

AM Exodus 20:1-21 "I am the LORD your God"

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[0 : 00] Now if you have your Bibles with you, can I ask you and invite you to turn to the book of Exodus, Exodus and chapter 20. Exodus and chapter 20.

And as you know, those of you who have been here before, we are doing a short study in these Ten Commandments. I say short study, we've not got to the actual First Commandment yet, and we'll get to that this evening.

So we're going to read anyway from Exodus 20, which is the giving of the law to the people of Israel by God himself.

God had promised that he would come to the people at Sinai, the Mount Sinai, and he was going to speak to the people. And we saw the last time in Exodus 19 something of the events around God coming.

But here he's going to speak the Ten Commandments. He's going to give the law to the people of Israel. And so we're going to read verses 1 down to 21.

[1 : 08] This is God's word. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant or your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates.

[2 : 40] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that is your neighbour's. Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashings of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled.

And they stood afar off and said to Moses, You speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die.

[3 : 54] Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness, where God was. Amen, and may God give us good understanding of his written word.

Now I can invite you to turn back to that passage that we read just a moment ago in Exodus chapter 20.

Exodus chapter 20. And the sermon title this morning in your bulletin is, I am the Lord, your God. Exodus chapter 20 and verse 2. And just so that you know, we're going to look at the first commandment this evening, under which the title is, God wants your heart.

[5 : 05] But we're going to look at these opening two verses this morning. The last time that I was with you, we looked at chapter 19 of Exodus, and we saw there that the people of God had arrived at Mount Sinai, as God had promised Moses that they would.

In three days time, God said, in chapter 19, the Almighty God was going to come down and speak audibly to the people of Israel.

the command to the people in chapter 19, as we saw the last time, was to get ready. Get ready to meet the coming King.

The God that they were going to hear was a holy God. An almighty God. An eternal God. A majestic God.

So it demanded for the people to be prepared and to be consecrated on their part. We saw that in chapter 19.

[6 : 18] God defined when and where and how the people were to approach Him. There was to be no casualness on their part.

There was to be no carelessness as to how they were to come into God's presence. There was to be lots of preparation on their part to get ready to meet the Almighty God.

It said when Her Majesty the Queen visits anywhere, all that she smells is the smell of new paint. everything is spruced up when the Queen comes to visit. Everything must be clean. Everything prepared. Everything just so.

Everything ready. We've got COP26 coming to Glasgow in a week's time. And oh the preparations for all these dignitaries that are going to descend upon Glasgow.

[7 : 27] but here God, the Almighty God is coming. And so that when He comes to visit His people He's looking for holiness and readiness and cleanness and obedience and carefulness.

if they weren't obedient according to the commands that He gave Moses in chapter 19 then such was the holiness of God that they would incur His judgment of death.

They couldn't presume just to come into God in some casual haphazard way. such is the majesty and holiness of the God of Israel.

And so in chapter 19 in verse 9 we read these words that God was going to come in the thick cloud of Sinai so that in order that for the purpose that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe.

So when we come to this chapter in chapter 20 we have again the fulfillment of God's promise. God had said He was going to come to speak and in these opening words chapter 20 in verse 1 God spoke all these words.

[9 : 05] The opening verse and the opening two verses of this chapter are not just filler before we get to the first commandment in verse 3.

Verse 1 establishes who God is and why His people and everyone should obey Him.

The God who speaks all these words what we call these ten commandments these we sometimes call it the Decalogue from the Greek Deca which means ten.

The God who speaks all these words that we have in chapter 20 is the same God we are introduced to in the opening verse of the entire Bible.

Now I should just point out that these commandments were ultimately written in stone in tablets of stone and that points us surely to their enduring nature.

[10 : 12] We sometimes use that expression written in stone because it tells us that they are meant to last. They are of eternal significance.

There is a completeness in fact in these ten words that God gives us because they encompass everything that we need to know in one sense about how we are to serve God and also how we are to respond and live in this world that God has created.

And so God is going to speak these words. So the God who is going to speak these words firstly is the creator God.

You remember those words in Genesis 1 and verse 1 that I hope we all believe in the beginning God. God.

This God of Sinai that we are going to look at is the creator and the initiator of all life. He is the sovereign, eternal, self-sufficient, triune, creating God.

[11 : 26] The same one who spoke the whole world that you and I live in into existence, the one who spoke the whole universe in which this planet earth is but a part.

This is the one who said let there be light and there was light. The same one who speaks at Sinai was the one who commanded light to shine out of darkness.

He is the same God who said let us make man in our own image and likeness. You see the God of Sinai is not only the creator God but he is the sustainer God.

This triune God that we now know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit continues today in 2021 to be God.

It is he in the person of his son Jesus Christ who we are told in the New Testament upholds all things by the word of his power.

[12 : 41] So God is not only the creator God who created the world in time and space many thousands of years ago but also upholds the world today.

He keeps it going. He keeps it together. The seasons, the cycles of life, God makes it all happen. This God of Sinai is the creator God. This God of Sinai who is going to speak is the sustaining God. This is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

This is the God who brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. This is the God of the plagues of Egypt. This is the God who provided manna, food for the children of Israel in the wilderness.

This is the God who bore them up on eagles wings as we saw in chapter 19. This is a God who is going to communicate again with the people here.

[13 : 55] He secondly is the communicating God. He is not only the creator God but he is a God who communicates. He is a God who has revealed himself.

Here at Sinai everyone will not only hear his words but they will actually hear his voice.

He is a God who is alive and he is a God who communicates to us in words that we can all understand and somehow miraculously the children of Israel were going to hear God's voice.

You see the God of the Bible as we sung in our psalm is not some dumb idol God that doesn't exist like all the other so called gods that the nations as we sung worship.

Listen to the words of Jeremiah like scarecrows in a cucumber patch he says their idols cannot speak they must be carried because they cannot walk do not fear them for they can do no harm and neither can they do any good and then come into the New Testament with the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Paul was speaking to the church at Corinth and this he says to them who once were outside of Christ who weren't Christians he says you know that when you were still pagans you were led astray and swept along in worshipping speechless idols now the fact he is coming God is coming himself to personally speak reinforces the importance of all these commandments you see we are told as you will well know hopefully that

[16 : 13] God spoke in many different ways in the Old Testament sometimes he spoke to people in visions sometimes he spoke to people in dreams sometimes he communicated his words to the prophets to give to the people only in very very rare circumstances or instances did anyone hear his voice and certainly here this is an unparalleled speaking of God these commandments are unique I submit to you that they are fundamental and foundational to the Christian life it was not even left to the great prophet Moses or any other means for God to communicate his heart and his will the people had to hear his voice and that's what they will hear at Mount

Sinai the instances that we looked at in chapter 19 the theophany described in chapter 19 that we looked at the last time was not the ultimate revelation that God gave to Israel his coming on Mount Sinai clearly revealed himself in his powerful majestic holiness but God just hadn't come to Mount Sinai to overaw his people and the thunder and the lightning and the smoke but he had come to graciously communicate to them his will in words so that they would clearly know how they were to live their lives to please him that's the purpose of the commandments the purpose of the commandments which are elevated by the Lord

Jesus in the New Testament are so that we might serve God and worship him in the way that he asks us to and also how we should know how we are to relate to our fellow human beings they are so that we might know what kind of lifestyle God requires from us his people so God spake all these words so that his people are clearly and unambiguously informed as to what he requires of them and how they are to behave so if God spoke all these words then as Thomas Watson an old Puritan said we should hear them all as we would have God hear all our words of prayer when we pray so we must hear all his words when he speaks we should hear them all we should attend to them with reverence they come from heaven they are

God's commands they are not some dreamed up words or suggestions by Moses they are God's words and we should remember them and memorise them and pass them on to our children and we should believe them and perhaps most importantly as Christians we should aim to be obedient to them that's how we glorify God he created us to represent him here in this world and what he requires of us his redeemed people is that we reflect his likeness in our lives that's the reason for the ten commandments but verse 2 tells us something more about this God he's not only the creator God and the communicating God but he is thirdly the redeeming God look at verse 3 it says verse 2 sorry I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the land of the house of slavery now we saw this the last time didn't we we saw that these commandments were given to a redeemed people a people whom God had saved and rescued and ransomed out of the land of Egypt and so he says I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt he's their saviour God he's their redeemer God and God had graciously brought them out of the land of Egypt God had covenanted to Abraham back in Genesis that he would make a great nation of Abraham but God was going further here and he was beginning to bring that covenant into fulfilment by bringing them out of Egypt and the exodus the exit out of [22 : 08] Egypt the deliverance the redemption stands as the ultimate demonstration of God's love to his people in the Old Testament until it is eclipsed by his great love when he sent Jesus Christ to be our redeemer now note carefully in this verse it doesn't just say I am the Lord God it says I am the Lord your God it's personal in other words it's intimate there is a relationship going on a close bond between God and his people you see the Lord is God's personal name in the Hebrew it was the word that they wouldn't take even upon their lips that we've come to know as Yahweh or Jehovah it was God who had revealed himself to them and chosen them it was God who had set his heart upon his people you see God is a revealing God he's a God who wants to be in relation with his people he's not some remote dumb idol God he's a God who communicates he's given us his word he's revealed himself so that we might know him that we might be in communion with him and it was a God who had revealed himself to them who had chosen them do you remember what later on in the Old Testament God says of the children of Israel he says you only you only amongst all the other nations have I known have I loved in all the earth and that same God says to his people and he says to you and I if we're Christians this morning I will be your God and you will be my people he redeemed his people Israel he didn't save any other nation God was their redeemer God was their salvation God was their deliverer and that's a great theme of the entire Bible isn't it how God comes to rescue his people from their sins we spoke about Jesus the name the Lord Jesus to the boys and girls this morning what does Jesus mean he shall save his people from their sins he's the God the apostle Paul says who is for us and that should give us great confidence this morning as we enter into a new week that God is for us if you're his children if you have been saved if you've been redeemed if you have been rescued if you have been ransomed from your sin Martin Luther the reformer of hundreds of years ago said the sweetness of the good news of the gospel lies mostly in pronouns well what did you mean by that I was to be honest rubbish at English when I was at school I couldn't tell you really at that time what a pronoun adjective adverb was but Martin Luther says the gospel lies mostly the sweetness of the gospel lies mostly in pronouns such as me my and thy what do I mean by that Paul could say it's all about relationship the apostle Paul could say the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me that must have made Paul feel very very special and yet humble to know to know that the son of God loved him personally as an individual Thomas could say my lord and my god the lord Jesus could say to somebody who he was healing son be of good cheer your sins are forgiven you I wonder if you're here this morning you are here this morning can you say with the hymn writer Murray McShane I think it was might be wrong in that oh I I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine he brings a poor vile sinner into his house of joy you see [27 : 31] God was a God who had brought them out of Egypt out of the land of slavery Egypt is a picture in the Bible it's a real place of course for the children of Israel but it's a picture in the Bible of a land of oppression and slavery and bondage which God's people needed to be freed from it's a picture of the world in which you and I live in that is dominated and controlled by Satan who is epitomized by Pharaoh in the Exodus narrative and we are all held in bondage to our sin we have all fallen as we said to the children we all need to be delivered every one of us and only God can free us only by the shedding of blood in that

Passover night in Egypt when the children of Israel were told that they would be delivered if they applied the blood to the lintel and the doorposts on the house when God in his judgment would come that Passover pointed forward to God's son Christ and his death at the cross of Calvary and it's only by faith in him that we can be rescued that we can be redeemed and that we can be ransomed from our sins the writer in the new testament says if the son shall set you free you shall be free indeed free to serve him in glad obedience glad obedience to his commands you see the Lord God had freed them from domination by others not to lead a life of self gratification of selfishness but one dedicated to his service it's the God of salvation it's the redeeming God it's the sovereign God who commands his people here how they should live their lives he does that by outlining these commands all these words for our lives and as we shall see tonight in the very first commandment only when our relationship with God is right when we have that vertical relationship right when we are put right with God when we are brought into his family it's only when that is established it's only when that is on a proper footing that the basis is laid for proper behaviour towards our fellow men and women so we need to have that vertical relationship sorted before the horizontal relationships that we have can operate the way that

God designed God created us his people to represent him on earth and what he requires of us his redeemed people is that we reflect the likeness that is seen in his son the Lord Jesus who was the one who ultimately lived out all of these commandments perfectly impeccably and we are called to follow him we are called to reflect his likeness in our lives by obedience to his commands that's why we shall see that the first four commands focus on our relationship with God because true morality is found in reverence to God and true humanity the way that we were created and designed to operate is found only in loving obedience to God to the words that he has spoken do you know him this morning do you have a personal relationship with God is he yours can you say with Thomas he is my

Lord and my God God wants to have that relationship with us if you're here and you don't have that relationship with God if you can't use that personal pronoun and you can't say the son of God loved me then you need to obey the other command of the gospel to repent and to come by faith to Jesus Christ but if you know him as many of you I'm sure do if he is your God if he is your saviour if he is your redeemer then you and I are called to be in love obedient to these commands commands we'll come to that very first commandment this evening I'm sure you're thankful for these thankful that we'll get to commandment one tonight but we'll get there you shall have no other gods before me let's pray together father we thank you that you have graciously revealed yourself to us you've given us your word you've spoken to us supremely in the person of your son the Lord

[34 : 27] Jesus he's the final word he's the one who upheld these commandments on behalf of your people he's the one who loved you with all his heart and soul and mind and strength and he was the one who served people in his day impeccably without fault we thank you that he can be our saviour and for many of us he is our saviour father we pray this morning that we might all be able to say with the apostle Paul that the son of God loved me and gave himself for me we ask this in Jesus name amen now we're going to be