

In Exodus chapter 20, we find ourselves standing at the base of Mount Sinai with the children of Israel. They had just seen the power of God in Egypt; they had walked through the Red Sea on dry land. Now, God is going to speak to them.

The people had originally said, "All that the Lord commands, we will do." That's a bold statement, isn't it? But before they could even try, God laid out the foundation of who He is and how He designed and created us to live.

The Nature of Our God

Exodus 20:1-3 God begins by saying, *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."*

Now, notice how He identifies Himself. He uses that name, Yahweh. It's a verb—the "becoming one." It means God desires to become to you whatever you need. If you are weak, He becomes your strength. If you are lost, He becomes your way. He isn't just a distant force; He is a personal God who delivers us from bondage.

When He says, "no other gods before Me," He isn't saying He wants to be #1 on a list of ten. He's saying He wants to be the *exclusive* God of your life. In His presence—in the very sight of His face—there is room for no one else.

The Danger of the Graven Image

Exodus 20:4-6 He tells them not to make any graven images. Why? Because man has a tendency to want to "box God in." We want something we can see, touch, and—ultimately—control.

When a man makes a god, he usually makes that god like himself. He projects his own feelings, his own reactions, and his own limitations onto the Divine. You've heard people say, *"Well, my God wouldn't do that."* What they are really saying is, *"If I were God, I wouldn't do that."* But God is not a projection of you. He is the Creator of the ends of the earth and universe!

The tragedy, as the Psalmist points out, is that those who make idols become like them. If your god has eyes but can't see, you become spiritually blind. If your god has ears but can't hear, you become deaf to the Spirit. We don't need a relic to remind us of God; we have His Holy Spirit. In Him we live and move and have our being.

The Name and the Sabbath

Exodus 20:7-11 *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."* This is more than just "cussing." To take His name in vain means to wear the label of "believer" but live like the world. It's saying "Lord, Lord" on Sunday and then never giving Him a thought or a vote in your life on Monday. That is the ultimate blasphemy—claiming His name while ignoring His Lordship.

Then He speaks of the Sabbath. Now, remember, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. It was a sign for Israel, a gift of rest. While we worship every day, God knows our bodies

need that "six and one" rhythm. But let's be careful—the Pharisees turned the Sabbath into a heavy burden of rules. Jesus came to be our rest.

The Schoolmaster and the New Covenant

Exodus 20:12-17 Then we have the commandments regarding our fellow man: honoring parents, not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, and not coveting.

Paul the Apostle said it was that last one—*thou shalt not covet*—that finally "killed" him. He realized he could look good on the outside, but inside, his heart was breaking the law. This is what Jesus taught: if you hate your brother, the seed of murder is there. If you look with lust, the seed of adultery is there.

The Purpose of the Law: The law was never meant to save you. It was meant to be a schoolmaster to lead you to Jesus Christ. It shows us that we are spiritually bankrupt and in need of a Savior. If we could be made righteous by keeping these rules, then Jesus died in vain! But we couldn't keep them. So, Jesus came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Practical Application: The Simple Altar

Exodus 20:21-26 At the end of the chapter, God gives instructions for an altar. He says, "Make it of earth." And "if you use stone, don't use a chisel."

Why? Because if you carve it and make it fancy, people will start admiring your handiwork instead of the God of the sacrifice. God wants no distractions. He doesn't want the work of man's hands to be glorified.

For us today:

- Keep it simple. Don't let your "religious activities" distract you from a simple, honest relationship with Jesus.
- Check your "gods." Is there anything in your life—a possession, a career, a relationship—that has become more important to you than the Lord?
- Trust the Finished Work. Stop trying to earn your way to heaven by the "table of the law" and start resting in the grace of Christ.

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you living in the consciousness of His presence today? Or are you trying to duplicate a "feeling" you had five years ago? Don't live on yesterday's manna. God has a fresh experience of His love for you *today*. Seek Him in the simplicity of a heart turned toward His Word.

An Invitation to New Life

Perhaps you're reading this and you realize you've been trying to run your own universe. You've seen the "thunderings and lightnings" of life and you're afraid. I have good news for you: Fear not.

Jesus Christ didn't come to destroy you; He came to save you. On that cross, He shed His precious blood to pay the debt for every law you've ever broken. He was buried, and three days later, He rose again, proving that He is God, Savior, and Lord over all.

You don't need to polish yourself up or "fix your life" to come to Him. You just come as you are—a sinner in need of grace. If you will turn from your way and put your trust in Him today, He will give you a new heart and the power of His Holy Spirit to walk in His ways.