

SN003 – 04/14/13
“No Graven Images”
Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

- We are taking a few months to go through the 10 Commandments found in Exodus Chapter 20
 - Now why in the world in New Testament age of Grace times would we want to do that?

Well for one reason on Wednesday Nights we are looking at the Book of Exodus from which the 10 Commandments come in its entirety

- And seeing the context for what we are studying is so important and so I want to connect the two
 - This week.....

Okay, sounds interesting but why are we studying the law with all its weird customs and dietary laws

- Well remember the first five books of the Bible are called the Law, but much of it is what the New Testament calls the Law of Moses
 - the holiday the Jews were suppose to keep
 - the rights of cleanliness that the Jews were to do
 - the Law of Moses was given to the Jewish people for that time
- The 10 commandments are different – they are given to all people for all time
 - Why???

Why are the 10 Commandments Important?

#1 – The Law Drives us to Christ

- We wonder why don't people see their need for Christ. Why do people walk away from Jesus?

I think one of the reasons is because we do a disservice to the gospel of Jesus Christ when we say things like – Give your life to Christ, He will make your life better

- It has been such a good experience for me!

We are like the flight attendant I talked about the first night who had been told by the pilot, 3 of the 4 engines have failed and we are going down, get the parachutes out

- But that flight attendant, like many of us, we don't want to offend, we don't want to impose

So she says, hey, sorry to interrupt your in-flight movie, sorry to interrupt your diet coke drinking – but would anyone like a parachute

- see how good it looks on me, it should you seat more comfortable
 - and most people are like why is this person interrupting my movie
 - and the few who take one, realize right away, it doesn't make my seat more comfortable and they want to take it off

But if that flight would have been honest with the people – We are going down

- but good news, we have a parachute, who wants one
 - well then no one would care about the movie or their soda
 - no – help me, give me the parachute

And so too when we in love, help people to see there is a standard, and you have fallen short and the wages of sin really is death

- but good news, there is a savior
 - The law doesn't save us, doesn't make us more acceptable to God
 - But when we understand it, it drives us to Christ

Why are the 10 Commandments Important?

#1 – The Law Drives us to Christ

#2 – The Law Directs us in Christ

- The Law show us our duty to God and to our fellow man – this is how you love God and love people
 - And in a day and age where so many including Christians do whatever is right in their own eyes, because we have lost the standard
- We live in the age of Grace which I am thankful for, we could not be saved without grace
 - But we sometimes think well then it doesn't matter how I live, grace brother – no friend there is a standard

Why are the 10 Commandments Important?

#1 – The Law Drives us to Christ

#2 – The Law Directs us in Christ

#3 – The Law helps us Discover Christ

- You learn something about the Law giver from the laws

Some of the laws on the books in our city governments let us know that at one time someone making laws was dumb

- Last week we picked on California, this week lets talk about laws in Texas
 - In Texas When two trains meet each other at a railroad crossing, each shall come to a full stop, and neither shall proceed until the other has gone. – think that one through...
 - The entire Encyclopedia Britannica is banned in Texas because it contains a formula for making beer at home.
 - And my favorite - It is illegal for one to shoot a buffalo from the second story of a hotel.
- We will look at other states as this series progresses

But those laws tell you something about the lawgivers

- well the 10 Commandments are the same
 - and what we primarily will discover about God from His law is that He is love

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” - I John 5:3

- As we keep His commandments
 - Not to save us, not to qualify us for His love
 - But just as we are directed in Christ - I experience His love for me

When my Mom decided to drive through hurricane Katrina, we went to get her, to drive all night to get her here before the storm hit. I have great trouble staying awake – so I got some of those energy boost – honey bee wings, bark from a tree in New Genuine – and I picked up about five packets of this stuff and began to take them. Now I read the back which said “take one every four hours, and I thought that doesn’t apply to me – I drink Ice Tea and other caffeinated drinks like there is no tomorrow, I can handle it. That warning is a conspiracy between the tree huggers who don’t want me to consume all their New Genuine tree bark. So the first hour great, started to wear off and then I took another and then another, by the time we got to Texarkana – I wasn’t feeling so good, my pupils were huge, my heart was pounding – I really couldn’t feel my fingers - And I began to realize those rule were not a conspiracy they were there for my good, for my benefit

➤ Same thing with the laws of God and tonight we get to Commandment #2...

“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. 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.” – Exodus 20:4-6

3 Things we want to consider as we as work through this second commandment of God

“You shall not make for yourself an Idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

#3 – The Result – Exodus 20:5-6

➤ Lets consider these one at a time

“You shall not make for yourself an Idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

➤ Many people don’t know this, I sure didn’t until I starting reading for this series – but there is a division in the church on how the 10 Commandments are to be divided –

○ Catholics and Lutherans believe and teach that verses 3-6 are one commandment, the you shall have no other gods and you shall make no idol is one commandment

➤ Where as the rest of Protestantism see it as two

○ the Catholics and Lutherans make up the difference and still get to 10 commandments, (because you can’t have 9 commandments) by dividing the last commandment on coveting into two

○ Commandment #9 – You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife

○ Commandment #10 – You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods

The reason is the Catholic and Lutherans combine verses 3-6 into one commandment is they think the whole section is about the same subject - worshipping the right God

➤ But there are actually two different things in view in Exodus 20:3-6

Commandment #1 – You shall have no other gods

➤ is about worshipping the right God, but....

Commandment #2 – You shall not make any idols

- this commandment is not about worshipping the right God, but about worshipping the right God in a right way

A great way to see the difference is illustrated in the life of King Jehu from II Kings Chapter 10

- He got rid of the worship of Baal, he cut down all the high places, where the worship of the false gods took place
 - and God commends him for doing so, but then it says in II Kings 10:29 that he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam in that he allowed the people to worship the golden calves at Bethel and Dan

Now the question is - why would King Jehu who did so much to get rid of Baal worship, why would he keep these sacred cows?

- listen, listen, key to understanding tonight
 - He did it because the “cows” were suppose to represent God
 - They didn’t represent the false gods Baal and Ashtoreth
- They were suppose to represent the true and the living God

YOU see, we will see later in Exodus as we study the whole book on Wednesday Nights - Aaron, Moses brother is watching after the people while Moses is on the Mountain, the people get antsy and demand that Aaron make them a god. So you that know that story know that Aaron makes the golden calf, he says...

“This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” – Exodus 32:4

➤ but notice that, not here is your new god you are to worship, but this is your god Aaron wasn’t trying to give them a new god, he was trying to give them a picture of who God was

- So when later in Israel’s history, when King Jehu is ruling he gets rid of Baal and Ashtoreth and in doing that he keeps commandment #1 – no other Gods
 - But in keeping the cows – he was worshipping God in a wrong way and violating commandment #2 – Worshipping the True God in a wrong way
 - And we are guilty of this from time to time

Just like we can violate Commandment #1 – We put other things ahead of God in our lives

- so too we can worship God differently from how He wants us to worship
 - and in doing so we are not that different from the ancients

We make fun of the ancients who made their idols out of the same wood that they used the other parts to make a fire – We think how can you worship that?

- but research has shown they were not worshipping the idol they made
 - you see they would recite incantations over the idols and what they believed was not that piece of wood was their god, but that it was a conduit to their God
 - much like today as if I speak into a that camera back there – hello all of you online - I understand that my message will be transmitted to others
- they believed as they spoke to the idol their words and worship would be transmitted to their false gods

**Also it is was interesting for us to learn that the ancients believed their gods to do anything but feed themselves
And feeding the false god “worship” or “sacrifice” was how they maintained, it was their sustenance**

- and in the belief that humans had to provide that for the gods, Baal and Ashtoreth, it provided a power the humans had over the gods
 - when you fed them with sacrifice and worship, then they would then be obligated to bless you

Another thing that struck me when we study idol worshipers is it was easy

- in the sense that you did have to go to Jerusalem to worship, you could worship your false god anywhere, they had high places set up on almost every hill and under many trees I Kings 14:23 tells us,
 - you didn't have to follow any commandments, just offer the sacrifices and live however you want
 - it was easy

And you put that together with the understanding that when the people of Israel would worship these false gods, the idea of multiple gods would be there

- they would have a local God like Baal and then a national God like Jehovah in their mind
 - No Jew would answer the question do you believe in God with the answer no – it was just He was the national god and my personal god was Baal or Ashtoreth

All of these things together

- idolaters believed the gods were obligated to bless them as they gave them what they needed – worship
 - idolaters believed there were no standards of living to follow, just worship your god the way you want to worship him - no commandments
- And idolaters had many gods – they wouldn't deny Jehovah – He is the national God, but I just have these personal, local gods on the side

But this shows us that the essence of idolatry is actually how many people, many people who call themselves Christians, try to worship God today

- They think I can do something to gain an audience with God, to put Him in a place where He has to bless me
 - we see that in branches of Christianity – if I pray this pray or do certain things then God is obligated to show up
 - in older days, if I whip myself, if I do some great sacrifice then God is obligated to bless me
- or today if I fast or give or really crazy, go to church on Sunday Night – then God has to bless me
 - see all I have done for Him

Idol worship is worship that is easy

- forget that God says there are rules we need to live by, disciplines we need to have
 - no – this is how I express my worship to God

- don't tell me about commandments – as long as I am sincere that is all God cares about

We can take on the idolatrous idea of God is my national God – 90 % of Americans believe in God

- I believe in God, I would never deny Him, but I am also worshipping the god of prosperity or sexuality or whatever, those are my personal gods
 - And what we are doing is creating worship of God in our image, what we want to do, how we would like to worship and follow God
 - But that in its essence that is idolatry, creating a worship system in our own image
 - And it needs to be repented of

We put our image on God

- Who is God, you ask people and you find out that - He talks like them, thinks like them – has the values.

What we are doing is making God into our own image

- we are deciding what His values are
 - what is important to Him
 - how He desires to be worship
 - How He wants me to live
- Its all coming from me
 - I am not worshipping a false god – no I believe in the God of the Bible
 - I am just worshipping God in a false way
- Getting my picture of Him, my values from my heart and not from His Holy Word

“You shall not make for yourself an Idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

- The rule is I shall not make an idol for myself
 - I am not to worship God in a false way
 - Where I decided what My god in like
 - I decided how He wants me to live
 - I decide what is important to Him
- God says – don't do that
 - But what is the reason???

God says, “Because I am a jealous God”

- now right there that strikes us as strange, we think that can't be the heart of God
 - and we think that because again – we make God into a image that comes from our heart
 - I am real understanding of my sin – so is God
 - And God must just want me to be happy because that is what I want
- And then we read, God is a jealous God and we think – that can't be true
 - Because it doesn't fit our image
 - But we have to get our understand of God from His Word, not our hearts

So what does it mean in the Word when it says, “God is jealous?”

- **The Word “jealousy” would be better understood in our day as “zeal”**
 - **“jealousy” as we think of it today is more like the biblical word “envy”**

God is not envious

- God is not envious of your worship, like part of Him is missing if you don't worship Him
 - Godly jealousy is not the insecure, insane and possessive human jealousy that we often encounter in this world,
 - rather it is an intensely caring devotion toward the objects of His love

I explain it this way...

- I am jealous for my wife and kids
 - I want the best for them
 - I want them to be happy and loved and secure
 - I want that so badly for them
 - I am jealous for my family
- We want to teach our kids to share, but there are things that are not intended to share, there are things that it is okay to be jealous for – I.e. - a piece of gum
 - Do you share your gum that is disgusting
- a unicycle is not to share
 - I tried to find a funny picture for you but there are none, because two people don't ride a unicycle
- on a more serious note, the intimacy between a husband and a wife – to be properly enjoyed, it is not be shared outside the marriage - there are things that we are not to share, things to be jealous for

And a God that was not jealous for His people would be as contemptible as a husband that didn't care if his wife cheated on him or that his kids endured great pain

So again it is more like our Word - zealous

- God has a zeal for you, and when you make an idol, when you start to say this is the way the Lord is, when you start to make God into your image – He gets jealous because you are missing out
 - You are missing out on who He really is
 - And that is lame because He is amazing
- And more than that – if I make a wrong image of what the Lord really is, I am also missing out on what He wants me to become
 - For God says one of His purposes in all of us is..

“to be conformed to the image of His Son” – Romans 8:29

- God wants to make us like Him
 - And yet if I make God into an image like myself, I don't know what I'm missing
 - If God thinks like me, acts like me, behaves like me
 - Then what is there to be conformed into
- And I will end up like all those worshippers of the Greek and Roman gods
 - Who were gods just like them – they were lustful gods, full of anger and bitterness, just like the men who made them
 - And so there was not a goal, nothing to be changed into

- And so the end result of worship was to be made just like your already empty self

And God is saying, I have so much more for you

- I don't want to make you into a strong version of yourself, with all of your sin and rebellion
 - I want to conform you into the image of my son, which is what you long to be
 - What you will be fulfilled in being
- I am jealous that you experience this, God would say

“You shall not make for yourself an Idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

#3 – The Result – Exodus 20:5-6

- The rule – don't make God into an idol, don't make Him into image of yourself
- The reason – if you do, you will miss out on who He really is, and what He wants to conform you into
 - And then God gives us the result of the decision we make to either listen to His loving words or not

Our decision to worship the right God in the right way is so important – and the reason is, it will effect the next generation

- that is what God is saying, as we read verses 5-6, we almost gasp
 - what? – God is going to visit sin upon children that sounds so horrible
 - but hear it in the New Living Translation and I think you will understand better – God says...

“I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.” – Exodus 20:5 – New living Translation

- What God is saying, is the sin of parents to worship the right God the wrong way
 - Lord if I do this – you are obligated to bless me
 - Lord I don't have to follow your commandments, just be sincere
 - Lord I can worship you, but I have these other things on the side
- That worshipping the right God, the wrong way, affects as the New living translation says, it affects the generations that follow
 - And this we totally see

It is not that God is saying, your parents were sinners, so I am going to judge you little boy

- no, that is contrary to what we see in other parts of scripture when we read in Deuteronomy 24:16...

“a son shall not be put to death for the sins of the Father” – Deuteronomy 24:16

- I am not judged for my father's sin, but it does affect me
 - I have told you that my Father when I was young was a drug addict, I love him to this day, but that is the truth
 - And I have never been judged by God for his sin, but I have been affected
- The divorce it caused affected me because I grew up without a Dad in the house

- It affected my personality, it is real easy for me to be addicted to things
- I mean praise the Lord I have never tried drugs but I was addicted to being the best golfer as a young man – I always was thinking about it
- Try to have me go a day without caffeine – get out of my way – I am addicted and I don't care
- It's the way I have such a heart for you in bondage to cigarettes or other things
 - I understand - if somebody told me tomorrow caffeine causes Cancer, my response would be – sound good, I'll see Jesus sooner – I wouldn't stop
 - My personality has been affected

This is what God is saying

- I don't want you to worship me in a wrong way
 - Making me into your image, what you value, what your priorities are
- And the reason, I am jealous, I am zealous for you

Worshipping me as I am, God would say is going to set you free and change your life

- but if you follow this false idea
 - you are going to empty
 - you are going to be ripped off

And if you don't repent

- then the same things that captivate you, will at the very least affect you kids, and your grandkids and your great grandkids

Instead the Lord would say, would you just turn to me - would you worship me, the true God, in the true way, the way outlined in the Word

- not in the way your heart tells you or society says is acceptable
 - but get your view of who I am, and what I desire for you from my Word
- And not only will I bless your socks off
 - But I bless generations through you

I'm sure there were some real losers in Spurgeon's day, and Moody's day, George Whitfield's day

- men whose sin affected their kids, their grandkids, their great grandkids
 - but I don't know them, I don't know who they were

But I am so blessed by things Spurgeon said, I am so blessed over 100 year later with the heart of Moody toward the lost, I am so challenged by sermons Whitfield gave, generations later, God is still using those men

- which side do you want to be?
 - the one who make God into their own image and miss out on all God has for them
- or the ones who realize – this is the love of the God, that I keep His commandments and they are not burdensome – I experience what life is to be!