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Teaching Notes

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The Ten Commandments, Part 2

Exodus 20:

Exodus 20:1-17 And God spoke all these words:

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

3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

6 but showing love to a thousand *generations* of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

I. The Second Commandment: Idolatry

vs. 4-6 ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.***

A. The Second Great Battle of the Old Testament

1. First, greatest battle: syncretism... worshipping many gods, not simply the one true God
2. Second great battle: the making of idols
3. The first clear violation of the Ten Commandments: The Golden Calf, Exodus 32
4. Throughout Old Testament time: a constant battle

B. Charles Hodge Definition

"Idolatry consists not only in the worship of false gods, but also in the worship of the true God by images."

CB. J. I. Packer: *Knowing God*

"In its Christian application, this means we are not to make use of any visual or pictorial representations of the triune God, or of any person of the Trinity, for the purposes of Christian worship. The commandment thus deals, not with the object of our worship, but with the manner of it; what it tells us is that statues and pictures of the One whom we worship are not to be used as an aid to worshipping Him."

More controversially:

"This categorical statement rules out, not simply the use of pictures and statues which depict God as an animal, but also the use of pictures and statues which depict Him as the highest created thing we know—a man. It also rules out the use of pictures and statues of Jesus Christ as a man, although Jesus Christ Himself was and remains Man; for all pictures and statues are necessarily made after the 'likeness' of ideal manhood as we conceive it, and therefore come under the ban which the commandment imposes.

Historically, Christians have differed as to whether the second commandment forbids the use of pictures of Jesus for purposes of teaching and instruction (in Sunday School classes, for instance), and the question is not an easy one to settle; but there is no room for doubting that the commandment obliges us to dissociate our worship, both in public and in private, from all pictures and statues of Christ, no less than from pictures and statues of His Father." [J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 39-40]

D. Note sweeping nature of the prohibition:

[NASB] *Exodus 20:4 "You shall 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."*

E. Modern Debate: Mel Gibson's *Passion*

F. Understanding the First Idolatry: The Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-10 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." 2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." 6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

7 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' 9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Analyzing idolatry in its first stage: worshiping the true God in a false way

1. Understanding Aaron's motive: to celebrate the power and might of God

A bull represented power and strength... a young bull, with years ahead of it, represented enduring strength and power... gold represented purity and immense worth

Aaron was not trying to dishonor God, but by doing this he greatly dishonored God and abased His worship into the mud:

Exodus 32: 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Psalms 106:19-20 "At Horeb they made a calf and worshipped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull that eats grass."

What's wrong?

2. First of all, they limited God's attributes to only one: power
 - a. all they were celebrating was the power and strength of God
 - b. most of His attributes were left off

How does a golden calf show God's mercy?

How does a golden calf show God's patience? His compassion? His holiness? His omniscience? His omnipresence?

How does a golden calf demonstrate God's sovereignty or His love? His justice?

None of these are represented!! Nor could you make any symbolic representation of any of these and combine them in any way that would honor God

Why?

3. Secondly, in the very attribute which they were seeking to honor God, they abased Him
 - a. God is infinitely more powerful than a calf
 - b. a calf has immense muscles, but the Lord God made the universe and holds it together
4. Thirdly, the calf brings with it some baggage... a calf isn't only powerful... it's also incredibly stupid, and is easily led, trained, enslaved, and even slaughtered by man

Psalm 106:19-20 "At Horeb they made a calf and worshipped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull that eats grass."

5. Fourthly, the Israelites were denying God's self-existence, holiness, and spirituality
 - a. self-existence, because they were making God, rather than acknowledging that God has always existed
 - b. holiness: in that God is far above everything in His creation, and nothing in His creation is a fit representation of all that He is

Isaiah 46:5 "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?"

- c. spirituality: in that they were using something physical to represent someone spiritual

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

This is the best case scenario: worshiping the true God by means of idols...

2) Even worse is the worship of false gods by means of idols

F. The Triple Dishonor of Idolatry

1. That we reject the true and only God, our glory and our joy

Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

Psalms 106:19-20 "At Horeb they made a calf and worshipped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull that eats grass."

2. That arrogantly we make up in our minds and imaginations a god to worship

Isaiah 44:12-17 The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. ¹³ The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. ¹⁴ He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. ¹⁵ It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. ¹⁶ Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." ¹⁷ From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god.""

3. That we actually end up worshiping demons

1 Corinthians 10:20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

G. The Immorality of Idolatry

Exodus 32:5-6 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." ⁶ So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt

offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

IV. Result of Failed Worship: The First Dark Exchange... IDOLATRY

NOTE: Not atheism, but idolatry!!! We WILL worship something!

Dark exchange

Romans 1:22-23 “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”

vs. 25 “They worshipped and served created things more than the creator who is forever praised.”

Two common modern forms of idolatry

a. “I like to think of God as a _____ God”

“I can’t worship a God who would send anybody to hell.”

“My God is the kind of God who would _____”

b. Greed, covetousness, earthly living

Fortune Magazine:

- Omega watches: “The world is not enough”
- Cessna Citation X Business Jet, can travel at over 600 mph: “Don’t just think outside the box, live there.”
- Accura RL Luxury Sedan: “Starting at \$42,000.”
- Ashford.com ,irresistable watches, pens, jewelry, fragrances, leather goods, just a click away: “All the stuff you really, really want.”

Colossians 3:5 “Put to death... greed which is idolatry.”

3. Flee the wrath to come!!

Colossians 3:6 “Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.”

Romans 3:25 “God presented Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

Wrath of God totally averted through faith in Christ