished.

Lesson 323: Exodus 20:8

The Sabbath Part I

The fourth commandment is:

Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (NKJV)

There has already been some preliminary discussion of the seventh day, so the people are aware that God sees it as a day of some significance.

God calls for it to be regarded as holy—that is, set apart specifically for Him.

The Ten Commandments, like the so-called Lord's prayer and the sermon on the mount, have been memorized or reread so many times in the King James Version that it is difficult to distance ourselves from it to attain a better understanding of what is here. This verse is not a command but almost a title of sorts. *Remembering* is in the Qal infinitive absolute, meaning that it is a verbal noun (although it can act as a noun, verb or adverb). The unfortunate neglect of prepositions has caused many scholars to overlook the lamed preposition near the end of the verse, which means *to, for, in regard to*. Qâdash (קָדַשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-DAHSH*] is a Piel infinitive construct, which is also a verbal noun which can be a noun, verb; it can take on prefixed prepositions, the article, and suffixes. It can be a subject, predicate, object of a preposition (which is what it is here). It means *to set apart, to make holy, to consecrate, to dedicate*. The examination of the word *Sabbath* will

be reserved for later. The Piel infinitive construct is affixed to the 3rd person masculine singular suffix (which refers back to the *Sabbath*).

We do not have a command in this verse or in the next. The actual injunction will follow in v. 10 (although, it will not be in the imperative).

Exodus 20:8 *Remembering a day of [the] Sabbath to consecrate him (it)*. (Kukis slavishly literal translation)

There is no command here to be followed, although it would be reasonable to understand this to mean, *set aside the seventh day*. On the other hand, this could be understood to be the title of the fourth commandment.

Bill Mounce says that the Qal infinitive absolute can be used as a Qal imperative ([citing](#) this verse in particular); but there is no actual command where there could be. God could have used the Qal imperative here, but, for whatever reason, He did not. I don't believe that the imperative mood is used anywhere in the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:8 *To remember a day of [the] Sabbath, to regard it as holy*. (Also a very literal rendering of this verse)

Exodus 20:9 *Six days you shall labor and do all your work*, (NKJV)

Whatever work a person believes needs to be done, will have to be done on the six other days of the week. So, God expects every person to work for 6 days.

Here is a verse pretty well translated correctly in any Bible. The verb *labor* is in the Qal imperfect, which means continuous action. You work throughout the week. So the first verb could be rendered, *you keep on working, you continuously labor*.

The second verb is the Qal perfect of 'âsâh, which means *to do, to make*. Because this is in the perfect tense, we are looking at a completed action, so I chose a synonym with that inference. In both cases, the verbs are in the 2nd person singular; so, like the rest of the commandments, these are addressed to each individual in Israel. Every Israelite would have understood this to mean that God is speaking directly to them individually.

Exodus 20:9 *You will work for six days and you will do all of your work [in those six days];...* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

This is a figure of speech where the imperfect and perfect tense are used to examine our work from two different perspectives: the daily grind (the imperfect tense) and the work week having been completed (the perfect tense). However, the imperative mood is implied because of the 2nd person singular and the construction of the previous verses.

The concept of not spending six days working was not anticipated by this commandment. Nevertheless, there are some people who do this (that is, they do not work).

Exodus 20:10a ...but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. (NKJV)

V. 9 reads *six of days* and v. 10 reads (literally) *day of seventh*. It is a matter of the numeral is in the construct in v. 9 and *day* is in the construct in v. 10. This grammatically sets the seventh day apart.

The word *Sabbath* is a transliteration. It comes from the verb which means *rest, cease*. It is Saturday and not Sunday. Furthermore, there was never any official command in the New Testament to change the Sabbath to Sunday. However, there is no command in the New Testament to keep the Sabbath, the book of Hebrews notwithstanding (I later will explain that verse in its proper context).

Although the believer often worships on a Sunday, the Christian Sunday is *not* the Jewish Sabbath. They are entirely different days and treated in different ways. It would make no sense for the Christian to proclaim Sunday the new day of rest. The day of rest will always be the seventh day. Furthermore, Sunday is not the Christians simply choosing a new day to worship on.

However, right now we are studying the Sabbath, and this was a day which was to be observed by the Hebrew people.

Exodus 20:10a ...but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. (NKJV)

From this point forward (from the giving of the Ten Commandments), the people would continue to work, but only for six days. The seventh day would be considered holy (set apart) to God. It would be treated differently from the other days.

Exodus 20:10b In it you shall do no work:... (NKJV)

On the seventh day, no work was to be done. Here, as with the other commandments, the 2nd person masculine singular is used with Qal imperfect verbs, so that every commandment applies to each and every person.

Remember that God is saying these things directly to the people. Every individual can hear these words spoken aloud. God is speaking to every person in the Israeli encampment as individuals.

Exodus 20:10a-b ...but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work:... (NKJV)

Exodus 20:10c ...you, nor your son, nor your daughter,... (NKJV)

Again, God emphasizes that no one is to work on the seventh day. A parent is not allowed to pick up the slack by making his children work. The sons or daughters are not allowed to work.

Exodus 20:10d ...nor your male servant, nor your female servant,... (NKJV)

A family is not allowed to work their servants on the Sabbath—not their male or female servants. The Sabbath was not a day of rest for the Jewish faithful family, while their servants ran around and did everything that needed to be done on that day. If they had servants, those servants could not work either.

Exodus 20:10e ...nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (NKJV)

They are not to take their cattle out to do work; they are not to lay a work requirement on the temporary immigrant who lives with the family (perhaps hired for a short period of time, for planting or harvesting).

God is eliminating all different ways that people might try to get around the Sabbath. They cannot decide that they want some work done and then assign it to someone else. This would be a violation of the Sabbath commandment. God says specifically that making new Hebrew people work is not an option.

Exodus 20:10 ...but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (NKJV)

The NKJV finishes v. 9 in v. 10; and then another sentence begins in v. 10:

Exodus 20:8–10 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: [not] you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (NKJV)

vv. 8–10 is the entire command.

Going forward, God gives an explanation (or the rationale) for the Sabbath day observance:

Exodus 20:11a For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,... (NKJV)

The Creation Special:

God made the heavens and the earth in six days. In fact, God created the heavens and the earth in an instant (Genesis 1:1). But what God is dealing with here is the restoration of the earth (Genesis 1:2b–31), which had fallen into disrepair (Genesis 1:2a).

The verbs used in Genesis 1:1 and Exodus 20:11 are different. In Genesis 1:1, we have the Qal perfect of *bârâ'* (בָּרָא) [pronounced *baw-RAWH*], which means, *to create; to create something from energy [or from the immaterial]; to create that which is immaterial; to produce*. Strong's #1254 BDB #135. When we get to Exodus 20:11, we have the Qal

perfect of the verb 'âsâh (אָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*], which is clearly a different verb. It means, *to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; to accomplish*. This second verb is taking materials which are already there (whatever God created in Genesis 1:1) and modifying, combining and fabricating them. Strong's #6213 BDB #793.

Genesis 1:1 takes place instantly. The greatest thing ever created is the entire universe, and yet, it was simply called into being and it instantly appeared. Why was there not a process given to us for the entire universe, as is described in Genesis 1:3 and following? This is why. The only Beings to observe Genesis 1:1 were the three Members of the Godhead. They did not need some long drawn out process, in order for Them to understand or appreciated what They had just done.

Now, there are three basic views with regards to the Genesis creation. (1) The heavens and the earth were created; the earth somehow turned to crap; and then God restored the earth in six days. This is often called the gap theory (the gap being Genesis 1:2). (2) God created the entire universe in an instant, but it was not exactly what He needed; and there were six days of fine-tuning which took place. (3) There is the day-age theory, where the days of Genesis 1 are actually ages, and that God's creation took place over very long periods of time, in order to make the creation account of Genesis 1 line up with the concept of evolution. (1) and (3) can both be true together (or not); and (2) and (3) can both be true together, or not.

I believe that the first view is correct, and the second and third are not.

In the first view, Genesis 1:1 is instantaneous. However, Genesis 1:3–31 appears to have been a six-day process. Why? There were observers for the six-day process; there were no observers (apart from the Godhead) for Genesis 1:1. Because there were observers for the restoration, they needed to see what God did step-by-step.

Why was this process necessary? God created the entire universe and angelic beings; and apparently, they could go anywhere in the universe that they wanted to go, but there was this one planet, the earth, which was a planet of incredible beauty. What happened between vv. 1 and 3? Genesis 1:2, where the earth appears to have been transformed into a waste dump which was then packed in ice.

Genesis 1:2a describes, albeit briefly, the process which took place:

Genesis 1:2a *And the earth [or, land] had become desolate and a waste and [there was] [extreme] darkness upon the surface of the depths [the deep waters]...* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

How do we know that God did not create the earth as desolate or as a waste? Isaiah 45:18 *For Yahweh who created the heavens, the God who formed the earth and*

made it, who established it and didn't create it a waste, who formed it to be inhabited says: "I am Yahweh. There is no other. (WEB)

So, what did God do as a result?

Genesis 1:2b ...and the Spirit of Elohim was hovering [moving, brooding] over the surface of the waters. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

The verb for *hovering* is what a mother hen does over her eggs. She warms them for hatching. The Spirit of God is doing something like that over the ice pack in which the earth was contained, hovering over all of that until much of the surface of the earth becomes water. This took a period of time, but we do not know how long it took. It was not something which could really be observed, because there was no light at the time.

Water is quite the amazing thing in the universe, because it is almost never found in this form. The universe has temperatures which are very close to absolute zero, which is -273°C and the [hottest place](#) in the universe is, according to a 2016 study of the quasar 3C273, 10 trillion $^{\circ}\text{C}$ at the plasma around the black hole. I chose to look at this in Celsius, because the freezing and boiling points of H_2O essentially define the Celsius scale. 0°C is where water freezes and 100°C is where water boils and becomes steam (32° and 212° respectively on the $^{\circ}\text{F}$ scale). Considering that the temperatures of our universe range from -273° up to 10 trillion $^{\circ}\text{C}$, that temperature range for water is really, really small. On earth, it does not appear to be a small range to us, because most of us live in places where the maximum Celsius temperature range is maybe 50°C (give or take). So, for planet earth, a 100° range seems pretty big. But, when considering the universe, such a temperature range is infinitesimal. Where in the universe do we have such a small range of temperatures? The earth, of course, but of the universe that we can observe, temperature range is much greater. The moon, which is pretty darned close to the earth, and therefore, subject to many of the same things that we are. The moon [ranges in temperature](#) from -246°C on up to 121°C —a pretty much unlivable range (if we are careful not to expose ourselves to the extremes). If we go to Mars, the temperature range is -153°C to around 20°C , an almost liveable range. The earth's range, by the way, is from -89°C on up to 57°C . Mercury is much colder and much warmer than the earth (pick a good spot to land). This sort of thing fascinates me, and all the temperatures for our solar system are found [here](#). I did not actually know that Jupiter and Saturn actually have no surface, as we have on the other planets.

Anyway, in order for us to have water, our temperature range has to be quite narrow, and it has to be maintained in this narrow range. The existence of a massive amount of water on earth helps to maintain that narrow range. The massive amount of water needs the narrow range and it appears to help stabilize our temperatures at the same time.

Exodus 20:11a For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,... (NKJV)

We do not have the word for *create* here in Exodus 20:11, as that is not what God is speaking of, but He uses the word for *to make, to accomplish, to do*. This is the word where something is made out of something else. The heavens and the earth had already been created in Genesis 1:1. During the six days, God restored the earth and its atmosphere to what we have today. This restoration process took six days; not because God was unable to do it sooner (it could have been instantaneous); but He worked for six days and rested on the seventh is done for two reasons. First, God had an audience, so He took time so that His audience could be able to observe and mentally process what He did. Secondly, the six days work (by God) followed by a seventh day of rest is done for a type. The Sabbath illustrates resting from our works for salvation. We do not work for our salvation; we enter into God's rest instead. We are able to do this because God has provided everything that we need (as He did in the six days of restoration).

Exodus 20:11b *...the sea, and all that is in them,....* (NKJV)

God set boundaries for the seas and dry land. All of life which is on land, in the heavens or in the sea—God created all of that within the six time period of restoration.

God had an audience for the restoration of the earth, whereas, there was no audience for the instant during which that He created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). It appears that planet Earth was the living quarters for all angels, although it is not clear whether elect and fallen angels lived there together or how exactly all of that worked. In any case, God packed the earth in ice; and in the first chapter of Genesis, God thawed the earth (Genesis 1:2b) and then restored it Genesis 1:3–31), with all angelic creation watching.

Exodus 20:11c *...and rested the seventh day.* (NKJV)

In restoring the earth, God did not rest on the seventh day due to physical exhaustion (God is not a physical being). He had completed all that He needed to do. He was done. So God stops working. There was nothing more to provide. The earth was ready to be inhabited by a perfect man and woman, along with a massive range of plants and animals (all of which was created or made during the six-day process).

Exodus 20:11d *Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day....* (NKJV)

God blessed the Sabbath day. He set it aside and He made it a day of rest and refreshment and for spiritual recharging.

I more or less observe the first day of the week, which is Sunday (the Sabbath day was Saturday). I sometimes do a little work, but I do not schedule any and spend the day writing and studying. For me, that is a great blessing and great enjoyment. You may be surprised, but careful examination of the Bible and writing commentary is a blessing to me from God.

Exodus 20:11e *...and hallowed it.* (NKJV)

God regards the seventh day as holy; as set apart for Him and to Him.

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)

I find it fascinating that we have the Sabbath in the Old Testament, but that we do not have a direct crossover into the Church Age. The Sabbath is not being ignored by the church; nor was the Sabbath changed into Sunday for the church.

One possible advantage of having Christian churches in the Church Age following and obeying the Sabbath is, you immediately can cross those churches off of your list of possible grace churches to attend. A church which observes the Sabbath in any way is simply not a grace church (this does not mean that Berachah Church's policy of no Bible class on Saturday was an observation of the Sabbath). R. B. Thieme, Jr. really needed a day off, so Saturday was a logical choice. During conferences, they had classes on Saturday.

Lesson 324: Exodus 20:11

Sabbath Part II

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)

The ESV; capitalized is used below, replacing Merritt's references (which were probably from the KJV). I made a few additions to this doctrine and did some editing.

The Doctrine of the Sabbath (by L. G. Merritt/Kukis)

1. The word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew Shabbat, which means "to cease" or "to desist."
 - 1) The Hebrew word is shâbbath (שַׁבָּת) [pronounced *shawb-BAHTH*], and it means, *to cease, to rest; to desist*; it is transliterated *Sabbath*. Strong's #7676 BDB #992.
 - 2) The Greek word sabbaton (σάββατον) [pronounced *SAHB-baht-on*] is clearly transliterated from the Hebrew. Sabbaton is sometimes used to designate a single Sabbath. The word is also applied to several festivals in the Old Testament, but principally and usually it refers to the seventh day of the week, the Jewish day of rest and worship.
2. The Sabbath was referenced at creation in Genesis 2:2, where the root occurs from which the word is derived. God ceased from His labor on the seventh day of creation and set a pattern for man to follow. Genesis 2:2-3 **And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in**

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creation.

3. Although the Bible, prior to Exodus 20, does not clearly delineate man following a Sabbath, maybe he did? Taking a position one way or the other would be speculative.
 - 1) Clearly, we have points of agreement and disagreement from dispensation to dispensation.
 - 2) The Age of Israel has quite a number of prophets; but there are no legitimate prophets in the post-canon Church Age.
 - 3) Circumcision was an absolute requirement of the Jewish believers in the Age of Israel; but it is not considered anything, good or bad, right or wrong, in the Church Age.
 - 4) Premeditated murder is clearly wrong in all dispensations.
 - 5) So we can put together a spiritual life for believers in the Age of the Gentiles (the age which precedes the Jewish Age); but there are things which would be missing. The Sabbath is mentioned, made holy prior to the Jewish Age, but was it followed and to what extent was it followed? We do not know the answer to that.
4. The incorporation of the Sabbath into the Decalogue was based on God's resting at the time of creation and on His deliverance of Israel from Egypt. (Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15) Exodus 20:11 **For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.** Deuteronomy 5:15 **You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**
5. Some have tried to trace the institution of the Sabbath back to Babylonia. Although the word appears in Babylonian inscriptions, it was not attached to the seventh day of the week (the Babylonians had a five-day week), nor was it a day of cessation from labor.
 - 1) J. R. Sampey remarks: "Hence the assertions of some Assyriologists with regard to the Babylonian origin of the Sabbath must be taken with several grains of salt." The Bible attributes the origin of the Sabbath to God's example at creation.
 - 2) After the creation account, the Sabbath is next mentioned in relation to the giving of the manna (Exodus 16:23-30); then at Sinai, when it became part of the Decalogue. (Exodus 20:8-11)
 - 3) Exodus 16:22-30 **On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms**

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in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day.

Exodus 20:8–11 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

- 4) So, for a very short time, the Israelites had become conditioned to some sort of Sabbath observance prior to receiving the Law.
6. God ordained keeping the Sabbath as the sign of His covenant with Israel. (Exodus 31:12-17)
- 1) Exodus 31:12–17 And the LORD said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'"
 - 2) Thus the Sabbath acted as the seal of the Mosaic covenant (Isaiah 56:4–6), (Genesis 17:11) Isaiah 56:3–6 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from His people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who choose the things that please Me and hold fast My covenant, I will give in My house and within My walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." You see, as eunuchs, they have no sons and daughters to follow

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- them in life.
- 3) The Sabbath corresponds to circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic covenant. Genesis 17:9–11 And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. So both the Sabbath and circumcision are signs of God's special relationship with the Hebrew people.
 7. The other books of the Pentateuch contain legislation for Sabbath observance. The Day of Atonement was designated a Sabbath of complete rest, and the first, fifteenth, and twenty-third days of the seventh month (Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles) were to be observed with a Sabbath rest.
 8. The seventh year was to be a sabbatical year. Leviticus 25:2–7 "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.
 - 1) Not only were the fields to enjoy a rest from cultivation but the debts of fellow Israelites were to be cancelled. Deuteronomy 15:1–3 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD's release has been proclaimed. Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release.
 - 2) As an aside, the Israelites did not observe the Sabbath year and this defect in their behavior gives the rationale to God for the time that they spent outside of the land.
 9. After every series of seven sabbatical years the fiftieth year was to be observed as a year of jubilee when property reverted to its original owner and Israelites in servitude regained freedom.
 - 1) Leviticus 25:8–10 "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall

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- be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.
- 2) Leviticus 25:54–55 And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee. For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
10. With the development of the synagogue during the inter-testament period, the Sabbath became a day of worship and study of the law as well as cessation from work. The beginnings of legalism and petty restrictions on Sabbath observance began during this period.
 11. Jesus declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27–28 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
 12. Jesus pointed the Jews back to the original intent of the Sabbath ordinance, to provide rest for man, and taught that the higher principle of mercy should take precedence.
 - 1) Matthew 12:5–12 Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."
 - 2) There is nothing in the Law of Moses about *not doing any healings or miracles on the Sabbath*. The Jewish authorities in the time of Jesus decided to arbitrarily designate healings and miracles as works. However, there is absolutely no effort exerted by our Lord when healing someone (Jesus does not do these healings Himself; God the Father and/or God the Holy Spirit bring these healings to pass. Can you accuse God of working on the Sabbath?
 13. Early Christians may have used the Sabbath for witnessing to Jews (Acts 13:14-15), but the first day of the week was their day of worship. (Acts 20:7)
 - 1) Acts 13:14–15 And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it." And they did.
 - 2) Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together

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to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

14. It is interesting that the decrees of the council of Jerusalem made no mention of keeping the Sabbath in the requirements for Gentile Christians. Acts 15:28–31 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.
 - 1) This letter from the council of Jerusalem represents a compromise. But even in the compromise, the Sabbath was not observed.
 - 2) However, the Sabbath will apparently be part of worship in the Millennium. Isaiah 66:22–24 "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before Me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, declares the LORD. "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."
15. Numerous biblical regulations governed the observance of the Sabbath.
 - 1) The chief biblical prohibition concerning the Sabbath was against work on that day. Exodus 20:8–10 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.
 - 2) The Old Testament does not define work in detail except that it specifically forbids the kindling of a fire for cooking (Exodus 35:3–4) and the gathering of wood. (Numbers 15:32–36)
 - (1) Exodus 35:3–4 You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day." Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "This is the thing that the LORD has commanded."
 - (2) Numbers 15:32–36 While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him. And the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses.
 - 3) However, in keeping with the purpose of the Sabbath, bearing burdens

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(Jeremiah 17:21-22.), traveling (Exodus 16:29), and trading (Neh 10:31) were also forbidden.

- (1) Jeremiah 17:21–22 Thus says the LORD: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers.
 - (2) Exodus 16:28–29 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and my laws? See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day He gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day."
 - (3) Nehemiah 10:31 And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.
16. The Jewish Sabbath was also to be observed with a holy assembly, the doubling of the daily offerings, and the placing of new showbread in the holy place. (Numbers 28:9 ff.; Leviticus 24:5-8)
- 1) Numbers 28:9–10 "On the Sabbath day, two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering: this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.
 - 2) Leviticus 24:5–8 "You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever.
17. The Sabbath was to be a day of gladness for it was to provide man an opportunity to put aside the duties of life and concentrate on spiritual activities for the refreshing of his soul. It was soon distorted and became an onerous legalistic burden--a heavy yoke as our Lord termed it.
18. For the believer in Christ, the Sabbath rest of God at the original creation is made an illustration of the rest into which the believer enters in the new creation when "he also hath ceased from his own works" by trusting Christ not only for his salvation but for daily living. Hebrews 4:1–10 **Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day**

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in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. Psalm 95:11 Genesis 2:2 Psalm 95:11, 7–8

19. Two views are held today concerning the Sabbath:
 - 1) It has been done away with completely, and though man needs one day of rest in seven, it and all of the Mosaic law--and the Decalogue in particular--are no longer binding. 2Corinthians 3:5–11 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.
 - 2) Since the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath He had the right to change the day of its keeping for His Church from the last day of the week to the first, and did so in order that it might become a commemoration of His rising from the dead.
 - 3) Although I would disagree that Sunday is the *new Sabbath*, believers in the Church Age are not under the law of the Sabbath.
20. This appears to many to be the only explanation that fits all the facts. Since the Sabbath was made for man, Christ changed its celebration to bless man.
21. Man was never to be under the excessive legalization of the Sabbath day as practiced by the pharisees and others.

See also Tod Kennedy's [Sabbath Summary Doctrine](#).

From [West Bank Bible Church](#); accessed June 27, 2019. The translation used was changed to the NASB and sometimes more verses were given. I added a few words here and there.

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)

Although there is no clear mandate to worship on Sunday, that seems to be a tradition from the New Testament.

The Doctrine of Sunday Worship

1. We should first differentiate between the 7th day of the week, the Sabbath (Saturday); and the 1st day of the week (Sunday). Sunday is the day that believers in the Church Age traditionally treat as a day of worship.
2. There is very little disagreement that the sons of Israel worshiped on the Sabbath day, which is the 7th day of the week, which is Saturday. Many Jewish people today continue to observe the Sabbath. This day has never changed.
3. There is no such thing as a *Christian Sabbath*.
4. The word *Sunday* is not found in the New Testament; but the words *first day of the week* are. This is the day after the 7th day of the week.
5. Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week. Luke 24:1-7 John 20:1-2
6. The disciples are gathered together on the first day of the week in John 20:19.
7. The disciples are gathered together on the first day of the week in Acts 20:7.
8. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to put money aside for giving on the first day of the week. That would imply that the Corinthians met on Sunday when an offering would be taken up. 1Corinthians 16:2
9. John speaks of being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, which would logically be Sunday. This was, in fact, the day in which He was raised. Revelation 1:10
10. Whereas, worship of God on the Sabbath was a very big deal to the Hebrew people, there is far less emphasis upon the 1st day of the week for Christian worship in the New Testament. Pastors and missionaries and evangelists do not confine their work to just Sundays. Those who have a communication spiritual gift are not somehow confined to a gift which only functions once a week. Furthermore, it simply is not possible for anyone to grow spiritually based upon a single sermon once a week.
11. Spiritual growth cannot occur by attending church once a week. The people of that era often spent a much longer time together on Sunday, which often included a meal and sermons and teaching which lasted so long, some people fell dead asleep. The closest I have seen to this is, R. B. Thieme, Jr., at one time, met twice on Sunday morning and then on Sunday night. His 1.3 hour-long sermons, three times on Sunday, were probably a better parallel to the early church, than any other church that I am aware of. (As an aside, I know that there are churches who also meet three times on Sunday, but often the sermon is 30 minutes or less and this sermon is often repeated in the second service. Bob taught more during one service than most preachers do all day Sunday.

This great contrast between Sunday worship for the church (where there is very little by way of specificity in the New Testament) and the Sabbath for the Old Testament saints, ought to suggest that, there can be more for the New Testament believer than Sunday-only worship.

Church of the Great God seems to have a reasonable [article](#) on this.

Our current topic, however, is the Sabbath. First the commandment...

Exodus 20:8–10 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: [not] you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. (NKJV)

Now for the reason why:

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)

In glancing through my NASB's topical concordance, I ran across two gross errors with respect to the Sabbath: (1) The Sabbath is called the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10); (2) The Sabbath is to be perpetuated forever (Exodus 31:16–17 Matthew 5:17–18). Mine is a very old NASB, but those points may still be there.

The brief counter-arguments are: (1) Revelation 1:10 has the designation *the Lord's day* and is not connected to the Sabbath at all—the word *Sabbath* occurs nowhere in this context. (2) As we have seen, the Law was given specifically to the Jew; not to the Gentile and not to the church. Exodus 31:13 reads: “*Speak to sons of Israel saying, 'You will definitely observe My Sabbaths...'*” Obviously, it is not perpetuated in the Church Age.

There is also a third common error, perpetuated by the legalistic branches of so-called *Christian* religions, where their claim is, we are still under the Sabbath Day Commandment. Often, they will quote Hebrews 4:9 **There still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** In fact, I recall watching *The World Tomorrow* (a show dedicated to the Armstrong cult), and the speaker confidently said, “Here it is in your English Bible, clear as day.” Then he quoted Hebrews 4:9. That was over 50 years ago, and I still remember it. Gardner Ted Armstrong was a powerful speaker—wrong often—but a very good public speaker.

Explaining There still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God:

Under the Law, there were a number of different Sabbaths and kinds of Sabbaths, only one of which have we begun to study. Saturday was the Sabbath for the Jewish people. The people of God, the Jewish people, from this point forward, observed the Sabbath each and every week. In vv. 16 & 17, again, notice the words “*So the sons of Israel will observe*

the Sabbath...as a perpetual covenant; it is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever." If you need some specificity as to who this is addressed to, there it is.

Our system of numbering verses has been a blessing and a curse. It is marvelous for a teacher to make a simple statement like *"Let's turn to Hebrews 10:9"*, and everyone can, given a few minutes, find this passage.

On the negative side, a speaker or writer can casually quote this verse: **There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God** (Hebrews 4:9) and many Christians are led astray by this, thinking that the Bible just told them to worship on the Sabbath. Every verse must be examined in context. Hebrews, first of all, is written to (hold onto your seats) Hebrews. Therefore, it will abound with Old Testament references. Hebrews 3 gives us the context: God had promised the sons of Israel the land of Canaan, but the Exodus generation could not enter into it because of unbelief. They had to continually wander through the desert, never entering into God's promise to them, the land of Canaan, thereby, in a sense, *never entering into His rest*. Hebrews 4:1 exhorts its readers not to make the same error. **Therefore, let us fear so that while a promise remains unclaimed of entering into His rest, that not any one of you should seem to come short of it** (Hebrews 4:1¹⁶).

A general theme of the book of Hebrews is faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the promised One of God. This book was written to Hebrew who had two basic problems: unbelief and unbelief. That is, some who would hear this letter being read had not yet believed in Jesus for salvation. Throughout the book of Hebrews, the readers are exhorted to trust the Hebrew Scriptures which point to Jesus as their Messiah. Therefore, they should also trust in Jesus. The second problem of unbelief is, Hebrew Christians were not moving forward in the spiritual life because they kept clinging to previous modes of worship. They were not believing in the doctrines of this new age. They were not mixing true New Testament teachings with faith.

Rest is a synonym here for both salvation and the spiritual life. The Hebrew people continually worked for their salvation throughout their history, even though they were not supposed to. God has done all of the work; Jesus Christ died for our sins on our behalf—He has done all the work for us to be saved; we only need to claim this promise by faith and enter into God's rest, which is a rest from our labors for God's approval. The unclaimed promise is appropriating Jesus Christ—the promised Messiah. Not claiming this promise from God is the greatest error the Jewish person can make. **For indeed we have had the good news preached to us, just as they also, but the word they heard did not profit them because it was not united by faith in those who heard** (Hebrews 4:2). We can make a similar application to the spiritual life.

¹⁶ I have no clue what translation this is. I have googled it and have only come up with this document that you are reading.

In a nutshell we have the problem of the Exodus generation; they did not unite (mix, combine) accurate teaching with faith; they did not mix together the promises of God with faith. A contrast and comparison is set up here between the Hebrews reading this epistle and the Hebrews of the Exodus generation. What are the Hebrews to whom this epistle is addressed to unite with faith? The good news! **For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in my wrath, they will not enter My rest."** although His works were finished from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:3). The Exodus generation did not enter into God's rest. To accurately hone in on this point, they had all believed in the Revealed God, but they did not enter into the spiritual life, which is a life of rest and dependence upon God. Who should have understood this better than the Exodus generation; but there you go. Negative volition was predominant in the Exodus generation, despite the fact that all of them had believed in the Revealed God.

Just in case you did not connect *rest* with *salvation*, v. 3 clearly ties them together; that is, those who believed have entered into God's rest. **For He has thus said somewhere** [that is, somewhere in the Old Testament] **concerning the seventh day, "And on the seventh day, God rested from all His works."** And again in [the Word]: **"They will not enter into My rest."** Since therefore it remains for some to enter it [enter into the rest] and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter [into this rest] because of **obstinance (or, disobedience)** (Hebrews 4:4–6). God's work was accomplished from the foundation of the world because His plan was true and His decrees immutable.

The Hebrews in the Exodus generation, although saved, never rested in the spiritual life because of their unbelief. The unbelieving Hebrews reading this will never enter into God's salvation rest because of their unbelief and obstinance. The believing Hebrews will not enter into the rest of the spiritual life, unless they let go of all the rites and practices of the Mosaic Law (the Mosaic Law being far more than simply the Ten Commandments).

The writer of Hebrews is very tactful here; all those who read this know about the hard-headed Exodus generation; so the writer can say these were obstinate or disobedient. But his inference is, those who do not claim the promise of the good news—they do not claim it out of obstinance and disobedience. **He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."** (Hebrews 4:7 Psalm 95:7–8). This certain day being spoken of is not the Sabbath but the day this epistle is read, which has amounted to over a half a million days thus far. This is today; this is right now. The book of Hebrews is God speaking to the reader; this is God's voice and you are hearing it right now. Do not do what the Exodus generation did. Lacking faith, they walked until they dropped like flies in the desert after 40 years (dying the sin unto death). They heard God's voice and yet they hardened their hearts. They never entered into God's rest because of unbelief. You listening to God's voice right now—do not harden your heart; do not spend the rest of your life wandering through the hot, arid desert of life; do not because of your unbelief fail to claim this promise of God and enter into His rest. All you have to do is to believe in Jesus Christ. **For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that** (Hebrews 4:8). Joshua entered the land with the sons of the Exodus generation.

Now, if entering into the land was the true rest, why would David say "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (Psalm 95:7–8) When he wrote these words, Israel had been in the land of Canaan for 500 years. David is saying, "Today, right now, do not harden your hearts when hearing God's voice."

Chronology is brought into the picture. The Hebrews have hardened their hearts for centuries. David had an audience to speak to. The writer of Hebrews still has an audience to speak to. Those who are alive today hearing or reading this—God is still speaking to you. Just because Joshua entered the land, doesn't mean that the Hebrews suddenly became great believers. Entering the land was analogous to God's rest, which is analogous to salvation (or analogous to the spiritual life).

Notice how the context of this verse is entering into God's rest—this context has absolutely nothing to do with keeping the Sabbath. The Sabbath is being taught as a type of rest; a rest into which the Exodus generation did not enter because of unbelief. The sign of this was the fact that they wandered the desert for forty years and died their because of their unbelief and obstinance. **There remains, therefore, a Sabbath rest for the people of God** (Hebrews 4:9). Who are the people of God? This context is not the church of God, the universal church of believers. The people of God are the Hebrews—those who are reading this epistle (or having it read to them). There is still a Sabbath rest for the Hebrew people to enter, those who are reading this right now. The context is that the Exodus generation did not enter into the land—which meant that they did not enter into God's rest. Even after Joshua took the next generation into the land, David still told them, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." This Sabbath rest available to the Hebrews reading this epistle is not keeping the Sabbath under some legalistic system in the Christian era. The Sabbath rest is God's glorious salvation provided through the Messiah, Who is the subject of the book of Hebrews, Jesus Christ (read Hebrews 1).

For you see, the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, just as God did form His (Hebrews 4:10). Here the type or the analogy is further explained: when you enter into God's rest (which is obviously not keeping the Sabbath), then you are resting from your works just as God rested from His. **Remember, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His own mercy He saved us** (Titus 3:5). **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one fall through as the same example of disobedience** [i.e., the Exodus generation] (Hebrews 4:11).

The rest the unbeliever is to enter into is the rest of believing in Jesus Christ. The rest the Hebrew believers was to enter into was the setting aside of the Hebrew traditions and to embrace the spiritual life post-Christ. In the first case, they would mix faith with the message of the gospel. In the second case, they would mix faith with the teaching of the spiritual life.

Exodus 20:11 **For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.** (NKJV)

Conclusion: There was a literal rest day, the Sabbath, for the Jews during the Jewish Age. However, during this new age, which follows God speaking to all of us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2), there is still a *Sabbath* rest, a rest that the Exodus generation did not enter into. That is the rest of resting from one's works and believing in Jesus Christ; and, in addition, to enjoy the faith-rest life, which rest believers enter into after salvation.

Lessons 326–327: Hebrews 4:1–10 Faith-rest/Context of Sabbath in Hebrews 4

When Hebrews 4 keeps speaking of the spiritual *rest* of the Old and New Testament believer, he is speaking of the faith-rest life. This technique is brought over into the Church Age dispensation from the Age of Israel. This is the key to understanding the point being made by the writer of Hebrews: faith-rest is brought into the New Testament from the Old; not the Sabbath Day observances.

Since the passage that we are studying is Hebrews 4 (as it relates back to Exodus 20), there is an important doctrine to come out of the first few verses of Hebrews 4, the Faith-rest life. Therefore, let's partially examine this doctrine.

The doctrine below is the streamlined version from what Bob eventually pulled together a more complete doctrine.

The Doctrine of Faith-Rest (by R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

1. Faith-rest is that function of the believer in which he utilizes Bible doctrine, Bible principles, Bible promises — everything he has ever learned about the Bible. Faith-rest is not only claiming God's promises, claiming doctrines and principles but it is, at the same time, thinking divine viewpoint. Faith-rest, therefore, is everything by which a believer utilizes Bible doctrine. All of this is to guide him in his life and his mental attitude.
2. The mechanics of faith-rest are found in Hebrews 4:1-3. That is the part where we claim certain promises, utilize certain doctrines, and mix them with our faith to launch them. Faith is the launcher and doctrine in the launching pad is actually fired by means of faith.
3. Faith-rest was the basic system for spirituality in the Old Testament among believers — Habakkuk 2:4 Romans 4:17–21 Hebrews 11. The indwelling ministry of God the Holy Spirit is the basis for spirituality in the royal family but this did not occur in Old Testament times and therefore there is a contrast in the modus operandi of believers in the Old and New Testament.
4. The inner dynamics of faith-rest. Faith-rest produces in the believer both a relaxed mental attitude and freedom from mental attitude sins — Isaiah 26:3–4 **You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.** [The believer who is advancing, who has doctrine resident in his soul sustains the purpose and the will of God, and he does so in perfect prosperity]. **Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. Trust in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah is a rock of ages.** (ESV; capitalized) The

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- sustained purpose in this context is the daily function of the grace apparatus for perception producing the ammunition that is fired from the right lobe of the heart in the believer (that ammunition is Bible doctrine).
5. The production dynamics of faith-rest is described in numerous passages. For example, faith-rest is absolutely necessary for dynamics in prayer — Matthew 21:22 Mark 11:24. Everyone will face in their lifetime various forms of fear, such as, fear of adversity, fear of one's enemies, fear of danger, fear of death.
 - a. There are many types of fear but faith-rest overcomes all of them — Psalm 56:3 (*When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.*—ESV; capitalized). This is the faith-rest technique overcoming a mental attitude sin called fear.
 - b. The overcoming of worry is the function of faith-rest — 1Peter 5:7 (*Casting all your anxieties on Him; for He cares for you.*). Whatever makes you anxious, upset or out of sorts can be given over to God. You can trust putting it into His very capable hands.
 - c. Benefit to others is related to the faith-rest technique — Matthew 8:13, the centurion who came to Jesus asking Him to heal his son. The centurion understood Christ's healing and was able to trust in Him.
 6. Faith-rest is related to supergrace and occupation with the person of Christ — Psalm 37:4–5 (*Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.*—ESV; capitalized). The desires of the right lobe are based upon reaching supergrace. You will have not only the capacity for life, not only all of the blessings necessary in the spiritual realm, but you will also have desires compatible with your station.
 7. Faith-rest is the modus operandi of the royal priesthood.
 - a. 1Corinthians 2:3, 5 *I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,...so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.* (ESV; capitalized)
 - b. 2Corinthians 5:7 *We walk by faith, not by sight.* (ESV; capitalized)
 8. Faith-rest is related to the function of GAP (grace apparatus for perception) — Colossians 2:6–7 *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* (ESV; capitalized)
 9. Faith-rest is related to the victory of the angelic conflict — 1John 5:4 *... this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* This is the faith-rest technique related to Bible doctrine under conditions of residency of doctrine in the soul.
 10. The beginning of the faith–rest drill is to believe God when He makes promises to us, such as Proverbs 3:5–6 Psalm 37:4–5 1Peter 5:7. In spiritual childhood, we reach out with our faith and claim these promises. But the faith–rest drill has far greater implications than just mixing the promises of God with our faith. However, these promises give us a starting point, even as young believers.
 - a. Psalm 4:8 *I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for You Lord only make me to dwell in safety.*
 - b. Psalm 34:19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord*

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- c. delivers him out of all of them.
 - c. Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.
 - d. Psalm 55:22 Cast all your burdens upon the Lord and He shall sustain you; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
 - e. Psalm 56:11 In God I put my trust. I will not be afraid of what man can do to me.
 - f. Deuteronomy 31:8 And the Lord, He it is who goes before you; He will not fail you or forsake you. Fear not, neither be confused.
 - g. 1Peter 5:7 Casting all your anxieties on Him; for He cares for you.
11. Stage one of faith mechanics is mixing the promises of God with faith, Hebrews 4:1–3 (we are about to study this passage, but in a different context).
- a. Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear, lest a promise being unclaimed of entering into His rest any of you should seem to come short of it.
 - i. "Fear" is used in the good sense of obligation to execute the mechanics of the faith-rest drill. We are never commanded to be afraid, but we should be afraid of failing in this matter.
 - ii. "His rest" is sharing the happiness of God—the tranquility and tremendous contentment which comes from understanding God's plan in the midst of the greatest confusion and stress in life. For the Christian, God's rest is entering into His happiness. Your happiness depends entirely upon what thoughts are circulating in your stream of consciousness. You are capable of facing any problem in life and handling it in your stream of consciousness and you are capable of making the right choices in resolving the problem. The true rest is what you have in your soul.
 - iii. This is the utilization of divine promises in the Bible. The blessing that comes from claiming God's promises and utilizing Bible doctrine circulating in the stream of consciousness is the basis of entering into this rest. This is a rest of great tranquility of soul in the midst of the greatest adversities in life. This is also a rest of being able to deal with stress from Bible doctrine resident in your own stream of consciousness. The better that you know these promises, the easier it is to depend upon them when you are under pressure.
 - iv. The believer comes short of God's rest through scar tissue in the stream of consciousness, garbage in the subconsciousness, the arrogance and emotional complex of sins, the control of the soul by the lust pattern. Failure to claim the promises of God through your own faith results in building up stress in your soul. Stress in your soul cannot be cured by any system of counseling. Stress in the soul knocks out the filling of the Spirit (Whatever is not of faith is sin—Romans 14:23), doctrinal orientation, and the coordination of the faith-rest drill among the problem solving devices.

The Doctrine of Faith-Rest (by R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

- (1) Psychological principles of stress.
 - (a) There is a definite relationship between stress and cognition.
 - (b) Stress makes you forgetful and impairs your memory.
 - (c) Stress impairs your ability to learn.
 - (d) Stress affects your perception of reality.
 - (e) When stress is removed, cognitive ability can be restored.
 - (f) If a person remains in stress too long, all of his cognitive ability is destroyed and he enters into a psychotic state.
 - (2) Doctrinal principles of stress and adversity. These principles also apply to prosperity which creates great stress in the soul.
 - (a) Adversity is an outside pressure; stress is an inside pressure of life.
 - (b) Stress is what you do to yourself; adversity is what circumstances do to you.
 - (c) Adversity is inevitable; stress is optional.
 - (d) Stress in the soul contradicts the protocol plan of God for the Church and destroys the spiritual life of the believer.
 - (e) The conversion of gnosis doctrine to epignosis doctrine through faith perception prevents the conversion of the outside pressures of adversity into the inside pressures of stress in the soul, which is tantamount to sin nature control of the soul.
 - (f) Extrapolation from epignosis doctrine circulating in the soul's stream of consciousness produces ten problem solving devices by which you, in the privacy of your priesthood, can resolve your own problems and make good decisions from a position of strength. With ten problem solving devices on the defensive line of your soul, you defensively prevent adversity from being converted into stress in the soul. Offensively you remove stress from the soul. vii. Metabolized doctrine in the stream of consciousness produces cohesion of soul--a soul that is healthy and normal under the concepts of the word of God. This is known as being spiritually self sustaining.
- v. Claiming the promises of God by faith substitutes contentment and tranquility for stress in the soul. No believer can deal with stress and adversity when he comes short of the temporal rest of contentment and tranquility provided through the ten problem

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- solving devices of the protocol plan of God. The alternative to dealing with pressure and catastrophe in life is the total carnal breakdown of the believer, also known as self-fragmentation. Self-fragmentation results in both Christian moral and immoral degeneracy and involvement in the cosmic system so that the believer cannot be distinguished from his unbeliever counterpart in mental attitude, sin nature function, and the modus operandi of life.
- vi. The faith-rest drill coordinates and correlates by claiming the promises of God and applying the doctrinal rationales with God's happiness. When pressure and adversity attacks, you have to have a base of contentment and tranquility from which you use the faith-rest drill under the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit, grace orientation, and doctrinal orientation.
- b. Hebrews 4:2 **For we also have been evangelized, even as they; but the doctrine of hearing [the word of teaching] did not profit them, because it was not mixed together with faith by those who heard.**
 - i. The faith-rest drill was operational in all previous dispensations ("they") and is operational today ("we"). Entering into the rest of God is not a matter of evangelization. Comparison of the Church Age believer with the believers of the Exodus generation indicates that the issue is not salvation by faith but the function of the faith-rest drill.
 - ii. After salvation, the believers of the Exodus generation were not able to use the faith-rest drill because they were negative to Bible doctrine taught by Moses. The Exodus generation had no faith perception, no metabolization of doctrine. It is possible to sit in Bible class and not be profited, because the doctrine is not mixed together with faith. There is no moving forward in the Christian life without faith and doctrinal knowledge.
 - c. Hebrews 4:3 **For we [Church Age believers] who have believed [Bible doctrine as it is taught] enter into the place of rest [+H], just as He said [Psalm 95:11], 'As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter into My place of rest,' although His works were finished from before the foundation of the world.**
 - i. The place of rest was the place of blessing--the place where you depend on the promises of God and doctrinal rationales to handle stress, problems, and adversity in life. They did not enter into Canaan, the place that God had provided for them, because they did not use the faith-rest drill during their time in the desert. Since they did not claim the promises of God as taught in Bible class, God gave them the promise that they would never enter into the place of blessing but would die the sin unto death in the desert.
 - ii. God provides for believers in eternity past. In eternity past, God provided in grace everything the believer needs in human history to

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- handle every adversity. The faith-rest drill has been provided for every generation in human history. Doctrine is always available to meet any stressful situation in life.
- d. Mixing the promises of God with faith is designed to stabilize the mentality of the believer under pressure, confusion, adversity, stress, and disaster. Claiming promises is the way new believers and young believers who have not yet grown up spiritually can function under the faith-rest drill. In time of stress, the believer begins by claiming promises of God and mixing those promises with a weak faith. As the believer grows spiritually, his faith increases, along with his doctrinal sophistication.
 - e. As a result of stage one of the faith-rest mechanics, the believer begins to prevent the outside pressures of life from penetrating into the soul. Faith claims the promises of God; faith applies the promises of God; faith takes control of the situation. The increase of the faith-rest drill in your life means the increase of control over your soul and your spiritual life.
 - f. Abraham used the first stage mechanics, Romans 4:20–21 **Yet, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, God was able to execute.**
 - g. When stage one of the faith-rest mechanics is fully operational, the believer fulfills 2Corinthians 5:7 **We walk by faith** [the faith-rest drill] **and not by sight** [human viewpoint].
12. The second stage of the faith-rest mechanics requires a much stronger faith and a greater understanding of the word of God. A strong faith now applies doctrinal rationales to experience. In the second stage, we have the development of a stronger faith through the perception of doctrine. With this perception of doctrine, the faith becomes strong enough to do more than just claim a promise from God. In the second stage, we begin to claim doctrinal rationales. Two things are needed for stage two.
- a. You need a stronger faith from consistent perception of Bible doctrine (post-salvation epistemological rehabilitation) which means metabolized doctrine circulating in the stream of consciousness.
 - b. You have a stronger faith because you have had experiences in the Christian life combined with more Bible doctrine.
 - c. You need cognition of the whole range of doctrine, which gives the faith-rest drill an option to meet the stress and pressures of life. This fulfills the concept of professionalism and integrity in the modus operandi of the protocol plan of God. Cognition of doctrine has two results related to the faith-rest drill.
 - i. Cognition of doctrine results in the development of a stronger faith. Romans 10:17 **Faith comes by hearing** [positive volition] **and hearing by the word of Christ.** The word of God is the thinking of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1Corinthians 2:16. Your faith has to become strong and be developed.

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- ii. Cognition of doctrine results in the development of the doctrinal rationales. The stronger faith claims doctrinal rationales once they are circulating in the stream of consciousness. God does not permit these difficult situations in life to come along until you have at least had a chance to learn doctrine.
- d. The faith-rest mechanics of stage two are as follows.
 - i. Faith applies a doctrinal rationale.
 - ii. Faith reaches doctrinal conclusions.
 - iii. Faith takes control of the situation.
 - iv. You follow your faith rather than your fear.
- e. The second stage of the faith-rest mechanics demands an understanding of five areas of doctrine found in the Scripture: the essence of God rationale, the plan of God rationale, the policy of God rationale which is grace orientation, the a fortiori rationale, and the ten problem solving devices. Doctrinal rationales begin to circulate in the stream of consciousness as a result of reaching spiritual adulthood. Lifting the shield of faith with the doctrinal rationales provides both the tranquility and contentment of soul in great pressure.
 - i. The essence of God rationale. (See the Doctrine of Divine Essence.)
 - (1) By learning about who and what God is, you develop a stronger faith. To mix your faith with the doctrine of divine essence gives you an advance in the faith-rest drill which is absolutely necessary for your spiritual advance.
 - (2) Spiritual self-esteem is that status of the Christian life where the believer grows up spiritually so that he can advance into the second stage of the faith-rest mechanics. Spiritual self-esteem does not emphasize who and what we are as believers but Who and What God is. Hence, the importance of the essence of God rationale. Therefore, spiritual self-esteem understands and executes the protocol plan of God by use of the essence of God rationale. The advance from spiritual self-esteem to spiritual autonomy is rapid when the believer consistently functions under both the essence of God rationale and the plan of God rationale. The believer in spiritual self-esteem is not easily subverted into arrogance or emotional complexes of sins because he is motivated by who and what God is from the essence of God rationale.
 - (3) Part of the faith-rest drill is the application of the essence of God rationale to stress circumstances, especially those that involve injustice and unfairness to you personally. The mixing of the essence of God rationale with a strong faith is the basis of handling these circumstances. For example, you are the victim of the public lie, the victim of slander,

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maligning, gossip, or some unfairness from people. By using the application of the essence of God rationale as part of the faith-rest drill you become a plaintiff before the supreme court of heaven. As a part of the essence of God rationale, faith-rest mechanics leave all personal injustices, all vilification, all unfairness in the hands of Jesus Christ as a supreme court justice in heaven. Psalm 55:2 **Cast your burden upon the Lord; for He will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous one to be shaken.** 1Peter 5:7 **Casting all your cares [anxieties, stresses] on Him because He cares for you.**

This is an early version of Faith-Rest with a few points from the more advanced doctrine added in. I added a few comments and a few Scriptures as well.

We are going to approach Hebrews 4:1–10 exegetically, having understood the faith-rest doctrine which we just covered. The rest spoken of here can either refer to the rest of salvation (we are resting from our works) or the rest of the faith-rest life.

The ESV; capitalized will be used below.

Hebrews 4:1–10 Exegesis

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.	Hebrews 4:1 sets up this passage, and it speaks about <i>entering into God's rest</i> . Clearly, not observing the Sabbath is not the key topic here. The Hebrew people all observed the Sabbath. It was not a situation where the Hebrew people were not following the Sabbath and the writer of Hebrews wrote to straighten this out. Context is the key!
The writer wants his readers to enter into God's rest (which is not yet defined). He is not looking to strengthen their observance of the Sabbath day (nothing in this passage suggests such a thing).	
Hebrews 4:2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.	There is an <i>us</i> and a <i>them</i> specified here. <i>Us</i> refers to the writer of Hebrews and to other believers in the new age. The good news came to <i>us</i> and <i>we</i> believed it. That good news is, <i>Jesus died for our sins and provided us the way to God</i> . The tricky part of interpretation is this: those in the Exodus generation had already believed in the Revealed God. But they were not living a life of faith.

Hebrews 4:1–10 Exegesis

Scripture

Text/Commentary

At this point, there is an analogy drawn which is not so obvious at first. The writer of Hebrews is not simply comparing Hebrews today (those reading this epistle) to the Hebrews during the time of Moses, but he is also drawing an analogy between saving faith and living faith.

Two generations of Hebrews are being looked at here—the recipients of this epistle and the Exodus generation. However, there is also a comparison being done between exercising saving faith in this era (by believing in Jesus Christ), and daily living faith among the Hebrews of the Exodus generation (which we call the faith-rest life).

The writer of Hebrews is not asserting that the Hebrews of the Exodus generation were not saved. They were saved! Otherwise, God would not have spent so much effort on them bringing them out of Egypt. Remember our study in Exodus. God exerted great power to bring every single Hebrew out of Egypt. God did that because they believed in Him. Furthermore, they follow Moses out of Egypt because they believed in the Revealed God.

Here is the problem with the Exodus generation: they did not exercise a living faith. They were not living the faith-rest life. God would say, “Here is what we are going to do next;” and the Exodus generation would respond with, “I think not. We have a different plan.”

Here is the parallel: there is a deficit of faith among Hebrews circa A.D. 67 *and* among Hebrews circa 1400 B.C. For this reason, some Hebrews hearing the words of this epistle have not yet exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, many Hebrews hearing this epistle being read and explained believed in Jesus, but they could not let go of their Judaic faith practices. They are being compared to the Hebrews of the Exodus generation who did not ever enter into the faith-rest life. They had enough faith to get them to salvation, but they would not exercise faith in their day-to-day life.

Understanding this parallel is key to understanding this passage. Hebrews in 1400 B.C. exercised faith in the Revealed God, but they were not consistently applying faith in their day-to-day lives. Hebrews (Jews) in A.D. 67 either had not exercised faith in Christ or they were not living the faith-rest life in this new era (where many of their rituals should go by the wayside—which is a very big topic in the book of Hebrews).

There is a rest being offered the Jews in A.D. 67 just as there was a rest offered the Hebrews in 1400 B.C. Will they appropriate *that* rest by faith?

Hebrews 4:1–10 Exegesis

Scripture

Text/Commentary

Hebrews 4:3 **For we who have believed enter that rest, as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.** (Psalm 95:11)

Those who have believed the good news have Jesus Christ have entered into the rest which God has promised. The *rest* is the life that the believer enters into after believing that Jesus died for our sins. That rest is God's eternal promise for all of us who have believed. There is nothing that person can bring to God for salvation apart from faith.

However, there is also the faith-rest life for those who have believed and are alive.

In the context of Psalm 95, the people about whom God is speaking is the Exodus generation, those whom He led in the desert, but who never developed any trust in Him in their day-to-day lives. They initially believed in the Revealed God, but then did not mix the promises of God with faith afterward.

At present, the writer of Hebrews is applying this faith-deficit to any Jew who has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, but has rejected it. They are like the Exodus generation, who also had a faith deficit. Without exercising the correct faith directed to the correct object, they will not enter into God's rest. This applies to the believers of the Exodus generation and to those who hear this epistle read aloud. There must be faith and it must be directed toward the correct object.

Hebrews 4:4 **For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."** (Genesis 2:2)

The writer of Hebrews is connecting the rest of the Sabbath day—an observance that virtually every Jew of that day observed—with the true rest God offered the Exodus generation.

He ties the observance to the 7th day where God rested from all of His works (He has provided everything necessary for life; there was nothing more for God to do).

The Hebrew people of the Exodus generation did not continue their faith from salvation faith to living faith; and therefore, they did not enter into God's rest for their post-salvation life. God would remove such people from the Hebrew people before going into the land of promise.

Hebrews 4:5 **And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter My rest."** (Psalm 95:11)

The writer then goes back and quotes Psalm 95:11, which says, **"They will not enter into My rest."** Again, this is the rest of salvation which is followed by the rest of the spiritual life. This is not the rest of observing the Sabbath day.

Hebrews 4:1–10 Exegesis

Scripture

Text/Commentary

This is all about the rest of salvation followed by the rest of the spiritual life. The Exodus generation believed in the Revealed God, but they did not continue their lives living in the rest which God provided them post-salvation.

Hebrews 4:6–7 **Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again He appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (Psalm 95:7–8)**

David wrote this psalm, so his message goes out to those who need to exercise faith (whether during David's time or during the time of the writer of Hebrews).

There are many Jews out in the world who still need to enter into God's promised rest. The writer quotes David, saying, "Today, if you hear My voice, do not harden your hearts." What is the voice testifying to? This would be the voice of God the Holy Spirit, which voice speaks the gospel of Jesus Christ. Contextually, even though we are speaking about the rest of God, this is not a reference to stopping work on Saturdays. This is a much greater rest the writer is speaking of (*greater* with respect to all mankind).

God's voice is telling them about the rest that God wants them to enter—this is the rest from doing all their works (as the Jews thought that they needed to do in order to gain God's approbation).

David is speaking of the salvation message, but this can also refer to God's direction for our lives.

Hebrews 4:8 **For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.**

Joshua led the people into the land and they took the land. They lived in the land and they rested on the seventh day. However, if this is all there was to the Sabbath, then God would not have spoken about this later in Scripture (specifically, in Psalm 95, just quoted).

Some Hebrews were not entering into a salvation rest; and some saved Hebrews were not entering into a lifetime rest.

Hebrews 4:1–10 Exegesis

Scripture

Text/Commentary

Hebrews 4:9–10 **So then, there remains a Sabbath [-type] rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His.**

The people of God are the Hebrew people; and there is a Sabbath-type rest for them that awaits them. They understood that the Sabbath was a reference to rest; and that this new era, there was still such a rest for them. When they enter into that rest, then they can rest from their works just as God has rested from His. That is first the salvation rest offered by faith in Jesus Christ. There are no works which they can bring to God; Christ Jesus did all of the work necessary for them to enter into God's rest. That is the true rest of salvation. Jesus Christ is the correct object of the faith which they should exercise.

Similarly, there is also the faith-rest life, which every person can enter into after salvation. This is *not* attained by following all of the Levitical rituals. Much of the book of Hebrews is all about explaining what those rituals were all about. "All of the rituals that your fathers did pointed toward the Lord Jesus Christ." Because Jesus has come and presented Himself as our Savior, we do not go back to these rituals as a way of life. We simply recognize toward Whom all of these rituals pointed.

The life described to the Hebrew people at the end of Exodus and throughout all of Leviticus is no longer the spiritual life for them. There is another rest available to them: the salvation of Jesus (a rest from works) and then the faith-rest life follows.

When people quote Hebrews 4:9 out of context, they lose 2 important contextual facts: (1) the *rest* spoken of here is not sitting around on Saturdays, enjoying a day off; and (2) the people of God is a direct reference to the Hebrew people (the recipients of this epistle), not to believers in the Church Age. Context is key.

Lesson 328: Exodus 20:12

The Freedom Code

Commandments 5–10; Regarding Fellow Man

The next six commandments make up the *freedom code*, which is how R. B. Thieme, Jr. described them. These laws define freedom and the limitations on human interaction which keep a nation free. If a nation adheres to these laws, even as unbelievers, they will experience a certain amount of blessing and happiness as a result, as well as freedom. When we follow God's laws under any circumstances, our lives cannot help but be better for it. In fact, any society could adopt these laws, enforce the judgements, and experience great benefit from it. It would take a couple generations for people to adjust, but a stronger, better society with greater freedom would be the result. These commandments make up a portion of the laws of divine establishment.

Recall the basic divine institutions:

1. Volition and normal function of the soul.
2. Work, which takes place under perfect environment and after the fall.
3. Marriage, a permanent relationship between one man and one woman.
4. Family. The permanent relationship above + children.
5. Nation. An organization which helps define behaviors which are acceptable and those which must be punished.

These divine institutions hold true for the believer and unbeliever alike. These institutions are preserved by the laws which follow.

Exodus 20:12a [“Honor your father and your mother,... \(NKJV\)](#)

Nearly everyone translates this as a Piel imperative, but it is actually a Piel infinitive absolute. Although the list of uses does not appear to include an imperative sense, one cannot help but understand that to be the sense of the verb, given this context.

More literally, this reads, [Giving honor to father and mother...](#)

One of the fundamental institutions of any nation is marriage and family. This is why socialist and communist (and liberal) propaganda try to eliminate the family or reduce its influence. This can be accomplished in a myriad of ways, the chief one today being public education, which appears to be more dedicated to overthrowing the values instilled in children by their parents than it is to providing an actual education. This is why so many students come out of a public education with socialist and liberal values, but without the ability to think, reason, spell, or do math. This is obviously not every student, nor does this mean that there is a hidden plot and conspiracy afoot (maybe there is and maybe there isn't; I am simply recording some observational behavior). Liberals just tend to be very adamant about spreading their ideology and they will take every opportunity to do so. This is why so many liberals express a fear of Christians establishing a theocracy in the United States. You see, if they had the power to do it, they would establish a government dedicated to their beliefs (this is pretty much what they have already done). Therefore, they believe that their natural enemies, Christians and conservatives, would do the same.

Application: According to a Gallup Poll (from a [2018 CNBC article](#)), 51% of millennials view socialism favorably with only 45% of them favoring capitalism. This is clearly a result of public education brainwashing, it cannot come from their parents, because adults do not believe in socialism by a 51-45 margin, or anything close to that. If there was any kind of an objective study of China, Russia, Cuba, Venezuela, or even of many liberal European countries which are said to be socialistic (they are not), no one could come away with that kind of conclusion.

Application: There is a push all over the world toward pre-school education, despite the benefits of such an education as being short-lived (if memory serves, they tend to improve the student's performance only up until 3rd grade or so). Here, as soon as a child has

some manageable cognitive skills, there is a growing faction who want to get their hands on these children and *raise them correctly* (which their parents are apparently not doing—and kids who are five years old are too old to fully influence).

Application: Parents, when raising their children, tend to have a more objective and realistic view of the world. When a child pays attention and respects their parents, they learn from them. After all, part of what the parent's job is, is to raise a child to be able and capable of taking care of himself (or herself). This objective is in opposition to socialistic programs, which want the state to raise the children, with a predisposition to dependence upon the government.

Application: During the 2012 election, President Obama, running for a second term, proposed the *Life of Julia*, which followed the life of Julia (a fictional woman) from birth to death, and this online, interactive presentation featured the many times her life intersected with the government and how she was helped by the government along the way during many times in her life. Even though a plethora of commentators continued to say, "You cannot call President Obama a socialist" there was never a more blatantly socialist view of the world than the *Life of Julia* (which interactive posting is very difficult to find today, despite the fact that it was parodied massively on the internet). It would be easier to find the parody than the original interactive *Life of Julia* than the original interactive post. For whatever reason, the Obama organization removed this utopian view of woman and government (even though this is something they believe in strongly). You see, the end result was, people would view this and have an unfavorable impression of the life of Julia. A normal person would examine this and think, *hell, I don't want that!*

Application: Children of today would be greatly benefitted by paying closer attention to the values of their parents rather than to the values being taught to them in our schools. Both the parents and the schools have agendas, but the parents' agenda is generally based upon love for their child; where the agenda of liberal education is love for socialism and/or liberal doctrines.

These illustrations which I use will, at some point in time, have little or no meaning for the reader. However, the cosmic system being what it is, there will always be similar illustrations which will rise up and take their place.

I know that some people would take issue with that. People have gotten to the point where they define freedom in terms of how much they are able to sin. Many believe that their sins have no effects on society. One example of this is drug usage. People believe that drugs are here to stay, that drugs should be legalized, and that we should empty the jails of all those there on drug charges. Furthermore, some believe that the state should provide drugs at discount prices or even free of charge to those who desire them. The rationale behind this is that once drugs are provided, then those who use them will no longer be a drain on society and no longer engage in criminal activity. Not true. This is a goofy utopian view constructed pretty much by dopers.

I have been well-acquainted with several people who have spent a great deal of their lives using drugs and some of them have become hopeless and totally useless members of society who are unable to carry their own weight due to continued drug-abuse (such people cannot even take care of themselves). As a result, we pay the bill to help them live (and provide them with drugs in many cases). Our homeless problem, although not made up of 100% drug users, has a very high percentage of drug and alcohol abusers. Our mental institutions have got a large percentage of drug abusers living there. So often the term *self-medicating* is used when speaking of drug abusers, but they might as well go into a bin of disposed-of medical drugs and take those by the handful. Drug use can often take a very manageable life and turn it into a non-functioning life.

An outgrowth of hedonistic drug abuse has been hedonistic sexual activity, which has begun an AIDS epidemic which continues to cost society billions of dollars and untold human suffering and grief (including that which is suffered by those who received the HIV virus in birth, conjugal relations with their spouse and through blood transfusions). So every kid who thinks that they should be allowed to take drugs because it doesn't cause anyone else any harm is wrong. The drug epidemic has spiraled out of control beyond what was ever foreseeable in the 1960's. Furthermore, the drug-related crime would not disappear with the provision of free drugs. People who use drugs and cannot function as they should in society—holding a job, producing, and providing for their own—will turn to crime out of their envy and hedonistic tendencies to get the things that they want and are unable to get, being drug users.

Option #2 would be commandment five of the Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:12a [“Honor your father and your mother,... \(NKJV\)](#)

This is where we started. The rest of this verse is:

Exodus 20:12b [...that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. \(NKJV\)](#)

That your days might be long has a two-fold meaning. By direct interpretation, *your* is the second person, masculine singular suffix and it refers to the individual believers, men and women. These are Israelites out in the desert-wilderness far south of the promised land, and God has promised to take them into that land. This is a specific promise to them; but this promise can be applied to thousands of later generations of both Jews and gentiles.

When you are properly oriented to authority by being first oriented to the authority of your parents, your life will be fuller in terms of days and in terms of quality. It is those people who are in continual rebellion against all forms of authority who are unhappy. They are unhappy because they will always have some form of authority over them and half of the time that authority will be unjust, unfair and unreasonable. This is normal and the person who has trouble with that will spend great portions of their life in misery because of this. By implication, a nation of people who are authority-oriented, first to their parents and then

to authority in general, is a nation which will survive for a long time and will be healthy and strong.

Several times in Scripture, there are ways delineated where a person might extend his life. This would be one of them. You are far better off in life when you respect your parents and heed the words of your parents than the child who is in constant rebellion against his parents. You will live longer and you will more easily adjust to life. In fact, the obedient child is going to live longer than the child always in rebellion.

I believe that this verse, although it certainly has individual application, specifically refers to the people of Israel and the land that they will occupy. The more that they obey and respect their parents, the longer nation Israel will hold onto the land given them by God. This is brought out by the second half of v. 12:

Exodus 20:12b ...that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (NKJV)

The key to this verse is respect for authority, upon which all orderly societies exist. Without this respect, society is degenerating. The child who believes an adult, a parent, a teacher, a policeman must first earn his respect and then he might consent to respect them—that child is totally disoriented to life. There are not enough hours in the day for those in authority to earn the respect of each and every single person they come into contact with. The primary people who face this daily are policemen (and women). They have an extremely difficult and discouraging job to face. Whereas a teacher who is half-way decent or has a reasonable personality occasionally receives compliments from students and parents, the policeman who has to stop you for speeding, who has to question you because you fit a description of someone just placed on his radio or computer—this man rarely gets a compliment or a word of appreciation for helping to control the lawless elements of our society.

I am reminded of a totally arrogant jerk (a MENSA member, in fact) who once proudly told me and a few of other people how he was questioned by the police while in a bar (I believe that this took place in New Orleans). Realizing he did not have to give the officer of the law a valid driver's license, he gave him one of these plastic cards that you get in the mail with your name on it enrolling you in a record club (this must have occurred in the 1960s or 70s). How unbelievably arrogant and disrespectful! Because he refused to cooperate, he was hauled down to the police station where he spent several hours and was finally released after engaging (and paying) a lawyer. Since I barely knew this person, I thought to myself, but did not express it aloud, *what an arrogant jerk; what a complete idiot!* I was glad that he spent that time in jail and had to go through the hassle that he went through. A policeman has a very difficult job to do and requires as much respect and cooperation as we are able to give—even if we are the one's receiving the ticket. This does not mean that some police officers are not wrong or that they have never exercised poor judgment—they have old sin natures just like you and I have. There are certainly going to be some bad apples in any organization. However, this does not preclude our giving them

the respect that they deserve. This verse is the basis for all authority orientation and respect, which, from a well-trained individual or from a grace-oriented person, is automatic.

Another important point—unrelated to this verse, but a pertinent tangent: only those who have been under authority and have respect for authority should wield authority. Those who want to be in control because they think they know what is best or they believe themselves to be smarter than those around them are not qualified either by desire or by intellectual ability to have authority. Even those who have the knowledge of the company, firm or organization should not necessarily be in authority. Just as a teenager sees the freedom that an adult has, yet does not see the accompanying responsibility; often the people who desire a leadership position can only see the power, but have not even a clue as to the related responsibilities. A good policeman is first and foremost a servant of his community; a good administrator in a school is there first and foremost to make certain that his teachers have the opportunity to teach. A good coach is there first and foremost for the growth and training of their young people. A president of a company is there to correctly direct and serve the company, which makes him responsible to and for every single employee there. The higher one climbs in authority, the greater is their responsibility for those below them. The person who thinks that it is all about personal power should not ever be given that power.

Lesson 329: Exodus 20:12

Obey Your Parents

Exodus 20:12 [“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. \(NKJV\)](#)

After our relationship to God, the most important relationship which we have is with our parents (which includes step-parents, parents via adoption, guardians, relatives acting in place of the parents, etc.). In fact, it is often the relationship with our parents which leads us into salvation. The family is the most basic unit of society, based upon right man/right woman. When that unit breaks down, then society invariably goes in the wrong direction. We have seen that in our country; since the 1960's, the family unit has eroded due to materialism lust, hedonism, sexual infidelity and immorality. This approach is interesting for two reasons: there are two generations of Israelites who will hear these commandments—those who will die in the desert after wandering for forty years, due to their hatred of God's Word and their children, who will enter the land and begin to take it from the degenerate peoples which occupy it.

With this commandment, God is speaking to the older and younger generation of Israelites. The older generation is condemned by these commandments; the younger generation will benefit by them.

The older generation are those who were born into slavery and they left Egypt as adults. I have designated them Gen X. They have seen God's gracious acts and provision, and yet, over and over again, they rebel against Him. The next generation I call the generation of promise. They left Egypt prior to entering adulthood, or they were born while Israel

spends 40 years in the desert-wilderness. It is this second generation who will enter into the land of Canaan and take it. Their parents will have died the sin unto death in the desert-wilderness before they all come to the border of Canaan for a second time (in our study of the Torah, we will actually see them come to the southern border of Canaan and get it all wrong).

Even though their parents are spiritually worthless, God mandates that the children give their parents their respect and honor. The second thing which strikes me is that the family begins from the top down; that is, the parents train their children properly and a society benefits greatly.

In the United States, we have many generations of degenerate children who came on the scene, whose parents for the most part did not take on the responsibility which comes with having children. As a young teacher, I observed many families where both parents worked in many cases not to break even but to gain great material possessions.

Instead of giving time, love and guidance, many of the children which I taught received their own rooms, stereos, DVD players, TV's, computers and game boys (some of these are obviously dated references). In other families, the father deserted the family early on, leaving the mother to raise the children. Although this is the fault of the father, this is not only the fault of the father. Women have become immoral; they become disobedient, horsey; and they sleep with men who simply turn them on. As a result, couplings occur between people who are not at all suited for one another; or before either person is really ready for a lifetime commitment. By the time they realize this, they have children and the man leaves. Morality on the part of the woman and character on the part of the man would have turned a lot of families around. However, this approaches the family from the other direction. The child is born, he is old enough to make some decisions, and he learns God's commandments. Regardless of the short-comings of the parents (and every parent has an old sin nature, so every parent has short-comings), the child is told here to honor, respect, revere his parents.

Exodus 20:12 [“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. \(NKJV\)](#)

This commandment was so important that any child who struck his parents could be put to death (Exodus 21:15). A child who was rebellious and out of control could be brought before the court and executed (Deuteronomy 21:18–21). Some children were so disrespectful, that even God desired that they be executed (1Samuel 2:22–25). The Bible gives us a much stronger concept of authority orientation that we are used to.

This is certainly a major theme in the New Testament. [Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is honorable. Honor your father and mother \(which is the first commandment with a promise \[which is\]\): that you may be prospered and that you may live long on the earth \(Ephesians 6:1–3\). Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is commendable in the Lord \(Colossians 3:20\).](#) It is the common thought of the teenager that the rules and the limits set up by their parents have the express intention of curtailing their

fun. The parent has made many mistakes by that time and out of love is attempting to save the child from making the same mistakes.

The responsibility of the father is given in Hebrews 12:6–8, given by way of analogy, implies the duties of a father: **For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** (Proverbs 3:11–12) Notice that even though this passage is not about a father's need to discipline his children, such behavior is expected.

Today, because of some abusive fathers (and mothers), we have gone completely in the opposite direction, where many people think that it is even wrong to spank a child. Many maxims which are false are accepted by society as being true. For instance, the idea that violence begets violence, so a father who spanks his child is apt to turn his son into a violent predator. However, this simply is not true.

But what about abusive parents? The Bible covers that also. **Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart** (Colossians 3:21). **And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord** (Ephesians 5:4). Notice that—this is the father who works every day all day long and who is put in charge of the child's spiritual growth? The father. I didn't write this and if it were me, I would have put the mother, who is with the children from birth, in charge of their spiritual growth. But God, who has a bit more insight than I do puts the father as the one ultimately responsible for the spiritual growth of the children. Further notice that this is not a mandate to beat your children or to spank them daily. Spankings should certainly be a last resort; they should be painful and they should be sparse. They lose their effectiveness if threatened and never carried out (as is true of all empty threats) and they are worthless when they are overdone. This destroys the fear and respect of the child for the father.

I need to point out that this does not leave the mother out of the picture altogether; for it stands written: **My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother** (Proverbs 6:20). Even though the previous verses listed only the father; this is because he is the head of the household and the one ultimately responsible for the salvation and spiritual growth of his children (within the limits of their own volition—it is possible for a father to do everything right and still end up with degenerate children). However, the man can delegate responsibility and the woman can initiate teaching of spiritual things to her children.

Although the Bible does not forbid women from working (in Proverbs, the business ventures of wives are referenced), it also assigns them the responsibility of teaching their own children. Many women do not realize this, but they set the tone for the next generation. What they teach their children will be the key to what the next generation does.

Another principle comes out of this (although we are out on the tangent of a tangent). Even though those who were at the crucifixion of our Lord were women and even though they seemed to have a clearer picture of what was going on than all of the disciples put together, God places the spiritual responsibility of leadership squarely with the man. It is with men where honor and character should begin, and spiritual dedication. It is unfortunate in a family where only the woman has an interest in things spiritual because she does not have the authority; she is under the authority of her husband and an evil, degenerate husband can undermine the solid teaching she gives her children. And since we are on a tangent, one of the reasons the authority rests with the male in this life is seen with today's single parent families. How many women got themselves into a bad marriage because of their own immorality and materialism lust and sexual lust and then how many of these women as single parents with children living in their home, bring men that they are not married home and sleep with them; how many of these women move in a boyfriend. And we wonder why so many children begin having sex at age 11 or 12. This is behavior learned from who?

Whether a woman wants to or not, she will end up teaching her children, and they may not learn the things that she would like them to.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (NKJV)

Before we leave this verse, notice its promise: that you may live long in the land. Remember, this is directed to the second generation of those who exited Egypt and this promise is to them; therefore, a strict interpretation is very limited. However, this command certainly has a wider application. For those who obey and honor their parents (which 98% of the time is for their own good), even if it is a matter of *do what I say and not what I do*; God here promises them longer life. Even for unbelievers, those who become involved in drugs and drinking and pre-marital sex and using a car without responsibility as if it is their teenage toy, they would do well to listen to the instruction of their parents and to obey their parents. It does not matter if their parents have been total failures; the children still need to obey their parents in all things and respect their parents. In most cases, they would be told to lay off the drugs and drinking, improve their school work, go to college or learn a trade, stay away from pre-marital sex; save that for marriage; and be responsible when dealing with adult tools, like a car. Obeying these mandates would give them many days in the land. Or, if you will, many more years of life.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (NKJV)

This fifth commandment is repeated many times in the New Testament:

Matthew 15:4 For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and mother," Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16 and, "The one speaking evil of father or mother, by death let him die." Exodus 21:17 (Green's literal translation)

Matthew 19:19 (Jesus is speaking to the rich young man) “[And] honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Exodus 20:12-16; Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 5:16-20 (Green’s literal translation)

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey the parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord. (Green’s literal translation)

Ephesians 6:1–3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise, Exodus 20:12 “that it may be well with you, and you may be long-lived on the earth”. Deut. 5:16

Lesson 330: Exodus 20:13

You will not murder

Now, the sixth commandment:

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder. (NKJV)

This is one of the shortest verses in the Bible, consisting of a negative and a single verb.

This verse does not read, *Thou shalt not kill*. Killing, under certain specific conditions, is legitimate. A soldier may kill his enemy in battle. A person may kill another in protection of himself or his family. A policeman may kill a person who is endangering others. The state may execute a person for committing horrendous crimes. All of these are legitimate reasons for killing someone.

What we are not allowed to do is intentionally kill someone simply because we believe that removing them from this world will somehow benefit us.

I recall in my youth attending a Baptist church in Berkeley, California once and listening to a Sunday School teacher teach this verse and point out that there are no exceptions herein stated; that no matter what, under any circumstances, we are not to kill anyone for any reason. This is absolutely false and I remember when I heard this guy expound ineloquently on this verse, I sat there just grinding my teeth thinking to myself, *does this man have even a clue?* In the Hebrew, there are about ten different words for kill and each verb has several stems (the stem of a verb changes its meaning somewhat).

The Hebrew Words for Kill/Murder

1. Nâkâh (נָקַח) [pronounced *naw-KAW*] is one of the most common words in the Old Testament, taking up over six columns of references in *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*. Despite its many appearances in the OT, it does not occur in the Qal stem, the most common of the Hebrew stems. It is most often translated *smite* in the KJV, and means *strike* in modern English. It can mean to strike so that the other person is killed, as in Exodus 21:12, 20 Joshua 10:26 11:17 1Samuel 17:50. Nâkâh can be used figuratively to strike an entire city or

The Hebrew Words for Kill/Murder

- population as in Joshua 19:47 Judges 1:5, 12. This word first occurs in Genesis 4:15 where it does mean to strike and kill. Strong's #5221, BDB p. 645, NEHC p. 814. When a specific word is followed by three numbers, these are Strong, BDB and NEHC numbers.
2. Mûwth (תוּמ/מוּת) [pronounced *mooth*] means *to die*. It is found many times throughout the Old Testament; it takes up 10 columns in NEHC. It is usually literal (Genesis 44:20) but not always (Job 12:2); and it is not necessarily a result of violence (Genesis 48:7). It is the word which is used the most often when it comes to capital punishment in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:12 21:12 Deuteronomy 13:10 17:5, 12 21:21 22:21) and it is often used of manslaughter (that is, the result of an act of manslaughter) (Exodus 21:12, 28, 35). This is a word which might be described as more the passive of *to kill*; this is the word which the victim does in the active voice, so to speak. Strong's #4191, BDB #559, NEHC p. 675
 - a. You may ask, how does this word not always mean violent death, given that it is used for manslaughter and execution?
 - b. It depends upon context and/or the stem of the verb.
 3. Hârag (גָּרַח) [pronounced *haw-RAG*] simply means *to kill, to slay*. It is primarily used of killing which is done as an act of violence (Genesis 4:23 Joshua 10:11). It is rarely used for capital punishment (Exodus 32:27 Leviticus 20:15–16) or for animals (2Kings 17:25 Job 20:18). Strong's #2026, BDB #246, NEHC p. 374
 4. Ṭâbach (טָבַח) [pronounced *taw^b-VAHKH*] is used for slaughtering sheep or other beasts (Genesis 43:16 Exodus 22:1) and is not found near as often as the previous three words. Strong's #2873 BDB #370, p. 473
 5. Shâchat (שָׁחַת) [pronounced *shaw-KHAT*] is the word used primarily for ceremonial sacrifices (Leviticus 1:5, 11 3:2, 8 4:4, 15). Strong's #7819 & 7829, BDB #1006, NEHC p. 1251
 6. Nâqaph (נָקַח) [pronounced *naw-KAHF*] is a bit harder to pin down for a definition; it seems to mean *to strike off, to mutilate, to wound*. It is found once the result of which was death (Isaiah 29:1). It also has what seems to be an entirely unrelated meaning which is how it is found most often (Joshua 6:3 2Kings 11:8 Job 1:5 Psalm 22:16). Strong's #5362, BDB #668, NEHC p. 839
 7. Râtsach (רָצַח) [pronounced *raw-TSAHKH*] is the word found in Exodus 20:13 and it means *to murder* (Deuteronomy 22:26 Jeremiah 7:9) and murderer (Numbers 35:16–18). It is, however, found occasionally for capital punishment (Numbers 35:30) and for a person guilty of involuntary manslaughter (Numbers 35:12). Strong's #7523 BDB #953, NEHC p. 1190
 8. Numbers 35:30 is a fascinating passage as four forms of three of these words are found in this one verse. **If any one kills (nâkâh) a person based upon the evidence of witnesses, the murderer (the Qal active participle of râtsach) shall be killed (Qal imperfect of râtsach); furthermore, one person will not testify against a person to [cause him to be put to] death (Qal infinitive construct of mûwth).** Two of the words left out are used for animals so that is most of what we have studied in this doctrine.

Therefore, this particular passage does not outlaw every single form of killing.

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder. (NKJV)

The doctrine below is probably similar to R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s doctrine of murder.

The Doctrine of Murder (by Jack M. Ballinger)

1. Satan is called a murderer. John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil [via the indwelling of Adam's original sin, genetic engineering, spiritual death] and you want to do the desires of your father [negative volition follows the sinful trend of Adam; the people who are addressed here will murder Jesus]. He was a murderer from the beginning [Satan is an accomplice to every murder, since he is the father of the indwelling sinful trend of Adam; from the first murderer to the victims of international politics in the present hour, cp. Revelation 18:24], and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him [Satan is behind every lie, every distortion, every conspiracy and every deception. The indwelling sinful trend of Adam is his greatest tactical victory]. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature [i.e., his fallen nature; he as the god of this world {2Corinthians 4:4} is behind every lie in the person of the indwelling sinful trend of Adam]; for he is a liar and the father of lies. The fact that he is symbolized as a great red dragon lurking in the sea of humanity emphasizes his murderous ways. Red, as in "blood", is his color.)
2. The first murder victim was Abel, who was murdered by his brother, Cain. Genesis 4:1–15; 1John 3:12
 - 1) The murder was due to a conflict in belief (Hebrews 11:4).
 - 2) Religiously inspired murder is a regular feature of the Angelic Conflict (Jude 11 Matthew 23:34-37 Revelation 17:6, the murder of Jesus).
 - 3) Although Genesis does not describe the murder, apparently Cain watched Abel kill the various animal sacrifices with a sacrificial knife (or blade). He asked to take a look at it, and then he used it on Abel. We know that from the specific meaning of the verb in 1John 3:12. That verb is sphazô (σφάζω) [pronounced SPHAHD-zoh], and it means, *to slay, slaughter, butcher; to put to death by violence; mortally wounded*. Strong's #4969. It is a word most closely associated with animal sacrifice as well as putting someone to death by violence. Those two meanings blend when it comes to Cain killing Abel.
3. Sinful anger constitutes mental attitude murder. Matthew 5:21,22 James 4:1,2
4. Murder is one of the sins God particularly hates. Proverbs 6:16-19
5. Murder and the mental attitude sins that lead up to it are sponsored by the sinful trend of Adam (Mark 7:21 Galatians 5:19–21 James 4:1,2; jealousy, anger, greed, power lust). We all have the sinful trend of Adam, as we inherit this from our human fathers.
6. Heathenism is characterized by this sin. Romans 1:28-32; cp. 3:15
7. A believer can commit murder and still be a believer (1Peter 4:15, King David). However, every murderer does not have eternal life in him (1John 3:15).

The Doctrine of Murder (by Jack M. Ballinger)

8. Murder is prohibited by the sixth commandment of the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17 "You shall not commit murder" is the Qal imperfect 2nd person plural of râtsach (רָצַח) [pronounced *raw-TSAKH*]. Of the 43X this verb occurs, only once is it used of sanctified killing (Numbers35:27); some 30X it is used in connection with the act of manslaughter [accidental killing].
9. The general Hebrew word for "killing" is qâṭal (לָטַל) [pronounced *kaw-TAHL*], which is used both for legitimate and non-legitimate killing in the Old Testament). This is a rare verb found only thrice in the Old Testament: Job 13:15 24:14 and Psalm 139:19.
10. Capital punishment is the divinely ordained punishment for the crime of murder (Deuteronomy 21:22,23; cf. 17:8-13). It was instituted before the Mosaic Law was instituted.
 - 1) Capital punishment is commanded to Noah's descendants and the nations they founded for the entire course of the postdiluvian civilization. The man who murders must be executed. Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man."
 - 2) Capital punishment was incorporated into the Mosaic Law (Exodus21:12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." The verb used here is the Hophal imperfect with the Qal infinitive absolute of mûwth (תוּם/מוּת) [pronounced *mooth*]: to die].
 - 3) Capital punishment was taught by Jesus in Matthew26:50-54 John 13:10, 11 Luke 22:49, 50 cf. 22:36-38.
 - 4) It was taught by Paul as a valid practice of law (Romans13:14), and by Peter (1Peter 2:13,14).
 - 5) Capital punishment will become a legal reality in the Millennium. Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15
 - 6) Paul taught the Royal Family that one of the lawful uses of the Law in the Church Age was that murder is a crime. 1Timothy 1:8-11 **Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.** (ESV)
11. Killing that does not constitute murder:
 - 1) Killing in self-defense. Exodus22:2 Luke 22:36
 - 2) Capital punishment. Genesis9:6
 - 3) War (see Doctrine of; universal military training, Numbers1).
 - (1) Covert aggression is the basis for declaring war (Numbers31:1ff).
 - (2) The principle of total victory by killing the enemy. Deuteronomy 20:10-18
 - (3) The use the faith-rest technique when entering battle.

The Doctrine of Murder (by Jack M. Ballinger)

- Deuteronomy 20:14
- (4) The Lord is known as "a man of war" in Exodus 15:3, and as "the Lord of the armies" in 1Samuel 17:45.
 - (5) One of the original books of the Jews was called "the book of the Wars of Yahweh." Numbers 21:14
 - (6) David praised God for giving him the skills to fight in combat. Psalm 144:1
 - (7) The Lord sends the army into battle. 2Chronicles 13:12
 - (8) God delivered the enemy into Israel's hands. Deuteronomy 20:13
 - (9) The Lord will once again strap on His sword and defeat the nations in the Tribulation. Revelation 19:15,16
 - (10) He will unleash a new weapon upon the forces at Armageddon not approved by the Geneva Convention! (Zechariah 14:12-15).

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/murder.pdf> accessed June 27, 2019 (edited).

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder. (NKJV)

Also see the **Doctrine of Killing and Murder** ([L. G. Merritt](#)).

Furthermore, for many of the commandments given in the Law, the penalty for them is execution by man—this obviously indicates that, under certain circumstances, killing is not only allowed but mandated. This is clearly taught, for instance, in Exodus 21:20 where the penalty for intentional manslaughter is death: **He that strikes a man so that he dies, shall be surely put to death.** See also Exodus 21:15–17. Furthermore, God will command the children of Israel to go into the land of Canaan and in some cases slaughter entire populations of man, woman, child and animal. So obviously there are circumstances where man is commanded by God to kill another man.

In many ways, murder is the ultimate sin because you deprive a man the use of his volition for good or for bad; a person's soul is not longer a part of the Angelic Conflict. The angelic conflict, to some extent, is dependent upon the decisions that we make. Without our volition, there is no angelic conflict. We are never to have our volition taken from us—not by a spiritual bully; not by parents running out lives after we have become an adult and have moved out of their house; and not by the federal government. In murder, one is robbed of his earthly volition forever. When a person is placed into jail unjustly, his volition is severely limited.

This exact commandment of *you will not murder* is repeated in the New Testament (Romans 13:9) and, in fact, is taken quite a bit further in the New Testament. Jesus said, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You will not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder will be liable to the courts.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court; and whoever will say to his brother, 'Raca' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever will say, 'You fool' will be guilty

enough to go into the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21–23). Without going into great detail, which this verse demands, it places hatred on the same plane as murder, insofar as the eventual punishment is eternity in the Lake of Fire. The business about the courts sets up an analogy because a man certainly cannot be executed for anger. The important concept to grasp here is that the motivation behind murder and mental attitude sins are just as wrong in God's sight as the act of murder itself.

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder. (NKJV)

Lesson 331: Exodus 20:14–15 You will not commit adultery; you will not steal

Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery. (NKJV)

This verse is just as short as the previous verse, having just a negative and a verb.

There is a dispute just as to how narrow this commandment should be understood. Does it apply to sexual sins in general or is it confined simply to adultery? That would be a moot question, as other sexual sins are dealt with throughout the Law of Moses (some of which will be punishable by death).

Again, there is a law in the Ten Commandments where marriage and family are protected. In ancient Israel, the person who interfered with a family in this way is executed. That is how important the family unit is to God.

Application: I have watched a number of British and Australian shows, and I was struck by how, in so many cases, two women will be talking and one is getting involved with a married man, and the other does not treat this as a sin or a major problem but, in so many cases, speaks of the woman finding her true love in life—rarely does the other woman say, "Your true love in life is not going to be found with another woman's husband." Sometimes the bonds of marriage are tenuous, and it is wrong for a man or a woman to insert themselves into a troubled marriage, doing what is certain to be the death blow to that marriage.

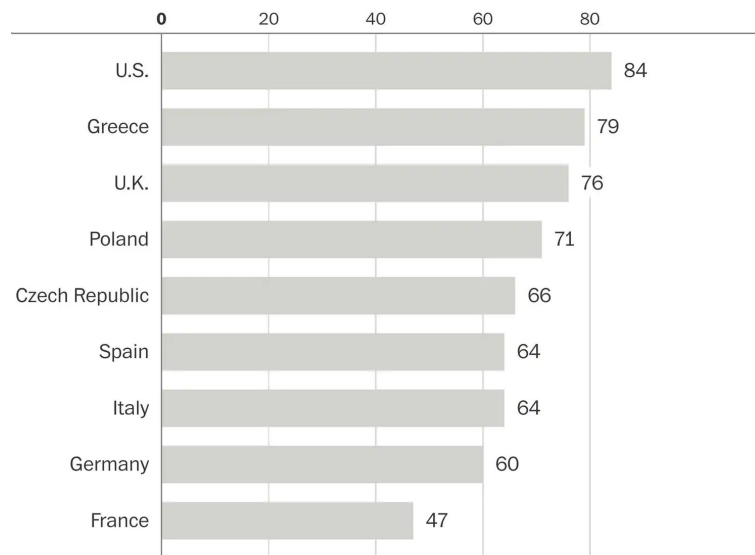
Application: Even when adultery does not destroy a marriage, it often causes great pain and suffering to the husband and wife and also to the children (if there are any). What happens in the lives of the adults often affects the lives of their children. Children who are raised by divorced parents are more likely to get divorced themselves.

Although our society no longer executes adulterers, American society still strongly disapproves of adultery.

Adultery is unacceptable (a graphic); from the [Washington Post](#); accessed June 2, 2019. The differences in culture are quite amazing, when 84% of Americans believe that adultery is unacceptable; whereas less than half of France believes that to be so.

The contrast is quite astonishing, but this only goes to show that societies develop different values. There is a huge Christian influence in the United States, and, therefore, fundamental values as expressed in the Ten Commandments are more universally recognized (one of the benefits of a society which is influenced by Christian beliefs is, these beliefs are often extended to unbelievers, which strengthens that society).

Do you believe that married people having an affair is morally unacceptable?



Source: Pew 2013
THE WASHINGTON POST

There is likely a close correspondence between Protestant Christianity and beliefs such as this.

Exodus 20:14 “[You shall not commit adultery.](#) (NKJV)

Society functions on the basis of five divine institutions: volition (the function of the soul), work, marriage, family and nation. Societies are preserved and prospered by these divine institutions. With the exception of a very few fringe members, all believers and unbelievers have belonged to and continue to belong to these institutions. The divine institutions were designed by God for believers and unbelievers alike. They are the very structure of society of believers and unbelievers. Attempts to modify or change these institutions are attacks by Satan. It is from him whence comes homosexual marriages; the state controlling our volition (when Obama was president, this was spoken of as nudging the public); the breakdown of nationalism, which is often replaced with some sort of international system; children being raised by the state or by state-controlled child-care institutions—all these are attacks on our society by Satan. Satan is obviously anti-God. But he is also anti-establishment. The five divine institutions are the very core of establishment.

Many studies have been done regarding criminality and family; and drug experimentation and the family. A person raised in a single parent home is far more likely to become a criminal and/or become involved with drugs, as opposed to a person raised in a mother-and-father-run home. Ann Coulter’s book *Guilty* cites the statistics comparing the end

results of children who come out of a single-parent home as compared to those with two parents, a mother and a father. These stats present a remarkable contrast. They reveal that, in most instances, parents who rise above their petty problems and hold their marriage together are going to produce better children.

One of the greatest attacks in our society today is the over-emphasis upon sex. People are made to think that, if they are not having a lot of very exciting, erotic sex, then there is something wrong with them. In order to achieve this, people commit adultery, they have sex prior to marriage, they marry and remarry, and chase this illusive hedonistic pleasure. Very few people ever find this great pleasure, and when they do, it is very temporary, and it often comes at the expense of love. Going on a hedonistic, sexual binge short-circuits a portion of your system and it makes it much more difficult, if not impossible, to identify your right man or right woman. And you do not get to go out on a youthful sexual-lust binge for 2-20 years and then think you can straighten it all out later. Adultery is just one of the sexual sins, but just as murder is an attack upon the first divine institution, volition; adultery is an attack on the third and fourth divine institutions, marriage and family.

It is certainly worth noting that nearly everything in Hollywood (and from the producers of series and movies in Great Britain and Australia) emphasize sex as the most important factor between a man and a woman and I would be hard-pressed to find any film or series where two young people wait until they are married to have sex.

Current culture teaches that (1) a young couple first has sex (possibly even intended as a one-night stand); (2) they have strong physical lust so they desire to have sex often; (3) then they might next move in together; (4) they might have children; (5) and finally, in the end, they might get married. The Bible teaches, you get to know one another as people (soul to soul); then you get married; then you move in together and then you have children. That's the correct order; and we should not be surprised that society has it all backwards.

Back in an era where the Biblical norms and standards were followed, lifetime marriages were the norm and divorce was rare. Today, when the standards of the movie and television industry are followed, marriage success is around 50%. This leaves out the fact that most children are conceived out of wedlock today and large numbers of children are raised by a single parent (usually the mother). The single parent model is that approved by many governments, as this sort of relationship (one parent—invariably the mother—and one or more children) is subsidized by the government. This often means that the single mother supports a more heavy-handed government (as that is what supports her).

Strictly speaking, adultery is a married man or a married woman fornicating with someone other than their spouse. However, the New Testament takes this further.

Adultery

- 1) The New Testament clearly forbids adultery in the traditional sense. Matthew 19:18 Romans 13:9

Adultery

- 2) The Old Testament forbids adultery. Exodus 20:14
- 3) Jesus forbids us to look upon a woman with lust and calls this sin equivalent to committing adultery. Matthew 5:27–28
- 4) Having sex with someone prior to marriage is also forbidden—this is adultery with respect to your future spouse. 1Corinthians 7:1 Hebrews 13:4 The verse in 1Corinthians should read: **It is not good for a man to, by touch [light the fire] of a woman.**
- 5) Divorcing one's spouse and remarrying is, in most cases, committing adultery. Romans 7:2–3

This does not mean that these things were not against the Law in the Old Testament; all except #3 will be specifically dealt with in the Law in additional commandments of God.

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery. (NKJV)

Links to Doctrines About Sex and Adultery

This would be an ideal time to examine the **60 Verses on Sex** ([Knowing Jesus](#)), Biblical Sex ([Stan Murrell](#)); Sexual Health in the Bible ([Grace Notes](#)), and the **Doctrine of Adultery** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

R. B. Thieme, Jr. has done a variety of series on Marriage, Right Man/Right Woman, and Adam's Rib (these are available in booklet form and as lesson sets from R. B. Thieme, Jr. [Ministries](#)). For any young man thinking about women and for any young woman who thinks about men, these studies are fundamental.

Commandment #8:

Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal. (NKJV)

At least two *Jewish* Bibles suggest that this relates directly to *man-stealing* (taking someone into slavery), but I find no support for this theory.

God tells the people that they may not take things which belong to other people from them.

This verse first and foremostly protects private property. Believers and unbelievers, Hebrews and Gentiles, all have the right to own property and all have the right to have their property safe from violation (meaning safe from being stolen). Nowhere does the Bible state that all the earth is God's, therefore we all own our things in common because they first and foremost belong to God. Furthermore, the Bible also does not say, because we are all brothers, these things belong to all of us. There were special circumstances during times of severe persecution when men and women huddled together in small churches and

shared what they had. However, this was always a matter of free will on their part. They believed that circumstances—intense persecution at the time—warranted such behavior.

Earlier, I mentioned the divine institutions, and you may have wondered, *do any of the Ten Commandments protect one's work?* Presumably, people work, over a period of time, to attain more than just necessary food. Work can translate into possessions and shelter. So, this, the 8th commandment and the 10th commandment both protect private property which is attained through work.

Communism and socialism mean to take away our personal property and possessions and our wealth, as such property ultimately belongs to the state (in their opinion; and they often couch this in false terms like, property belonging to the people) Socialism gives the government the choice when and who receives private property and how much. Socialists are anti-God because they sponsor the government doing the exact opposite of what a good government is supposed to do. A good government looks to protect the private possessions of its citizenry—not to take them away at the whim of bureaucratic members. The Bible does not set up a particular form of government that we must all live under. It allows for a reasonable amount of freedom in governmental organization. However, any government which runs exactly counter to these commandments is evil to its core.

Some churches are so bent on taking your money from you, that we are made to feel as though there is something wrong with owning property, personal possessions, luxury items, etc. We have a divine right to property which we have earned legally. There is a place for giving, but that is not in view here. What is in view is that, whatever someone else owns is divinely protected. God demands that we allow others the right to purchase, collect, and own private property and that we have no right as individuals to steal it from others. This may be expanded to today's world where the state has no right to come in and steal private property. This does not preclude taxation, however. The New Testament affirms this as the right of government in Matthew 19:18 and Romans 13:9.

As there are in many issues, there are two divergent poles, both of which claim Biblical support. There are those who believe that we should give until it hurts, that we should not accumulate any material luxuries. There are others who believe that they may accumulate whatever they choose to without repercussion; that if we are spiritually mature, then God will give us great material wealth. The truth, as always, is somewhere in the middle. It is our priorities, our mental attitude, our positive volition toward God's Word and our willingness to share our prosperity which are the fundamental issues—not the accumulation of material things or the eschewing of such ownership.

Giving

- 1) In the area of priorities, people who spend their entire lives pursuing material things will, at some point, experience great misery and sorrow. **Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume**
-

Giving

your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have store up your treasure! Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields which you have withheld, cries out! And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened you hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the righteous; he does not resist you (James 5:1–6).

- 2) The illustration of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16–22 is not someone who could not be saved because he was wealthy. The rich young ruler was trying to be saved by works and Jesus Christ illustrated to him that if he was going to be saved by works, then one of the things he needed to do was to give away his material possessions. That was one work which he was unwilling to do. Selling everything and giving it all to the poor would not have saved the man. This merely illustrates where his shortcomings were because he was a very self-righteous, rich young ruler.
- 3) When a person's material wealth stands in the way of his spiritual growth or his salvation, then wealth is a stumbling block to that individual. Jesus Christ explained to the disciples that wealth sometimes blinds a person to their need for salvation. Matthew 19:23–26
- 4) Giving is a matter of sharing our resources as we have been prospered (2Corinthians 8–9). God has given great prosperity to some people (David and Solomon come quickly to mind) and some wealthy men use their wealth wisely and support God's work. Similarly, some who do not make a great deal of money, also use what God has given them and support His work (remember the widow and the two mites).
- 5) There are even periods of time during great persecution where Christians have bound themselves together to share what God has given them (Acts 4:32). Here, we must be careful. We are all members of the same family and the material things which we possess are given to us by God. Therefore, we should be willing to share our material prosperity with the members of our family and be willing to give as God has prospered us. However, at the same time, we are not to deprive our own families (1Timothy 5:8).
- 6) When churches begin financially supporting their members, great care has to be exercised. Paul gives Timothy advice in 1Timothy 5:9–13; which implies that those on the dole have a tendency to degenerate (see also 2Thessalonians 3:11). Paul writes that those who are not actively working, should not eat (2Thessalonians 3:10).
- 7) The point in mentioning these divergent passages is that different circumstances require different approaches by God's people. Because people often grab on to one set of verses and ignore anything that they see as contrary, there are often completely opposite viewpoints about what is right or wrong, neither of which is correct. This is a form of propaganda where a person sets up two alternatives and then says to chose one or the other. Often, these are not the only alternatives (a good example is hyper-Calvinism vs. Arminianism).

Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal. (NKJV)

Lessons 332–333: Exodus 20:16–17 Do not bear false witness; do not covet

Our study has been an examination of the Ten Commandments. The final two commandments are #s 9 and 10. The ninth commandment is:

Exodus 20:16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (NKJV)

Because the KJV was *the* Bible in western culture for so long, and because certain passages were commonly memorized (the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the first few verses of Genesis), it is difficult to exegete some passages because the translation sometimes comes out differently than what is found in the KJV (for instance, Exodus 20:7).

	8267 [e]	5707 [e]	7453 [e]	6030 [e]	3808 [e]	
s	šā·qer.	‘êd	bə·rê·‘ă·kâ	ta·‘ă·neh	lō-	
ס . : שקר	עד	ברעך	תענה	לא	16	
-	FALSE	witness	against your neighbor	You shall bear	Not	
Punc	N-ms	N-msc	Prep-b N-msc 2ms	V-Qal-Imperf-2ms	Adv-NegPrt	

Exodus 20:16 (a graphic); from [Bible Hub](#); accessed August 7, 2024.

This provides me with most of the information which

I need to know. The top line is Strong’s #; the second line is the English transliteration of each Hebrew word (as it is found in the Hebrew text). The third line is the actual Hebrew, which is written from right to left. The original Hebrew letters are large black graphics. Above and below those letters are the vowel points. These vowel points were not given in the original text, so that a person can mentally or physically cover up the vowel points and still read the Hebrew as it was originally written 3500 years ago. The fourth line is the English translation and the fifth line is the morphology of the verb. The blue lines (links) provide even more information if you place your cursor over them.

Before the internet, in the late 1990s (very few people were on the internet regularly at that time), I purchased 4 very expensive and thick books with this same information put together by a man named John Joseph Owens.

In my chapter-by-chapter studies, I list this information somewhat differently:

Exodus 20:16 (a second graphic); from Kukis.org; accessed August 7, 2024.

This format is one which I developed and is

unique in its set up. I believe that it communicates the most amount of information without being too confusing—even for those completely unfamiliar with the Hebrew language. For those who use WordPerfect (a writing program similar to and superior to Word), these charts can be easily integrated into your own notes, if you so choose.

I presented all of that information so that you would not get completely lost in the exegetically approach from the Hebrew below:

V. 16 begins as the previous three verses did: with a negative and the 2nd person, masculine singular, Qal imperfect of a verb. The verb in v. 16 is ‘ânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced *gaw-NAWH*], a word with three very diverse meanings (actually, it is better understood as three different words which are spelled the same). It means *to answer, to respond, to testify; to be occupied with, to be busied with* (found very rarely in the Old Testament; Ecclesiastes 1:13 3:10); and *to be afflicted, to be troubled*. Here it obviously means *to answer, to testify*. Strong's #6030 BDB #772. There is a negative with this verb, so this is something that we are not supposed to do.

This is followed by the prefixed proposition b^e (ב) [pronounced *b^{eh}*] and it means *in, into, near, at, by, with against*. No Strong's # BDB #88. It is prefixed to the noun rêa' (רֵא') [pronounced *RAY-ahg*] and it means *friend, companion, and even neighbor*, and it is found about 200 times in the Old Testament (Genesis 15:10 Exodus 2:13 32:27 2Samuel 16:17). Rêa' has a 2nd person, masculine singular suffix, translated *your*. A cooperative relationship rather than an adversarial one is implied (however, this depends upon one's understanding of the bêyth preposition). Strong's #7453 BDB #945.

‘Êd (עֵד) [pronounced *gayde*] means *witness, testimony, evidence* and it is in the construct form. To give you an idea of how the construct is used, let's say that Moses has a tent. If we put *tent* in the construct and follow it with *Moses*, then the translation would be *the tent of Moses* or *Moses' tent*. In Exodus 20:16, this construct state translates to, *a testimony of deception*. Strong's #5707 BDB #729.

Exodus 20:16			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
לֹא (לֹא or אִלַּן) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
‘ânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i>]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6030 BDB #772
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
rêa' (רֵא') [pronounced <i>RAY-ahg</i>]	<i>associate, neighbor, colleague, companion, friend; beloved; fellow, acquaintance; fellow citizen; another person; one, another [in a reciprocal phrase]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945

The final word in Exodus 20:16 is sheqer (שָׁקֵר) [pronounced SHEH-ker] and it means *deception, disappointment, falsehood*. The traditional way to render these two words is *a testimony of deception, a witness of falsehood, or a false witness*. Strong's #8267 BDB #1055. This changes the commonly rendered *you will not bear false witness against your neighbor* to *You will not testify with your neighbor [or, friend or associate] a witness of deception*. The bēyth preposition is also rendered *against*; so this may also be translated *You will not testify against your neighbor [or, friend or associate] a witness of deception*.

What is implied in the first example is collusion of testimony which is false. Our word for this today is perjury, but here the person is perjuring themselves in order to agree with the testimony of another. This does not have to be a court case. Your friend can be gossiping about someone and you can chime in with a rumor which you have heard and possibly unthinkingly embellished. In any case, it is a lie, and it is against God's law to lie. Matthew 19:18 leaves out the portion about the neighbor (it reads, *You shall not bear false witness*). This is the sin of lying.

The second approach has one lying against one's associate. Doing either one of these is wrong; and so wrong as to be one of the Ten Commandments.

In Acts 5 we have one of the most famous cases of collusion and misrepresentation. Ananias and Sapphira were a Christian couple who sold a piece of property and acted as though they had given all of the proceeds from that sale to the church. The problem was not that they held back some of the funds, but that they misled everyone into thinking that they had given the entire amount. We are under no obligation to give all of our funds to the church, to the missionaries that come through our church, etc. We need only give as God has prospered. However, we should not act as though we are giving sacrificially when in reality we are not. Both Ananias and Sapphira died because they had lied to the Holy Spirit, insofar as they misled their fellow believers. Just so there is no misunderstanding here, even though this couple died the sin unto death, they are both in heaven today.

We do not lose our salvation even if we die the sin unto death.

Exodus 20:16 *You will not testify [as] a false witness against a neighbor [or associate]*. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Although this appears to be speaking of giving testimony in a courtroom, it is applicable to all forms of false speech against a neighbor or an associate. This does not indicate that person is a friend or close to you in some way.

Now for the tenth and final commandment. This is the entire verse:

The tenth commandment is Exodus 20:17 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."* (ESV)

R. B. Thieme, Jr. calls this last commandment the *Magna Carta of Freedom*. It is this commandment which gives us our rights to privacy, property, person and possessions. This is the commandment which tells us not to be envious of what another has; not to crave or desire any of their possessions. If you have owned a nice, relatively new, good-looking car, and its been stolen or someone has keyed it, you have been the victim of covetousness. Someone envied what you had; someone was jealous of your possession and acting out of their old sin nature. If you have a spouse who is attractive, in soul and/or in appearance, we have possibly experienced (or they have experienced) a male or female Lothario hit on them, despite their wedding ring. You are victims of someone who has broken this commandment. If you have ever had one of your possessions stolen or experienced a break-in to your automobile or your personal residence, your privacy and person have been violated, as well as your right to own of property, by someone who has broken this commandment.

Now let's examine this commandment piece by piece.

Exodus 20:17a “[You shall not covet your neighbor's house;...](#) (NKJV)

The key word it is *covet*. It is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of the verb *châmad* (חָמַד) [pronounced *khaw-MAHD*], which means, *to delight [in something]; to desire, to covet, to take pleasure in*. Strong's #2530 BDB #326. This is preceded by a negative, which is how most of the commandments are structured.

The wonderful old English word which describes this: *covetousness*—however, this word is such a relic that some people no longer have a full understanding of it. However, you see something which belongs to your neighbor (someone you know or associate with), you develop a great desire for it and you crave it. He may have a beautiful wife and you desire her. He may have recently purchased a new Lamborghini and you crave it. He may have purchased a Renoir and you are jealous and desire to have it. No matter where you look, there will always be someone who is thinner, richer, drives a nicer car, has a better looking spouse (even if they aren't as good-looking as you). They may be smarter or wittier than you. Nevertheless, you do not crave, covet or desire what they have that you lack.

2024 Lamborghini Huracan (a photograph); from [McClaren](#) in Houston; accessed August 7, 2024. I believe that this little vehicle costs about \$420k.



God has provided for our every need. He has made it possible for any one of us to have great happiness and great inner peace and tranquility on this earth; it just requires salvation, rebound, the intake of doctrine, and our trust in and deference to His judgement and guidance. As Paul wrote, **Not because I am speaking with reference to poverty: for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am, to**

keep on being content. In fact, I have come to know [through experience] how to be degraded [the degradation of reversionistic discipline], also I have come to know what it is to live in prosperity [the supergrace life]: in every place and in all circumstances I have been initiated in both how to be well fed [saturated with doctrine] and to hunger [for more doctrine]. (Philippians 4:11–12; R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s corrected translation).

It is this desire for things which others have which motivates lying, deceit, stealing, adultery and killing. Parents who teach their children not to lust are raising a family of law-abiding citizens. The parent who allow their children to lust for what others have are raising a generation of criminals. Remove the lust for what you do not have but your neighbor does and you remove a massive amount of criminal activity. Covetousness, or lust (which word does not have to be employed exclusively for sexual lust) is forbidden in the New Testament as well. Romans 7:7–8 **To what conclusion are we forced? Is Law the origin of sin? Absolutely not! However, I was not aware of my sin nature had it not been revealed to me in the Law. Furthermore, I would not have recognized my sinful lust pattern if the Law did not say, "You will not lust!" Now, sin took this occasion, through this very command, to bring about my conscious understanding of every lust in me, for apart from an objective Law, I am unable to recognize sin. [Exodus 20:17] (Kukis paraphrase)**

You are probably still thinking about that Lamborghini. What we are studying is:

Exodus 20:17a **"You shall not covet your neighbor's house;... (NKJV)**

At this point in time in Israel's history, the people of Israel live in tents. However, they will occupy houses when they enter into the land of promise. God is telling them not to lust after or desire the house that your neighbor owns.

I have certainly had house lust in my life. I can think of immediately the 3 houses which I have had house lust for: my own house which I currently own; a 2-story home in a nearby neighborhood built as 4 levels; and a house in the country near River Terrace. I could not acquire the latter two homes and that is certainly acceptable to me. I recall things about them which I like, but I certainly do not concentrate on them nor do I feel any grief or serious disappointment that I missed out on two of those homes. The second house I could not afford (how complex those building plans must have been!); and the third house I found out about just a little too late. In any case, my life is not upset simply because I saw two houses which I liked but could not have.

Exodus 20:17b **...you shall not covet your neighbor's wife,... (NKJV)**

The Israelite was not to desire or lust after a neighbor's wife. Again, this does not limit your lust by using the term *neighbor*; essentially, you are not to lust after any person's wife. If you are introduced to any woman who is married or is partnered up, then you remove them from your list of possibilities, no matter how charming and gorgeous they happen to be.

Once a marriage has been established, then that particular wife (or husband) should be seen as off-limits to everyone in their periphery. This part of the 10th commandment goes

further than forbidding adultery in terms of prohibition. Men are not to concentrate on or think about the wife of another in any inappropriate way.

Exodus 20:17c ...nor his male servant, nor his female servant,... (NKJV)

If your associate has great slaves or servants, you do not desire them. In the ancient world, a successful person was more likely to have servants (slaves). A servant, in that era, like a wife, belonged wholly to the slave owner. Therefore, they were totally off limits to others. Having competent, industrious and intelligent servants in the ancient world was certainly ideal.

Today in the United States (as well as elsewhere), some people have housekeepers who come in a few hours a week (or a day); so this is not a ban against one neighbor asking another about Blanca the housekeeper and if she can take on any new accounts.

This would be different in places like Hong Kong (and in many places in the Middle East), where young women are often hired to live in a home and to take care of children, attend to the dying mother, and to also do cooking and housecleaning. Such people are closer to the concept of being enslaved, with many of the limitations which come out of the Bible (there is a time limitation on Hebrew slaves; and more people employed in HK in similar positions are on 1–3 year contracts).

V. 17 continues with things which we are not to covet:

Exodus 20:17d ...nor his ox, nor his donkey,... (NKJV)

In an agricultural society, livestock represents wealth. This is very much like a person's checking or savings account. You are not to desire the money that belongs to your neighbor.

Exodus 20:17e ...nor anything that is your neighbor's." (NKJV)

These are the final words that God will speak directly to the people of Israel.

Whatever your neighbor has that you might want, you are to end the wanting for it. Now, if you like something that your neighbor has and you want to purchase it, that is fine. But, spending time being concerned about what your neighbor has and that you lack—that is a violation of the 10th commandment.

Application: This commandment has great application to socialist propaganda. Socialists use the fact that there are only a few rich, but many people who are middle class and poor, and they try to drum up jealousy and desire in the many against the few. Power is often in a person's income, so they remove the power of their income, and they take that power to themselves. For communists and socialists, this is a two-fer. They set this as the bait to cause the masses to become jealous of the few who are extremely rich; and, when such people are taken down by the communists, then their wealth and power is absorbed by the

very small, communist inner circle. As we have observed in Cuba and Venezuela, such promises do not end up prospering the country.

Application: When Donald Trump announced that he was running for president in 2015, there were great numbers of people who assumed, because he was successful, that he was also dishonest and crooked in business. I am writing in 2024 and I personally know people who still, after all of this time, believe Trump to be a fundamentally dishonest person. They assume that, since Trump is a billionaire, that he had to be dishonest to become wealthy. Much of that comes from socialist propaganda that the wealthy are inherently dishonest. Wealthy people are not inherently dishonest nor are poor people inherently honest.

Application: Politicians today often try to sell the idea of somehow the government grows the middle class; and often that false idea is sold by wealth redistribution. Wealth redistribution is another tool used by socialists. What they desire is the power to decide which money goes to which people. They always favor their friends and supporters; and they always take their own very sizeable cut off the top.

Application: I began to write this in 2019, and the first Democratic presidential debates have occurred, and one of their themes is wealth inequality and growing the middle class. Now, the implication is, they reduce the wealth of the wealthy and that somehow goes to those in the middle class, but, in reality, it never does. Those who are rich are taxed more, taxed excessively, and taxed to the point where they leave the state or the country where they are (if they are able to). New York and California have seen an exodus of the very rich (not all of them) because of their high taxation rate. Great Britain, because of its high tax policies, has seen many a successful rock group leave their country altogether—the very land in which they grew up—to find cheaper living elsewhere. Many of those in the acting profession in Great Britain and Australia spend months (or even years) learning an American accent so that they can act in films in the United States. They are looking for lower taxes and higher paychecks.

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” (NKJV)

Application: Certain politicians, political parties and political movements depend upon covetousness in order to motivate their followers. I have a personal friend (actually, a former student from high school) who believes that McDonald’s was an extremely immoral organization because the CEO was making some huge amount of money each year (I believe that the meme this guy posted had him making \$18 million), while all of the employees were making minimum wage or something above that. So, I did a little math for this former math student of mine. I pointed out to him that two million people work for McDonald’s (actually 2.15 million, but the math is easier to do with two million). So, let’s say this someone took away this CEO’s salary and showered McDonald’s employees with all of his yearly salary, splitting it up equally among them. That means each employee would make an extra \$9 per year. That is less than an extra dollar a month. Their increase

in wages would be perhaps a penny or two extra each hour. This, of course, did not change the thinking of the friend. In his eyes, it was just wrong and immoral for the CEO to make so much money and for the McDonald's workers to make so little. Therefore, he still concluded that the CEO should not be making that much (even though the reduction of his salary to zero did not make any significant change to the millions of McDonald's workers). Somehow, there was this whole fairness aspect to which he was clung.

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” (NKJV)

At this point, we have just completed a reasonably thorough study of the Ten Commandments. The first three are all about God and man; the fourth is the Sabbath-day commandment; and the final six are all about the relationships between man and man.

Paul accepted, to some degree as an unbeliever (before he was converted on the Road to Damascus), the authority of the Bible (which, in his time, was just the Old Testament). A portion of realizing that we need a savior is to recognize that no matter how hard we try, no matter what we do, we are not and never will be perfect. Since we do not fulfill the Law, then we are sinful before God. What clued Paul into his personal inadequacy is this particular commandment. **I would not have come to the point of recognizing sin except by means of the Law; for you see, I would not have known about coveting had the Law not said, You will not covet.** But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law, sin [would have been] dead [to me] (Romans 7:7b–8). None of us keep any of the commandments except in the most legalistic, limited sense. However, Paul recognized that this is where his inadequacies lie.

Romans 7:7–8 **To what conclusion are we forced? Is Law the origin of sin? Absolutely not! However, I was not aware of my sin nature had it not been revealed to me in the Law. Furthermore, I would not have recognized my sinful lust pattern if the Law did not say, “You will not lust!” Now, sin took this occasion, through this very command, to bring about my conscious understanding of every lust in me, for apart from an objective Law, I am unable to recognize sin.** [Exodus 20:17] (Kukis paraphrase)

Paul fully understood the sin inside of him based upon his own covetousness (or his materialism lust).

Now that we have covered the Ten Commandments (lit., the Ten Words), we need to examine the **Doctrine of the Suzerain-vassal Treaties:**

[These are] notes from lectures of Dr. Meredith Kline, presented at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in Massachusetts.

The Suzerain-Vassal Treaty

Brief Summary of Suzerain Treaties:

In the Ancient Near East, treaties between kings was common. These were treaties drawn up among equals and mostly outlined agreements to honor each other's boundaries, to maintain trade relations, and return run-away slaves. These treaties are preserved in the Mari Tablets and in the Amarna texts.

Also preserved in these collections are treaties drafted between a superior and his inferior. If the relationship was familial or friendly, the parties are referred to as "father" and "son." If the relationship is bereft of kindness and intimacy, the parties are referred to as "lord" and "servant," or "king" and "vassal," or "greater king" and "lesser king." The greater king is the suzerain and the lesser king is a prince, or a lesser lord in the service of the greater king. The lesser lord is a representative of all the common people who are under the protection of the greater king. He enforces the treaty among the masses.

These Suzerain/Vassal treaties open with two sections: 1) The identification of the Suzerain by his name and titles; 2) The historical survey of the Suzerain's dealings with the vassal. The purpose is to illustrate to the vassal how much the Suzerain has done to protect and establish the vassal who therefore owes submission and allegiance to the Suzerain. These two sections are referred to as the "Preamble."

The next section of these treaties list the "stipulations." What the vassal is required to do is spelled out in principal and detail. This section is often concluded with the requirement that the vassal deposit his copy of the treaty in his temple, where he is to occasionally read and study it to refresh his memory concerning his duties.

The last section of these treaties contains the blessings and curses of the Suzerain. If the stipulations are met by the vassal, he will receive the Suzerain's blessings, which are listed. If the vassal fails to meet the stipulations, he will receive the Suzerain's curses, which are also listed.

The Suzerain would keep one copy of the treaty and the vassal would keep one copy of the treaty. A number of ratifying ceremonies were used depending upon the era and culture. But the most widely used rite was that of cutting the bodies of animals in halves and placing them in two rows with enough space between for the two parties of the treaty to walk side by side. As they walked between the pieces, they were vowing to each other, "May what has happened to these animals, happen to me if I break this covenant with you."

Covenant Documents of the Bible Patterned After Suzerain Treaties:

Exodus 20

The Suzerain-Vassal Treaty

- 1) "Y^ehowah" is the Suzerain who delivered this Preamble to Moses (and the rest of Israel). Moses is the vassal-lord who represents the people under the authority of the Suzerain. Exodus 20:1–2
- 2) Names & titles = "I am the Lord, your God." Exodus 20:2
- 3) Historical prologue = "Who brought you out of Egypt..." Exodus 20:2
- 4) Stipulations with selected blessings and curses. Exodus 20:3–17
- 5) Stipulations = the 10 commandments. Exodus 20:3–17
- 6) Blessings and curses Exodus 20:5b–6, 7b, 12b

Deuteronomy

- 1) This entire book of Moses is saturated with Suzerain Treaty language and structure. It is not properly the treaty document itself, but it is based upon such a treaty, making reference to it often. Below are some examples.
- 2) Historical Prologue language and structure. Deuteronomy 4:32–40
- 3) Stipulations. Deuteronomy 4:44–5:21
- 4) Blessings and Curses. Deuteronomy 6:4–25
- 5) Reflects all the sections of a suzerain treaty. Deuteronomy 8
- 6) Reflects all the sections of a suzerain treaty. Deuteronomy 11
- 7) Reflects the relationship of a vassal king to the Suzerain., Deuteronomy 17:14-20
- 8) Reflects the language and structure of war-time arrangements between a Suzerain and his people. Deuteronomy 20
- 9) Curses and Blessings. Deuteronomy 27–28
- 10) Covenant Renewal. Deuteronomy 29
- 11) Classic presentation of Ancient Near East Treaties! Deuteronomy 30:11–19
- 12) A question along the lines of "what came first, the chicken or the egg?" Did God see fit to present His covenant to His people in a cultural form developed by Near Eastern empires, or did God's original pattern for his covenant in Eden inform and form the cultural pattern of the Ancient Near East?

The point being made here is, the Ten Commandments and the book of Deuteronomy both having striking similarities to the Suzerain-Vassal Treaties of that day and time (which, by the way, also supports the idea that Moses either wrote or dictated the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Taken from <http://www.fivesolas.com/suzerain.htm> and edited.

The Ten Commandments sum up the fundamental laws regarding man and God and regarding man and man. I have read through some systems of ancient law and they come nowhere close to these Ten Commandments.

The concept of Ten Commandments (or some number similar to this) is found throughout our western culture and elsewhere. We have such things as, Ten Commandments of Science; The 10 Commandments of Customer Service; The Ten Commandments of Progressive Christianity; The Ten Commandments of E-Mail; The Ten Commandments of Movement Solidarity, etc. (this list seems to be endless). This is how entrenched these commandments are, even for people who cannot name two or three of them.

Nevertheless, we do not have a similar listing of the most important laws in any other culture (none that I am aware of). Today, we can find hundreds, if not thousands, of *the Ten Commandments of...* However, in the ancient world we find this succinct list only in Jewish culture, insofar as I am aware. Certainly, every ancient culture had some sort of a law system—these can be found online. But a succinct summation of what a culture is all about when it comes to law—I have only come across the Ten Commandments.

Interestingly enough, Jesus summed up the commandments up as two commands.

Jesus recalling the Ten Commandments: Matthew 19:18–19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20

One of the most misunderstood incidents from the New Testament is the interaction between Jesus and the rich young ruler. The record of their interaction is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. We will look at this primarily from Matthew's perspective.

As we study this, remember that Jesus can get a very fast read on any individual. That is, He can speak with someone for a few minutes and know a great deal about that person. This does not come from His omniscience (which Jesus does not make use of); but this comes from Him being people-smart. Jesus had this skill developed to a degree greater than anyone else.

The English Standard Version (capitalized) will be used below:

Matthew 19:16 **And behold, a man came up to Him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"**

This man who had come to Jesus actually twice uses the word *good*. He first said:

Mark 10:17 **And as He was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

When the young man says this, Jesus stops him right there and asks a preliminary question:

Mark 10:18 **And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.**

Jesus seems to be asking this man, "Are you saying that I am God, by calling Me good?"

The young man is not ready to agree with that, but he does have something in particular on his mind. He says:

Matthew 19:16 **And behold, a man came up to Him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"**

You see, this young man has got the word *good* on his mind. He is a good guy and, from all that he has heard about Jesus, He seems to be a good guy as well. But, this young man is not quite ready to say, "Yes, Jesus, I believe that You are God." He certainly does not believe that. On the other hand, he certainly believes that Jesus is a learned teacher and possibly even a prophet. Therefore, he plainly asks Jesus, "**Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?**"

Matthew 19:17a **And He said to him, "Why do you ask Me about what is good?"**

A more literal rendering Jesus' words from Matthew 19:17a:

"Why do you keep on asking Me about the good?"

First the young man addressed Jesus as being *good*; and then he asked about what *good* thing he could do for eternal life.

Matthew 19:17b **There is only One Who is good.**

The only entity Who is truly good is God. By the man's expression on his face—by the way he responded to Jesus with various micro-expressions—Jesus decides how to continue this conversation.

Matthew 19:17c **If you would enter life, keep the commandments."**

An expanded translation of Matthew 19:17c **"And if you keep on desiring to enter into the life [in context, this would be eternal life], then keep on guarding (preserving, attending to) the commandments."**

The young man knows that there are over 600 commandments in the Torah. So the young man asks for some specificity.

Matthew 19:18a **He said to Him, "Which ones?"**

"Since there are so many commandments found in the writings of Moses, which ones are You talking about?"

The Torah of Moses is filled with commandments. Some were followed by the Jewish people and some were not. But when speaking of personal righteousness, Jesus begins to name some of the Ten Commandments.

Matthew 19:18b **And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,..."**

We have just studied the Ten Commandments. Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He started with commandment 6, then 7, then 8, then 9. What do we expect to hear next? What does the young man expect to hear next? Commandment #10, *do not covet*. And when it comes to the tenth commandment, this is where the young man excels (in his own estimation). He's rich. If he wants something, he simply buys it. He does not look with great desire to what someone else has to the point where he thinks he must take it. If he wants anything badly enough, he simply buys it for himself. In his mind, this is the exact opposite of coveting.

In fact, you can just picture this young man, as Jesus ticks off the commands. **"You will not murder."** Good there; I have never murdered anyone. **"You will not commit adultery."** I am good there; I am rich, so the most attractive women are attracted to me. **"You will not steal."** This young man has no reason to steal. He can buy whatever he wanted. **"You will not bear false witness."** This young man has never needed to lie in court.

So Jesus is ticking off the Ten Commandments, beginning with #6, and the man is seemingly nodding his head up and down, as if to say, "Yep, I kept that one."

And he expects that Jesus will then say, **"You will not covet."** But Jesus does not go to the tenth commandment. He circles back to the fifth commandment and then He also adds in another command from the Torah.

Matthew 19:19 **Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

Jesus is not simply naming random commandments in any order. We know how people-smart Jesus was. He could speak with a person for a few minutes and have a great understanding of that person's psyche (I should say, *soul*). Jesus figured out what this young man was all about. He had money, and for that reason, he did not have to break the commandments (at least, not in his own estimation).

But, what about this fifth commandment? Why did Jesus quote it?

There was a gimmick among the Hebrew people where someone with wealth did not have to be responsible for his parents' debt or needs. He simply dedicated his wealth to the Temple as an inheritance, and when he died, his money (of a significant portion of it) went there. Therefore, as long as this man was alive, his money was God's money. No one could lay claim on it for any reason. Maybe his parents were sickly. Maybe they had accumulated debts. This was not the problem of the young man, as his wealth was qorban (set apart to God). If anyone came to him, asking for him to make good on his parent's debt, he would simply reply, "This is God's money. I cannot take from it."

We might make a similar guess regarding his neighbor. We don't know the circumstances, but possibly his neighbor was also in need. But the man could not be pressed upon to help him out, because his personal wealth was God's money. Or maybe this young man, while expanding his own homestead, took advantage of some of his neighbors?

The Scriptures do not tell us exactly what was happening in the life of this young man, but we have the fact that Jesus is people-smart and had this guy's number; and we have the fact that Jesus instead of going on to the next commandment, circled back to #5. Jesus knew that this was the pertinent commandment regarding this young man.

Nevertheless, this man responds positively, albeit with less confidence:

Matthew 19:20 **The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?"**

The young man says that he has kept these commandments, but only insofar as the Temple officials agreed with him. They were more than willing to enter into a contract with him so that his money was dedicated to God.

Matthew 19:21 **Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

So Jesus says, "To be perfect, then sell all that you have, give that to the poor, and then follow Me."

So that we do not misunderstand this, Jesus is not saying that someone who is rich can simply sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. That is not Jesus' point. Remember the young man's original question, "What good thing must I do in order to gain eternal life?" Jesus is going to show this young man that he is deficient. He does not measure up to God's righteousness as well as he thinks he does.

Certainly, Jesus did say, "You just have to sell everything you have, and give the money away!" But remember what Jesus said first. "If you would be perfect..." The word *perfect* is *téleios* (τέλειος) [pronounced *TEHL-i-os*], which means, *complete, mature, finished*; with reference to people, it means *a full age, fully grown, mature, adulthood*. Strong's #5046. "What good thing must you do in order to be complete? if you want to show yourself as fully grown or mature, then this is what you must do..."

Jesus' point is not that every wealthy person needs to give away all of his stuff in order to be saved. This rich young man believes that he is moral enough and ethical enough to earn God's approbation. In fact, he sees himself as *good* (remember how Jesus reacted to his use of that word?).

At this point in time, this young man is not ready yet for faith in Jesus Christ (the *only* way of salvation). He first has to come to grips with not being the perfectly moral human being that he believes himself to be. Jesus quickly came up with an explanation as to why this

man was not meeting the Biblical commandments. He had to express this in a way that would reach this young man.

Strictly speaking, in this young man's eyes, he believed that he was following the commandments and that he was not doing this or doing that. So Jesus gives him a positive command which would reveal that he was not really keeping the commandments.

Jesus' quest to reach the young man was successful. Jesus had shown him that he is deficient with regards to personal righteousness.

Matthew 19:22 **When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.**

The young man has heard all that Jesus has said. He does not disrespect Jesus or question the Lord's wisdom. But he does go away, sorrowful, as he has great possessions.

This young man has very nearly come to the point of recognizing his own need for a Savior. Then he will look to Jesus. We do not know what became of this young man. I believe, at some point that he believed in Jesus, and I base this on the barest of clues in Mark's account.

Mark 10:21a **And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said...**

Jesus, as a man, was capable of human emotions. He had them and expressed them on several occasions (all recorded in the gospel accounts). Jesus did not resent this man; Jesus did not find anything wrong with the fact that this man was wealthy. He simply loved the man, and that would be human love. Let me suggest that Jesus was hopeful that this man would believe in Him, at a later time, and enter into the Kingdom of God as a result. Or, let me suggest in the alternative that Jesus, as a prophet, knew this man's future.

On the other hand, there is a clue in these three narratives that perhaps this young man was never saved. We do not hear his name mentioned in any of the accounts. I am of the opinion that most people named in the Scriptures are those who have believed in the Lord (or, in the Old Testament, have believed in the Revealed God).

In any case, the Lord's disciples were watching and listening to all of this and they had some questions. The young man is gone. He has walked away. So, at this point, the disciples are going to need some guidance, to help to understand this interaction that we just studied. Therefore, we will continue with this passage for our own edification.

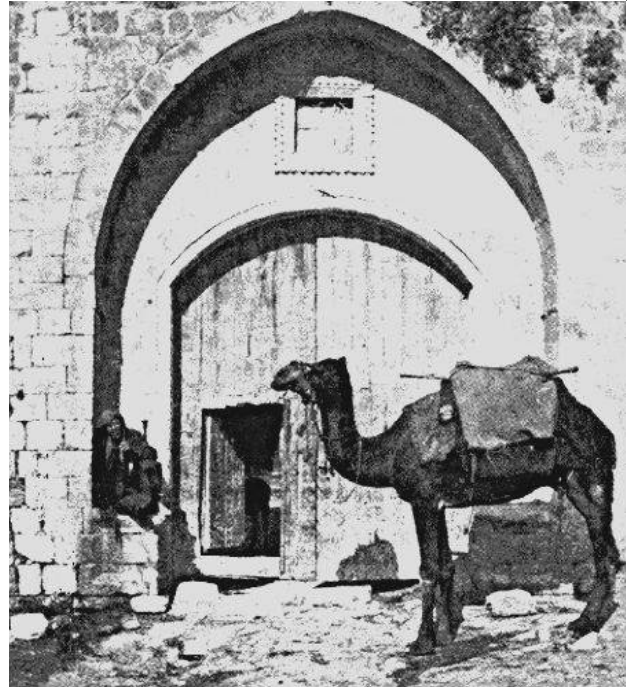
Matthew 19:23 **And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. (Continued with the ESV; capitalized)**

People who are well-off often do not see any reason to seek salvation. They have it all already.

Matthew 19:24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

There is a gate into Jerusalem which has a normal doorway. Jesus is presenting something which is possible, but not easy.

Camel at the Eye of the Needle Gate (photograph); from [Best Travel Deals](#); accessed July 17, 2024. You can get a camel through the door, but it was very difficult.



Matthew 19:25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

The response of the disciples is fascinating, as at least eleven of them were already saved. They had already trusted in Jesus. However, they did not fully understand soteriology (*being saved* and *understanding being saved* are two very different things).

Matthew 19:26 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Man has no way to reach God. No matter what we do, we cannot figure out a way to pursue God and to connect with Him directly. There is nothing that you can do from your own power to reach God; there is nothing I can do from my own human abilities to reach God. Nevertheless, God makes it possible to be saved. We are able to reach to God through Jesus Christ.

Matthew 19:27 Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed You. What then will we have?"

Peter is confusing his post-salvation experience with the fact of him already being saved, which is not uncommon with a person who does not have a full understanding of soteriology. "I have left everything to follow You. What will I have as a result?"

Matthew 19:28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus assures His disciples that they will have a place in the Kingdom of God. In fact, they will have positions of authority in the kingdom.

Matthew 19:29 **And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.**

There is salvation and there is reward. Peter was asking about rewards and Jesus explained what he would receive in terms of reward.

Peter is not grasping that he is saved and that he cannot lose this salvation. But this young man could not reach God with his good works. Peter also has good works. His good works were not the basis of his salvation, but the outworking of having already been saved.

Peter's epistles are evidence that he eventually understood and was able to work out salvation, the post-salvation experience, and the rewards of the mature spiritual life.

However, at this point, Jesus says this:

Matthew 19:30 **But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**" (ESV; capitalized)

The Apostles periodically argued among themselves as to who was the greatest. However, none of them knew what the future held. The greatest Apostle had not yet been called. Judas will reject Jesus and betray Him. He will be replaced by Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul. He will be the greatest of the Apostles; he will be first among the Apostles. He was the last of the Apostles in terms of his calling, but he will be the greatest of them.

Jesus then gives a parable to help the disciples understand further (Matthew 20:1–16). We will save that for another time.

Lessons 335–336: Exodus 20:18–20 The People of Israel React to Hearing God

In the Exodus narrative, which we have been studying, the people of Israel have just heard God speak the Ten Commandments to them. Every one of them audibly heard God's voice. This upset them very much.

The People Afraid of God's Presence

Exodus 20:18a **Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes,...** (NKJV)

The singular noun *lappîyd* (לִפְיָד) [pronounced *lahp-PEED*] means, *torch; firebrand; burning lamp; a flame*. Strong's #3940 BDB #542. The singular noun *qôwl* (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*] means, *sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering; a proclamation; a bleating*. Strong's #6963 BDB #876. However, when these words are used in conjunction with one another, in the plural, they likely mean *thunderings and lightning flashes*. Recall that there were not a lot of rain in Egypt so the Hebrews did not require a specialized vocabulary for everything which occurred in a storm. Everyone heard the Ten Commandments, but the people also

saw and concerned themselves with the smoking and lightning and the thunder and the trumpet.

It is interesting that we do not have the verb for *to hear*, because they heard the storm, and they heard the Ten Commandments spoken by God, and they heard the blasting horn. The people actually did is described by the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *râ'âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], the verb which means, *to see*. In this form, it means, *those seeing; the ones observing; those with understanding; seers, those who perceive*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. This word takes in or includes other forms of perception. All of their senses were engaged as the people of Israel stood at the foot of this mountain.

Exodus 20:18a **And all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings...** (Modern Literal Version 2020)

Quite a number of translators understood that this was a full-on sensual experience that went far beyond what they saw; and therefore, these translators used some form of *to perceive* here rather than some form of *to see*.

The people heard amazingly loud thunder; they saw constant lightning flashes. This was quite disconcerting. These were things that they were not used to seeing.

I moved from a place that did not have many dramatic weather events and moved to a city with a number of weather events, which could be quite spectacular at times. I recall an evening storm—which I slept through. The next morning, I got up and tried to drive to work. Almost every street in my neighborhood had a tree laying down in it, blocking traffic. Later I drove through an adjacent neighborhood. Everywhere, I saw large limbs and trees either thrust through the houses themselves or on top of every other house. Behind my own house, there was a large tree, laid on top of a two-story house, from end to end, the roots hanging over the edge on one side and the crown of the tree on the other. The roof peak somehow supported this massive tree. I regret today not taking a photo of that. It was as if some giant had pulled this tree out of the ground and then carefully laid it on top of the house, end-to-end.

On the day that God spoke directly to the people, these Israelites had never seen anything like this before. Therefore, their senses were overloaded with great sounds and sights. Furthermore, these lighting flashes and thunderings frightened the people.

Exodus 20:18b **...the sound of the trumpet...** (NKJV)

The horn is often used to represent power and authority; and all the power and authority of the universe belongs to God. Surely there was a blasting horn, which was louder and more sustained than anything which they had seen before.

Interestingly enough, there are some weather events even today where the sound of horns can be heard. Such events can be searched out on YouTube.

Exodus 20:18c ...and the mountain smoking;.. (NKJV)

The mountain is filled with smoke. One of the ways smoke is used in the Bible as a sweet savor rising up to God. Here, this smoke indicates the Presence of God on the mountain. I would suggest that it came about from lightning striking trees on the mountain.

Exodus 20:18d ...and when the people saw it,... (NKJV)

There are some alternate readings at this point. The verb used with the word people is disputed. It is either the 3rd masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *to see* or of *to fear*. Most translations have some form of the verb *to see*; but a number of them comment about the alternate reading. In any case, their fear will be alluded to in the next phrase.

Exodus 20:18e ...they trembled.... (NKJV)

The reason that we do not necessarily need to verb *to be afraid* in the previous section is because we are told here that the people are trembling. So, what they do here and say after is indicative of how they felt.

Exodus 20:18e ...they trembled.... (NKJV)

The next two verbs are in the 3rd masculine plural, which is where we get the pronoun *they* from (the form of a Hebrew verb tells you the gender and number of the subject).

The people of Israel were very much afraid of God; even though He led them out of Egypt and has seen to their every need. They know what they are like inside and they are uncomfortable with such a Holy and powerful God. Moses has been the go-between (or mediator) and the Hebrew people were much more comfortable with Moses standing between them and God. This is a parallelism of the people's own volition which is wonderful. Both religious and anti-religious people sneer or minimize God's great gift to us in the sacrifice of His Son. However, it is because of the cross, that Jesus stands between God and us, as a Mediator. Jesus is able to stand before the perfection and holiness of our God, yet He gives to us a kindly hand. The people of Moses' era recognized their own need for a mediator and they asked for Moses to stand in the gap between themselves and God.

Apart from Jesus, we face the wrath of a perfect God, Who can have nothing to do with our sins.

Throughout the Old Testament, with regards to doctrines, pronouncements and narratives, the gospel message is made clear. In shadow form, we see the good news proclaimed again and again.

Exodus 20:18f ...and stood afar off. (NKJV)

In Exodus 19, God told Moses to cordon off the mountain so that the people did not try to get close to God in any way. At this point, that is not necessary. The people are not going to approach the mountain out of curiosity after hearing God's voice.

To get a feel for what is happening, this is a massive crowd of people, and moving them from one point to another is not easy to do. However, it appears that, as this stuff is taking place, the people are inching further and further back, moving away from the mountain.

Although God voiced concern to Moses that the people might come too close to the mountain (Exodus 19:20–22), once the storm kicked in and the voice of God was heard, anyone interested in getting a closer view began to back off.

Exodus 20:18 *Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.* (NKJV)

Given all that had taken place, the people were no longer pushing forward to get a better look at all that was going on. They were afraid and they trembled, as they backed away from Mount Sinai. At this point, they were too close. This was an experience they did not want to repeat.

Exodus 20:19a *Then they said to Moses,...* (NKJV)

It appears that, after the Ten Commandments, God's speaking came to an abrupt end. Some men came forward to speak to Moses, to express their concern for all that is happening. They will provide Moses the general pulse of the congregation.

Exodus 20:19b *...“You speak with us,...* (NKJV)

The preposition used here is *ʿîm* (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which means *with*, not *to*.

The people were very close to the Presence of God, a Presence which was marked by the loud noises and powerful storm. They heard God speak to them, which frightened them considerably. The people were willing to hear Moses. When they ask for Moses only to speak to them, they mean, *instead of God; or, not God*. In this way, Moses would be an intermediary between God and the people, which is what God wanted Moses to be in the first place (remember, that Moses initially resisted this and wanted to bring Aaron into the picture).

God through the Ten Commandments, speaks *to* us; God through Moses spoke *to* the people. However, God spoke *with* Moses, because the people rightfully feared to come too close to God. The people had good reason to fear God and His power. They had seen His strength in action against Pharaoh. And now, they had experienced God's power in the storm.

Exodus 20:19c *...and we will hear; ...* (NKJV)

The people promise here that they will listen to Moses when he speaks.

There is some humor in what the people are saying to Moses. “Listen, you speak to us and we will listen to you!” The implication is, they have not really been listening to Moses before—and that is certainly true.

The true breakdown in communication is, the people are not taking what they should be learning and understanding about God and believing it. They are not mixing God-given information with faith, which is the key step in spiritual growth. Because they do not take this step, this generation will fail multiple times while being led by Moses in the desert-wilderness.

Exodus 20:19d ...but let not God speak with us,... (NKJV)

They ask for a moratorium on God speaking directly to them. They cannot take any more of this. The giving of the Ten Commandments, something which could not have taken more than a few minutes, was very disconcerting to the sons of Jacob.

Exodus 20:19e ...lest we die.” (NKJV)

The people are concerned that they will die if they are exposed to God in the future as now. This had to be a shocking experience.

Certainly, the people are speaking in hyperbole. If they hear God’s voice again, the people will not keel over and die. However, it is clear that none of them want to re-experience what they heard directly from God.

Exodus 20:19 Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” (NKJV)

The people were rendered fearful due to this great spectacle.

What this represents is, God is perfect and the people cannot have direct contact with God. This is true for all mankind. There is nothing in us which allows for direct contact with God.

Exodus 20:18–19 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” (NKJV)

A slightly freer translation:

Exodus 20:18–19 The people could hear and see all that was going on: the great thunder, the lightning flashes, the persistent loud sound of the horn, as well as the mountain [which] smoked—the people saw all of this and they were afraid; they were trembling. They kept moving back away from the mountain. They pleaded with Moses, “Please, only you speak

to us and we will listen to you. Please do not let God speak directly with us, or we will die.”
(Kukis paraphrase)

The people tell Moses that they want him—and only him—to speak with them. They do not want God speaking to them any more. If God speaks to them again, the people fear that they will die (obviously, a hyperbolic expression).

Now the key to the verse that we are about to study is this: there is fear, the mental attitude sin; and there is fear, which is used as a synonym for occupation with Christ (or, in the Old Testament, occupation with the God of Israel). The mental attitude sin of fear is an emotion or an emotional response to a set of circumstances. Fear as a non-emotional mental attitude is the soul of man, through Bible doctrine, directing his own thinking in such a way as to concentrate on Jesus Christ (or, the God of Israel in the Old Testament).

Exodus 20:20a *And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear;... (NKJV)*

There is the mental attitude sins *fear* and there is the concept of a fear/respect for God. God ought to be feared and respected. However, the Hebrew people are not to give in to an overwhelming fear of what might happen to them.

Moses is telling the people to stop being emotionally afraid. When someone is emotionally afraid, their spiritual life is short-circuited. They cannot move forward in a spiritual sense. They must set aside the emotional fear first, through an admission of this sin to God, in order to spiritually move forward.

Exodus 20:20a *And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear;... (NKJV)*

God has just spoken to them and there is a great deal of commotion on the mountain, but no one is in danger of being harmed. God is great and powerful, but if you are in the plan of God, He is not going to harm you.

God never commands us to feel this or that emotion and this applies to the concept of fear as well. The people of Israel are emotionally afraid, and that short-circuits their spiritual lives. However, God tells them to have the mental attitude of fear toward Him. That is an understanding of God ultimately being in charge and that acting against Him is a very bad idea. We come to this understanding not through the emotion of fear but through the mental attitude of fear/respect.

Exodus 20:20b *...for God has come to test you,... (NKJV)*

The verb here is the Piel infinitive construct of *nâçâh* (נָצַח) [pronounced *naw-SAWH*], which means, *to test, to try, to prove, to tempt, to assay, put to the proof or test; to try to do a thing; to practice doing a thing*. Strong's #5254 BDB #650.

God has come to this mountain to this people in order to prove, assay or test them. I have many times heard the argument, *why does God test us? Isn't He omniscient? Doesn't He*

already know whether we will pass or fail? God's testing of us is for our benefit, not His. This helps us to understand where we are in life and how far He has taken us. Having this understanding is necessary for us to continue on our spiritual journey on this earth.

They are to put together all of the things which have happened to them so far, and realize that God is acting on their behalf. Therefore, despite all that is happening when the Ten Commandments are given, the people are not to fear God, in the sense of believing that, He may harm some of them while giving the Ten Commandments.

They are to consider their circumstances and recognize that they are being tested by God.

Exodus 20:20c ...and that His fear may be before you,... (NKJV)

It seems contradictory that Moses has just said, *fear not*; and now he is telling them to fear. Again, they are to set aside, through rebound, the emotion of fear. However, they are to retain the mental attitude of fear and respect toward God. That fear is a mental attitude and not an emotion.

The people have already expressed their emotional fear. "You speak to us Moses instead of God, or we will die!" That is emotional fear. That is a fear which reveals a deep distrust of God and His power. The people need to set that fear aside. However, the people need to maintain a mental attitude of fear and respect for God.

Literally, this phrase reads, ...in order that the fear of Him be upon your faces...

Upon your faces is the actual literal meaning of the words. However, what they mean is, *upon your face, against the face of; facing you, in front of you, before (as in preference to) you, in addition to you, overlooking you.* *His fear* is the subject of the verb *to be*; so it is God's fear which is facing the Israelites or is right in front of the Israelites. Clearly, this was the case.

Some translations reorder this verse somewhat to smooth it out. However, the intent is clear; God is revealing His power before them in order to continue to maintain their respect and fear of Him. It may seem like a contradiction that Moses tells the people not to be afraid and then tells them that part of the purpose of God's coming is to make them afraid. It is the same word; it is first a verb and then we have the noun cognate. This is a figure of speech where the *fear of Him* stands for that which makes people afraid. That is, the storm and the power and the trumpets and all the things that cause them to fear—it is those things which God places before their eyes so that they would not sin. Fear is simply a word which stands for their reaction to what God has placed before them.

However, the people are to have fear/respect for God. They have not really developed that yet because they do not yet fully appreciate Who and What God is. He has revealed Himself to His people, but they have not really learned and accepted all that has happened.

Let me put this in another way. At this moment, the people have a real and palpable fear of God and what is taking place, but that fear is emotional. It will be with them as long as this experience continues and as long as they think about and relive this experience. However, this emotional fear will leave them. Now, if their concentration is on this emotional fear which they have, then they cannot take in the other information which God is giving them. Moses is telling them to overcome their emotional fear based upon the circumstances of hearing God's voice from Mount Sinai; but they are to maintain the mental attitude of fear and respect for God.

Exodus 20:20d ...so that you may not sin." (NKJV)

The purpose of all that has happened is to keep these people from sinning. Their fear of God needs to be a mental attitude of fear and respect. They need to understand God's power and character, so that Israel, as a nation, does not try to turn against God. This would be to their own national detriment.

When it comes to a positive command from God, that positive command is *never* to feel any particular emotion or to work up an emotion. Negative commands from God are often about taking control of your emotions and not allowing them to drive your decisions and actions. God's positive commands are all about what you think, say and do. God's negative commands are about what you think, say, do and emote. You cannot allow your emotions to control or guide your thoughts, words or deeds.

The spiritual believer sets his negative emotions aside through the rebound technique.

Exodus 20:20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." (NKJV)

God has given them the fundamental laws for their society, and the people of Israel will be tested insofar as their obedience to these laws.

The people are not to be emotionally afraid based upon this experience of hearing God's voice. However, they need to maintain a mental attitude of fear and respect when it comes to God and obedience to His commandments.

Exodus 20:20 Moses then answered the people, saying, "You [all] should not be afraid of God, for He has come to you with the intent of proving your obedience to Him and in order that you develop a mental attitude of fear and respect for Him, so that you [all] do not sin against Him." (Kukis paraphrase)

This translation of *proving your obedience* needs some explanation. The Hebrew people have already believed in the Revealed God. This took place prior to the exodus from Egypt. It is through their obedience to His Word that the Hebrew people are proved experientially. Every person who is saved, first believed in the Revealed God (or, *in Jesus* in our dispensation). We cannot lose our salvation because our salvation is based upon Jesus rather than upon our own works. However, after salvation, we learn more and more

about God, and we obey Him, because His commandments are righteous (these commands tell us what we should or should not be doing). We cannot lose our salvation in our post-salvation life; but we can glorify God by our obedience to Him.

In the Church Age, in the time that we live, we glorify God by growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the key to the Christian life.

The Doctrine of Fear by R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Unless otherwise noted, Bob's translation is used. Where I did not have his translation available, I used the Berean Study Bible.

1. Fear is a mental attitude and a mental attitude sin. Like all mental attitude sins it attacks the soul and anything that attacks the soul is attacking the vital lifeline. The most important part of your life is what goes on in your soul, the real you is the soul. Therefore fear is a part of the makeup of your soul when obviously you do not have the inner residency of Bible doctrine. 1Samuel 17:11, 24.
2. Fear therefore, is the sign of reversionism. 1Samuel 18:12, 29; 21:12; 28:20.
 - a. 1Samuel 18:12 **So Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. (BSB)**
 - b. 1Samuel 18:28–29 **When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, he grew even more afraid of David. So from then on Saul was David's enemy. (BSB)**
3. On the other hand lack of fear is a part of mental attitude dynamics.
 - a. Hebrews 13:5-6 **Let your lifestyle be free from love for money, and be content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you, I will never forsake you,' so that we may say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid of what man can do to me?'**
 - b. Hebrews 11:27 **By means of doctrine resident in the soul he [Moses] gave up the throne of Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king [Thutmose III]; for you see he became strong under pressure as long as he kept seeing the invisible one.**
4. Legitimate fear is related to the supergrace believer failing. Hebrews 4:1 **Therefore let us fear, lest at any time a promised blessing being unclaimed of entering into his rest, anyone from among you should think subjectively to the point of defaulting [this is reversionism].**
5. Love is the absence of fear. Remember that agapê love is a mental attitude. 1John 4:18 **There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love. (BSB)**
6. Fear as a mental attitude sin is not a part of the divine plan for the believer. Exodus 14:13,14; Joshua 8:1; Deuteronomy 31:8; Isaiah 41:10; 1Chronicles 28:20; 2Samuel 1:7.
 - a. Exodus 14:13–14 **But Moses told the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the LORD's salvation, which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." (BSB)**

b. Joshua 8:1a Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged.” (BSB)

7. Courage or lack of fear is a sign of supergrace status. Psalm 3:6 56:3,11 Hebrews 11:27.
8. Fear as used for occupation with Christ is a part of supergrace status. The word “fear” in the original language has another meaning: “occupation with.” There are certain passages where fear is used in that sense. 2Samuel 23:3 Nehemiah 5:9,15 Ephesians 5:21 Job 28:28 Psalm 19:9 34:11 Proverbs 1:7 9:10 10:27 15:16 Malachi 3:16 1Peter 2:17.

Lesson 337: Exodus 20:18–21 The people stand afar off, but Moses moves closer

A brief review of Exodus 20:18–20:

At this point, God has just audibly given the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel, and they are reacting to that experience.

Exodus 20:18–19 And all the people, the ones seeing [and hearing all that was going on]: the thunderings and the lightning flashes, the sound of the horn, and the mountain [was] smoking—so the people saw [or, *the people are afraid*], and they are trembling and they stand far away [from the mountain]. They said to Moses, “You speak to us—[and only] you; and we will listen! [Let] Elohim not speak to us, so that we do not die.” (Kukis mostly literal translation)

The people are very shaken up, having heard God’s actual voice. They are filled with fear and they ask for Moses to stand between them and God, and simply convey whatever God wants them to hear. They wanted Moses to act as an intermediary.

Exodus 20:20 Moses then said to the people, “You [all] should not fear, for the Elohim has come with the intent of proving you and in order that the fear of Him be upon your faces, so that you [all] do not sin.” (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Now Moses is much closer to all of the action, as it were. He is on the mountain. The people see all of the intense weather events taking place, but Moses is right there in the midst of it all. Moses is therefore able to tell the people, “Don’t be afraid!”

Exodus 20:21a So the people stood afar off,... (NKJV)

Moses’ words did not seem to placate this people. They continued to stand off, away from the mountain. His words did not reassure them.

It seemed like, at first, there might be some men who wanted to see for themselves what is going on, on the mountain. Twice, God talks about keeping them off the mountain

(Exodus 19:12–13, 21–22). But after God speaks aloud to all of the people and manifests His Presence at that mountain, the people withdraw from it. They are fine with viewing these events from a distance.

Exodus 20:21b ...but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. (NKJV)

Moses, on the other hand, moved closer to the mountain, toward the dark cloud which enveloped all or a portion of the mountain.

Moses was allowed by God to move towards the mountain; to come onto the mountain. For the past few weeks, Moses had communed directly with God. What Moses saw regarding the stormy and blackened cloud did not appear to concern him. He was going to speak to the same God that he had been speaking to.

Exodus 20:21 So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. (NKJV)

The Ten Commandments are the basic freedom code, as R. B. Thieme, Jr. put it; they are the skeleton upon which all the other laws hang. They are the essentials for Israel; now God will give Israel the details and the specifics. What the Hebrews did is they took all of these laws, the decalogue and the laws which come from them, and designed more laws to place on top of God's laws. They developed a deeply complex and very legalistic code which attempted to anticipate each and every possible situation and variation and give actions which must accompany those situations (this was related primarily to the Sabbath day).

In their rabbinical study of the Law, they do not see God's grace, their own failures, or the sacrifices of Leviticus as being related to their Messiah. Their own take on the Mosaic Law resulted in the Mishna, the Midrash and the Talmud.

The Mishna is the oral traditions of the Rabbis; a commentary, if you will, on the Torah (which is the Law of Moses). However, they go beyond being a commentary to being an addition to the Torah. The Mishna proffers a great complex list of laws, and if's and then's. It is not too far removed from our American Constitution and then all the laws and statutes and resolutions and regulations which have resulted from the Constitution. We could remove perhaps 80% of the governmental interpretation of the Constitution and function just as well, if not better, than we are now. The Mishna is the verbal traditions based upon the Torah.

The Midrash is a linguistic study of the Old Testament; however, unlike this commentary, which attempts to derive meaning from the original language, the Midrash enters into this realm of triviality of the linguistics, pursuing such things as, as ZPEB put it, *farfetched connections made on the sheer analogies of the sounds of words*. When the Mishna was committed to writing, the Talmud was also written down and such things and the leading of beasts, the 39 kinds of work, the throwing of objects, the moving of objects, containers, and people were all related to the Sabbath into a huge list of do's and don't's. Although

we do not know for certain the time periods in which these documents were produced, many of the legalistic additions to the Torah were obviously in effect at least by tradition, during the time of our Lord's walk on this earth. The first written version which I believe that we have of the Talmud was produced during the first four centuries A.D., although several versions and updates have been made since then.

So, what is the connection between this verse and what I have just written. This verse describes the history of the Hebrews: *the people stood at a distance while Moses approached the thick cloud where God [was].*

Exodus 20:21 *So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.* (NKJV)

Are believers in the Church Age shortchanged?

Believers in the Church Age do not hear God's voice directly; so, let me ask, have we been shortchanged? In previous generations, God has, from time to time, spoken directly to man. Jesus, for 3 or 4 years, taught truth to the people of Galilee and Jerusalem. People actually learned directly from the Son of God. Jacob, in Genesis 28, received direct revelation from God, and this was at a time when Jacob was simply not a great believer; he was a mediocre believer. Nevertheless, God spoke to Jacob directly.

We might feel in the Church Age that we have somehow been shortchanged. God does not speak to us directly; and people who claim to audibly hear God's voice are loons. But, we grow spiritually based upon God's Word embedded in our souls. **We are told to Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This does not require God providing a physical manifestation to us; it does not demand that we hear God's audible voice; and it does not mean that God will send us teaching angels. God has this all under control, providing us with His Word and with the proper gifts, in the Church Age, for His Word to be taught.

Most believers will go through their entire lives and not witness a single unequivocal miracle—one which clearly defies the laws of science. Believers in this era (the post-canon period of the Church Age) will not ever hear God's voice—not even a still, small voice from deep inside. None of us are going to see some physical manifestation of God, as in the burning bush or a cloud hanging over the Tabernacle. Yet, it is possible for us to grow spiritually just like anyone at any time in history. In fact, our spiritual lives can be supercharged in this era.

We have studied both Moses and Aaron. Both men were exposed to God manifesting Himself to them and speaking to them, directly, audibly. Who seemed to grow the most? Moses. Aaron will be later talked into casting a golden calf for the people to worship. What is the difference between the two men? Positive volition in their souls and the amount of Bible doctrine in their souls.

The generation of Israelites that we are studying will fail miserably in the desert-wilderness. God will say, “I loathed that generation.” Yet, they heard God’s audible voice!

Our lives, our spiritual progress, our divine good production—it is all based upon Bible doctrine in the soul, and that does not require miracles or some special manifestation of God. It requires positive volition toward the teaching of Bible doctrine; and positive volition towards the plan of God, which is revealed in the teaching of God’s Word.

And when I use the phrase *the teaching of Bible doctrine*, I am specifically speaking of the pastor-teacher who has both the gift and the training to teach the Word of God. This is key to our spiritual progress in the Church Age.

When it comes to life experiences, every believer has their own set of life experiences. What God expects us to do is to mix the truth that we hear with faith, and then apply that truth to our lives. My point being is, no one in the Church Age has been short-changed. Although, during our lives, we will not have some dramatic spiritual experience, that is the norm. God has given us everything that we need in order to advance spiritually; we just have to choose to do it (or not).

Exodus 20:21 [So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.](#) (NKJV)

This would have been a good place to end Exodus 20; but the chapter continues on.

Preface to Exodus 20:22–40:38: What will follow, for much of the remainder of the book of Exodus will be a series of laws, punctuated by a limited amount of narrative. For many of these laws, I will cover them fairly quickly and give them some modern-day application whenever possible. When it comes to ceremonial laws—and there will be a lot of that in subsequent chapters—I will primarily focus upon what these laws represent. All of the ceremonial observations look forward to the 1st advent of Jesus Christ. A few of them speak to some specifics of the spiritual life: salvation and temporal cleanliness (which is achieved by naming one’s sins to God).

As a result of this different approach, we will cover the material much more quickly. So, even though we are at the approximate halfway mark of the book of Exodus (there are 40 chapters in all), we are probably at the three-quarters mark for our overall study of this book.

Even though we are all *New Testament Christians* living in the Church Age, this does not mean that there is little or no value in the Old. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (in His Deity); as is God the Holy Spirit (by Whom every author writes Scripture). God the Father is also unchanged. Therefore, we learn a great deal about God when He interacts with the Hebrew people and with nation Israel.

Therefore, not every judgment really has a commandment to go back to (unless we understand *murder* to also be a mental attitude sin, which type of sin likely occurs when someone is punched out).

Also, these judgments are not in a strict order. God does not start with, “Okay, let’s apply the first commandment. The first commandment says,...and so, here are the related offenses and what needs to be done about them.”

Logically, it seems like there would be some sort of order for the laws which follow, but I do not see it myself. Obviously, specific sections relate to specific commandments.

The general headings of Exodus 20:22–23:19:

vv.	20:22–24	Instruction about Idols and Altars
vv.	21:1–11	Laws Concerning Servants
vv.	21:12–27	Laws Concerning Personal Injury and Homicide
vv.	21:28–31	Laws Concerning Injury by Someone’s Animal
vv.	22:1–4	Laws Concerning Theft of Personal Property
vv.	22:5–15	Laws Concerning Personal Liability
vv.	22:16–31	Various Other Laws
vv.	23:1–9	Laws about Truthful Testimony
vv.	23:10–13	Instructions for Sabbaths and Sabbatical Years
vv.	23:14–17	The Three Major Festivals
vv.	23:18–19	Various Laws

Most of these headings came from the International Study Bible. The latter three sections might be separated out as they are not, strictly speaking, violations and penalties.

The very specific laws which relate to man interacting with man are not really that extensive. They begin with the Ten Commandments and only carry on for three and third chapters. We do not have any sort of listing of laws until we come to Leviticus 18 where very specific sexual practices are forbidden. These prohibitions might better find a home in Leviticus, as such sexual deviancy might be practiced at heathen Temples or as a result of degenerate cultural practices.

Portions of Leviticus 19–20 may also be seen as additional lists of laws and prohibitions. We will have a few more laws in the book of Deuteronomy, which are pretty much written by Moses rather than by God. God speaks much of Exodus 20–40 and the book of Leviticus. However, it is Moses speaking in most of Deuteronomy. That in itself is somewhat of a wild twist with many implications.

As noted previously, chapter 20 should have ended with v. 21, and we should be beginning a new chapter at this point, but, whoever organized the chapters at this point failed (the division of the Bible into chapters and verses took place after the fact).

At this point, we begin a section of laws which we might entitle *judgments*, as a variety of offences are recorded along with the proper consequences.

At this point, we are going to take in a bird's eye view of the laws and the application of the laws which we will study over the next three chapters and a half.

This is the organization as I see it, grouping some of the laws together.

The Specific Topics of Exodus 20:22–23:33

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Exodus 20:22–26	God forbids idolatry and describes the function and design of altars.
Exodus 21:1–11	Laws regarding servitude to Hebrew masters. There are time limits given. Marriages might take place during servitude.
Exodus 21:12–27	Various forms of violence and penalties for these acts. A general principle is given at the end.
Exodus 21:28–36	Animal control laws; responsibility for what might reasonably be foreseen; and relevant penalties.
Exodus 22:1–15	Theft, restitution; taking responsibility for another's possessions.
Exodus 22:16–31	A series of moral and ceremonial laws, which includes topics such as, the loss of a maid's virginity, witches, bestiality, sacrificing to other gods, the fair treatment of strangers and the destitute, money lending and judges.
Exodus 23:1–9	Justice under the law for several categories of people—the poor, your enemy, the stranger; and the absolute importance of integrity in the judicial system.
Exodus 23:10–13	The Sabbath Year and the Sabbath Day.
Exodus 23:14–19	The 3 primary feasts of Israel.
Exodus 23:20–23	The Angel Who will go before Israel into the land.
Exodus 23:24–33	Warnings against idolatry in the land.

As you can see, God delivers a veritable cornucopia of laws, regulations and warnings to nascent Israel. Always bear in mind that the entire Law, Exodus through Deuteronomy, were written while Israel was in the desert-wilderness and had not come into the land of Canaan yet. That will occur under Joshua.

What follows in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are not simply a series of laws and judgments. There are a great variety of topics to follow, as well as sections of narrative.

Moses will return to commune with God soon after this, and God will deliver a massive set of ceremonial and (therefore) typical laws (Exodus 25–31). By *typical*, I mean laws which look forward to the crucifixion of our Lord. The type would be the ceremonial law and the antitype would be some aspect of the crucifixion of our Lord. The type is the shadow form and the antitype is the reality that the shadow form was revealing. Not all typical laws look forward to the crucifixion; some of them look forward to Israel's future as a nation (and bear in mind, all of this information is given to nation Israel before Israel is actually a full-on nation. At this point in time, they do not live on the land given them by God).

Narrative will resume in Exodus 32, but most of that narrative will be devoted to manufacturing of the items that will be used in the worship of God—primarily the Tabernacle. The items themselves, which the people of Israel are to produce, will *not* be worshiped.

This narrative, punctuated by guidance from God, will continue through Exodus 39. In Exodus 40, we will have the completion of the Tabernacle and God will issue some additional commands concerning the Tabernacle and the initial worship in and around it.

In general, the organization presented above came from the Niobi Study Bible (also called the [Patchworkid Study Bible](#)) for [e-sword](#). At times, their organization is perfectly in line with the International Study Bible outline, and in some places, not aligned at all.

When it comes to these laws and the application of these laws to our lives today, we have to be careful. Most of us live in client nation USA. This means that the United States has a set of very specific functions which are related to the spiritual life. This is not something that the federal government does (although, on occasion, the federal government might do something which indicates spiritual awareness). This is something which takes place within our nation. These things are done by individuals, by churches and by other groups. This may include the preservation of Scriptures, the translation of the Scriptures, or the accurate explanation of the Scriptures. Missionaries are sent out from our country as well as various forms of aid, which is related to missionary work (I believe that there are some physicians who are believers who go to various impoverished nations and provide medical care for them; and sometimes the gospel message).

It is possible for the spiritual works being done in a client nation to be at odds with the current administration. There have been missions and private food banks and other similar outreaches within the United States which governing authorities have shut down or have made their operation difficult. Some such organizations have simply shut down, being continually frustrated by the local or federal governments.

There is also the simple problem of the believer in today's United States understanding what his role is with regards to our government.

I mention this because many of the laws which we are about to study are fundamental to the laws of divine establishment. Therefore, it is important to understand the laws of divine establishment as well as, *what should we, as born again believers, be doing in our nation?* We have previously studied the laws of divine establishment, and that doctrine can be found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Application: Many believers today see President Trump as a net blessing to the United States (I write this between the years 2019–2024). Many people in this country pray for our nation; and there are, apparently, a number of believers in the United States. There is also a small pivot listening to doctrine and advancing to spiritual maturity. These things go hand-in-hand with blessings from God.

Application: On the other hand, it seems as if every evil force in the world is aimed at destroying the United States. Even one political party seems to have that aim. Will this blessing that we have enjoyed under President Trump be short-lived because these same believers praying for America are not advancing spiritually as they should be?

Application: It is fine to be informed politically and to vote—particularly if you are a believer who understands the divine institutions and the laws of divine establishment. However, your focus needs to be on spiritual growth and the function of your spiritual gift (which, for the most part, is not going to operate until you reach some level of spiritual maturity). You might on occasion enter into a political discussion; but your focus needs to be upon our nation as a spiritual entity rather than as a political entity. Furthermore, we must be aware that, even when the wrong political party wins or there is not really a stark choice offered to us, that we understand that it is men and women advancing spiritually who make this nation work; not the workings of political figures and movements.

Application: Any president who appears to understand the laws of divine establishment is better than a president who does not. However, how do believers who do not understand these laws select such a president?

Application: As believers, we are not trying to establish a Christian nation—that is, a nation run by Christians with the imposition of Christian laws and Christian doctrines. The nation cannot concern itself with what is taking place in the churches or what doctrines are accepted or rejected. What happens in the local churches runs on a different track from what happens in political circles. We should be interested in honest government which upholds the laws of divine establishment. However, we should not fall apart if we don't get that.

Moses is not after political power; nor is he running for anything. Yet, in this point of time in human history, he is the most important person. We might see him as a spiritual Atlas. Similarly, 600 years previous, the most important person on this earth was a traveling shepherd named Abraham, who moved from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan.

Do you remember any kings from that era or any great military men? Probably not. But who you know about—and who is known about throughout the world—is Abraham, being sent by God from the east (Iraq) to Canaan.

God has just given the Ten Commandments to His people. They clearly do not want to hear His voice directly. The people ask for Moses to be their mediator. So the laws which we will study were first given to Moses and then given to the people.

The Law of the Altar (I often retain the subheadings found in e-sword)

Exodus 20:22a [Then the Lord said to Moses, ...](#)

God then speaks to Moses.

It appears that God has called Moses into the mountain; or perhaps he was simply drawn there. So, while the sons of Israel attempt to draw back from the mountain, fearful of the cataclysmic weather events that they are witnessing, Moses walks towards the mountain and, apparently, onto it. We do not know how far up Moses goes into the mountain or if he is simply within the cordoned-off area.

There are many things which are atypical about these writings of Moses, the person who most directly experienced these things. Had it been me, I would describe the climb up the mountain, where I went, what I saw. And when God spoke, I would describe everything about that experience. But Moses does not do this. God will speak to Moses a great many times, particularly over the next year (a great deal of the Law will be given over the next year). Moses does not describe anything as a typical author might do. He does not attempt to place us, the reader, into his moment, as it were. This is because his subjective experience is not key to what we are studying. Our study needs to concentrate on God's words and what they mean to Israel. What we are studying are meant to govern Israel for about 1600 years. Furthermore, even though these are specific laws give at a very specific time to a very specific people, there is also application which we can make. Very large portions of the Mosaic Law (by which I mean Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) will give us concepts regarding divine establishment laws, the client nation, and divine discipline for a nation. In other words, we can study these laws and the incidental narrative, and have application to our own day and time.

However, just to be clear, our purpose on earth of believers in Jesus Christ is not to take the Mosaic Law and integrate it into our system of national laws and supplant existing law. Nor is it our purpose to select a set of these laws and lobby our congressman to introduce these laws as national laws.

Exodus 20:22b [...“Thus you shall say to the children of Israel:...”](#) (NKJV)

God is giving Moses the pertinent message to deliver to the people.

God has a message for Moses to deliver to the people. They have heard the Ten Commandments; and they have made a desperate request to never hear God's voice again, as it clearly frightened them. They want Moses to deliver all other messages himself, speaking these words himself. They do not want to hear God's voice again.

Exodus 20:22c ...*You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.* (NKJV)

God uses the verb *to see* for something that the people *saw and heard*. Again, this word refers to a complete and total perception which takes place among the people—the smoke, the sounds and God's voice. They know that this was God; they have no question about that.

We have two words translated *with* in these two verses. In v. 22, we have the preposition 'îm (יַם) [pronounced *g'eem*] and it means *with, in conjunction with, together with, as long as [in conjunction with time], close to, beside, in the possession of, in the custody or care of, besides (except)*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. When we come to v. 23, we will look at the second word which is also translated *with*.

Where this verse reads, *I have spoken with you from heaven*, this is not God speaking to Moses because *you* is in the plural and not the singular. A reasonably literal translation of v. 22 is:

Exodus 20:22 *And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "So you will say to the sons of Israel: 'You [all] have [clearly] seen from the heavens that I have spoken with you [all].* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

God speaks to Moses directly, and he will speak to the people. *"I have spoken with you (all) from heaven."* These were God's words for the people.

All of the Israelites heard God speak to them from heaven.

Exodus 20:23a *You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver....* (NKJV)

The implication here is more than God speaking *to* the people (as He spoke *to* Egypt through Moses), here He speaks *with* the people, even though it is through Moses; a closer association is implied. Any young student can tell you the difference between a teacher speaking *to* them and *with* them. In v. 23, we have another preposition 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced *ayth*] and this is a preposition of nearness, often translated *with, by, at among*. It is a preposition which is even closer than 'îm.¹⁷ Strong's #854 BDB #85. It is context which differentiates between the sign of the direct object and this preposition (they are exactly the same in the Hebrew).

¹⁷ I often complain of the ignoring of the prepositions by Strong and by Owen. Both of these prepositions have Strong's numbers and Owen at least notes the BDB reference of the second preposition.

The people are not to make gods of silver dedicated to God. Nothing that they make with their hands should have anything to do with some representation of God. If you have some special spot in your home with maybe there is a chair and a cross and a picture of Jesus (or Mary), let me be the first to tell you that that approach violates the idolatry clause of the Ten Commandments; and this violates this law here.

Exodus 20:23b ...or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. (NKJV)

The people are not to make gods of gold for themselves. The second commandment is: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:4–6; ESV; capitalized)

God explicitly forbids the creation of any sort of idol, even if it is dedicated to Him.

Exodus 20:23 You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. (NKJV)

Even if the idol is made from expensive material and is said to represent the True God, it was not accepted by God.

God's intent is for us to relate to Him and understand Him by our thinking, not by pictures of Jesus, pictures of Mary, special beads, or with a good-luck cross. You get absolutely nothing from looking at any of those objects, touching them, holding them up, etc. Not only are they not good luck for you; they are detrimental to your spiritual life.

We must relate to God by what we think, religious symbols be damned.

Exodus 20:22–23 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. (NKJV)

Not too long after God gave the people the Ten Commandments, this in particular was one of the very first laws which the Hebrews broke. This was a continuation of the second commandment; this law expanded on the second commandment. There were to be no idols, not even if the idol was supposed to represent the one true God. The second preposition, 'êth, means that no matter how closely the Hebrews associated the statue with God, it was still forbidden to them to make such an idol. Even if the idol was made out of the most precious metals, this was not what God wanted. Do you worship or often look toward that so-called picture of Jesus; do you have a statue of Mary, the mother of the humanity of God? This is idolatry. We do not know what either one looked like. Even in His time, Jesus was not easily recognized (recall that Judas had to reveal to the mob which

one Jesus was). What we have is a picture which was based upon artistic guesses from, if memory serves, the fifth century A.D.

We do not have Church Age altars (that is, altars for today).

Lesson 339: Exodus 20:22–26

Proper private altars

God is no longer speaking to all of the people, but He is speaking to Moses directly; and Moses is to get this information to all of the sons of Israel.

Exodus 20:22–23 [And Y^ehowah said to Moses, “So you will say to the sons of Israel: ‘You \[all\] have \[clearly\] seen from the heavens that I have spoken with you \[all\]. You \[all\] will not make to Me elohim of silver and you will not make elohim of gold for yourselves. \(Kukis mostly literal translation\)](#)

God is giving a more specific prohibition with regards to the second commandment. The second commandment reads: Exodus 20:4–6 [You shall not make for yourself an idol of any kind, or an image of anything in the heavens above, 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, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving devotion to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments. \(Berean Study Bible\)](#)

In our passage, God specifies that such gods should not be made of gold or silver, even if such gods are made to Yehowah-Elohim.

Do you know what is coming in the final chapters of Exodus? God will have His people build the Tabernacle along with seven specific pieces of furniture (five of them involving the fabrication of a lot of gold). So, how do we explain that? First of all, the five articles of furniture made from gold (or from gold covered acacia wood) were not actually seen by the public. Secondly, people worshiped at the Tabernacle or outside the Tabernacle; but they did not worship the Tabernacle itself or the furniture in the Tabernacle (even though, as we will find, this furniture represented Jesus Christ in shadow form). 99.99% Israelites would never see any of the gold or gold and acacia wood furniture pieces. The Tabernacle furnishings were all kept inside of the Tent of Meeting. The Tabernacle was not like a modern-day church. People did not go into the Tabernacle (apart from a handful of priests and possibly Levites who performed limited functions in the Tabernacle).

For the people in general, this was the command of God concerning altars:

Exodus 20:24a [An altar of earth you shall make for Me,... \(NKJV\)](#)

Altars were not be made in such a way for them to be extremely fancy. They would be made up of the materials from the ground. Many times, an altar used in one generation would not even be recognizable as an altar in the next generation, having been exposed

to the elements for a few decades. About the only clue might be, an oblong rock was often set on end as a part of the altar.

The association of these sacrifices with the earth is an association with the humanity of Jesus Christ. It is the humanity of our Lord which died for our sins (the Lord's Deity could not die, it could not experience spiritual death, and it could not have any contact with our sins).

Exodus 20:24b ...and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings... (NKJV)

On each altar that is made, there would be burnt offerings sacrificed upon them. The smoke of these burnt offerings would ascend into heaven.

The burnt offerings represent Jesus and the burning represents the judgment of God.

Exodus 20:24c ...and your peace offerings,... (NKJV)

This is the first time we have the word for *peace offering*; this is an offering which establishes peace between man and God. Of course, this offering is symbolic. It is typical (that is, it represents something else). Peace between man and God is established by Jesus Christ. The peace offering is the type and Jesus is the Antitype. The peace offering is the shadow and Jesus is the reality (or, you might say, Jesus is the reality that casts that shadow).

Exodus 20:24d ...your sheep and your oxen. (NKJV)

The sacrifices would be primarily domesticated animals like sheep and oxen. Other animals could be offered up as well. I believe that these animals are illustrative rather than limiting.

The animals were to be without spot and without blemish. In this way, they also represented our Lord. They are without spot and blemish; and they are associated with sin that they had nothing to do with; and Jesus is without sin and He will be associated with our sins that He had nothing to do with.

Exodus 20:24e In every place where I record My name... (NKJV)

The altars would be put up wherever God's name is made known and remembered. This does not mean that God would point down from heaven to a spot and say, "There—remember My Name there!" For whatever reason, people would understand this or that place to be where God would be thought of. Perhaps something very personal like where a cow dropped a calf, or the first crops came up; or perhaps something more national, such as a place where a battle was won. Or, maybe there is a place where some great miracle took place. Whatever the reason, a person would associate that place with God. At least for a time.

Exodus 20:24f ...I will come to you, and I will bless you. (NKJV)

When the sons of Israel do this, God would come to them and God would bless them. This does not mean that God would appear to subsequent generations as He is appearing to Israel right now on Mount Sinai. Many times, the people would simply experience the blessing (or discipline) from God. This blessing or cursing is the manifestation of God to them.

Exodus 20:24f I will come to you and I will bless you. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

These sorts of things would go hand-in-hand. That is, the people being motivated to offer up a sacrifice to God; and God coming to them and blessing them.

We have been studying Exodus 20:24:

Exodus 20:24 You will make an altar of earth for Me and sacrifice upon it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings—your sheep and your oxen—in every place where I cause My name to be remembered. I will come to you and I will bless you. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Throughout this verse, *you* and *your* are all in the singular. This is all about what individuals in Israel do. We are not talking about the national altar which would be built and kept outside the Tabernacle; but these would be times when an individual or a family is moved to make an offering to God.

The altar that they make is not to be anything fancy. It is to be made from the things of the earth, but there is to be no human craft imposed upon it. Perhaps things are taking place in the life of this person or family, and they believe that it is appropriate to make an offering to God. This can take place based upon the blessings of God which have been experienced. This verse suggests that additional blessings might be given by God.

Exodus 20:24 An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. (NKJV)

With an altar, there is no attempt on the Hebrews' part to make a likeness of God; to attempt something to even spiritually represent His features. The altar made of earth speaks of Jesus Christ coming to this earth and taking on a body made of earth, just as Adam was fashioned out of the chemical elements of the earth. However, the altar itself is not worshipped, nor is it thought by anyone to represent some kind of physical likeness of God (particularly since "God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in doctrine"—John 4:24). Although burnt offerings have only been mentioned in a few places and although there is not much detail afforded to them prior to this time; the believers did have some kind of knowledge of their importance and the procedure which was to be followed. Such things existed and there may have even been a well-

defined procedure given before. However, now Israel is receiving the Law, and that will be the regulation of their lives from Exodus 20 through the end of Deuteronomy.

When we come to the end of the book of Exodus, certain artisans will build the bronze altar, which will sit inside of the courtyard for the Tabernacle. So what is this all about? This is an altar which will be used thousands of times. This is an altar which will be a national altar before which all Israel will come on many occasions.

The Hebrew people—at least some of them—have been previously inspired to offer up blood sacrifices to God wherever they happen to live (you may recall Abraham or Jacob making offerings to God in various places). Such offerings often brought to mind what God had done for them in their recent past; and sometimes what God might do in the future. Even for Jews in the Exodus generation and beyond, there will be times when they do not travel to worship God. They will offer up an animal in their own place. This verse describes the altar which is acceptable to God.

Exodus 20:25a *And if you make Me an altar of stone,...* (NKJV)

Altars were allowed to be made out of earth using existing stones.

Exodus 20:25b *...you shall not build it of hewn stone;...* (NKJV)

A person was not to modify the stones used. The stones were not to be cut and shaped. No artistic skill was to be applied.

This is different than we might expect. We would think that a home altar ought to be the most well-designed, artistic endeavor around the home; but that is *not* what God required. What the Hebrew family could do was quite the opposite.

Exodus 20:25c *...for if you use your tool on it,...* (NKJV)

When a person uses a tool on the stone, that represents the use of human effort. There was to be no human effort to be involved in worship. These are works. Human works never will attain to salvation.

Exodus 20:25d *...you have profaned it.* (NKJV)

Châlal (חָלַל) [pronounced *khaw-LAHL*] is based upon a root *to bore into*; thereby *wound*. It means *profane, pollute, defile, corrupt*. Châlal (חָלַל) is the antonym of *consecrate, set apart, purify*. The latter takes something which was common and sets it apart to God or dedicates it to God. Châlal takes something which is holy and desecrates it, pollutes and defiles it; associates it with that which is common and filthy. This is in the Piel imperfect, 2nd masculine singular with a 3rd feminine singular suffix (which refers to the stone). This phrase is addressed to each individual Jew and it is in the intensive (Piel) stem, indicating the severity of this pollution of that which is holy. The imperfect indicates that the altar continues to be desecrated. Strong's #2490 BDB #320.

Those who are grace oriented understand the analogy immediately. The sacrifice is not to be associated with human works in any way, shape or form. We have saved by faith alone in Christ alone. If you stand upon your faith in Him **and** trust some little good deed that you have done, some attempt to be better, some vow to please God, some intention to turn your life around for Him; then you are not saved. Our salvation does not come from asking Jesus into our hearts or into our lives; it does not come from repenting of our sins; it does not come from making Him Lord over our lives; it comes from one thing and one thing only: by believing in Jesus Christ for our salvation. Our part in the salvation process is to trust in His finished work upon the cross. There can be no mixture of human works into our salvation. Therefore, in the Old Testament, when an altar is made, then a sacrifice upon that altar looks forward to Christ's work on the cross on our behalf. Therefore, a family altar cannot be associated with human works, human artistic ability, or artisan stone work. Attempting to associate our puny works with His marvelous work on the cross profanes His holy work on our behalf.

The person who uses a tool on the stone, to made better stones, or better looking stones, profanes the work of our Lord, because human effort is applied. Human effort profanes the plan of God.

Application: How do we bypass human works as believers? We need to be filled with the Spirit by rebound and we need to think like God thinks (which requires knowing His Word).

Exodus 20:25 *And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.* (NKJV)

The altar and offering a sacrifice upon an altar looks forward to the salvation work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, human works were not to be involved.

Exodus 20:26a *Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar,...* (NKJV)

A series of steps was not to be set up for an altar so that it was higher than everywhere else. Climbing up a series of steps could be perceived to be related to man's effort to make himself better, step-by-step. There are some Catholic churches where salvation by faith alone in Christ alone is clearly taught; where there are no works involved and no dependence upon the Catholic church. There are other Catholic churches where faith alone in Christ alone is distorted and related to the sacraments of the church.

Exodus 20:26b *...that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'* (NKJV)

The explanation given is, their nakedness might be exposed when going up these steps. I am not sure what the application here would be. My guess is, people ascend up the stairs—which suggests that they are going up or reaching heights, which implies works.

I would think that, with the typical clothing worn by priests in that era would have potentially exposed a priest standing on a high platform.

It is likely that similar altars of heathen faiths featured nudity of the priests and priestesses. There were human sacrifices taking place as well as sex with the priests and priestesses. The altar where God would be worshiped must not ever be mistaken for the heathen practices of that time.

Solomon will, in the future, build the Temple and there will be an altar outside of the Temple where the priest goes up steps to get to it. I don't believe that the nakedness of the priest was revealed here, but is Solomon violating these words of God?

One of the things which we will study in the remaining chapters of the book of Exodus is the building of the Tabernacle and the furniture of the Tabernacle. An altar would be built for Tabernacle and that altar would be different from the home altar being described here. That will also be a legitimate altar, and its construction will not be the work of man, as God the Holy Spirit would be a part of the construction of the Tabernacle. That is, the Holy Spirit would temporarily fill the artisans called upon to build the Tabernacle and its furniture.

Exodus 20:26 **Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'** (NKJV)

The altar used at home—or an altar used at any other sort of gathering (let's say, an altar for a city)—was not to be elaborate or carefully and artfully constructed. It is not to represent man's effort or works.

Application: Whereas, I love architecture, God's plan was not for these massively ornate cathedrals to be built throughout the world, having sucked up the resources of the believers (and unbelievers) in that area. I will admit that I really like some of the architecture for the Catholic churches, but man's efforts when it came to architecture are not God's plan for the Church Age.

Exodus 20:25–26 **And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'** (NKJV)

Just as we have in v. 25, any sort of human works profanes the family or city altar. Going up by steps (possibly not unlike the stations of the cross?) implies that there are some works involved to come to the altar of God. However, when we come to God with our works in hand, we embarrass ourselves with their worthlessness. We in God's sight are exposed for the wretched creatures that we are. Our works that we bring do not please him. **For the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked** (Jeremiah 17:9). **Our righteousnesses are as menstruous rags in His sight** (Isaiah 64:6).

We have completed Exodus 20, which contained the giving of the Ten Commandments, the immediate response of the people to hearing God's voice, and some additional laws were added at the end (which laws should have been placed with Exodus 21).

I believe that the best approach to this chapter is a verse-by-verse review, where the entire chapter is seen as a whole.

The Bible translation which I used: The Scriptures 2009. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotations will be taken from this translation as well.

In the Scriptures 2009, instead of *God*, we have the word *Elohim*, which is a transliteration from the Hebrew. The other primary name for God is *YHWH* (also given as, *Jehovah*, *Yahweh*, *Adonai*, *Lord*, *JHWH*, *Y^ehowah*). In the Hebrew, this name is represented with the actual four Hebrew consonants יהוה (often referred to as the Tetragrammaton). The reason for there being so many different words used here is interesting. Originally, the Hebrew was written without vowels—not just YHWH, but every single Hebrew word was recorded without any vowels. Because the Hebrew Scriptures (which we know as the Old Testament) were read aloud so often, the reader could look at the Hebrew consonants and know the word that was there. In fact, the Masoretes, who preserved the Bibles' pronunciation, introduced diacritical marks in the 7th century A.D. (these are vowel points, which was added above and below the original Hebrew text). Up to that time, every word in the Bible was read aloud except for one, and that was YHWH. When the Jews came to this proper name, they said, *Adonai* (= *Lord*). As a result, the Jews preserved the pronunciation of the Biblical text for all but one word. Of the nearly 100 translations of the Old Testament to which I refer, any one of those eight forms may be found—and one of them, the Message, uses *GOD*. Furthermore, Bible translations are not necessarily consistent at this point. One place we may read *Lord*, and elsewhere we may read *Jehovah* in the same translation, both translating the same Hebrew consonants (יהוה).

The Ten Commandments

At this point, God speaks directly to the people of Israel. This is not actually made clear until we get to Exodus 20:22, which reads, *And Yahweh said to Moses, "Thus you will say to the sons of Israel, 'You+ yourselves have seen that I have talked with you+ from heaven.'"* (Updated Bible Version 2.17; I added in quotation marks). *You +* means *you all, you (plural)*. When did Israel see and hear all of this? In Exodus 20:2–17.

Exodus 20:22 helps us to frame this entire chapter. Moses is *not* telling the people what God said to him in Exodus 20 (which could be one understanding of Exodus 19:25). Moses did come down and he did speak to the people, and he told them what God told him in Exodus 19:21–24 (warning the people not to approach the mountain).

So Moses comes down from Mount Sinai and speaks to the people and tells them, "Do not rush the mountain; do not come close to this mountain." At that point, God speaks aloud to all the people. He does not use Moses as His intermediary for these commandments.

In the text of Exodus, what we read here is very abrupt. Moses does not give us an introduction, so that we know that God is speaking to the people directly. Let me suggest that the recording of this information is abrupt because, in fact, it was abrupt in the experience as well. It was abrupt to Moses as well.

This is how this all took place:

Exodus 19:21 And הוהי [= YHWH, Y^ehowah] said to Moshe [= Moses], “Go down, and warn the people, lest they break through unto הוהי to see, and many of them fall.

At this point, Moses is on Mount Sinai speaking directly to God. God tells Moses to go back down the mountain and tell the people to get back and not to come any closer to the holy mountain. Obviously, some of them were inching closer and close to the mountain.

Exodus 19:22 “And let the priests who come near הוהי set themselves apart too, lest הוהי break out against them.”

“Listen,” God says, “do not even allow the priests to come closer to the mountain, or Y^ehowah will break out against them!”

Exodus 19:23 And Mosheh said to הוהי, “The people are not able to come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Make a border around the mountain and set it apart.’ ”

Moses speaks to God telling Him, essentially, “I have already taken care of this. I already told the people not to come close to the mountain. This has been done.”

Exodus 19:24 And הוהי said to him, “Come, go down and then come up, you and Aharon with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to הוהי, lest He break out against them.”

God tells Moses again. “You are going to go back down the mountain and you can afterward return with Aaron. But, do not let the priests try to come up with you.”

Exodus 19:25 And Mosheh went down to the people and spoke to them .

So Moses goes back down the mountain and he speaks to the people.

Let me add one more thing. Not everything that takes place is spelled out for us. That is, when it says that God spoke to Moses; then Moses comes down from the mountain and speaks to the people, that is not exactly what happens. Moses does not come down and speak to one million adult males. He would speak to elders or leaders of the people, and then they would disseminate this message to all the tribes (probably the men speak to the men). The exact mechanics are not given to us. That is what I have logically presumed to be taking place.

While Moses is down among the people, telling them not to come forward toward the mountain and warning the priests not to come near. Then, at that point, God speaks.

So, no one is on the mountain. Moses is down below with the people, warning them not to come closer to the mountain, and then suddenly, God begins speaking so that everyone could hear Him.

Exodus 20:1–2 **And Elohim [= God] spoke all these Words, saying, “I am הוהי [= YHWH, Y^ehowah] your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim [= Egypt], out of the house of slavery.**

For the most part, the commandments are given to the people using the 2nd person masculine singular. If we wanted to lay particular emphasis to this, we might modify this verse as follows:

Exodus 20:1–2 **And Elohim [= God] spoke all these Words, saying, “I am הוהי [= YHWH, Y^ehowah] the Elohim of each one of you, who brought each one of you out of the land of Mitsrayim [= Egypt], out of the house of slavery.** (The Scriptures 2009 slightly modified)

Throughout this chapter, God addresses the people in the 2nd person masculine singular. This emphasizes the individual responsibility of each and every person with regards to the commandments.

Throughout the giving of the Law (the Torah), God identifies Himself as *the Elohim Who brought you (the people of Israel) out of Egypt*. Exodus 22:21 23:9 29:46 Leviticus 11:45 19:36 23:43 Numbers 15:41 etc.

Exodus 20:3 **“You have no other mighty ones against My face.**

Mighty ones is actually the word *’ēlōhîym* (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*], a masculine plural noun; and it means, *gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels*; transliterated *elohim, Elohim*. Strong's #430 BDB #43. This is modified by the word *other, another*.

Then *against My face* is a very literal translation. That is exactly what the text says (I say exactly, with the caveat that *face* is always plural in the Hebrew—this does not mean that God manifests many faces at the same time; it simply means that every face is a collage of various and even disparate elements).

A very literal translation would be: **“There is not to be to you other gods before Me.”** When combining the verb *to be* with *to you*, this can be understood to mean, *you will not have*. So, also a literal translation, **“You will not have [any] other gods before Me [or, against My face (s)].”**

That is commandment #1: **You will have no other gods before Me.** (MLV 2020; capitalized)

Exodus 20:4 “You do not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of that which is in the heavens above, or which is in the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth,...

God goes into detail. The early Hebrew people were very demonstrative. So, even though they clearly had the mental capacity to have various gods in their thinking; God spoke specifically against physical idols (even though, these are not the only kind of idols which a person can have).

Exodus 20:5 ...you do not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, הוהי your Elohim am a jealous Ėl [= God], visiting the crookedness of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,...

God warns the Israelites not to bow down and serve these other idols, or they will be punished, and their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren will be punished.

We understand that the way this works is, God punishes the later generations *if* they are guilty of committing the same sins. The influence of their parents often results in their children committing the same type of sins. When they commit the same category of sins, then they are disciplined as well.

In other words, “You will set up a very dangerous and harmful precedent, which precedent your children will follow, which precedent your grandchildren will follow. And when they do this, I will discipline them!”

Exodus 20:6 ...but showing loving-commitment to thousands, to those who love Me and guard My commands.

Putting one group of people under strict punishment is not contradicted by God showing a loving commitment to those who love Him and guard His commandments. God desires for everyone to be in this second category. However, we all have free will.

Commandment #2:

Exodus 20:4–6 **YOU WILL NOT MAKE TO YOURSELVES ANY IDOL OR ANY IMAGE OF ANYTHING THAT IS IN COSMOS ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE LAND, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER.** You will not bow down yourself to them nor serve them, for I (YHWH your Elohim) am a jealous Elohim, punishing the depravity of the fathers upon the children to the 3rd and 4th generation of those that hate Me. And showing goodness to thousands of them that love me, and observe my commandments. (Urim-Thummin Version)

Physical representations of any god, including the God, are forbidden.

Exodus 20:7 “You do not bring^a the Name of הוהי your Elohim to naught, for הוהי does not leave the one unpunished who brings His Name to naught.

^aOr lift up, or take.

Lifting up the name of Y^ehowah your God indicates a use of the names or designations for God. However, the name or names are being lifted up for naught, for emptiness, for man's vanity. God's name/names is/are being treated trivially, casually, or irreverently. For example, this is the way that these names are used in nearly every HBO and Showtime series. I would suggest that the proper names most used in any ten or more series from HBO and Showtime are *Jesus, Christ* and *Jesus Christ*. You will find the Lord's name used on these shows far more than the names *Bob, Jason, Noah* etc.

The empty or trivial use of God's name would include phrases like, *I swear to God, thank God it's Friday, oh my God, God spoke to me*, etc. Obviously, swearing using God's name is disallowed.

Commandment #3:

Exodus 20:7 You do not take up the Name of your God YHWH for a vain thing, for YHWH does not acquit him who takes up His Name for a vain thing. (Literal Standard Version)

Exodus 20:7 "Never use the name of the LORD your God carelessly. The LORD will make sure that anyone who carelessly uses his name will be punished." (God's Word™)

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, [Literally "take up/bear/carry the name of Yahweh your God for what is worthless/false/empty"] because Yahweh will not leave unpunished anyone who misuses his name." [Literally "bears his name for what is false"] (Lexham English Bible)

Many times, it is helpful to see several translations of the same verse.

Those were the three commandments related to the Hebrew people and God. But then there is the fourth commandment, which also relates the Hebrew people to their God:

Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to set it apart.

Some mentions of the Sabbath day have been made before, but here, it is clearly set apart as a day specifically designated for God.

Exodus 20:9 "Six days you labour, and shall do all your work,...

Six days for the Hebrew people is to be devoted to work. Work is the 2nd divine institution. Work was given to man before the fall as a blessing and after the fall as a part of the curse.

Exodus 20:10 ...but the seventh day is a Sabbath^b of יהוה your Elohim. You do not do any work – you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

^bThere are other Sabbaths, but this is the weekly Sabbath.

Just as God restored the earth in six days, so man would be given six days each week to work.

The Sabbath is a day set apart specifically to Y^ehowah, the God of the Hebrew people.

Exodus 20:11 “For in six days הוהי made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore הוהי blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart.

The verb used here is the Qal perfect of ‘āsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*], which means, *to do, to make, to construct, to produce, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. We also have the dual noun shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced *shaw-MAH-yim*], which means, *heaven, heavens, skies; the visible heavens, as in as abode of the stars or as the visible universe, the sky, atmosphere, etc.; Heaven (as the abode of God)*. Strong's #8064 BDB #1029.

During these six days, God did not *create* the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but He *made* them—that is, *He prepared them*. Over a period of six days, God prepared the atmosphere and the earth for a population of animals and human beings.

God prepared the environment to be populated; and then God created the animals and humans to live in this environment.

All of this was done over a period of six days because angels were watching and learning from what God did (original creation, which took place in Genesis 1:1, was instantaneous, because there were no creatures around at that time to watch and learn).

When God completed His work, everything was done. He was not tired; He was finished. God did not go back on the 7th day and say, “Hmmm, I think that I could tweak this a bit more and make it better.” God did not do that because everything that He did, He pronounced as *good*. The earth was ready to be populated and God allowed for its population (days 5 and 6).

Working for six days and then resting for one day is a recognition of what God has done; and acknowledgment of what God has done.

Throughout the world, we have seven-day work weeks—not six-day weeks, not ten-day weeks, but seven-day weeks.

The fourth commandment:

Exodus 20:8–11 **REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AS CONSECRATED.** Six days will you labor, and do all your work. But the 7th day is the Sabbath of YHWH your Elohim, in it you will not do any work, you, your son, daughter, male and female slave, livestock, nor the foreigner that resides within your gates. For in 6 days YHWH made the visible universe

and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the 7th day, then YHWH blessed the Sabbath day, and consecrated it. (Urim Thummim Version)

The Sabbath day observance was extended to all members of the family and to their servants and to their livestock.

The final six commandments deal with man's relationship to man. Each commandment is contained in one verse. The first of these is:

Exodus 20:12 "Respect your father and your mother, so that your days are prolonged upon the soil which יהוה your Elohim is giving you.

The Ten Commandments were given specifically to the Hebrew people, as the rationale for the fifth commandment is related directly to the land where God would plant them. The translation *soil* above is unfortunate. The Hebrew word here means *land*.

You will note how these commandments which regulate the interactions between men are closely related to the divine institutions.

The concept of volition is presupposed in the concept of Ten Commandments. The concept of work is found in the fourth commandment. The concept of marriage and family is found in the fifth commandment (so far, this is a recognition of the first four divine institutions).

Commandment #5:

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long [Lit. so your days may increase] in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (International Standard Version)

Giving respect to one's own parents increases the stability of society. When a society is stable, it continues for a longer period of time as a nation. This would be true for Israel in the land of Canaan; and it is certainly true of any national entity.

Exodus 20:13 "You do not murder.

Murder, which was prohibited immediately after the flood (Genesis 9:6), is also prohibited here in the Ten Commandments. Later in the book of Exodus, violations of these laws would be given specific assigned penalties (for instance, a man who murders will be put to death—the violation is murder and the penalty is death).

Man and the exercise of his free will is integral to the Angelic Conflict. When one man kills another, he removes that man's ability to exercise his free will. The criminal is to be executed as a result.

As an aside here, executing the criminal is *not* the responsibility of the friends and relatives of the murdered victim; executing the criminal is a matter of state action, which give us the fifth divine institution, *government (or nation)*.

Commandment #6:

Exodus 20:13 **YOU WILL NOT MURDER.** (Urim Thummim Version)

There are several words in the Hebrew for killing. This is specifically used of murdering another human being.

Exodus 20:14 **“You do not commit adultery.**

Adultery was forbidden because this violates one or two of the fundamental divine institutions, which are marriage and family.

The divine institutions include man and the function of his volition along with marriage and family. Work and the national entity are the other two divine institutions.

Exodus 20:15 **“You do not steal.**

Stealing is forbidden because people are allowed to accumulate private property and that private property belongs to them during their lives.

The accumulation of things comes as a result of the divine institution of work. When we work beyond the minimum which provides food and shelter for the family, work over and above that may provide some additional things for the family. These things were not to be stolen from them.

Exodus 20:16 **“You do not bear false witness against your neighbour.**

False witness against a neighbor is forbidden, whether this takes place in a courtroom or is done simply among others in the form of gossip.

Exodus 20:17 **“You do not covet your neighbour’s house, you do not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, or whatever belongs to your neighbour.”**

Interestingly enough, after four very overt sins are forbidden, the tenth commandment forbids a mental attitude sin. This commandment deals with the lust pattern of the soul.

What our neighbor has in comparison to what we have is only a problem if we allow it to be a problem. If we allow our mental attitude to be consumed with lust for what our neighbor has, then that is a problem. However, it is not a problem your neighbor can solve; it is a problem that only you can solve in your soul.

Now the Ten Commandments, taken as a whole, are unique in human history. We have no evidence of any previous society or nation which put together a concise set of basic prohibitions and requirements of a people. This event is unique in human history; and this set of commands in such a concise format are also unique.

Certainly, other societies and nations forbade murder and stealing, but we do not have a foundational list of God's basic commands. I have heard over and over again that the Hebrew people stole their laws from other nations, but we have yet to uncover any evidence that is true; and we have yet to find any example of such a concise listing of prohibitions anywhere else.

Because of the Ten Commandments, such a list has become iconic, but it is because all of the world is attempting to copy God's fundamental laws, but with putting their own spin on them. Google "The ten commandments of..." and you will get thousands of examples of such attempts by individuals attempting to set up their own list of ten commandments.

If a person needed to have a shorthand explanation of the laws of divine establishment, he could simply take the five divine institutions (volition, work, marriage, family, nation) and combine them with the Ten Commandments, and that would give us God's basic requirements for any people or nation. This does not mean that God requires every nation on earth to observe the Sabbath, but the concept of a work week and a day of rest has become almost universally observed in our world. If no day off is given, such a society is understood to be oppressive and inhuman.

Although it is not clear whether the next verse describes the sensory perception during the giving of the Ten Commandments or what suddenly happened after. I would suggest that once the final commandment was given, these other things became suddenly very apparent to all of the Hebrew people.

Exodus 20:18a *And all the people saw the thunders, the lightning flashes, the voice [or, sound] of the shophar [horn], and the mountain smoking.*

The people, hearing the voice of God, were frozen in their tracks. They could not say anything. They made no comments. However, while God spoke, there was thundering and lightning. Perhaps these things increased in intensity when God came to the end of the Ten Commandments.

There was the sound of a horn, which is likely the sound of the wind. This sound is not unique to this particular event. People have claimed to have heard something similar to this and such events have actually been recorded and placed on YouTube.

All of these things occurring at the same time—the thunder, lightning, sound of the horns and mountains smoking—is a rarer experience. This was devastating to the psyche of the people of Jacob.

Exodus 20:18b–19 **And the people saw it, and they trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Mosheh, “You speak with us and we hear, but let not Elohim speak with us, lest we die.”**

The people have just heard the Ten Commandments given from the mouth of God. They heard God’s voice. Then they observe everything else, and this causes them to feel great fear and uneasiness.

Maybe they speak among themselves, and finally come forward to Moses and express their concern for all that they have just seen and heard.

Recall that Moses came back down the mountain and spoke to the people, so he is right in front of them now. God has spoke the Ten Commandments, and everyone is certainly cognizant of the dramatic sounds and visuals coming from Mount Sinai.

Now, apparently during the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments—which would not have taken very long—these sights and sounds may have been occurring. Even if God stopped for a dramatic pause between each commandment, the entirety of this experience was probably ten minutes at most. This was probably closer to five minutes. However, I would submit to you that, apart from the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, this is the second-best known event from the Bible (despite its relatively short duration).

If there were considerable weather events taking place at the same time—occurring before, after and during the giving of the Ten Commandments—then maybe this event was stretched out for a slightly longer in time, with God allowing some time to pass when the visual and auditory events became more intense.

While this is all taking place, Moses is right there with the people. He is in front of the people as God speaks to Israel.

Finally, someone approaches Moses and makes this very strong request: “Listen, Moses, you speak to us. Whatever God has to say, you listen to it and then tell us what He said. Please do not allow God to speak directly to us anymore.” This was likely the informal request of many leaders and elders.

Exodus 20:20 **And Mosheh said to the people, “Do not fear, for Elohim has come to prove you, and in order that His fear be before you, so that you do not sin.”**

Moses tells the people not to be afraid. God will test these people, and God has given them what they are to be tested with—His commandments.

V. 20 or v. 21 should have ended this chapter. Ideally speaking, v. 21 should have been the beginning of the next chapter.

Exodus 20:21 **So the people stood at a distance, but Mosheh drew near the thick darkness where Elohim was.**

The people are no longer pushing and shoving, trying to get closer to the mountain. Nevertheless, Moses draws near to the thick darkness which is hanging over the mountain. He draws near to receive additional instructions from God for the people of Israel.

From this point forward in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, God will speak to Moses and Moses will speak to the people. This will be interspersed with some narrative. In the book of Leviticus, for instance, almost every chapter begins with the words, *And so God spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say..."*

Although Moses and the people do not realize this at this point in time, the people of Israel will live in this desert-wilderness for 39 more years. They are not to settle here because God has not given them this land—God has given them Canaan. God will lead them right up to the border of Canaan in the book of Numbers, but the first generation of adult Israelites will fail. Therefore, God will keep them in the desert-wilderness until this generation of reversionists (apostate believers) dies out.

There are two generations of Israel which make up the Exodus generation. There are those who were adults when they left Egypt and I will occasionally call them Gen X. They are the generation about whom God said, *"I loathed that generation."* (This is found several times in the Old and New Testaments. Because of their rebellion against God, everyone from this generation will die out before God leads Israel into the land of promise (which will take place in the book of Joshua). Their children and those born to them while in the desert-wilderness will make up the next generation, whom I have designed as the GOP (the generation of promise). It is this next generation of Israelites who will actually take the land given them by God.

From this point forward to the end of Deuteronomy, about 40 years will pass. During that time, God will remove those of Gen X until only the generation of promise remains. That second generation of Israelites will go into the land to take it, being led by men like Joshua and Caleb and a handful of others who will remain alive from Gen X.

One of the reasons I like to review a chapter like this is, it allows us to get the big picture, to see where we are and where we are going. I recently talked with a couple of Christians about the book of Acts, the events which transpire in that book, and how far it goes. They did not have a full appreciation for the time factor. Time and geography and human history are fundamental to our understanding of the Word of God. When we integrate these things with the Word of God, we develop a much better understanding of the Word of God. For this reason, I believe that it is imperative that we stop and the end of each chapter to review in order to apprehend the big picture.

What follows next in Exodus 20 should have been placed with chapter 21. From this point through Exodus 24, we will have a series of laws. These will have similarities to laws which preceded them and laws which were written afterwards. This is because many different nations attempted to put together a system of laws which would work for them.

Laws About Altars

Exodus 20:22 And יהוה said to Mosheh, “Say this to the children of Yisra’el: ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you [lit., *you all, you+, you (pl)*] from the heavens.

The Ten Commandments were given to the people using the 2nd person masculine singular. However, in this section of Exodus 20, the 2nd person masculine plural will be used.

From this point forward, God will speak to Moses and He will tell Moses what to say to the people.

Exodus 20:23 ‘You do not make besides Me mighty ones [lit., *elohim*] of silver, and you do not make mighty ones of gold for yourselves.

Here, God forbids the people of Israel from making idols that represent various gods. Such idols were often fashioned from gold or silver to emphasize their divine nature (not a true divine nature, but one given to them by their people).

Exodus 20:24 ‘Make a slaughter-place of earth for Me, and you shall slaughter on it your ascending offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I cause My Name to be remembered I shall come to you and bless you.

Just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had stopped from time to time to make burnt offerings to Y^ehowah, the people of Israel will be required to do the same.

Exodus 20:25 ‘And if you make Me a slaughter-place of stone, do not build it of cut stone, for if you use your chisel on it, you have profaned it.

When an offering place was to be made, it should not involve human ingenuity, design or craftsmanship. “You can pile up some existing stones for such an altar but you cannot chisel these stones in any way.”

Exodus 20:26 ‘Nor do you go up by steps to My slaughter-place, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.’

It was common for societies to make the slaughter places high up (remember, they are called *high places* throughout the Old Testament). The Hebrew people were not to do this. The implication is, there is an ascension process to get to God. Not true. God revealed Himself to man, and we believe in Him or we don’t.

Although God will have a very specifically-designed place for animals to be offered up as sacrifices (the brazen altar outside of the Tabernacle), God apparently will still allow groups, families and even individuals to offer up animal sacrifices; however, they would be limited to altars made up only of the natural rocks found where an offering is to be made. No one is to design and construct some ornate, well-crafted altar to be used elsewhere in the land of Canaan.

The Law Concerning Servants

With Exodus 21, we begin the study of the various laws which God gave to Israel. Now, the purpose of this study is not to put us under the Law of Moses. Christians are not called in every country to impose these laws in their country. There are no significant religious movements by Jews or Christians to make the Mosaic Law Code the law of any country. Although many people in Israel hold, to some degree or another, to the Ten Commandments; this country did not place itself under the myriad of law that we will study. The Mosaic Law was designed for Israel as a nation under God during the Age of Israel (circa 2100 B.C. to 5 B.C.¹⁸).

We will attempt to understand the laws given to Israel and to better understand the God Who gave them these laws. We will receive sets of laws similar to these, but spread out in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, these laws come directly from God. However, in Deuteronomy, these laws and applications will come directly from Moses.

Whereas, the Ten Commandments are essentially universal laws which work in any society in any age, these other laws are very specifically written for this point in time in human history, to be followed in nation Israel. Now, if during this time, other nations copied Israel, then they would have enjoyed great blessing as well.

A society, in any era, which seeks to codify the Ten Commandments as fundamental law principles, will be prospered and blessed. On the other hand, when it comes to the additional 600+ laws laid out in the books of Moses, there are very important principles to learn, digest and apply; but this does not mean that all of these laws are appropriate to our society as written.

Unless you are unduly influenced by liberalism, you understand that the United States is one of the greatest, freest and most prosperous nations of all time (if not the greatest and the most free). So much of that is tied directly to God and all that God has done on our behalf; and to the fact that so many people in the United States have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a significant number of Americans (not enough) are growing in grace and doctrine, just as Jesus did in His humanity (Luke 2:40, 52) and just as Peter encouraged believers of his era to do in 2Peter 3:18.

Any nation today could look at the United States, at our government, at our founding; and study the principles associated with our founding. And then try to duplicate it. There is a lot to love about the United States Constitution; but, if another nation tried to duplicate our nation apart from the spiritual factor (which cannot be imposed), then there would be some

¹⁸ If you consider the life of Jesus Christ to be a separate dispensation.

blessing to come to that country. However, the greatness of our government comes from spiritual factor, which we may want to consider as the DNA of our founding as a country. If a nation desires blessing and freedom, the key is always the spiritual factor. You get the spiritual factor right, and everything else will fall into place. And to be clear on this, a very strong Catholic influence is not the correct spiritual factor. Many Catholics have believed in Jesus Christ and depend solely upon Him for salvation. That makes a Catholic a believer. However, there is not enough accurate spiritual information found in the Catholic Church to guide Catholics to spiritual maturity.

This does not mean that all Protestant churches are hotbeds of spiritual growth. Most of them are not. A church which provides three separate teaching sessions a week is not going to even keep its congregation above water (spiritually speaking). If there are not other options for spiritual growth available, believers in the typical Protestant church are simply not going to advance. A church with limited teaching sessions each week (and teaching even three sessions a week can be difficult for a pastor to do), a church must develop some sort of plan for their congregation to advance spiritually. And so there is no misunderstanding, no one grows from a praise and worship service. Let's set this topic aside for a time.

There are great and wonderful principles found in our Constitution, which is very much a divine establishment product. A nation which reflects similar principles will be strong and prosperous; but divine blessing comes specifically to a nation with many believers and many growing believers.

When Israel believed most strongly in God and followed divine precepts and kept God's laws and commandments, Israel prospered. When people rejected God—His Word or His prophets (who presented His Word to them)—then Israel faced God's discipline. A rejection of God's Word by Israelites meant more problems and less happiness.

In the era that this was written (Moses writing down the very words of God), this was studied and adhered to. These were the laws of the land. These were very relevant to a well-ordered life. These laws provided maximum freedom and maximum blessing to nation Israel, if followed.

The Bible student today is going to have a different reaction when it comes to studying these laws. First off, let me assure you that God does not want Christians (or Jews) to gather into groups here or there in the world and reestablish a city or a nation which adheres to the laws found in these final chapters of Exodus. Whereas, there is a religion in existence today which wants its people to adhere to a very specific law code written more than a millennium ago, this is not what we will get from studying this chapter.

On the other hand, do not so quickly cast this and similar chapters aside, finding fault with some of the recorded laws because you do not think anyone should own a slave at any time for any reason. There are degrees of slavery and various types of slavery. Furthermore, there are more slaves today than during the time of Moses. Furthermore, many people (including myself) would consider those born into communism slaves of the

state. That point of view places a third of the world under slavery (which should also give you a clue as to the power and influence of Satan on this earth).

It is rather incongruous to absolutely hate the slavery found in American 200 years ago, and yet embrace socialism or communism, which is also a form of slavery. It makes no sense to pull down a statue of a slave holder, and yet favor a statue of Marx or Lenin being put up in its place. How do you vociferously reject the slavery of a few people, but be in favor of a nation where 90% of the people are enslaved by a communist government?

In any case, Exodus is not a book of completely outdated laws and regulations. Try to understand what these laws meant to the people and how they understood them and applied them to their culture; then try to take from these laws and understand how they might be pertinent to life today. The better that you understand the time and place of these laws, the better you understand what they mean to us today.

Now, you cannot say, "God, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow" and then conclude "Therefore, the Mosaic Law applies word-for-word to us today." Why not? The Bible is very specific that the Law was given to the ancient Hebrew people when they were in the land God gave them. The Law was not given to the gentiles and the Law was not given to the church.

In fact, this would be a good time to study the Mosaic Law, in order to get an overview of it. This is an early doctrine done by R. B. Thieme, Jr. from the late 1960s or 1970s. I have included a handful of verses, using the ESV (capitalized) translation.

The Mosaic Law (by R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

1. The Mosaic law is divided into three parts:
 - 1) The moral code — Codex #1 — which has the commandments related to the laws of establishment — like in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. This part of the Mosaic law is pertinent today as a legal demonstration of the laws of divine establishment;
 - 2) Codex #2 is the spiritual code, known in the King James version as the *ordinances*. It is a complete Christology designed to present the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and as the God of Israel. It includes everything from the structure of the tabernacle, the holy days, the Levitical offerings, and the modus operandi of the Levitical priesthood;
 - 3) Codex #3 is known in the KJV as the judgements. It presents divine laws of establishment designed to provide freedom and privacy for Israel. It was designed to protect their property, their rights, their privileges. It included the functions of the divine institutions, many practical and wonderful things such as diet, sanitation, quarantine, soil conservation, taxation, universal military training, and many other ahead-of-its-time principles.
2. It is very important to understand the recipients of the Mosaic law. This can be explained by three very simple points.

- 1) The Law was given to Israel — Exodus 19:3 Leviticus 26:46 (These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between Himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.) Romans 3:19 9:4 (They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.)
- 2) The Law was not given to the Gentiles — Deuteronomy 4:8 (And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?) Romans 2:12-14 (Romans 2:14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.)
- 3) Christians — Church Age believers — are not under the law. The Law was not given to the Church. It is not an authorizing agent for any part of the royal priesthood — Acts 15:5, 24 Romans 6:14 (For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.) Galatians 2:19 (we, as believers in the Church Age, are members of the royal priesthood).
3. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the law — Matthew 5:17 ("Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.").
 - 1) Jesus fulfilled specifically, Codex #2, by His ministry on the cross.
 - 2) In effect, He actually fulfilled Codex #1 by His impeccability.
 - 3) It can even be said that He fulfilled certain stages of Codex #3 in the field of patriotism and the laws of establishment — Matthew 22:21. But the principle concept is that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by His sacrifice on the cross.
4. Therefore, Christ is the end of the law for the royal family, for Church Age believers, for the royal priesthood — Romans 10:4 (For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.)
 - 1) And in effect there is a conflict between the royal priesthood of the believer and the former Levitical priesthood.
 - 2) The conflict is resolved by the annulment, the abrogation of the law. The law is not in function today.
5. Believers of the Church Age, members of the royal family, are under a higher law. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the badge of royalty. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the higher law, the superseding law, the law which nullifies the Mosaic law — Romans 8:2–4 Galatians 5:18, 22, 23 1Corinthians 13.
6. The limitations of the Mosaic law.
 - 1) It cannot justify. The law was never designed to be an agent of justification — Galatians 2:16 (...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.) Romans 3:20, 28 Acts 13:39 Philippians 3:9.

- 2) The Mosaic Law cannot provide life and it cannot perpetuate anything. Everything related to the law died and disappeared — like the Levitical priesthood. The Mosaic law could not perpetuate the Levitical priesthood forever. So it cannot give life — Galatians 3:21 (...if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.).
 - 3) It cannot provide God the Holy Spirit — Galatians 3:2. God the Holy Spirit is provided — indwelling only — members of the royal family as the sign of royalty.
 - 4) It cannot solve the problem of the old sin nature — Romans 8:3–4 (For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.).
7. The present purpose of the Mosaic law.
 - 1) Under Codex #1 we have a definition of freedom through the laws of divine establishment. Codex #1 is also designed to convince by divine standard that the unbeliever is a sinner and needs a saviour — Romans 3:20, 28; 1Timothy 1:8-10.
 - 2) Codex #2 is designed to communicate the Gospel by illustration, by analogy. The theological term is *typical*. The sacrifices in codex #2 are *types* or shadows of Jesus Christ and His offering on the cross. Jesus is the fulfillment of these Old Testament sacrifices (we say that He is the *antitype*).
 - 3) Codex #3 provides for the national function of freedom under the laws of divine establishment: freedom through military victory, prosperity through free enterprise. These concepts are very important, but are adopted not by force but by the acceptance by the current culture). This is in contrast to our passage where the past purpose of the Mosaic law was for an authorizing agent for the Levitical priesthood. We saw that in Hebrews 7:11–12. These laws applied to Israel during a particular period of time, and many of them no longer apply (particularly the dietary laws, which laws preserved the people of Israel over 1500 years as a nation).
 8. The Mosaic law is known by other nomenclature. For example, it is called the book of the covenant — Exodus 24:7–8 34:27–28 Deuteronomy 4:13–16, 23 8:18 9:9,11,15. There is an addendum to the Mosaic law in Deuteronomy 29. The prophecy of the breaking of the covenant is found in Deuteronomy 31, and also Jeremiah 22:9. The book of the covenant is the subject of Jeremiah chapter 11 but is not to be confused with the new covenant of Jeremiah 31.
 9. Keeping the law was never a way of salvation, it was the way of human freedom and human prosperity under establishment. It was designed to provide the best possible conditions for the writing of the Old Testament canon, and it did that perfectly. There is constant reference throughout the Old Testament to the Mosaic law.

Regarding the original location of this doctrine: given the approach of this doctrine and the lack of actually writing out the corrected verse translations (I added those), I would suspect

that this was the form of this doctrine given prior to 1970. Most of this doctrine is found in Lesson #24 of the 1969 Basics Series. It is also found in Lesson #15 of the 1968 2Corinthians study. By lesson #82 of the 1972 Hebrews series, Bob was beginning to edit and expand this doctrine. However, lesson #94 of the 1972 Hebrews series seems to be the actual source of this doctrine. Sometimes Bob would present these doctrines exactly the same for many years; often he would tweak a few points; and, by the 1980s, he appeared to go back and rewrite many of these doctrines from scratch.

Throughout the books of Moses, when studying the Old Testament laws, we should always try to understand them in terms of the **laws of divine establishment**. The laws of divine establishment are laws of God by which every nation and people should be governed. Such laws provide the greatest amount of freedom while providing protection from crime and self-destructive behavior.

One must bear in mind that societies accept and enforce the laws which are in synch with the society as a whole (or in synch with the most powerful members of the society). This is how a man could operate a *Lolita island* for the rich and powerful in the United States, without many repercussions (apart from him being murdered, of course)—particularly not for those who actually went there (I write this is 2024).

Lesson 343: Exodus 21:1–2

Slavery

We have begun Exodus 21, which is a continuation of a few verses at the end of Exodus 20. This chapter should have begun with Exodus 20:22, which reads: *And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. (ESV)* Some of the laws were given at the end of Exodus 20, and they are continued in Exodus 21. These *laws* are called the *judgements*.

Exodus 21:1 *"Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them:...* (NKJV)

One of the more common words in the Pentateuch is the word *mîsh^əpâṭîym* (מִשְׁפָּטִים) [pronounced *mish^ə-paw-TEEM*] and it is generally translated *laws, ordinances, judgements*. This is the word found here and translated *judgments*. *The Emphasized Bible* gives the possible translation *divine applications of law to actual life*.¹⁹ Sometimes, a one-word translation is just not enough to convey what is here (although Rotherham gives the one-word translation *rules* and then footnotes this as *regulations*).²⁰ I prefer the translation *judgment (s), verdict (s) or judicial decision (s)*. Strong's #4941 BDB #1048.

What we are studying are the specifics and the applications of the Ten Commandments. This set of laws (or ordinances or judgments) carry with them punishments and the *what if's*.

¹⁹ See http://kukis.org/Translations/Emphasised_Bible.pdf (footnote for Exodus 21:1).

²⁰ Ibid.

In this verse, God is continuing His conversation with Moses; Moses is possibly taking dictation at this point (or, he simply carries this material in his mind for a period of time and speaks them to his secretary, Joshua). These words of God were written in **the** book, alluded to in Exodus 17:14 (see also Exodus 34:27 Deuteronomy 31:9 Joshua 4:7).

What I find remarkable are the differences between the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These are very different books which provide, at the same time, a very consistent history of nation Israel in its beginning.

An Overview of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

1. Exodus
 - 1) Although the book of Exodus provides the entire history of Moses' from age 0 to age 81, the book of Exodus primarily covers a period of a year to a year and a half.
 - 2) Moses ages from 0 to 80 in Exodus 1–2.
 - 3) Moses, led by God, leads the people of Israel out of Egypt. Exodus 3–15
 - 4) God gives the people the Law from Mount Sinai. Exodus 16–31
 - 5) An historical account of the rebellion of the people of Israel and Moses presents the people with a second set of tablets of the Law. Exodus 32–34
 - 6) The people participate in various ways to build the Tabernacle of God. Exodus 35–40
 - 7) The Tabernacle is erected on the first day of the first month (Exodus 40:1), so that puts us at exact one year out from the exodus itself.
2. Leviticus
 - 1) The book of Leviticus is nearly all Law. God speaks to Moses (or to Moses and Aaron), and these laws are passed along to Israel. Everyone heard the Ten Commandments, but after that, God spoke specifically to Moses (or to Moses and Aaron) and they would convey these words to the people.
 - 2) The time period for Leviticus is about one year. It picks up after the completion of the Tabernacle (see Exodus 40) whereas the book of Numbers begins two years and two months since Israel exited Egypt.
 - 3) There are only a few chapters in Leviticus which are strictly narrative.
3. Numbers
 - 1) The book of Numbers takes us from the second year post-Egypt to year 39.
 - 2) Although many commands from God are given, the nature of the time period indicates that there will be a lot of narrative in Numbers.
 - 3) Gen X dies out in the book of Numbers and the generation of promise replaces them.
 - (1) Gen X are the Hebrew people who age 20 or older at the exodus.
 - (2) The generation of promise are the Hebrew people age 20 or younger at the time of the exodus. This includes those born in the desert during the 40 years between the exodus and Moses' death.

An Overview of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

4. Deuteronomy
 - 1) Deuteronomy is a set of sermons given by Moses in the last few months before Israel invades Canaan (which is the book of Joshua).
 - 2) What is very unusual about this book is, up to this point in time, God would speak and then Moses would repeat verbatim the words of God. At this point, based upon his understanding of the Law and his experience with the Hebrew people, Moses speaks to Israel about their history with God, the giving of the Law, and how the law should be applied. He also encourages them in the next chapter of their lives (which is the book of Joshua).
 - 3) What Moses writes and then speaks (and maybe he simply spoke without any notes) becomes the Law for Israel, every bit as much as the words spoken directly by God. For the most part, modern-day Jews and Christians assign the same authority to Deuteronomy as they do to the rest of the Torah. Generally speaking, we do not have people writing critically of the words of Moses, but upholding the authority of the previous books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. If someone writes, *Moses was a good man, but he made a number of errors in his interpretation of Israel's history*; then that same person will also be critical of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.
 - 4) In other words, even though most of the book of Deuteronomy is Moses speaking extemporaneously to the people of Israel, it is not considered *less than* with respect to the previous books. Even though it may sound somewhat blasphemous to say, *Moses' words in the book of Deuteronomy are given the same authority as God's words in the previous three books*. This fact is one of the most revolutionary things about the book of Deuteronomy. This is foundational to the concept of Verbal Plenary Inspiration. The Word of God is inspired throughout; the authority of the Word of God is not limited to the specific times God is said to be speaking. Therefore, this authority is extended to all the books of the Bible. When going through some other book or passage, and we have doubts or questions, the problem is with us and not with the Scriptures.
 - 5) The book of Deuteronomy will include the death of Moses, which would have been written by Joshua (who acted as Moses' amanuenses (secretary) for some period of time, probably beginning in the book of Numbers. Having written God's words for all of this time, Joshua saw no reason to exclude Moses' death from the grand arc of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
5. In the four books of Moses (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), we begin with his birth and end with his death, a period of 120 years.
 - 1) Moses' first 40 years take him from his birth to his escape from Egypt (because he killed a slave master). Exodus 1:1–2:15
 - 2) Moses spends years 40–80 in Midian, having been married, and assuming charge of his father-in-law's business (shepherding). Exodus 2:16–25

An Overview of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

- 3) Ages 80–120: Moses is called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt. This is Exodus 3 through Deuteronomy 34 (the end of the book of Deuteronomy).
- 4) Therefore, most of the books of Moses cover about 40–41 years.

The book of Joshua will pick up historically right after Deuteronomy.

At this point, God is going to make some very specific laws, laws which apply to that time and age; but laws which often have a much wider application. What I mean by this is, when Christians or Jews are somehow involved with the formation of their government, neither should attempt to apply the laws from Moses' writings verbatim to their nation. Nevertheless, these writings provide us with very important applications.

Exodus 21:2a [If you buy a Hebrew servant...](#) (NKJV)

In this first situation, we have a Hebrew person purchasing a Hebrew slave. The primary way that this would happen is, the slave has run out of options in life. He lacks the ability to support himself (and possibly his family), so he appeals to a wealthier man to purchase him.

Perhaps he is also deeply in debt.

What needs to be emphasized here is, there is free will involved on the part of the master and the part of the slave. There may be a variety of circumstances which leads both of them to this place. In the ancient world, the purchase of a slave was not some great evil as it is considered today.

This allowed a person who was personally devastated in the financial realm to build himself back up again. Instead of this, we have bankruptcy laws, which allow a person to become financially destitute and to be able to file a few papers in order to get past that. In Israel's society, every person who was in debt had ways to deal with that debt, and one of them was offering himself as a slave to a wealthy man.

Application: Interestingly enough, there is a portion of a political party today who treat slavery as a part of their platform. Now, they do not seem to be very concerned about human trafficking today, which is rampant; but they are ultra-concerned about slave owners from 200 years ago. These same misfits do nothing about present-day slavery, but they will do everything possible to tear down statues of a former slave owners, proposing that, if you disagree with them, then you support slavery, making you a very bad person.

So that there is no misunderstanding, the slavery practiced in America 200 years ago is not the same as the slavery which is found here in Exodus 21. The slave in this case has put himself in this position or he has found himself to be in this position, with no easy way out, apart from indentured servitude.

This does not mean that the slave is morally at fault here. The slave might be a child or young adult of a family who is going through difficult times, and selling him or her is the only immediate solution. Also, there are no moral aspersions being cast upon the slave owner either. The two have entered into a mutually beneficial contract. The slave is allowed to restore himself financially, and the slave owner has another person to help him get stuff done.

Exodus 21:2b ...he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. (NKJV)

For a Hebrew owning a Hebrew slave, there was a very specific time limit. You could own another Hebrew for 6 years and no longer. In the 7th year, the slave was to be set free; and there was to be no fee assessed against him. That is, creative bookkeeping was not allowed in order to keep a slave on.

As we progress in God's laws for Israel, we will find that God will require Israel to observe the Sabbath year, a part of which would involve setting free Hebrew slaves.

Now, in case your mind is racing, and you are worried about, *what if the slave is not a Hebrew*, this will be a part of the Law as well. Just be patient and we will get to that.

What is being described here is a very specific situation at a very particular period of time. The period of time is the time that Israel was a nation to God, which will begin in the book of Joshua,²¹ and continue until the time of Jesus and the Apostles.

Exodus 21:2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. (NKJV)

We are working here both with principle and with analogy. Just as the Hebrews were to spend some time in slavery and then to go out of Egypt, so the Hebrews under private ownership were to do the same. They are God's people and as such are free.

The Bible nowhere takes a direct position against all forms of slavery; even in the book of Philemon, Paul suggests to the recipient that he free his slave, Onesimus, because he is also a believer in Jesus Christ—however, he does not require this (a mature believer would have freed Onesimus and a weaker one would not have). This passage at best implies that slavery is not the ideal position for a slave. This also indicates to us that, even though Paul is an apostle, he does not have the right to tell people how to live their personal lives. Otherwise, he could have simply issued an order to Philemon: "Free Onesimus!"

There are passages in the Old Testament which forbid *man stealing*; and this is how many slaves are provided for slave buyers (we will study this in this very chapter). This is the foundation for the type of slavery practiced in the early history of the United States.

²¹ In the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, Israel was a people, but they did not yet have a land in which they lived.

In this verse, where it says they will go out free for nothing, means that there are no requirements for the slave to fulfill in order to be released. The slave does not have to produce a certain amount nor does he have to somehow see that his master has compensated for his release. He is released from slavery for nothing.

Why does the Bible not take issue with slavery? Why not in this, God's perfect law at that time for Israel tell the Hebrews from the outset to free all of their slaves?

Slavery in Israel

1. Slavery is a social issue.
2. These are laws for the government of Israel, which laws are not designed to correct social ills. Furthermore, some forms of slavery are not necessarily wrong.
3. There are some things which are neither right nor wrong and one of these is slavery, taken as a general principle.
4. I realize that you may have been taught all of your life that slavery is evil and terrible and cannot be justified, but, there are circumstances where a person might benefit by becoming a slave. He might be an orphan or completely without funds, or in great debt, and his only solution is to offer himself as a slave. He has nothing to offer except himself. His position as a slave many times frees him from this burdensome debt or from a life of poverty. Furthermore, such an agreement to become an indentured servant is something that both the slave and the master agree to.
5. It is possible for a slave to have an enlightened owner and it is possible for a slave to have a vicious, degenerate owner. Under a fair and just owner, a slave enjoys fair and just treatment and under anyone else, he receives treatment which might vary as to the mood of the owner and it might be out and out cruel. Sometimes, the treatment of slave can begin well, but end badly (for instance, Joseph in the final fifth of the book of Genesis).
6. One issue in slavery is the owner and his spiritual growth.
7. There are free people with jobs today who are worse off than slaves of good masters. A good master provided for the basic necessities of his slaves and provided fair and just treatment of his slaves. There are many jobs today where the workers do not make even enough money to live on; let alone, enough money to support a family with and the treatment which they receive on the job is deplorable. Slaves had their basic necessities met. If not, they did not survive, so that was not smart for a slave owner to do.
8. This is not to say that we need unions and that people should strike, walk out, call in sick, or do anything else to protest their treatment, to change their workplace, or to register their complaints. Here, we appeal to God. If we are unhappy with our station in life, we take night classes or work under someone in a second job in order to learn a trade. If these things are impossible, we continue to work as unto the Lord and appeal to Him. God is just and God is fair. Some human employers are not.
9. Life in most socialist and communist nations is inferior to life as a slave in Israel.
10. In any case, we do not rebel against our employers in any, way, shape or form.

Slavery in Israel

Slaves are not serving men but in their slavery they are serving Jesus Christ. Therefore our work habits, our production, our integrity should be as unto the Lord and not as unto man.

- 1) Ephesians 6:5–8 **You slaves [employees], be obeying your lords [management] according to the standard of the flesh [laws of establishment], with respect for authority and maximum effort, by means of integrity from your right lobe, as to your Christ. Not according to the standard of eye-slavery, as men-pleasers; but as slaves [workers, employees] belonging to Christ, constantly doing the will of your God from the soul. With loyal enthusiasm performing the duties of a slave, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that each one, if he has done anything good, he himself shall receive with interest this same production from the source of the Lord, whether he is a slave or a free man. (R. B. Thieme, Jr. corrected translation)**
 - 2) Colossians 3:22–25 **Labour, keep on submitting to the authority of the lord's according to the flesh; according to the standard of all things [the laws of divine establishment], not in the sphere of eye-slavery as men-pleasers; but by means of integrity of the right lobe, respecting the Lord. In whatever you do [in the business world], keep on functioning from the soul, as to the Lord and not [to] men, knowing that from the ultimate source of the Lord you shall receive in return the reward from the inheritance; for you are the servant to the Lord Christ. Therefore the one doing wrong shall receive back for the thing which he has done wrong; and there is not partiality. (R. B. Thieme, Jr. corrected translation)**
11. So what about the masters? What about those who own a company?
- 1) Ephesians 6:9 **Also, you lords [management], be doing the same things toward them [labour], be desisting from bullying; knowing that both their Lord and yours is in heaven; and there is no partiality with Him. (R. B. Thieme, Jr. corrected translation)** Although this passage was written to slave owners regarding their treatment of slaves, it has a wider application, as we find here in Thieme's translation.
 - 2) Colossians 4:1 **Management, be rendering [from your own resources and power] both fair treatment and equal wages to your employees, knowing that you also have management in heaven. (R. B. Thieme, Jr. corrected translation)**
12. Note that the bulk of the commands are toward the slave and not toward the master. This is because the slave is in a more difficult position and requires more guidance.
13. Periodically, the Mosaic Law reset the game. Hebrew slaves, for instance, were to be made free in the Sabbath year (every seven years). This was God's expectation for Israel, but they did not follow this particular law of God. They went overboard when it came to observing the Sabbath day, but then ignored their Sabbath years.
14. The prophet Isaiah deals with the manumission of slaves. When Israel is

Slavery in Israel

involved in fasting, thinking that this is such a great deal, and that God ought to see their fasting, God suggests that they sort of fast He would like to see is one where they set all of their slaves free (Isaiah 58:1–6). To hell with doing without food; do without your slaves! Isaiah 58:6 **Is not this the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?** (Voice in the Wilderness)

15. There are issues that go far beyond the conditions in the workplace, the wages, etc. Very few people feel that they make enough money or make a fair salary and most people spend all that they make. Our primary relationship is toward God not toward man—therefore, it is to God that we should appeal.
16. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible which indicates that we should expect good working conditions, a fair wage or positive reinforcement. Our work should be done as though we were working directly for Jesus Christ and all of our appeals for better treatment, a better wage, etc. are to be directed to our Lord, Who is in heaven, Who knows and sees all things

Exodus 21:1 **Now these [are] the judgments [or, *judicial decisions*] that you will place before them:...** (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Exodus 21:2 **If you purchase a Hebrew servant, he will serve for six years, but in the seventh, he will go out for free for nothing.** (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Lesson 344: Exodus 21:3–4

The master provides a wife for his slave

We continue our study of specific laws and judgments. Vv. 1–11 deal with various aspects of slavery.

Exodus 21:3a **If he comes in by himself,...** (NKJV)

He refers to the slave.

We then have the preposition *with* and the rarely used noun (with the 3rd person, masculine singular suffix) *gaph* (גַּף) [pronounced *gahf*], which was originally translated *body*, but it is only found here, twice in v. 3 and once in v. 4 and then in a completely different sentence and context in Proverbs 9:3. In Proverbs, it is translated *the highest places* and here *body*. I am not sure that there is a reason to translate it *body*. The Septuagint translates this by the Greek word for *alone, one* and I think that we ought to do the same.

I believe the idea here is, when a slave enters into slavery with nothing else apart from his body. His body is all that he has to offer his master (I do not mean that in some crude way).

It is very common for a single man to come into slavery. Such a one might be considered fit for a great variety of labor. However, these general principles could apply to a female slave as well.

Exodus 21:3b ...he shall go out by himself;... (NKJV)

This person, when the time of servitude had been fulfilled, he would go out the same way that he came in, by himself; or, as many translate this, *a single male, single, alone*.

The Lexham English Bible reads: *If he comes in single, he will go out single*. The Hebraic Roots Bible: *If he comes in with his body, he shall go out with his body*. (Exodus 21:3a-b) The slave will receive what he and the master have agreed to (if such an agreement was made)

Although this, by context, refers to a Hebrew slave and a Hebrew master, it could be applied to anyone who is manumitted from slavery.

Exodus 21:3c ...if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. (NKJV)

There might be times when a family unit is brought into slavery. This is a decision that the man would make; but it is reasonable to assume that debt or poverty played a part in these circumstances.

In this case, the entire family might be employed by the host family (the slave-owning family).

The whole idea here is, this is what is seen by those placing themselves into slavery as the best solution.

We have become so repulsed by slavery that we do not see that a modern-day version of this might be a good solution for many people in many circumstances.

There are many retired people who find it difficult to do normal things, like go out and shop for food. Also, to make the food. There would be some instances where a person who is without means to put themselves into some form of slavery to such a person. The owner would provide food and shelter; perhaps additional funds. In return, the modern-day slave would provide basic services, which might include cleaning, cooking, purchasing food, etc.

Tangent: Interestingly enough, we have something similar which occurs in Hong Kong and in many of the more prosperous Arabic nations (like Saudi Arabia or the UAE). Contract workers are bargained for from poorer countries, and hired for a year or for two years (on contract). Even though they are not ever called slaves, some of them live a life of comparable slavery in the house of their employer. They do tend to have more freedoms than a slave in the time of Moses, but they certainly have less freedom in general than, say, their classmates who are able to survive in the Philippines (or, wherever).

Although this would never be classified as slavery, it very much is; and, furthermore, workers from the Philippines and elsewhere are very glad to have these options.

Exodus 21:3c ...if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. (NKJV)

No doubt, there would be circumstances where the person in need might be a single man, might be a single woman; or might be a family.

In the illustration here, we are dealing with a man who is married. Perhaps there are children; perhaps not. In any case, if he enters into slavery as a married man, he exits as a married man (and the children, if any, would go with the family).²²

Exodus 21:3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. (NKJV)

Bôw' (בֹּוֹ) [pronounced *boh*] means *to come (in), to go (in)*. In this context, they are going into slavery. What is interesting, is this: he comes into slavery and goes out of slavery both in the Qal imperfect (which indicates continual action). On the other hand, when his wife goes with him in the Qal perfect (action taken as a singular event). I would have assumed that all of these would have been Qal perfect. So, when entering slavery and exiting slavery, the man's life as a slave and his life as a freed slave are seen as a continuous processes.

Exodus 21:3 If he comes in [as a slave] by himself, [then] he will go out by himself. If he [is] the owner [or, lord, husband, master] of a wife, then his wife will go out with him. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

There are several scenarios that have to be dealt with here. The first are those where he enters into slavery as single or married; he is allowed to leave in the same marital state. So, what if he marries during slavery? God deals with that situation next:

Exodus 21:4a If his master has given him a wife,... (NKJV)

Now, let's say that the master provides a wife. In this situation, the woman is likely not a Hebrew (as she would be subject to the same laws already given, meaning that, according to the Law, both must be released in the seventh year).

Furthermore, we may not assume that, just because a master purchases a female slave that she and the slave under consideration will even like one another.

However, we are looking at the circumstance where, the slave owner has a male Hebrew slave and he develops a strong interest in a woman also owned by the slave owner.

²² This is not the case if both the husband and wife are slaves who chose to marry while in slavery.

Bear in mind, there are a great many options at this point. A slave might meet a woman, owned by his master, while in slavery; and he can choose to do whatever it takes to purchase her from his master once he is in freedom. My point being here, this option of taking a wife when a slave is not the only option. However, this is the option being explored in this law.

Bear in mind that, love being what it is, a male Hebrew slave may not want to wait for X number of years to serve out his term, then do whatever it takes to get enough money to purchase the woman, and then purchase her (assuming that another slave has not made her his wife). So, rather than wait for a period of five years or so, a male Hebrew slave might opt to marry the woman when enslaved (if a Hebrew woman, she would be free within 6 years; if a gentile woman, she could be a slave all of her life). In either case, the man may not want to wait. Furthermore, the life of a slave is not necessarily a bad life. That all depends upon the slave owner.

Application: Interestingly enough, there are movements today whose adherents speak disparagingly about slavery in the United States, 200 years ago; and, at the same time, favor a socialistic government, which is, for all intents and purposes, a national slavery. Under socialism, everyone is subject to the whims of the government. If such a person makes an argument that the government must provide a job, food and clothing; well, of course, that is exactly what masters do. Masters provide work, food, clothing and shelter. Those who were slaves in the United States and in ancient Israel are guaranteed a job, food, clothing and shelter. When the government does this, it is still slavery.

Exodus 21:4a [If his master has given him a wife,...](#) (NKJV)

An interesting literary quirk here: *master* is in the plural but *give* demands a singular subject. This might be the plural of quality rather than of quantity (the verb would indicate that).

I would suggest to you that, this was not an unusual case. Men and women tend to like one another, and in such circumstances, like one another a lot.

In this particular case, the slave owner allows for this marriage to take place. Or, the slave owner might even take his single male slave to an auction of slaves and ask, "What about her?" There could be a variety of circumstances which lead to the slave marrying a woman provided by the master.

Exodus 21:4b [...and she has borne him sons or daughters,...](#) (NKJV)

Now, one possible scenario is, the woman marries the slave and then they have children. They might have sons, they might have daughters, they may have a mixture.

Exodus 21:4c [...the wife and her children shall be her master's,...](#) (NKJV)

Now, the underlying truth of the matter is, this woman belongs to the slave owner. No matter what you might say (“No man can own another man”), this was simply a fact of life. Furthermore, not all slavery is cruel and oppressive.

Tangent: People argue today that working for minimum wage is cruel and oppressive. Cruelty and oppression, to some degree, are relative concepts (just as wealth is).

Application: Life is a trade-off. A person working for minimum wage has his freedom, but he may not be able to afford all of his basic needs. A slave may not have his freedom, but he has his basic needs provided for. If you want freedom, then that includes all that freedom is. If you want slavery, then you should admit that is what you want.

We have already studied the life of Joseph, back in the book of Genesis, where he, as a slave, was greatly prospered, and he rose up from being a slave to becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt. This is an opportunity which came to him *only* because he began in Egypt as a slave. God prospered Joseph under these circumstances.

Slaves can end up having great prosperity and great responsibilities. And, again, no matter what you think, none of this is wrong. There are people in poverty which would give anything to become the slave of a good master. And I have already given the illustration of similar practices taking place in Hong Kong and various Arab countries, with Filipinos offering themselves up as modern-day slaves.

One of the narratives in Genesis is about Abraham sending his most trusted slave east in order to find a wife for his son Isaac. This slave could have gotten to Haran and simply kept on going further east to escape slavery. He did not. He performed the task that Abraham sent him to do. This is Genesis 24 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Abraham had a number of slaves and Genesis 24 illustrates just how loyal some of his slaves were.

Exodus 21:4d ...and he shall go out by himself. (NKJV)

If the wife has been provided by the slave owner, then the slave can leave after 7 years, but, he cannot take with him his master's property (that is, his wife). The woman (and children, if any) belong to the master, not to the slave who married her. It is the master who has provided the food and shelter and care for the wife and children, not the husband.

There are certainly other options at this point. The slave might vow to become a man of means and purchase his wife and children from his former owner. He might just leave, and leave them behind. Or, the Hebrew slave might choose to remain with his master. Now, this is the option explored here by God (remember, God is speaking to Moses here).

What about the woman? I would assume that, if the woman who was purchased is a Hebrew slave, then, like the male, she serves for 6 years and then she goes free.²³ I don't

²³ This is according to the Sabbath year laws, which apparently were not followed by the Hebrew people.

see her as being treated differently in this regard. However, a foreign slave acquired in another way is subject to her master forever.

Exodus 21:4 *If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.* (NKJV)

A man who comes into slavery as a single man will leave the same way, even if he marries while in slavery. As an aside, this is a very logical and reasonable rule. If a woman consigned to a lifetime of slavery could get out in less than seven years by marrying a Hebrew man—this would provide a whole other reason for marrying.

Exodus 21:3–4 *If he comes in [as a slave] by himself, [then] he will go out by himself. If he [is] the owner [or, lord, husband, master] of a wife, then his wife will go out with him. If his master gives to him a wife and she bears sons and/or daughters to him, then the wife is [still the property of] her master and he [the slave] will go out by himself.* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

I know that this will not sit well with many, but this is God's Word as it is applied to the circumstances of that era. Under the circumstance where a wife was acquired through his master in marriage (likely that this would be another slave which is his master's), he does not own this woman but his master does. Therefore, by marriage, he is not suddenly her master in terms of absolute ownership. Just as when we get married, we are still the Lord's. That position does not change, regardless of which temporal changes we go through. What kind of options are open here?

What if the Master Gives a Slave a Wife?

1. A slave has to make a choice between his wife (and possibly family) or freedom from slavery.
2. A slave does not have to marry while he is in slavery; he can wait and then purchase this woman from his former master (depending upon his financial situation after slavery). Similarly, the former slave can consider other options when freed.
3. The slave in freedom can purchase the one he married from his master (in both of these cases, the master of course must be willing to cooperate).
4. The master is not precluded from allowing the wife acquired while in slavery to go out with the husband—however, this is the choice of the master, not the choice of the husband. It is the slave owner who has incurred all of the expenses.
5. Since the woman belongs to the master, the children also belong to the master.
6. The entire issue involves self-discipline on the part of the slave and dedication to the one he loves. He has to make a choice when it comes to marriage, whether to wait or to marry and he has to make a choice when it comes to having children; whether to wait or whether to have them in slavery.
7. There is nothing in the Bible which indicates that we should be able to do just exactly what we want and when we want to do it. We may meet the most wonderful person in the world—however, this does not mean that we should immediately marry and have children.

What if the Master Gives a Slave a Wife?

8. What if the man marries or does not marry; purchases the freedom of his beloved seven years later and she leaves him because she was using him to get out of slavery? So what. That means he exercised poor judgement. Probably half of all marriages today are the result of poor judgement—even though many of them are right man/right woman.
9. What this law does protect is the master. Two slaves, male and female, have very little motivation to marry other than because they are right man/right woman. The woman is not motivated to marry because of freedom because her freedom is not guaranteed by a fellow slave. The man is not motivated to marry for any reason besides love because he realizes that he may not be able to take her out of the household

Lesson 345: Exodus 21:5–6

The slave chooses to remain with his wife

What we have been studying is, *what if a male slave marries a female slave?* Because the law requires a Hebrew slave to be freed after six years, what happens if he married a fellow slave during those six years? One option is, he can be manumitted, but he goes out a freed man but without his wife.

The Law of Moses (actually, the Law of God) does afford him a second option:

Exodus 21:5a **But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children;... (NKJV)**

Now, recall that this slave may have found himself in these circumstances because of mismanagement of his own money and property; and this may have happened to him where bad decisions did not play a part in his life. Nevertheless, the Hebrew man finds himself in the situation where he had to become a slave; and then he willingly married a woman owned by his master.

This slave testifies clearly that he loves his master, his wife and his children. There are situations where an entire family can find servitude as a good option for them in life. Again, put aside whatever prejudices that you have and recognize that free will is playing a big part in all that is taking place here (despite the fact that these are slaves).

Exodus 21:5b **...I will not go out free,' (NKJV)**

The freewill testimony of this slave is, "I will not leave my life of slavery." If you do not have a predisposition here, you ought to recognize that, there are some situations where this is a good option for the person who is enslaved.

This man is choosing a life where he has a wife, he has children; and he has guaranteed food, shelter and clothing.

Exodus 21:5 But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'... (NKJV)

Another option occurs to me, and there are reasons why it is missing. Can the man buy his wife (and children, if any) from his former master after being set free? Why is this option missing from this set of regulations?

This is, of course, an option open to the former slave. It is not enshrined in the Law because, there is no right for him to take his family out, if that family was provided for him by his master.

A recently manumitted slave is not going to have a lot of money; and certainly not enough to pay for the manumission of his wife and children. An additional regulation inserted here would imply that he had some sort of legal right, at this point, to take his wife and children; whereas, he does not. His legal right is the free market. His legal right is make enough money to purchase his wife and children at a later date. This strikes me as a pretty remote possibility.

Exodus 21:5 But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'... (NKJV)

Note who is first on this list: the master (which is in the singular). The slave is making a clear declaration, likely in front of witnesses, of his freewill choice. He realizes that he will not be able to purchase the freedom of his wife or children and he has a choice; he chooses whatever is more important to him—his wife and children or his station in life. A man faced with these kinds of choices would think quite carefully before entering into marriage as a slave. We face a similar circumstances today even in today's world.

Application: As a single person, a man can pick up stakes, move from job to job, move from state to state or country to country, unencumbered by social responsibilities. However, when one takes on a wife and child, one assumes a great many responsibilities, not the least of which is the providing of the basic necessities for his family. This means that a man in order to take care of his wife and children at times must remain in a job that he does not like, that he finds unfulfilling (although, many jobs have periods of time which are not fulfilling). In marriage a man must often say, "I love my job [or, my boss], my wife and my children—I will continue to work and live here." Do you see the parallel?

In recent times, we have been brought up to think that slavery is the absolute worst sin and human indignity known to mankind. It is not.

First of all, the slavery practiced here in Exodus 21 is not the same as the slavery which split our nation in the 1800's. In many cases, slavery in this era (of Exodus 21) was voluntary. Now, you might wonder, *how could anyone ever volunteer to be enslaved?* Sometimes, that was the only reasonable option for a person who was without personal property or funds.

Secondly, slavery is regulated by the Mosaic Law. What laws constrained southern masters concerning their slaves in America in the 1800s?

Interestingly enough, there have been many modern movements about workers making a *living wage*—and these movements are, for the most part, a front for communism/socialism. Nevertheless, the adherents to this movement are often sincere. They do not appear to understand that there is always a tradeoff when it comes to labor and remuneration for labor. Labor is only worth so much, and when you pay too much for it, the business purchasing the labor will find alternatives (they will build a plant elsewhere; or just close down). Labor is a part of the bottom line for any sort of business. Many times, the cost of labor is the most significant component of the business itself.

In a free market, a business will look to hire workers at such and such a wage, and a worker who applies for that job is accepting the terms of his contract. The worker may not make a lot of money and this may constrain him elsewhere in life, but, he has a modicum of freedom (which includes the option of saying to his boss, *I quit!*).

A slave, on the other hand, is automatically paid a living wage. He gets food, shelter and clothing; so he gets what is necessary for his life. On the other hand, he cannot say, *I quit*, and walk off the job.

In a government-controlled market, people accept what the government offers, they have no choice. They may get what the government designates as basic living benefits; but their actual freedom is very limited (as are the *guaranteed* government benefits).

In the Soviet Union, the government might provide you with food, shelter and clothing (and not much of these), but finding bread may be an impossible chore. A one bedroom apartment may be shared with 10 other unrelated people. Furthermore, people were always under the constant threat of being arrested for acts and words against the state. And if such a person was arrested, he was assumed to be guilty from the start. Sometimes even being able to prove one's innocence was not enough (see *Alexander Dolgun's Story: An American in the Gulag*). Present-day Russia is not too much different.

In a free market, a person accepts what salary and perks are offered—like them or not—but he has the freedom to leave the job and pursue a better employment elsewhere.

Personally, I have no problem with voluntary slavery. A person down on his luck can go to a slave owner (or to a slave auction) and be assured that he will eat, have clothing and a place to sleep. In the Hebrew society, this arrangement continued only for 6 years (if this was a fellow Hebrew). That is, according to the Law (the Hebrew people did not always follow the Law).

There are many different kinds of slavery. What we think of as slavery (1) exists in greater numbers today than ever before; and (2) is outlawed by Scripture. The Bible calls this sort of slavery *man-stealing*; and this is where a free man in a society is captured and forced

into slavery (as many countries have done throughout the centuries). The Hebrew people were not allowed to do this (and this will be addressed in this chapter).

I have not seen a single anti-confederate-soldier-monument group lift a finger to manumit a single person from modern-day slavery. But they are very good at kicking statues. This is because, they may think that they are doing something great and noble, but they are simply pawns in the hands of globalists and communists.

The Hebrew people were, generally speaking, a non-aggressive people. They did not look around them, see land that they wanted, and go out and take it. The exception to this is, obviously, their original conquering of Canaan (see the book of Joshua). God commanded them to take the land, and they did. But once the land was under their control, almost all their wars fought afterwards were reactionary. A country would invade them and they would have to fight and defeat that country in order to maintain their own freedom. As a result of such a war, they would take in more territory from the losing country.

When a country fought an aggressive war against the Hebrews, the Hebrew people could defeat their enemies and then take those who remain alive as slaves. There were limited options when you defeated another country. They could kill all of their enemies or they could enslave those who remained. Although there were laws which regulated this, the laws regulating the enslavement of fellow Hebrew citizens were more restrictive.

Now, let's go back and pick up the context for v. 6:

Exodus 21:5 **But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'...** (NKJV)

Exodus 21:6a **...then his master shall bring him to the judges.** (NKJV)

We have the word *elohim* here, which certainly can be a reference to God (Owens translates it here *God*); but I think the better application is, this is *a board of authorities*, probably *judges*, before whom this slave owner and his slave go. The master brings his slave to these judges, and the slave publically states that he is willing to remain a slave to his master forever.

This does not preclude a slave having previously bargained with his master for a period of time—say, 20, 30 or 40 years. None of this would be off the table. However, the most extreme example is presented. The slave willingly subjects himself to a lifetime of slavery, and he testifies openly to this.

One must also consider that, after a certain age, freedom may become less and less desirable. That is, people do get old, and they cannot work as hard as they used to. Nevertheless, the master continues to provide for them (in many cases, slaves become a part of the family).

As an aside, in various movies and television programs, we have been exposed to the very worst examples of slavery and the abuse of slaves (I am speaking of slavery in the United States before the Civil War). That was not the case for every plantation or any home where a slave might live.²⁴

Back to our context:

Exodus 21:6a ...then his master shall bring him to the judges. (NKJV)

So, the slave has told his master, in order to remain married, he will serve his master for the rest of his life. His master brings the slave before judges to confirm this testimony with witnesses.

Exodus 21:6b He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost,... (NKJV)

After the public testimony, the owner brings his slave to his door or doorpost.

Exodus 21:6c ...and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl;.. (NKJV)

The master, as a sign of ownership, will put a hole in the slave's ear. I would assume that some identifying piece of jewelry might be added at this point. This is not stated as a requirement, however.

An Awl (a graphic); from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); accessed July 4, 2019. I use tools, so I know what the text is speaking about. Not everyone does, so I have included the graphic of a modern awl. My guess is, an ancient awl would be a single piece, made of all metal or all wood.



Today, a person might use an awl to create an opening for a screw or a drill; or use it to punch a hole into leather.

It would logically make sense that something else by way of identification would be placed in the earlobe of the slave—an earring or some sort which indicates ownership (I have seen cows with this sort of thing in their ear). Otherwise, the hole would fill in on its own.

The implication here is, there is more done than simply opening up a temporary hole in the ear. Something would be added here as identification of belonging to one's master.

Exodus 21:6d ...and he shall serve him forever. (NKJV)

²⁴ Domestic slaves often lived inside the houses of their masters and those working in the field were quartered outside

The end result is, the slave (and his wife and children) belong to the master forever.

Exodus 21:6 ...then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (NKJV)

I realize that some people just bristle at this thought, as if there could be nothing worse in the world than this. Starvation and great poverty would be worse options. The slave certainly knows his options and likes them with his master.

Having a master is not the worst thing in the world. A slave may have a reasonably good life under some masters. If all of his needs are met and he has a wife and family also, this could be a pretty good deal for the man.

Application: One of the contradictory positions taken by the left is, slavery is the worst possible outcome for a person's life; and the government should be responsible to provide all of the necessities of an individual's life. In the second premise, a form of slavery has just been described. Part of the condition of a person having the state provide his basic necessities being met is, he must agree to all the rules of the state. That is, he commits to slavery to the state. The more that a state promises to do for the individual, the more that the state can do to that individual.

Application: If you are a committed leftist, then you may not grasp this. However, there is no way that a government can provide the basic necessities for everyone, if these people do not work. If, by today's standards, the government said, "Okay, no matter what, you get \$50,000 a year, whether you work or not;" then many people would just stop working. They can make a reasonable life on that amount and without the hassle and worry of working for someone. But, that cannot work for society as a whole. The money does not grow on trees; it comes from someone else's production and hard work. So, if there is a basic income given out, there will be, at some point, a set of basic requirements which must be met. By that I mean, the government will become much more restrictive.

Application: I have found such a thing to be very true today. I have found that my medicare has severe limitations, and these limitations were a result of my making a mistake, and this mistake was based upon the words of someone who was in authority. Now, had this person given me true and accurate information, I would have done something else, so that my options were not limited.²⁵ My point being is, nothing is free; and nothing is unconditional. If the government provides a free handout of money for anything, there will be conditions and there will be consequences.

²⁵ If you want specifics, I was told that I was paying for medicare part B, which is a requirement; I could see that money was taken out of my check; and I therefore assumed what this person told me was true. Turns out, I did not have Medicare part B and was paying for additional insurance, something I did not need to do. Not having part B limits my options for changing coverage.

Vv. 5–6 are an entire thought, but based upon a man marrying while a slave and possibly producing children as a slave:

Exodus 21:5–6 But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (NKJV)

It is interesting that the earliest connotation of pierced ears for men is a lifetime of slavery. This mark is a clear indication of a volitional choice which lasts a lifetime. Similarly, when a man chooses a wife, the choice should be for a lifetime. If a man cannot make a commitment to anything for more than a couple weeks (or months or years) then he is not ready to be married. The NASB reasonably interprets the *bringing to God* as bringing the slave before the judges who judge in God's stead. This emphasizes the solemnity and permanence of this decision. The same phrasing is found in Exodus 22:8, 9, and 28.

There are two oddities in this passage. The master brings the slave before God (*Elohim*). We understand this to be a reference to *judges acting for God*. The other oddity is, *master* is actually a plural noun throughout—*ādōnāy* (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAY*]²⁶—but affixed to singular verbs.

Exodus 21:5–6 But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my Adonai, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his Adonai shall bring him to the Elohim (God). He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his Adonai shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (NKJV, with substitutions)

Remember that, throughout the Old Testament, there are shadows of what will take place. Our Lord Jesus Christ will take us before God and we will be made servants of our Lord (= Adonai) forever. When following along in the Hebrew, these oddities simply reach out and grab you, which caused me to repeat this passage, but with the Hebrew word substitutions.

There is more here than just the law. Man is in the world of His Lord and Master Jesus Christ, Who created it. In the church age, we choose to be married to our Lord through believing in Christ (the analogy between salvation and marriage is found in Ephesians 5:22–32 Revelation 19:7 21:2, 9). We can choose after salvation to serve God or not;²⁶ just as this slave can choose to serve his master for the rest of his life. This analogy is further supported by the ending of this verse with the time period *forever*. Obviously a slave cannot serve his master throughout eternity, particularly if one has been regenerated and the other has not. However, this is both a real law which is to be applied and it is also a shadow of our servitude to our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁶ Without regular personal confession of sin directly to God and growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, no one is serving God

Exodus 21:5–6 But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (NKJV)

This is God's Word; it does not matter if you agree with it or not. It does not matter whether this fits in with the way you were raised or not. This was the perfect government for Israel at this time and place. Some of the specific laws might change today, but the principles would remain the same.

Lessons 346–347: Exodus 21:7–11

A father sells his daughter

This next section, Exodus 21:7–11 deals with a woman being sold into slavery and/or as a potential wife for the owner's sons. It is not until v. 9 where the marriage angle is mentioned.

Exodus 21:7a “And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave,... (NKJV)

I believe that there are assumptions which we can make here. I believe that the father of the daughter being sold and the master are both Hebrew men. After all, these are God's laws for the Hebrew people.

Quite obviously, the man who is selling his daughter is unable to get her married, either in the near or the far future, for whatever reason. Perhaps he cannot afford her dowry, etc. Perhaps his family is in bad financial shape—that would be the likely situation.

The Bible in Basic English suggests that the woman is sold for *the price of a servant*. I mention this here, and will later explain what else might be going on.

Even though the words do not specifically say this, I believe that we can understand that someone has paid a dowry price for this daughter. I believe that we are covering the possibility that the original agreement was for a daughter to marry or with the option of marriage. However, this agreement seems to be structured in such a way that, this young lady will be a slave for a period of time and may or may not marry into this family.

As I see it, based upon the entire context, the parents could not afford the young woman. They are responsible for her, but could not even raise a dowry amount. She is sold to another family to be taken care of. After she enters the new household, there are a variety of options which are given.

Exodus 21:7b ...she shall not go out as the male slaves do. (NKJV)

This woman is not to be mistreated or treated like a manservant. God makes a normal distinction between men and women (as all of our sports did at one time).

Now, in my first reading of this, I understood that she would not be expected to do the same work as the men. Others understood that the woman could not be sold or placed elsewhere as males slaves are.

The slave owner is not to take advantage of the weakness of the female.

Again, slavery in this era was normal; and it was going to be practiced. God designed laws which protected the slaves. Although I have not made a personal study of this topic in other national laws, I would be surprised to find slaves being given any similar protections in other cultures or nations.

Exodus 21:7 “And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. (NKJV)

For some women, the Bible will make them grind their teeth. Some people, men and women alike, try to put the Bible strictly into the culture from whence they came and claim that these were the unevolved laws and perceptions and culture of Moses and Paul (since Paul was equally *unenlightened* in their eyes). Moses and Paul recorded God's Word and even though some specifics might change, the principles do not. Men and women are entirely different creatures with different positions and stations in life. It has nothing to do with being better or worse, with being inferior or superior in intellectual or in physical abilities—it has to do with the fact that we are different creatures and God has a different plan for men and women in this life. It goes back to the creation of Adam and the woman and their original sins. Like it or not, the man has authority over the woman in marriage. Furthermore, there are many instances of men and women being subjected to and held to different standards in the Bible. If no such double standard is revealed in the Word, then we may assume that a principle stated for a man applies to a woman and vice versa.

In this situation, a man has chosen to sell his own daughter into slavery. This in of itself is quite the solemn decision. There is nothing like the bond between a man and his daughter. However, in the rare case where this is done, then the woman does not have the same privilege to leave the position of slavery after seven years of service. This means to a Hebrew male in slavery, there is no reason to get married other than love and a lifelong dedication, because this woman is a slave for life. Only the master has the volition to free her.

When I first examined Exodus 21:8 in the English, I must admit that I did not fully understand what was going on. Owen writes: *If she does not please (in the sight of) her master who has (not) designated her, then he shall let her be redeemed to a foreign people. He shall have no right to sell her since he has dealt faithlessly with her.*²⁷ NASB: *If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, the he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her.* We will need to dissect this verse, phrase by phrase.

²⁷ I have added the punctuation

Exodus 21:8a *If she does not please her master,...* (NKJV)

This verse begins with an hypothetical particle which is followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *râ'a'* (רַעַר) [pronounced *raw-ĠAHĠ*], a word which can mean *to be evil, bad*. However, Zodhiates and the New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance list this as the adjective *ra'* (רַעַ) [pronounced *rag'*] (which, in the feminine, is *râ'a'* (רַעַר) [pronounced *raw-ĠAHĠ*] and it means *evil, misery, distress*. I am certain this is similar to a case which we have previously looked at where there are differences in opinion as to whether the masculine and feminine are different words and whether the word is a verb, an adjective or a noun, or an adjective acting as a substantive. However, in any case, she is *displeasing* (an alternate meaning born out by Numbers 11:16 22:34 Joshua 24:15 Proverbs 24:18). Sometimes, the feminine gender seems to soften the meaning of the word in the Hebrew.

Let's look at a more literal rendering of this verse:

Exodus 21:8a *If she is evil in the sight of her master* [or, *If she is displeasing to her lord*],... (Kukis mostly literal translation)

This does not mean that the woman herself is evil; nor does it mean that she is doing a substandard job. It means that her master has determined that she is not a good maidservant—and for whatever reason. He may or may not have a legitimate reason for coming to this conclusion. The operative phrase is, *in the sight of*. So, this is his expressed opinion, which may or may not be accurate or reasonable.

This appears to mean, there is a woman servant and her master finds her to be displeasing.

Exodus 21:8b *...who has betrothed her to himself,...* (NKJV)

I have a different translation, which is going to change up the interpretation considerably:

Exodus 21:8b *...he may not reassign her,...* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

These are obviously very different approaches, so what do we find in the Hebrew?

The word often translated *designated* is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect, 3rd person feminine singular suffix of *yâ'ad* (יָאָד) [pronounced *yaw-ĠAHD*] and it means *to appoint, to assign*—especially insofar as acquiring or designating as wife. With this verb is the negative *lô'* (לֹא or לוֹ) [pronounced *low*]. It negates the meaning of the verb. So he may not appoint or assign her (to something).

Now, who exactly are we talking about? In v. 7, we have a man who sells his daughter. This would be a rare circumstance, but it would happen (I have suggested that great poverty might be the cause of this).

There is a lot more happening here than simply selling a slave to a slave buyer. This is a father who cannot care for his daughter and, therefore, must sell her. She is not simply being sold in a way that she become a commodity, but the father is entrusting the care of his daughter to another man (another family); and this becomes a permanent situation. This provides stability for the young woman, even though she will potentially be a servant for the rest of her life.

The new master cannot say, “This woman is worthless” and then use that claim to justify selling her. The Law does not allow that. He may not assign her to another family. That is, he may not sell her to another family. Again, she is not a commodity to be bought and sold.

Exodus 21:8c ...then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people,... (NKJV)

I understand v. 8c in a different way:

Exodus 21:8c ...[and he may not] cause her to be redeemed by a foreign people.

You see, I carry the negative from the previous phrase into this one.

Here we have the conjunction is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect, 3rd person feminine singular of *pâdâh* (פָּדָה) [pronounced *paw-DAWH*] and it means *ransom, redeem*. It is in the causative stem. This is not followed by a new sentence but the sentence is continued with the words *to a foreign people* (the literal translation of the next two or three words²⁸).

So he is causing her to be redeemed and it is *to a foreign people*; and the negative of the previous phrase applies here as well. The man cannot *cause her to be redeemed to a foreign people*.

In the alternative, this allows for the woman to be redeemed, meaning someone can purchase her to remove her from slavery. This could be a kinsman-redeemer (a near relative who does this on her behalf); and it could be a man wanting to marry her.

So, I am caught between two opinions here. If the person who bought the young lady originally has decided that he is displeased with her, (1) she cannot be purchased for a foreign people or (2) she may be purchased out of slavery, but not bought by a foreign family. As I look more closely at this, I lean toward the second interpretation.

In any case, this master does not have carte blanc over the life of his slaves—particularly over his Hebrew slaves; and particularly, not over his female Hebrew slaves. God is placing severe limitations on the slave owner.

²⁸ Some would not count the *lâmed* preposition as a separate word.

I would not be surprised to find that such laws—laws which actually limit the power and authority of the slave owner—are exclusive to Hebrew culture. Remember, even in the southern states of the United States, I don't know if there were any laws which limited the slave owners as to what they could and could not do.

In this particular case, the slave owner cannot simply sell the woman in question to a foreign person (who might end up giving him a higher price than what he paid), even if he is dissatisfied with her.

Furthermore, this is the limitation on the slave-owner, whether the woman is not doing a good job; or if her master says/thinks she is not doing a good job. Obviously, he might be able to get a much better price and then want to sell her. He can simply claim that she is not meeting his expectations. Therefore, that option is not left open to him.

Application: I was commiserating with a friend the other day that, sometimes in life, you get some bad bosses. In my life as an employee, I had 2 or 3 really good bosses who stand out in my mind (and I am not saying that I had 2 or 3 really nice bosses, because I butted heads with the good bosses at times, me being who I am). The others I found to be so-so, two-faced, or lousy. Nevertheless, we still have authorities under whom we function, whether they are good or not.

Similarly, there would be good and lousy slave owners.

This is a general rule about slave owners, which is not factoring in if they are good or bad as owners. God simply sets a layer of conditions and restrictions upon the slave owners here.

Exodus 21:8d ...since he has dealt deceitfully with her. (NKJV)

My translation is quite a bit different:

Exodus 21:8d He does not have the authority to sell her by his deceptive practices.

This sentence begins with the negative $l\ddot{o}$ ' (אֵל or אִוֵל) [pronounced *low*]. When that is the first word of a sentence, it means *definitely not*. This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *māshal* (מָשַׁל) [pronounced *maw-HAHL*], which means, *to rule, to have dominion, to reign, to have power over*; possibly, *to have the right to [do something]*. Strong's #4910 BDB #605. With the negative, this means that this man definitely does not have the right or the authority to do something. That *something* is defined by the *lāmed* preposition following by the Qal infinitive construct of *mākar* (מָכַר) [pronounced *maw-KAHR*], which means, *to sell, to sell [betroth] [a daughter]; to sell [deliver over] [a people]*. Strong's #4376 BDB #569. So this man, the master, does not have the right to sell this woman. We know we are talking about this woman because there is a feminine singular suffix tacked onto the Qal infinitive verb.

This is followed by the bêyth preposition (*in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, against, by means of*) which is affixed to the Qal infinitive construct of the verb bâgad (בָּגַד) [pronounced *baw-GAHD*], which means, *to behave deceitfully, to act covertly, to act fraudulently, to act in bad faith*. Strong's #898 BDB #93. We know that it is the master who is behaving deceitfully or acting in bad faith because the Qal infinitive verb is affixed to a masculine singular suffix.

The master of this woman, the woman who was sold by her father, does not have the authority to sell her by this deceptive practice. In other words, he cannot allege that she is a bad servant and then sell her as a result.

The concept here is much different from selling a commodity. The young woman belongs to a family who simply cannot afford to support her and they sell her to a family who is accepting her as a slave, but with the idea that they will support her and take care of her over the long term (they will do what her own family could not do). This helps to explain all of the restrictions which are placed upon the slave owner.

Exodus 21:8d **He does not have the authority to sell her by his deceptive practices.** (Kukis mostly literal translation)

The owner cannot just simply sell a Hebrew maidservant to anyone, no matter what reason he gives.

Interestingly enough, God here is acknowledging bad business practices.

Now, here is what I think might be going on. A successful person pays a dowry for a woman, either for himself or for one of his sons. The woman is delivered to him and he decides that she is not what he wants; so then he claims, "I just purchased her as a slave girl and so I will treat her as such." This passages tells us, it doesn't matter. No matter what the transaction was, since this is a woman, she will be under very specific regulations. This regulation makes is so a man cannot pretend that he is paying the dowry for a woman, and then turn her into a slave just like a male slave. He cannot treat her as he would treat a male slave.

She must produce as a member of this family. She does not get to lay in bed and eat bon bons all day. However, the laws we are studying limit the slave-owner, not her.

We have one grammatical problem in v. 8. It is written *lo'* (not) but read *lo* (for himself). Some codices (western Aramaic, Syriac and Septuagint) read *for himself*; in seven early printed editions of the Hebrew Bible and the Samaritan Pentateuch, it is written and read *not*. Remove the *not*, and it would read "If she has not been pleasing in the sight of her master, who had designated her for himself in marriage and he will cause her to be redeemed to a foreign people, then he will have no authority to sell her since he has dealt deceitfully with her."

Bear in mind that these are words written down 3500 years ago, and then these words were copied perhaps 50–100 times. So, now an again, even though the preservation of the text was excellent, there are a few verses here or there which may be difficult to sort out.

Exodus 21:8 *If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. (NKJV)*

The man has purchased her, but chosen not to marry her or to give her to one of his sons. He still has the responsibility to take care of this young lady and he cannot sell her as a commodity to foreigners.

Exodus 21:7–8 *If a man sells his daughter as a maid, she will not be subject to the same work done by the male slaves. If she disappoints her master, he still may not reassign her, selling her to a foreign people. He does not have the authority to sell her in this way. (Kukis paraphrase)*

This law protects the daughter from being purchased under false pretenses. He purchases her with the idea that she would become his wife or concubine (or possibly that she would at least become the wife of one of his slaves or of one of his sons). He has come across a family which is in desperate straits and made an offer. However, what the man cannot do is later sell her to a foreigner. He cannot purchase this young woman and give the parents a false idea of what would occur. The slave owner cannot deal deceitfully with her, as these are the laws and regulations which protect the woman, even in such difficult circumstances. The master does not have the power or authority to sell her to someone else either as a wife or as a slave.

The purchase of any slave involves a certain amount of capital and the master here had intentions of making money on his investment. However, God does not allow anyone to buy this young woman under false pretenses. He cannot change his mind concerning his purpose in purchasing her. This law forbids, in general, unethical business practices, although it is admittedly limited in scope here.

Although this passage may not seem to specifically speak of marriage, we have marriage clearly a part of the context with the passage which follows:

Exodus 21:9 *And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. (NKJV)*

So you see, the young woman may have been purchased with the idea of marrying her off to one of this man's sons. Depending upon how she fits into the household functioning as a maid and depending upon her interaction with any one of his sons, a decision can be made to change her position from maid to daughter-in-law.

My translation at this point is:

Exodus 21:9 **If he assigns her to his son, he does for her in the custom of daughters.**
(Kukis mostly literal translation)

That is a very literal translation, but it means roughly the same thing.

One of the unfortunate aspects of depending upon the scholarship of another is that they may not always be accurate. Owen's translation reads: **If he designates her for his son as with a daughter he shall deal with her.** Our problem is that the word *mîsh^epâṭ* (מִשְׁפַּט) [pronounced *mish^e-PAWT*] is found in the Hebrew in some manuscripts, but nowhere in Owen's translation. Recall that this is generally translated *laws, ordinances, judgements*. This is preceded by the *bêyth* preposition which means *in, into, by*.

Here is a man who has purchased a woman from a family in desperate straits and the understanding is that he has purchased her possibly to be married to his son. Under these circumstances, she is not a slave to him to be bought or sold but he is to treat her as a daughter.

I experienced some difficulty in translating this verse. Here is what some others did:

Easy to Read Version	If the master promised to let the slave woman marry his son, then she must not be treated like a slave. She must be treated like a daughter.
Lexham English Bible	And if he selects her for his son, he shall do for her according to the regulations for daughters.
English Standard Version	If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. [Kukis: the ESV appears to use a manuscript which lacks the word <i>mîsh^epâṭ</i> (מִשְׁפַּט).]
Webster's translation	And if he espouses her to his son, he will deal with her according to the manner of daughters.

What appears to be the case is, if a master gives a slave woman that he purchased to his son in marriage, then she is no longer to be treated as a slave; but treated just as all women are treated (or should be treated) in marriage.

The way that this is set up covers all bases, whether this woman was purchased as a slave; or had her dowry paid for by her service.

Exodus 21:10 **If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.** (NKJV)

One word is a problem in v.10 and that is the one often translated *food* (NASB, KJV, *The Amplified Bible*, NRSV and Owen's). This word is *sh^eêr* (שֶׁר) [pronounced *sh^eair*] which is translated in the Pentateuch as *blood relative, near kinsman*. The word means *flesh*, but it is used more figuratively for a close relationship, as we see in Leviticus 18:6, 12, 13, 20:19 21:2 25:19 Numbers 27:11 (this is a complete listing in the Pentateuch).

Therefore, in this context, this could be rendered this *marriage rights, status, position*. This would certainly include getting enough food to eat.

My translation of Exodus 21:10: *If he [the son] takes another [woman] to himself [in marriage], her food and clothing and her marriage rights must be preserved [lit., may not be withdrawn]*. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

There would be times when a man might take more than one wife. Interestingly enough, there is nothing said about this in the Old Testament. That is, there are no prohibitions in this regard that I remember having come across. Interestingly enough, there are only a few examples of men having more than one wife (and in many cases, the second wife comes on the scene when the first wife is long gone or dead, as in the cases of Abraham and Moses).

Let me suggest why this is the case. When a man marries, he may find that his wife is a handful, from time to time. If he was to introduce another woman into the family—a second wife—what are the changes that having two women under the same roof are potentially far more than a handful.

At one time, I had two women as roommates. When things were good, they were good; but if things went south, they went way, way south.

Back to the passage at hand.

Exodus 21:10: *If he [the son] takes another [woman] to himself [in marriage], her food and clothing and her marriage rights must be preserved [lit., may not be withdrawn]*. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

What God requires is, the first wife—in this case, a former slave—cannot be treated differently or demoted back to being a slave or anything like that. In marriage, the man has the responsibility for the woman, to see that she is taken care of. She is still to be fed and clothed and she retains all of her rights as a wife, no matter what happens along the road of life.

You will note that, no matter what the buyer/dowry payer claims, this woman may not be mistreated in any way.

Exodus 21:10 *If he [the son] takes another [woman] to himself [in marriage], her food and clothing and her marriage rights must be preserved [lit., may not be withdrawn]*. (NKJV)

What we are dealing with is a man who has purchased a woman with the stated purpose that she would be wed to him or to his son. In v. 8, he potentially loses the control of the woman because he purchased her under false pretenses; in v. 9, if she becomes his daughter-in-law, she is to be treated as a daughter and not in any way shape or form as a slave. And if the husband later takes a new wife, she is not to receive a lessor portion or position than that to which she has become accustomed.

In this last law, it is God's first choice for us to be married to one woman. However, in this point in time, men did marry several women and had several concubines so that God set up laws concerning those circumstances.

Links to Doctrines on Marriage

The **Doctrine of the Christian Marriage** ([grace notes](#))

The **Doctrine of Marriage** ([Robert Deffinbaugh, ThM](#))

Love in Marriage ([Grace Doctrine.org](#))

Marriage and More ([West Bank Bible Church](#))

Marriage Roles ([Grace Bible Church](#))

Marriage; Considering Marriage ([Grace Bible Church](#))

Marriage ([Lake Erie Bible Church](#))

Divorce and Remarriage ([Lake Erie Bible Church](#))

The **Doctrine of Polygamy** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))

Exodus 21:11a [And if he does not do these three for her,...](#) (NKJV)

The husband—in the example given, the son of her master—must continue to provide for her all of these things: food, clothing and normal marital privileges. There would be a consequence if he did not.

Exodus 21:11b [...then she shall go out free, without paying money.](#) (NKJV)

If the woman, the former maidservant, is not taken care of, then she can exit the marriage and leave that family entirely. She owes nothing to them; and she has her complete freedom.

This is the case, whether the man who paid for her claims that she is a slave or a wife (for himself or for his son). It does not matter how much he paid for her, under the circumstances described, she leaves this arrangement without cost and without ties.

Exodus 21:11 [And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.](#) (NKJV)

Exodus 21:9–11 [And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.](#) (NKJV)

In these laws, God has given three different scenarios and how one who purchases an Hebrew woman from her family should deal with her. Generally speaking, if he does not deal honorably with her as so stated, then she may leave him without being purchased.

The key to understanding and appreciating all that is taking place here, we must see the entire context, which is vv. 7–11:

Exodus 21:7–8 If a man sells his daughter as a maid, she will not be subject to the same work done by the male slaves. If she disappoints her master, he still may not reassign her, selling her to a foreign people. He does not have the authority to sell her in this way. (Kukis paraphrase)

Exodus 21:9–11 Let's say her owner assigns her in marriage to one of his sons, and all the preparations are done for her. If the son takes on another wife in marriage, her support must be maintained (her food, shelter, clothing and marriage rights). If the owner does not do these things for her, then she may leave that family, freely and without cost. (Kukis paraphrase)

Too often, Biblical critics will take a small portion of this, using a poor translation, and have reason to complain about the treatment of this woman. However, when taken in its full context, God is looking after the woman, by His law, for her entire life, even if she has come out of abject poverty.

There is somewhat of a hidden gem in this passage. Remember, there is the master (the man who paid for her) and the woman (who perhaps was purchased to marry one of his sons and perhaps as a slave). The master, the man, cannot say, "This woman is a disappointment; I did not get a good woman in this process. I really have no choice but to sell her to someone else (a non-Jewish family)." He cannot say or do any of that, even as the master.

However, the woman—the slave woman, if you will—if she is married to one of the sons and he takes another wife in addition to her, she can say, "I am not being taken care of as a wife should be taken care of. I should be released." And then she walks away, freely and without cost. The testimony of the slave-owner, whether true or not, is not accepted; but the testimony of the woman is accepted at face value.

All of the laws conditions and limitations are placed on the master, the one who paid for her. These laws do not place conditions and limitations on her. God sees that a woman out of poverty is taken care of, even if her own family was financially unable to do so.

Does that sound anti-woman to you?

Lessons 348–349: Exodus 21:12

Capital Punishment

The Law Concerning Violence

Exodus 21:12–17 give us a list of offenses for which the death penalty is prescribed. These are not the only capital offenses, but they are a list of important ones.

Exodus 21:12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. (NKJV)

People confuse *you will not kill*, a commandment, and understand this to mean that it is a sin to kill anyone at any time. That is not what we are told here. If one man kills another man, then he will be executed—and *executed* is emphasized (we know this because the verb is doubled).

At least one commentator tells us, *well, that's it; whether it is manslaughter or murder, execution is the end result*. However, this is false, because in the next two verses, there will be a careful differentiation between the two, with much different outcomes.

It is very problematic when you take one statement (like v. 12) and accept it as the end-all, be-all. However, vv. 13–14 modify v. 12. V. 13 describes what a man is to do if he is guilty of involuntary manslaughter; and v. 14 is specifically about premeditated murder. When it comes to culpability, these are clearly differentiated in Scripture—spoken by God 3500 years ago—and in today's law.

Exodus 21:12 **“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. (NKJV)**

I personally am at a loss as to the sentencing differences between first and second degree murder. God does not distinguish between having prior intent or murdering someone right on the spot. When you strike a man with the intent of injuring them, whether this is a festering desire for many years or something which suddenly manifests itself; the result should be the same: execution. All men who murder in our system should be executed. There is no excuse for ever allowing a murderer to live out their life on death row; allow them endless chances to appeal on technicalities (and, simultaneously, disallow appeals where there is reasonable indication that the convicted person is innocent); and it is even worse to allow them back on the street. In the way our society has degenerated, it would not be inhumane to sentence 13 and 14 year old murderers to death row and to carry out the sentence quickly.

In our study of the Mosaic Law, this is the first law to carry with it the death penalty presented in the Law.

This is the first appearance of capital punishment in the Mosaic Law and the second in the Old Testament (we first find it in Genesis 9). For this reason, we are going to look at several articles on capital punishment:

This article is taken from the website <http://www.gotquestions.org/>

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

Question: “What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?”

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

Answer: The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder (Exodus 21:12), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), bestiality (Exodus 22:19), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), homosexuality²⁹ (Leviticus 20:13), being a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:5), prostitution and rape (Deuteronomy 22:24), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken (2Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 2Samuel 12:13). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us (Romans 5:8).

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated grace when capital punishment was due (John 8:1-11). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate (Romans 13:1-7).

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government's right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes.

From <http://www.gotquestions.org/death-penalty.html> accessed June 15, 2010. This is an excellent site, by the way, with a great many answers to Biblical questions.

This article is originally from the website <http://www.apologeticspress.org/>

²⁹ People were not executed for having homosexual desires; they were executed for acting on them.

Capital Crimes in the Old Testament (Dave Miller)

Very early in human history, God decreed that murderers were to forfeit their own lives: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he the man" (Genesis 9:6). This standard continued into the Mosaic period (cf. Numbers 35:33). As a matter of fact, the law God gave to Moses to regulate the Israelite nation made provision for at least sixteen capital crimes. In sixteen instances, the death penalty was to be invoked. The first four may be categorized as pertaining to civil matters.

1. Under the law of Moses, the death penalty was required in cases of premeditated murder (Exodus 21:12-14,22-23; Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21). This outcome even included the situation in which two men might be fighting and, in the process, cause the death of an innocent bystander or her unborn infant. It did not include accidental homicide, which we call "manslaughter."
2. Kidnaping was a capital crime under the Old Testament (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). One movie, which was based on an actual incident, depicted the kidnaping of a seven-year-old boy as he was walking home from school. The man who stole him kept him for some seven years, putting the child through emotional and sexual abuse, before the boy, at age fifteen, was finally returned to his parents. He was a different child, and never again would be the same. God would not tolerate such a thing in the Old Testament, and much of the same would be stopped in America if such crimes were taken more seriously.
3. A person could be put to death for striking or cursing his parents (Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9). Jesus alluded to this point in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10.
4. Incurable rebelliousness was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 17:12). For example, a stubborn, disobedient, rebellious son who would not submit to parents or civil authorities was to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The next six capital crimes can be identified as more specifically pertaining to spiritual matters.

5. Sacrificing to false gods was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:20).
6. Violating the Sabbath brought the death penalty (Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36).
7. Blasphemy, or cursing God, warranted the death penalty (Leviticus 24:10-16,23).
8. The false prophet, specifically one who tried to entice the people to idolatry, was to be executed (Deuteronomy 13:1-11), as were the people who were so influenced (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).
9. Human sacrifice was a capital crime (Leviticus 20:2). The Israelites were tempted to offer their children to false pagan deities, like Molech. Such acts were despicable to God.
10. Divination, or the dabbling in the magical arts, was a capital crime. Consequently, under Mosaic law, witches, sorcerers, wizards, mediums, charmers, soothsayers, diviners, spiritists, and enchanters were to be put to death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

The next six crimes pertain to sexual matters.

Capital Crimes in the Old Testament (Dave Miller)

11. Adultery was punishable by death under the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22). Can you imagine what would happen in our own country if adultery brought the death penalty? Most of Hollywood would be wiped out, as well as a sizeable portion of the rest of our population!
12. Bestiality, i.e., having sexual relations with an animal, was punishable by death (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15-16).
13. Incest was a capital offense in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:6-17; 20:11-12, 14).
14. Homosexual acts could be punished by death (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).
15. Premarital sex, in some specific instances, brought the death penalty (Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 22:20-21).
16. Rape of an engaged or married woman was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:25-27). Again, imagine what would happen in this country if rape brought the death penalty! Much of the unconscionable treatment of women now taking place would be terminated.

Capital punishment was written into God's will for the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. The death penalty was a viable form of punishment for at least sixteen separate offenses. Some people have misunderstood one of the Ten Commandments which says, "You will not kill" (Exodus 20:13). They have assumed that the law forbade taking human life under any circumstances. But God required the death penalty for some sixteen crimes. Therefore, the commandment would have been better translated, "You will not murder." In other words, the command was a prohibition against an individual taking the law into his own hands and exercising personal vengeance. But God wanted the execution of law breakers to be carried out by duly constituted legal authorities.

From <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/1974> accessed June 15, 2010 (edited).

This article disappeared from Apologetics Press; however, it is also posted here: <https://truediscipleship.com/capital-punishment-and-the-bible-3/> accessed September 18, 2024.

I don't necessarily need to redo what has already done. This is an article by Gregory Koukl

The Bible and Capital Punishment (by Gregory Koukl)

I. The Bible and Capital Punishment

- a. Capital punishment was commanded by God in the Old Testament.
 - i. It preceded the Mosaic Law. Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.
 - ii. It was based on the dignity of man, i.e. man's transcendent value. Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.
 - iii. It was commanded in the Mosaic Law.
 - (1) Twenty-one different offenses called for the death penalty in the Old Testament.
 - (2) Only three include an actual or potential capital offense, by our

The Bible and Capital Punishment (by Gregory Koukl)

- standards.
- (3) Six are for religious offenses.
- (4) Ten are for various moral issues.
- (5) Two relate to ceremonial issues.
- iv. "But King David wasn't put to death for his capital crimes."
 - (1) David understood what justice demanded in this case: "[As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.](#)" 2Sam 12:5
 - (2) If God chose to set aside punishment, that doesn't mean the punishment is unjust when it is executed. God was the one who required capital punishment in many instances.
- b. Capital punishment was assumed in the New Testament.
 - i. God ordains governing authorities:
 - (1) John 19:11 [Jesus answered \[Pilate\], "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above."](#) Romans 13:1-2 [Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.](#)
 - (2) 1Peter 2:13-14 [Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.](#)
 - ii. Those governments may practice capital punishment. Romans 13:3-4 [For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.](#)
 - (1) Acts 25:11 ["If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."](#)
- c. Jesus' ethic of love and forgiveness doesn't disallow capital punishment.
 - i. "But Jesus would forgive."
 - (1) This argument proves too much.
 - (a) It becomes an argument against any punishment what-so-ever.
 - (b) What should we do with the criminal we've forgiven?
 - (c) Life in prison instead of capital punishment?
 - (d) But Jesus would forgive.
 - (2) Jesus never challenged the validity of the death penalty.
 - (a) In John 8:3-11, for example, there were no witnesses left to testify against the woman caught in adultery (the Law required at least two witnesses).

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- (b) Jesus actually upheld the Law here, He didn't abrogate it, but He did so in a way that wouldn't allow the evil designs of the Scribes and Pharisees to be accomplished.
 - (3) Jesus asked God to forgive, not Caesar; He didn't suggest civil punishment or capital punishment was inappropriate.
 - (4) We must argue for the coherence and consistency of both Testaments.
 - (a) The question is not, "Was Jesus right or was Moses right?"
 - (b) We must also factor in Paul and Peter.
 - ii. "Jesus was crucified."
 - (1) I'm not sure what the point is here? Yes, Jesus was the victim of capital punishment, but what follows from that?
 - (2) The real issue regarding Jesus was not capital punishment, but His innocence.
 - (a) Peter assails the act of handing over an innocent man to godless executioners.
 - (b) Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23)
 - iii. But what about forgiveness?
 - (1) God's mercy is always available in His court.
 - (2) Man's court is another matter, governed by different biblical responsibilities.
- d. One simply can't say that capital punishment is patently immoral on biblical grounds.
 - i. Jesus did not "abolish the Law," He fulfilled it, but not in the sense that all laws are wiped from the books. Then we would have no punishment for any biblical crimes.
 - ii. Matt 5:17-19: **Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.**

II. Retributionism vs. Rehabilitationism

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- a. Each position is based on a particular view of man.
 - i. Rehabilitationism
 - (1) Man is man sick, needing healing.
 - (2) Man is a machine needing fixing.
 - ii. Retributionism
 - (1) Man is a free moral agent who makes choices for which he can be held responsible for.
 - (2) Man is worthy of praise, resulting in reward, or blame, deserving punishment.
- b. The case for retributionism
 - i. Man a free moral agent.
 - (1) He is capable of choosing good or bad behavior.
 - (2) He may be influenced by his environment, but not ultimately controlled by it.
 - (3) We have an immediate awareness of our moral natures, that we freely make moral choices.
 - (4) It seems to make sense to praise and reward good behavior. If we're not responsible for our choices neither blame nor praise make any sense.
 - (5) If we are not free agents, then we are determined and therefore not responsible for our behavior, either good or bad. B.F. Skinner was right; we've got to bite the bullet and realize that we're "beyond freedom and dignity."
 - ii. Crime is not pathological, deserving rehabilitation, but moral, deserving punishment.
 - (1) The goal of justice is penal, not remedial, moral, not therapeutic.
 - (2) Two purposes of capital punishment:
 - (a) Justice demands punishment of the guilty.
 - (b) Goodness demands protecting the innocent in society.
 - (i) "Capital punishment is to the whole society what self-defense is to the individual." *The Ethics of Life and Death* J.P. Moreland, p. 115.
 - (ii) Dennis Prager: "We have a war going on here between murderers and society, but only one side is allowed to kill." [Prager is describing a society where there is virtually no capital punishment, which is what is taking place in the United States.]
 - iii. The punishment should fit the crime (*lex talionis*).
 - iv. Capital punishment fits capital crimes (crimes that involve the loss of life).

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- c. Objections to retributionism
 - i. Arguments that prove too much.
 - (1) Many arguments against capital punishment prove too much because they apply with equal force against any punishment at all.
 - (2) "Capital punishment is applied unfairly."
 - (a) Even if this were true, the injustice here applies to those that got away, not to those that got punished. It's never unjust to punish a guilty man if the punishment itself fits the crime (*lex talionis*). The injustice is remedied by applying it more often, not less.
 - (b) Better unequal justice than no justice at all.
 - (c) If one man is paid for a job (he gets what he deserves) and another isn't, how do you rectify the inequity? You don't take away what the first man deserves, withholding his pay because the second man didn't get paid. That would double the injustice.
 - (3) "Innocent people get condemned."
 - (a) This is a criticism of any system of justice, not a particular type of punishment. Life is flawed, not capital punishment.
 - (b) Why must we accept a philosophy that says it's better for 100 guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be condemned?
 - (c) Guilty people repeat crimes that injure and even kill other innocent people.
 - (d) "But death can't be undone." No punishment can be undone.
 - (e) Our attempts at improving justice here must be at the level of the process of adjudication making any determination of guilt more trustworthy.
 - ii. Other objections:
 - (1) "How can you be for capital punishment but against abortion" (the "seamless garment" argument)?
 - (a) The term "Pro-life" is actually a misnomer. Our case is not for every one's life or every form of life. Pro-lifer's are against the unjust taking of innocent human life, particularly the life of the unborn child.
 - (b) The right to life is not an absolute; it can be forfeited. This moral right is only *prima facie*; it stands only until challenged by some greater law, like justice or protecting the lives of the innocent.
 - (c) We also have a right to freedom, but it can be

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- properly overridden with incarceration when certain conditions are met.
- (d) An unborn child has committed no crime that forfeits its life.
- (2) "Capital punishment is cruel and unusual."
- (a) It's not cruel and unusual, but rather the exact punishment that fits the crime.
 - (b) This is an appeal to the language of the Bill of Rights, but the ones who wrote those words believed in capital punishment. If one wants to redefine the term for modern times, then he cannot argue from the Bill of Rights itself, because that has the old definition.
- (3) "Capital punishment doesn't work; it doesn't deter crime."
- (a) It always deters the offender. Dead people don't commit more crimes.
 - (b) If it lacks in deterrence, it might be because it is not widely exercised or not done speedily enough to be a threat.
 - (c) The principal goal of capital punishment is not deterrence, but punishment. In that way it works every time.
- (4) "Why not a life sentence?"
- (a) Confuses a life sentence with a death sentence.
 - (b) It's unjust (doesn't fit the crime) because the criminal only loses liberty, not life.
- (5) "This kind of death is undignified."
- (a) In one sense, all death is undignified.
 - (b) Argues only against certain aggravated forms of capital punishment and not capital punishment itself.
 - (c) In the final analysis, the question is not the dignity of death, but its equity or justice.
- (6) "There's no opportunity of to reform the criminal." Justice is the goal of punishment, not reform.
- (7) "Capital punishment violates human dignity."
- (a) It is specifically because of man's value and dignity that we punish his moral wrongdoing. We don't punish animals for stealing or killing (we don't punish them, we remove them for our safety).
 - (b) We hold men morally responsible because of dignity.
 - (c) "It is based on the assumption that normal adult beings are rational and moral beings who knew better, who could have done otherwise, but yet who chose to do evil anyway, and who therefore deserve to be punished." JPM p. 118

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- (d) Arguably it is undignified to force rehabilitation on free moral agents who don't want it.
- (8) Roman Catholic objections
 - (a) The Catholic position against capital punishment is somewhat ironic given their position on purgatory, in which even when God forgives a sinner, still he must suffer for his own sins.
 - (b) What of the practice of penance?

Taken from: <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5164> accessed June 15, 2010 (slightly edited).

Lesson 350: Exodus 21:12–14

Capital Punishment—Part II

Here is an article written by George Zeller:

I have updated the language of the King James Bible, which appears to have been the version that Zeller used.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject? (By George Zeller)

1. Instituted by God Himself

Capital punishment was instituted by God Himself after the worldwide flood. We learn of this in Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God He made man." This verse speaks of a murderer, one who knowingly and violently sheds another man's blood, resulting in death. God here gives man the authority and the right and the duty to put to death the murderer: "by man shall his blood be shed." The reason given for this is based upon the value and sacredness of human life: "for in the image of God He made man." In this case we have justice being carried out according to the rule: "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Exodus 21:23-24). The penalty should fit the crime. In this case the crime is murder and the penalty is death. Notice that Genesis 9:6 was given to man even before the law of Moses was given.

2. "Thou Shalt Not Kill"?

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

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Capital punishment is not a violation of the sixth commandment which says, "You will not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The proper translation of this verb is "You will not murder." See modern translations (such as the NASB, the NIV and the NKJV) and also see Matthew 19:18 in the KJV. All murder is killing but not all killing is murder. Some examples of killing that would not be considered as murder are as follows: a) killing the enemy in war (Bible examples: David killing Goliath, Joshua and the Israelites when they conquered the land); b) a husband, discovering a man about to kill his wife and/or children, protects and defends his family by having to kill the attacker; c) a policeman who kills in the line of duty in order to protect innocent life; d) the person carrying out capital punishment, such as the man who must pull the switch for the electric chair; e) accidental killing, when the killer never intended to take someone's life. We should also note that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will "judge and make war" at His second coming resulting in countless numbers of deaths (Revelation 19:11-20).

3. Crimes Punishable By Death

We are assured that capital punishment is not a violation of the Ten Commandments. This is evident when one studies the chapter which immediately follows the ten commandments: Exodus chapter 21 (the Ten Commandments are found in chapter 20). In chapter 21 we learn that God in His law demanded the death penalty for a number of crimes such as murder, kidnapping, cursing parents, etc. See Exodus 21:12,15,16,17. See also Leviticus 20:10-17 for other crimes punishable by death in the law of Moses.

4. The Executioner As God's Servant

In New Testament times capital punishment was still being practiced. Romans 13:4 says that God has given human governments the authority to execute wrath upon evildoers by means of a sword (a common instrument of capital punishment in New Testament days). The Apostle Paul was living in a day when capital punishment was commonly practiced in the Roman empire (quite unlike our day), and yet he did not condemn this practice. On the contrary he described the person who bears the sword as being God's servant. Thus the one punishing the evildoer does so in the exercise of God's delegated authority.

5. An Effective Deterrent

Capital punishment, when consistently practiced, is a very effective deterrent to crime because the fear of death is the greatest fear that man has (see Hebrews 2:14-15). Since death is the king of fears, a man will think twice about committing a crime if he knows it will cost him his life. He will be less reluctant to murder someone if he knows that the worst that could happen to him is to stay in jail the rest of his life with meals provided, television to watch, etc. When swift justice is carried out then "those who remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil" (Deuteronomy 19:20). When the right penalty is not executed speedily, then this is an encouragement to crime (see Eccles. 8:11).

6. Cruel and Inhumane?

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject? (By George Zeller)

Is capital punishment cruel and inhumane? Death is usually not pleasant to witness, and certainly those responsible for putting a criminal to death do not have an enviable task. Nevertheless we need to be careful that we do not focus on the criminal and forget about the victim of the crime. Cold-blooded murder is very cruel and inhumane. Forcible rape is very cruel and inhumane. Hijacking an airplane and endangering the lives of many innocent people is very cruel and inhumane. Pushing life-destroying drugs is very cruel and inhumane. In our zeal to protect the criminal we can lose sight of the terribleness of the crime. Regardless of a person's position on capital punishment, all would have to agree that if a murderer is put to death, he will never murder again. It is remarkable that those people who decry capital punishment as being a cruel and inhumane method of destroying people's lives are often the same people who are strongly in favor of abortion rights. Why does a guilty murderer have a greater right to life than an unborn child?

7. Paul's Own Testimony

What did the Apostle Paul think of capital punishment? Did he consider it to be unfair and cruel and inhumane? We have already considered Paul's teaching in Romans 13, but we should also make note of what the Apostle said in Acts 25:11: **"If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die."** Paul knew that there were certain crimes that were worthy of death, and he knew that those guilty of such crimes must be executed. If he was guilty of such, then he would not refuse to die. He would submit to capital punishment if he had done deeds worthy of such. Of course, Paul was innocent of any such crimes, and yet he was eventually executed under Nero. For what crime? For preaching the gospel of the grace of God!

8. Bright Barbarians

Even uncultured men know deep down in their hearts that certain crimes demand the death penalty. This is illustrated in Acts 28 when Paul was shipwrecked upon the island of Melita (Malta) where he met a group of kindly barbarians (v.1-2). As Paul was gathering sticks for the fire, a deadly venomous snake bit him on the hand. Normally such a bite would be fatal in a matter of minutes. When the natives saw this they said, **"No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the [judgment of the] sea, yet justice does not allow him to live"** (v.4). These natives saw what they thought was the penalty (death) and thus they assumed the crime (he must be a murderer). They soon learned that they were mistaken, but the point is that these barbarians had a built in sense of justice and they knew that murderers should pay for their crime by death.

9. The Testimony of a Thief (Robber)

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject? (By George Zeller)

In Luke chapter 23 we have the honest testimony of a man who was being put to death for crimes he had done. This was capital punishment by means of Roman crucifixion. This man was an evildoer, he was arrested, and he was found guilty of crimes worthy of death. Modern methods of execution are generally very mild and painless as compared to Roman crucifixion. What did this man think of capital punishment? Was he opposed to it? Did he consider it to be cruel and inhumane? Did he think it to be unfair and unjust? Here is his testimony (his words to the other condemned criminal): **"Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds"** (Luke 23:40-41). In other words, he was saying, "We are getting exactly what we deserve: death by crucifixion. What we have done is worthy of death!" Before men and before human government most of us are not guilty of crimes worthy of death. However, before a Holy God every one of us needs to recognize that we have done certain things that are worthy of death (see Romans 1:29-32; 6:23a). As the Old Testament says, **"The soul that sins, it shall die"** (Ezekiel 18:4). How thankful we should be that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered the death penalty for us: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

10. The Death of an Innocent Man

If capital punishment is practiced, are there not times when an innocent man is pronounced guilty and put to death? Yes, sadly this is true. Our judicial system is far from perfect and there are times when the guilty are justified and the innocent are condemned (compare Deuteronomy 25:1). Even without the death penalty, it is true that occasionally some innocent men are sent to prison even for life. We must remember that there is in heaven a true and righteous Judge who sees all and who knows all and who someday will make right all that is wrong and will straighten out all that is crooked. In eternity, all will be corrected (see Luke 16:25 for an example of this). The greatest example of an innocent man being put to death is that of the Lord Jesus Himself, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1Peter . 2:22). The only sinless Man who ever lived was condemned to death by crucifixion! As we think about Christ's death, we must remember that it was for our sins that He suffered and bled and died (1Corinthians 15:3; Romans 5:8). **For Christ also having once suffered for (our) sins, the Just (the Righteous One) for the unjust (the unrighteous ones), that He might bring us to God** (1Peter 3:18). We are the guilty ones who deserved the death penalty (Romans 6:23), but Jesus paid it all! He died so that we might live (John 5:24)!

From: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/capitalp.htm> accessed June 15, 2010.

What started us off on the examination of killing versus murder was v. 12:

Exodus 21:12 **"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.** (NKJV)

The Contemporary English Version simplifies things up for us:

Exodus 21:12 **Death is the punishment for murder.** (CEV)

The Bible becomes a bit more specific at this point. This is because all killing is not murder. Many times, what is key is what is in the thinking of the person doing the killing. However, since we cannot really determine what that is, we rely on actions to clarify the type of killing which takes place.

Exodus 21:13a *However, if he did not lie in wait,....* (NKJV)

Here, the Bible distinguishes between murder and manslaughter. Let's say someone has been killed, but the killer did not lie in wait with the intention of harming him. *Lying in wait* would be premeditation. *Not lying in wait* would indicate no premeditation.

Exodus 21:13b *...but God delivered him into his hand,....* (NKJV)

This is a difficult phrase to translate. I believe the idea here is, God allows this to happen, and that a death does take place, but it is unintentional. There are no specific circumstances given, because unintentional deaths can occur in a myriad of ways. For one man, it is the time that God calls him.

Here are some other translations:

Exodus 21:13a-b *If, however, he did not lie in wait, but God allowed it to happen,...* (Berean Study Bible)

Exodus 21:13a-b *But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand,...* (ESV)

Exodus 21:13a-b *However, if he did not lie in wait, but God allowed the meeting into his hand,...* (Voice in the Wilderness)

Exodus 21:13a-b *And when he does not lie in wait [to harm him], and Elohim has caused [them] to meet regarding his hand,...* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

This is a reasonably literal translation, yet it is still difficult to sort out. The text is very general, not describing a specific set of circumstances which result in one man dying. However, the One Who has caused this to take place is God. The volition of the man who remains alive is not a factor. We understand this to mean involuntary manslaughter.

When X waits for Y in order to kill him, X is guilty of premeditated murder. V. 13b essentially says that the killing was not premeditated and that God allowed this to take place.

Exodus 21:13c *...then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.* (NKJV)

When someone dies at the hand of another, there are going to be situations which arise as a result. The family of the deceased may want some form of justice, no matter what. They may seek this man's life, even if the death was accidental.

God is going to set up a place where a person who committed involuntary manslaughter may flee. These are known as cities of refuge. One of the main things here is, to take the person who committed this act and get him out of town. You want there to be distance between that person and the family of the deceased. The city of refuge allows for that distance.

All of the details for these places will be given at a later date. Obviously, Israel is not yet settled, so where these cities are makes little difference to them.

Nevertheless, the concept is this: if a man is guilty of manslaughter, but did not intentionally kill a person, then his life will be spared. However, he will have to leave his city or town, and go to an altar designated by God, and grab on to that altar. God protects his life but God does not let him return to his hometown.

Exodus 21:13 *However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.* (NKJV)

This is involuntary manslaughter—precise details are not given because there can be so many different circumstances; however, here, someone has killed another man without meaning to. God will set up cities of refuge where such a one can go to be protected from execution.

Exodus 21:14a *“But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor,...* (NKJV)

Let’s say that the killing involved some form of mental attitude sin; such as pride or seething with anger, etc. Then this is no longer a case of involuntary manslaughter. There is a clear motivation, which is a mental attitude sin or cluster of mental attitude sins.

Exodus 21:14b *...to kill him by treachery,...* (NKJV)

The killing involved some form of craftiness or cunning or guile. So, there was some sort of premeditation. There was some planning out. It is this cunning or guile, revealed by developing a plot to kill another, which is revealed in the preliminary actions.

Exodus 21:14c *...you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.* (NKJV)

Even if such a one flees to the altar in a city of refuge, God calls for his removal and for him to be executed. So, just because a person runs to the altar of God and grabs onto it, that does not mean that they are automatically adjudged to be innocent. God’s altar did not become an automatic safe zone. In a circumstance as defined here, someone who has grabbed onto the altar may be dragged away to be executed.

You will find the laws of God to be quite straightforward, and capital punishment is often what is required.

Exodus 21:14 “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die. (NKJV)

When you hear of the refuge cities, the first thing you think of is, *what about the guilty murderer who flees to them*. Therefore we have this ordinance: this is a person who planned out the murder and then escaped to a refuge city. This person is to be taken from God's altar and put to death. An occurrence of this is recorded in 1Kings 2:28–34. Despite the sacredness of the altar, there is no clemency for a murderer. A criminal does not escape justice through some loophole in the Mosaic Law. We could learn from that.