

The School of Biblical Law

Covenant and Law

Lesson Fourteen: “The Covenant Model and Commandment One”

Scripture records the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. The passage fits the framework of covenant beginning with the Transcendent One identifying Himself. The hierarchy, although not here delineated, are clearly understood to be Israelites. Thirdly, the ethics are announced in the form of the Ten Commandments. Verses one through three read: “And God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.’”

1. God revealed Himself to be the Redeemer and the Deliverer of the Israelites.

In the Exodus event, God recreated the world of His people and identified Himself to be the Boundary-setter of the following:

- Israelites
- Egyptians
- The Red Sea

In Genesis 1-2, God is revealed in the context of Creator and Boundary-setter.

2. God, who had demonstrated His transcendent nature and sovereign power in the Exodus event, began the ethics by stating, “You shall have no other gods before me”.

The Israelites should have been ready to hear Commandment One.

- Based upon their redemption, no other god should have held a higher position of value.
- Because of the God’s position of worth, the Israelites should have naturally been prepared to offer to God worship (weorthscipe – Old English form of word worship) of the highest order.

The progression from worship to obedience is a natural progression.

- We follow after or obey that which we worth or value.
- That which is most highly esteemed by us is the god that we will worship.
- “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” (Westminster Shorter Catechism)
- The new creation reality in which the Israelites found themselves was entirely of God’s doing and God’s grace, not a result of the effort or good works of any humanistic power system.

3. Fully keeping Commandment One not only means acknowledging the God of Scriptures to be the only Supreme God and offering full worship to Him and Him alone, but it also means offering love to this God of covenant and grace.

- Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”
- Deuteronomy 7:9: “Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”
- Deuteronomy 30:6: “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all you soul, that you may live.”
- Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

God, who had proven Himself to be the Most High God, was commanding total faithfulness and obedience from His people. He would allow no voice with more supremacy, no claim to more preeminence, no demand for more dominance. He alone was the Transcendent One who claimed sole rights to set the terms of covenantal faithfulness.