



Ten Words to Live By

Oct-Nov 2023

2nd Commandment – Undiminished Worship

(sermons: Oct 29)



Introduction

God had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He had made a dry route for them through the Sea of Reeds (or the Red Sea). He had provided them with manna and quails to eat, although they had complained about this food. He had caused water to flow from a rock to quench their thirst. He had enabled them to defeat their first enemy, the Amalekites. After 3 months of travelling through barren country they had reached Mt Sinai, where God proposed a covenant with his people: an agreement that recognized all that God had already done for them, where God laid down the terms, including the Ten Commandments; the people responded by accepting God's grace towards them and promising to obey.

Exodus 19: 16-25 Moses Approaches God at Mount Sinai

v.16 the third day – after their arrival at Sinai; they had used the time to dedicate themselves to God
v.18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke – this suggests volcanic activity. Smoke and cloud are often a symbol of God's presence in the Bible; fire symbolizes purity.

1. What did the appearance of Mt Sinai show the Israelites about the Character of God and about their unworthiness to approach Him?

Exodus 20: 1-6 The First Two Commandments

v.2 an image – or 'idol' in older translations: a physical representation of God, such as carved statue or a painted picture
v.2 anything in heaven above – such as the sun, which was worshipped by the Egyptians, or the moon stars and planets that some peoples believed were in control of events
v.2 or on the earth beneath – such as the crops they hoped to grow, or domestic animals on which they depended, or wild animals from which they wanted to be protected
v.2 or in the waters below – some other peoples saw forces of evil in the destructive power of the sea, so they made idols of sea monsters to appease such evil forces

2. What reason is given in the introduction to the Ten Commandments (*v.1*) why God expected both undivided allegiance (1st Commandment) and undiminished worship (2nd Commandment) ?
For us as Christians what similar but greater reason do we have to obey these commandments?
3. What sort of images of other deities might the Israelites have been tempted to make, to use in their worship?
How would this have been like surrounding tribes and why might they have wanted to copy them?
How would this diminish their worship of the LORD? How would it show a lack of faith in Him?
4. Even if they tried to make an image of the LORD, how would it have been an inadequate representation of His greatness and His Character?
5. What did God say about the seriousness of this commandment and the effect of either keeping it, or disobeying it, on both individuals and on their society?

A True Image of God

5. What, or who, did God intend to be an 'image' that reflects some of his Character?

(see *Genesis 1:26-27* in the box below)

How are we called to 'represent' God to the wider world? How do we fail to do so?

6. How is Jesus the only perfect 'image' of God? (see *Colossians 1:15-20* below)

What does this mean for how we teach people about God, both within the church, and in the way we talk about Him to those who do not yet believe?

Since Jesus is '*the head of the body, the church*', what does this say about the way that we, as a Christian community, should show something of what God is like?

7. How, and why, may we be tempted to give a false, incomplete, or unworthy picture of God?

What aspects of God's Character do we sometimes neglect, in our teaching, or in our life of faith?

Exodus 20: 4-6

⁴ 'You shall not make for yourself an image 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 parents 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.

Genesis 1: 26-27

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

John 4:24

²⁴ 'God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit (*or* the Spirit) and in truth.'

Colossians 1: 15-20

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.