

Lesson Fourteen: *Covenant Law*
Exodus 20:1-21

Theme:

Covenant under Moses (19-24): God, who is holy, gives the law to guide His redeemed people.

I. (1-2) **The Law of God**

- a. The “Ten Words” of the covenant establish order and authority just as the ten words of the creation account (Gen 1:3-29; *God said...*).
 - i. God’s word brings order to chaos.
 1. God created humans to be subject to His law (contra human autonomy).
 2. In a covenant relationship, joy is realized through obedience to the law.
 - a. The marriage of duty and delight (a willing and grateful obedience)
 - ii. Rebellion brings chaos to God’s order.
 1. The sin of Genesis 3 was a rebellion against the law of God (Gen 2:17).
 - a. Pride and the desire for autonomy (...*you will be like God*)
 - b. The natural man’s disposition toward the law:
 - i. *The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so* (Rom 8:7).
 - ii. Man hates the giver, and the intent of the law.
 - iii. God restores order through His law.
 1. The covenant relationship and the role of the law:
 - a. The covenant *establishes* the relationship; the law *defines* it.
 - i. Establishes: The people of Israel are a *particular* people.
 1. The law is given to a redeemed people.
 - a. Redemption must precede obedience.
 - b. Redemption makes willing and grateful obedience possible (Rom 12:1).
 2. *The people were given the law not in order that they might become the redeemed; rather it was because they had already been redeemed* (J.A. Motyer).
 - ii. Defines: those behaviors that please Him and those that offend Him
 1. The law answers the question: *How should we then live?* (Ezek 33:10; cf. Lev 11:44).
 2. The authority of the law:
 - a. (1) *God spoke all these words...*
 - i. The law is the binding **word** (*dabar*) of God.
 - b. (2) **I am the LORD**: It proceeds from the sovereign Creator of all things
 - i. The law’s transcendence
 - c. (2) **I am the LORD your God**: It proceeds from the heavenly Father (*brought you out* – Israel’s redemption and adoption)
 - i. The law’s imminence
 - d. The Ten Commandments are covenant requirements, not covenant suggestions!

II. (3-11) **Love for God**

- a. *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind* (Matt 22:37).
 - i. (3) The first commandment: *You shall have no other gods before Me.*
 1. Covenant fidelity:
 - a. While God is living and present, Israel must worship Him alone.
 - b. A consecrated (monotheistic) people in the midst of a pagan (polytheistic) people
 - i. Syncretism and the passing of time

- ii. (4-6) The second commandment: *You shall not make for yourself an idol...*
 - 1. Covenant worship: according to the law
 - a. God's revelation of Himself (fulfilled in Jesus Christ)
 - b. False worship provokes God's *jealousy* (a consuming love that brooks no rivals).
- iii. (7) The third commandment: *You shall not take the name of the LORD in vain...*
 - 1. Reverence for the character of God:
 - a. God's name captures His character.
 - b. *I AM WHO I AM*: Israel's covenant Father, Redeemer, Protector, and Provider
 - i. God's name must not be used in false worship.
- iv. (8-11) The fourth commandment: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
 - 1. A covenant pattern:
 - a. As the Lord rested from His labors, so should His people.
 - b. The absence of labor allows for a special consecration of the day.
 - i. A particular focus upon the Lord (Is 58:13-14)

III. (12-17) **Love for Neighbor**

- a. *You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Matt 22:39).
 - i. Love for God should result in a love for His image in man.
 - ii. (12) The fifth commandment: *Honor your father and your mother...*
 - 1. The protection of God's image
 - a. The family is the oldest and most sacred human institution.
 - b. The importance of covenant children and child rearing
 - iii. (13) The sixth commandment: *You shall not murder.*
 - 1. The protection of God's image
 - a. The sacredness of human life (Gen 1:26; 9:6)
 - b. A prohibition against killing for selfish reasons
 - i. Matthew 5:21-22
 - iv. (14) The seventh commandment: *You shall not commit adultery.*
 - 1. The protection of God's image
 - a. Marriage reflects God's covenant fidelity (image).
 - i. Matthew 5:27-28
 - v. (15) The eighth commandment: *You shall not steal.*
 - 1. The protection of property
 - a. Personal, economic, and commercial integrity
 - vi. (16) The ninth commandment: *You shall not bear false witness...*
 - 1. The protection of God's image
 - a. James 3:8-12
 - 2. The protection of legal integrity
 - vii. (17) The tenth commandment: *You shall not covet...*
 - 1. The protection of the law
 - a. God's people must desire what is lawful and good.

IV. (18-21) **The Purpose of the Law**

- a. (18-21) To inspire holy fear
 - i. Not such that we flee from Him (Heb 4:16)
 - ii. To approach with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28-29)
 - 1. The fear of the Lord should be a deterrent to sin.
- b. The threefold purpose of the law
 - i. A mirror reflecting our sinfulness and God's righteousness / grace
 - 1. The law drives us to Christ (Gal 3:24)
 - ii. A restraint against evil and lawlessness (civil use; Rom 13:3-4)
 - iii. A guide to righteousness and good works (John 14:15; Eph 2:8-10)

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul...The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalm 19:7-8).