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Teaching Notes

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## The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17

### I. Introduction

#### A. Uniqueness of the Ten Commandments

1. A.W. Pink: Strong distinction between “Law of Moses” and “Law of God”
2. Valid observations:

God gave Moses MANY laws to govern the Jews, but:

- a. only the “Ten Commandments” were literally spoken by the audible voice of God to all the people, surrounded by awesome tokens of God’s powerful wrath

*Exodus 20:1 “And God spoke all these words: ”*

*Deuteronomy 5:22 These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; **and he added nothing more.** Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.*

“And He added nothing more” implies the awesome importance of this beginning of God’s lawgiving to Israel

Later, He would add MANY more things

- b. only the “Ten Commandments” were written directly by the finger of God onto physical stone that God Himself had carved

*Exodus 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.*

*Exodus 32:16 The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.*

this carving onto stone is clearly given to emphasize their permanent nature

- c. only the “Ten Commandments” were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which itself became the Mercy Seat where the blood of the sacrifices were poured out, the throne of Yahweh from which He governed His people. It wasn’t until the Tabernacle was

established and the Ark built that God formally took up His obvious rule in the center of the people

A.W. Pink: "Thus did the Lord signify to Israel that the Moral Law was the basis of His governmental dealings with them."

The climax and end of the book of Exodus:

***Exodus 40:33-38 Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work. 34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; 37 but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out-- until the day it lifted. 38 So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.***

This is the immense significance of the Ten Commandments, and they should be considered in a unique category compared with the mass of laws God gave Israel commonly called the Law of Moses

### 3. Why "Ten" Commandments?

- a. I quickly counted at least fourteen separate commandment statements
- b. long lists expand the commands even further... the "Ten" Commandments thus are MANY commandments
- c. BUT Ten main commandments, or perhaps ten headings
- d. the title itself is biblical

***Exodus 34:28 Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant-- the Ten Commandments.***

***Deuteronomy 4:13 He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.***

***Deuteronomy 10:4 The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me.***

### B. Christ's Summary of the Law

***Matthew 22:35-40 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your***

*heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

### C. Arrangement of the Ten Commandments

#### 1. First four commandments: Love for God

- 1) You shall have no other gods beside me
- 2) You shall not make for yourself an idol
- 3) You shall not misuse the name of the Lord
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

#### 2. Last six commandments: Love for other people

- 5) Honor your father and mother
- 6) You shall not murder
- 7) You shall not commit adultery
- 8) You shall not steal
- 9) You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
- 10) You shall not covet... anything that belongs to your neighbor

## II. The Ten Commandments

### A. Commandment #1: "No other gods" (vs. 2-3)

*vs. 2-3 "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."*

1. God begins with His mighty covenant name, and identifies Himself as Israel's God

# hw"ihy>

It appears almost 6000 times in the Hebrew Bible... no other name for God comes close

“Yahweh” is the most common English pronunciation...

Jews so revered this four-letter word for the Most High God, and they so feared taking His name in vain, that they developed many traditions around this word... they added the Hebrew vowels for the word “adonai” (“my lord”) and always read the word “adonai” instead of Yahweh whenever they would read Scripture:

ʾdx'(a, Yhw"ihy WnyhePl{a/ hw"ihy> lae\_r'f.yI [m;Pv.

&gt;

“Shema yisrael adonai elohenu adonai ehad”

This was God’s covenant name, and again and again He affixes this same verbal formula to His commands:

To Abraham:

*Genesis 15:7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."*

To Jacob in his dream at Bethel:

*Genesis 28:13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying."*

To Moses:

Exodus 6:1-8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country." 2 God also said to Moses, "**I am the LORD.** 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: '**I am the LORD,** and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that **I am the LORD** your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. **I am the LORD.**"

Exodus 6:28-29 Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, 29 he said to him, "**I am the LORD.** Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you."

Exodus 7: 5 And the Egyptians will know that **I am the LORD** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

Exodus 10:1-2 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that **I am the LORD.**"

Leviticus 18:1 The LORD said to Moses,

2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: '**I am the LORD** your God.

3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices.

4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. **I am the LORD** your God.

5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. **I am the LORD.**

6 "'No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. **I am the LORD.**

7 "'Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

8 "'Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

9 "'Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

10 "'Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you.

11 "'Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

12 "'Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

13 "'Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

14 "'Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

15 "'Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.

16 "'Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

17 "'Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

18 "'Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

19 "'Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

20 "'Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

21 "'Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. **I am the LORD.**

22 "'Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

23 "'Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

24 "'Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.

25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things,

27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled.

28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

29 "Everyone who does any of these detestable things-- such persons must be cut off from their people.

30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. **I am the LORD** your God."

NIV Leviticus 19:1 The LORD said to Moses,

2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

3 "Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. **I am the LORD** your God.

4 "Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. **I am the LORD** your God.

5 "When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf.

6 It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up.

7 If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted.

8 Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD; that person must be cut off from his people.

9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. **I am the LORD** your God.

11 "Do not steal. "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another.

12 "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. **I am the LORD.**

13 "Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

14 "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. **I am the LORD.**

15 "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

16 "Do not go about spreading slander among your people. "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. **I am the LORD.**

17 "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. **I am the LORD.**

19 "Keep my decrees. "Do not mate different kinds of animals. "Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. "Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.

20 "If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed.

21 The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD.

22 With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.

23 "When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten.

24 In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD.

25 But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. **I am the LORD** your God.

26 "Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. "Do not practice divination or sorcery.

27 "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

28 "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. **I am the LORD.**

29 "Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.

30 "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. **I am the LORD.**

31 "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. **I am the LORD** your God.

32 "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. **I am the LORD.**

33 "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him.

34 The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. **I am the LORD** your God.

35 "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity.

36 Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. **I am the LORD** your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

37 "Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. **I am the LORD.**"

2. Next, God reminds the Israelites of the mighty Exodus

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

3. He could have begun with creation, as He does elsewhere in the Bible

*Isaiah 44:24 "This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself*

The argument goes like this:

I created the universe and everything in it... there was no other god at that time, thus no other god should be worshiped

***Isaiah 43:10 Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.***

***Isaiah 45:18 For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.***

Over and over again, the Lord declares His rights over the creation He alone formed and made:

***Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.***

***Isaiah 43:15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King."***

Or to Job:

***Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.***

God could have argued for exclusive rights over Israel's worship simply because He alone created the universe and everything in it. Paul uses the approach with the Gentiles:

***Acts 17:24-27 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.***

But in the Ten Commandments, God argues from redemptive history instead:

***vs. 2-3 "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."***

Principle: the more God does for you, the higher is your level of obligation to Him:

***Luke 12:48 ... From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.***

3. What is the commandment?

a. no other gods before me

Some think it implies polytheism and syncretism are okay, as long as Yahweh comes first

b. no other gods beside me

Implies no other gods are to be worshiped at all?

***Exodus 20:23 'You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.***

“Before me” is literally “before my face” or in front of me

God sees everything in the universe, and He is saying the worship of any other gods is “in His face”, a direct affront to His holiness, and He will take it in that manner

Abraham had come from a family of polytheists

***Joshua 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.***

Jacob purified his household of false gods:

***Genesis 35:1-4 Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.***

Israel had worshiped Egypt's gods while in Egypt:

***Joshua 24:14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.***

In their future history, Israel tried to worship BOTH the Lord and other gods, saying God is the highest god, but other gods are also valid... God crushed those notions completely by providential history and by the words of the prophets

***2 Kings 17:41 Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.***

But here, in the Ten Commandments, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is declaring Himself to be the only true, living God

4. God is the focus of your life, the goal and the ultimate hope... the one you serve, the one you love, the one you live for

Ancient gods: Ra, the Egyptian sun-god; Ishtar, the Assyrian war-goddess; Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites; Baal, the Canaanite fertility god and his sensuous consort Asherah; Marduk, the Babylonian king god

Modern “gods”: money, power, pleasure, food, experiences... good gifts from God become god’s greatest rival

Some live for their bodily drives and appetites:

***Philippians 3:19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.***

Modern Application:

Diagnostic questions: what is the focus of your existence? What occupies your best efforts? What dominates your mental energies? What is so foundational to your life that, if it were removed your whole world would crumble? What is your ultimate hope... what is your greatest treasure and pleasure in life? What is the true center of your personality?

This is your god.

God commands all people everywhere that they should have only one God, the true God, the living God, the only God there is

The theological core of this first command is

***John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.***

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."