

A Commentary on Exodus 20

In terms of importance to us, this seminal chapter may be the most significant in this book. It is here where the fundamental Laws under which man was to live are first revealed. By giving the Law here, God began the revelation of His own character, and what He wanted in those who would share His eternal glory. As Spurgeon once said, “Our lives are the canvas upon which the Lord paints His own character.” I believe that here, with the Ten Commandments, God assembled the ten pigments He would apply to each “canvas” of willing souls. To those souls He would then fashion the image of Himself, which was originally represented in Adam and Eve before their fall. In our Christian vernacular, we call this His work of sanctification. Here was a new covenant between God and man which we might call the Sinaiatic Covenant, because it was framed at Mt. Sinai. The earlier Abrahamic covenant was unilateral. God unconditionally promised the land to Abraham’s descendents. The only question was when, and under what circumstance. The Sinaiatic covenant was a two party conditional one. God would do certain things **if** the people did certain things. There are no **ifs** in the Abrahamic covenant. The terms and conditions of the Sinaiatic covenant are expressed more fully in (Ex. 34:27, 28, Deut. 4:13, and reflected in Deut. 19:9, 24:3, 4-8.) Of course, they center around obedience to His Law.

Mt Sinai was a temporary terminal point where the Hebrews, now as a nation, spent most of two years receiving what we might today call a Constitution, in a way similar to what the “founding fathers” of our nation gave to us as the basic laws for the governance of a new nation. While there is much in our Constitution and its amendments that seem to have been God inspired, it was man made, and therefore far from perfect. However, there at Sinai, every aspect of the governance document was God-authored. This made it perfect! No other nation or group of people has ever been so favored or blessed! We often read about how Israel was God’s chosen people, how Israel was the “wife” of Jehovah, and how Israel was the “apple of God’s eye” (Zechariah 2:8) We might consider that the major aspect of Scripture from Jacob to Sinai was the recording of the events that took place during the gestation period of Israel. From the seeds of Jacob as he

sired 12 sons, until the birth of the nation was about 300 years. This was the time required for the 12 “embryos” to grow into the million plus nation that emerged from the womb of the Red Sea. At Sinai, the Father would begin to teach His child how to grow, how to live and what his purpose in life was to be. They were given a God-perfect governmental structure to live by through the 10 Commandments as further elaborated by the 613 specifics of application that are carefully codified in the remainder of Exodus and the next 3 books.

As the Law is revealed here in this chapter, we should keep in mind, and understand the full meaning of each of the Ten Commandments, as Jesus more fully explained them to us in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. We should also keep in mind that the law was given with no expectation God gave it as the example toward which man should strive. It was a goal that man could not possibly live by, and therefore would need a Savior to redeem him from the inevitable fate that his failure would cause. As we read on we will see that the two years at Sinai were not only for the teaching of the law, but also for constructing the tabernacle and all of its components, as well as learning the many ceremonies, rituals and rules for worship. These were provided in order to show them the means by which the punishment for their failure to keep the Law could be mitigated. The Law reveals God’s righteousness, but it can’t give righteousness. (Gal. 2:21) only Jesus can do that. We don’t receive the Holy Spirit because we obey the law, but because we trust Jesus. The Law is God’s way of showing us our sins and stripping us of our self righteousness as we cry for mercy and for the grace of God. One of the main ministries of the Law was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ (Gal. 4:1, 2). The first four commandments deal with our responsibility toward God, and the last six are instructions regarding our dealings with our fellow man.

Verses 1, 2

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Just so there could be no misunderstanding about who was issuing these commandments, God identified Himself as the One who delivered them physically out of Egypt. Now was the time for them to learn what was to be expected of them if He was to continue protecting and providing for them as His people. Could this have been the Son, speaking as a Theopany? Yes, in some portions of the event. However, I believe it was the Father Himself who spoke introducing Himself to the nation of Israel whom He would later call His wife. (Hosea 2)

Verses 3, 4, 5

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me;”

No mincing of words by God here. He was to be the one and only God they were to worship. There were to be no other gods of any kind, neither secondary gods, nor parallel gods. There were to be no images, sculptures, or models made in the likeness of anything existing or imagined anywhere in God’s creation that were to be made as items of worship. This included angels as well as God Himself. Even though God was not seen, He could have been imagined. Every painting of Jesus is a violation of this commandment, and an even greater blasphemy because it is completely false in that no one knows what He looks like. His supposed likeness is represented in paintings, which in some instances have been the subject of worship. This is exactly what this commandment was meant to prevent. Nothing, or no one was to be in any way worshiped but the true God, that is the God who was then speaking to them. We should understand that anything to which we give an inordinate amount of our time, or our heart, is something that we have chosen to be a competitive god, whether or not we intended to do so. God has the right to be jealous.

He is God our Creator, Sustainer and Savior. He has a righteous claim on our loyalty, and to be the only One whom we worship. He wants all your spiritual affection. Some interpret these verses to forbid the making of all paintings, or sculptures or other forms of images. It doesn't say that, it only prohibits those intended for worship, or which might become items of worships. Verse 5 warns us of the likelihood that children, grandchildren etc. of those who hate God can fall victim by example and environment. They are most likely to have the same fate as their parents. God doesn't punish these children for the parent's sin. It is the sad consequences of ancestral sins that can be passed on generation to generation, so that these otherwise innocent children suffer as a result. It's hard not to sin when your environment has been one of deliberate or condoned sin. By nature, these circumstances seem to carry on for several generations especially in cultures where family influence remains close at hand.

Verse 6

“and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

On the other hand, the godliness of parents can help, through their example, to bring blessings to succeeding generations. Those who choose to love and obey are greatly rewarded by His grace and mercy. Both Scripture and life experience indicate that it doesn't always work that way. The odds of godly parents raising godly children is far greater than the alternative.

Verse 7

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

God is the ultimate being in the universe. Therefore his name is the greatest name and needs to be treated as such. God is very sensitive as to how his name is used or this third commandment wouldn't be here. The sample prayer Jesus gave the Apostles begins with

“Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed (holy) is your name.”(Matthew 6:9) By that established fact He expects His holiness to be recognized in our hearts at all times especially when we pray. The common interpretation of this commandment is that it has to do with the use of profanity, but that is only a minor part of its purpose. Most who use His name in profanity don’t even know what they are saying, and their problem with God and with their immortal souls is far greater for other reasons than swearing. Born-again Christians, if they have advanced at all in their sanctification, do not deliberately do this, regardless the depths of depravity from which they began. Nevertheless, this 4th commandment is badly dealt with by many Christians. God demands reverence for His name, and warns that failure to do so will result in punishment, since such failure establishes one as being guilty of sin and therefore eligible for such treatment.

Why is God so sensitive about this where His own people are concerned? It is because we are representatives of Him and His kingdom. As His adult children we are His ambassadors to the world, and how we represent our Father and King reflects on Him, and how our regard toward Him is seen by others. How effective we are as evangelists, how fruitful we are in spreading His Word, and gaining the world’s interest in seeing value in our faith, is largely determined by how we represent Him. Gandhi was once asked what he saw as the problem with Christianity. He simply answered, “The Christian.” Sadly, he was right! What Gandhi saw that caused him to have that negative view was the manner of ambassadorship that the Christians around him and elsewhere presented. Certainly, Catholic “Christians” who were the most numerous “representatives” of Christianity were the major part of his “Christian” experience. The same is true of what the Jews have seen mostly for the past 1500 years.

Their view of Christianity was, and is, typified by the crusades, the inquisition and the silence of the papacy throughout the German extermination program. There are many other examples of how Catholicism, masquerading as the “brotherly love” religion called Christianity, has treated Jews throughout the ages. What kind of example or representation of their faith do even the born-again Christians project to the world? In general, not very good, I’m afraid. Even the “Christian” denominations that are the “spin

offs” from Catholicism, which occurred during the “reformation,” do for the most part project similar images. It’s because most of them carried with them, and still do, the Catholic doctrine called “replacement theology”. This is the belief that when the Jews rejected Jesus they forfeited any further grace of God. They believe that the church replaced the Jews as God’s chosen people, thereby leaving the Jews absent of any earthly or spiritual future. Simple reading of Scripture easily refutes that belief over and over again.

What actually distinguishes a real redeemed Christian from the rest of the world of “good people?” There are many “good” people all around us who in many ways surpass many Christians in their virtuous lifestyles and acts of love. Both the Jehovah witnesses and the Mormons as well as many Hindu sects express Christian like virtues in their daily lives that can put to shame many real Christians. Therefore, outwardly expressed virtuous living doesn’t by itself express the difference between a saved and unsaved soul. Each of us is identifying his or herself as a disciple of Christ when we call ourselves Christians. To be worthy of that name, and not be violating this commandments one must see to it that one:

1. Is sufficiently scripturally literate to know with certainty who Jesus is and what He expects of His own, and who also lives a life that fulfills that expectation as closely as possible.
2. Knows the value of prayer and applies it to the true God in the manner Scripture suggests.
3. Separates from all that is ungodly, and from ungodly people, and all ungodly activities to the extent possible...
4. Expresses brotherly love to even the worst of humanity where the opportunities present themselves.
5. Attends church where uncompromising biblical Christianity is taught and practiced, and is absent as much as possible of the intrusion of worldly ways. These have slowly transformed many churches into social clubs rather than places of sincere worship, and biblical learning. A true Christian should be devoid of any semblance

of activity or circumstances where today's use of the word "liberal" could apply in any theological context,

6. Does not try to hide one's Christian faith so as to cause one to appear as a "normal" member of today's go-along-to-get-along worldly society. What kind of "Christian" is one who tries to appear not to be a Christian? After all of the rationalizations and excuses are offered, the only valid answer is that such a person is ashamed of their faith, or too weak to face up to the consequences that almost always "go with the territory"! If so, one should seriously wonder whether or not this is a saving faith! How do I know? Because Jesus said so. Read, His own words in Mark 8:38 *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

We could go on and on with this, but the above is probably more than most "Christians" feel they need regarding this commandment. However, let us acknowledge that it contains a much deeper meaning than simple abstinence from using the Lord's name profanely. No real Christian would intentionally do this anyway. In passing, isn't it interesting that such profanity always expresses itself against our true God Jesus, and never against Buddha, or Mohammad or Satan. What clearer testimony could there be as to the enmity and hatred the Satan controlled world has for Jesus, just as He said it would.

Verse 8-11

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

When you think about it, this is a very strange requirement to have been included in a list of ten laws which were given to tell man the manner in which he is to deal with God and other men. The first three commandments tell us most emphatically that He is the one and only God to be worshiping and who jealously views His preeminence and His reputation where His name is represented. Then, the rest of the commandments deal very logically with man's relationship to man. Here in between we have this end-of-the-week day called the Sabbath, that was to be kept holy.

We might reason, and rightly so, that this commandment was for the purpose of allowing, or requiring a day of serious worship by setting a day devoted primarily for that purpose. I believe that it was also required in order to assure man a day of physical rest from his labors. Absent such a requirement, many men, especially those who use the labor of others, could and would extract a seven-day week of labor from their employees. There is a third reason that God set the last day of the week aside from work, and expressed this requirement of rest. The way God related this commandment to His creation week, in my opinion, expresses His foreknowledge of how man would eventually try to deny Him the glory of, and inerrancy of, His Holy Scripture.

In Genesis He stated as clearly as possible that He created everything in six-24 hour days. He called the time required to complete each of the six portions of creation as "days." So that there could be no mistake about how long a day was, He identified it as the sum of "the evening and the morning" clearly defining it as a normal 24 hour day by referring to it as the sum of its two immutable segments, which are the daylight and darkness portions of the normal 24 hour day. He represented this definition of a day in Genesis all six times. Then He spoke of the seventh day as the day following the six days of creation as a day of rest, since all He intended to create He had created during those six morning and evening days. We should note that the hour, minute and second division of a day was given much later through man's own God-given motivation and improvising skills. Even if He had chosen to have then introduced those subdivisions of a day, at the time of creation, man would have questioned and perverted even those time segments as they have done so with the word "day."

By the way, here is an interesting observation concerning the seven day week as a commonly repeated segment of time like the day, month and year. When did this seven day segment of time begin to be used as such? We find no mention of any seven day cycle or the word “week” anywhere in secular history or in Scripture until the Israelites had left Egypt and were nearing Mt. Sinai in Arabia. In Exodus 16:23-26 We find the first mention of the word “Sabbath.” The word in the Hebrew means “intermission” to repose, desist from exertion”. The seven-day week was inaugurated through the “manna program” where God provided just the right amount each day for five days, twice the needed amount on the sixth day, and none on the seventh. This is how and when the seven -day cycle we call the “week” first came into existence.

Was this first seven-day cycle synchronized with the seven days of creation? I suspect that the time interval from the first day of creation to the first day that manna was provided would be evenly divisible by seven. This was because God knew the exact number of days since creation and most surely would have begun this seven-spoke wheel rolling in concert with His seven days of creation. Therefore, it is more than likely that our Saturday is the true “anniversary” of God’s original day of rest! There doesn’t seem to be any record in secular history, which indicates any other period of time or culture that may have applied a seven day cycle of time until it was adopted by the Romans many centuries later. As a point of evidence of God’s use of sevens according to the chronology study by Dr. Floyd Jones, the crossing out of Egypt the year manna was first offered, was 2513 years after creation. The number is evenly divisible by seven!

Having anticipated man’s attack on the six days of creation, God chose here in this commandment to reaffirm the meaning of a day. He equates the six days of work and seventh day of rest for man as the exact same time increment utilized by Him to complete all of creation. This renders ridiculous the idea that a day was a long period of time amounting to millions of what we call years. Can anyone not believe that in this list of laws, a day is a day as we know it to be, and that six days of work and one day of rest is anything else other than what we know it to be? Long before the commandments were

given, everyone who knew the story of Genesis knew that God made all of creation in six actual 24 hour days. I had no doubt that at Sinai they also believed that God's six days of creation consisted of the same amount of time as what they then heard God speak of in this commandment!

In verse eleven He links what we call a week consisting of six days of work and one of rest, mentioned in verses 9, and 10, most emphatically with: "For in six days the Lord made...". Anyone weak enough in their faith in the inerrancy of Scripture to waiver or reject the literal six days of Genesis should, if they study this whole issue, be restored to their senses by this confirmation. Of course "science" claims "compelling evidence" that it took billions of years during which life "accidentally" evolved. Most of the so-called old earth "creation scientists" allow for God to have created, but that those days were not 24 hour days, but eons of time. Anyone with only a modicum of God-given common sense, who has not chosen to believe otherwise, should be able to recognize that the incredible complexity of every cell and organ of the body of even the most elemental species, could not possibly have "evolved" from non-living substances.

All evidence leads to an inescapable conclusion that there had to be information supplied in order for a cell to be formed, and for the cells to have been assembled in such a complex and intricate manner just to form a single organ. This particular area of "science," which makes claims contrary to biblical truth, is an agency of Satan in his attempt to discredit God's Word. Fortunately, there is today a growing body of scientists who have examined the same evidence used by Satan's agents, and have shown that it in fact supports the literal 24 hour day of creation rather than the longer time period. However because Satan also controls most of how information is communicated, this information is not wide spread. So-called Science is WRONG in this matter, and Scripture is ALWAYS RIGHT!! Don't ever forget this, or even question that fact no matter how brilliant, compelling and persuasive Satan's "scientific" arguments against it may be.

It's sad that the Israelites didn't honor the Sabbath as God had directed, and so had to be punished (2 Chron.36:14-21, Eze.20:12, Is.58:13, Jer.17:21-27). We also find that the Pharisees added thirty nine acts that were forbidden to be done on the Sabbath, acts God never imposed. Jesus strongly criticized them for imposing these needless burdens (Mark: 2:24, 3:5). Jesus never violated a single one of the Ten Commandments or the other 613 legitimate prohibitions. It was from among these 39 man-made laws that He deliberately broke and for which He rebuked them.

Working the animals such as the oxen or asses or other beasts of burden was forbidden, perhaps as an act of mercy or compassion for them as well, and also to work them, would have required a person to attend them and thereby violate the Sabbath. A reason for restricting strangers to the same law would be to prevent them from getting an economic advantage over the adherents of the law by allowing them an extra day to produce. Gates would be literal for those who lived in walled gated cities, and figurative for other places that didn't have physical walls. This would of course include confines of all forms as well as nomadic encampments.

Verse 12

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

In the early years of Israel and for many centuries, disobedient children could be put to death. This is the only commandment that carries an automatic blessing for its obedience. How incredible it seems to us in the present age that parental respect or honor should be an actual commandment and one of the basic ten as well. Notice that this is not limited to, or even mentioned of young children. This applies to all people who yet have parents. Somehow most of the more "primitive" cultures even today, show reverence to the elderly. Yet in our "civilized" society, it is the reverse that is in vogue. Youth is more often respected, deemed wise and imitated, while the elderly are, for the most part considered "invisible", or irrelevant and "out of touch" with the "important" things in

life. I know this from personal experience as it applies to my grandchildren, and of observing society on general.

In but only two or three generations past, the elderly were cared for by their children in their own homes to the very end. “Old age homes” were rare and far between, and populated almost entirely by those who had no families to be responsible for them. Today it’s more common for even those with children capable of caring for them in their homes, to refuse that duty and relegate them to some spiritually cold and loveless facilities. I believe that this is part of what Jesus predicted when in Matthew 24:12 *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”*

Perhaps an even sadder example of our current neglect of performance regarding this commandment is in the word “honor”. In discussing what follows, the use of the word “respect”, a close cousin of “honor,” is more appropriate. The advancement of all civilization has been due to each generation setting it’s foundation on the knowledge, experiences and achievements of the previous generations, thus being able to establish a higher more beneficial foundation for the generation that would follow them. This has worked visibly well in most fields of science. For instance, once the wheel had been invented, it never had to be reinvented. It was simply improved and expanded in its application by succeeding generations.

Today, as with so many other God-given assets available, the knowledge, experience and wisdom obtained over the lifetime of those who are on in years is ignored at best, and ridiculed or otherwise demeaned as worthless compared with what “youth know.” We see this attitude inculcated into society at an early age through the TV “sit-coms”, advertisements, magazines, the educational system and nearly every aspect of society. The result permeates down to the family level where parents and especially grandparents are more of a joke and a burden than a source of valuable knowledge and wisdom. This is true even when the elderly are kept at home, and even more so when they are filed away in institutions. What is the result? Rather than receiving, respecting and appreciating the benefits of what the older generations have learned and experienced, the younger

generation goes out into the world full of false confidence and self esteem, and finds that it must symbolically “reinvent” the wheel, which is often far more inferior than they might have started with, had they chosen to use what was available from their elders. The steady decline of moral values, and just about every other measure of social quality, we see so evident today can be attributed, in varying degrees to the degradation of the family, of the institute of marriage and of the worth of the elderly.

God’s blessing to those who would obey this commandment provides that the life spans of those who honor their parents would be greater than those who didn’t. I suppose the death penalty had some effect on ones relative length of life. While as written, it seems to have applied to those Israelites who would enter Canaan, it is evident that it has relevance to all peoples of all times. We could go on for several pages citing the adverse ramifications of this sad situation regarding value of our elders. However I have an example of this, which the worldly call “the generation gap”. I’ve sat thousands of hours at my kitchen table over the last seventeen (18) years, the period during which all 4 of my grandchildren grew to adulthood. All of this time was spent writing “Christian Musings” and Bible study notes, and commentaries such as this. **NOT ONCE** in all those years have any of my grandchildren **OR** my children ever looked over my shoulder to see what I was doing, or sat down with me and asked me any questions about my work, or even expressed a passing courtesy interest in any of that which I have devoted the major portion of these last years. As a well-educated man having had in a small way, a very successful career, I have much to offer from a secular perspective, but they are not eager to have or want that either. While I believe, my children are far more respectful of me than is found in most of today’s families, I see this disinterest as highly symbolic of what this Marxists indoctrinated society has deliberately done to these later generations. A fairly recent exception to this, for which I feel eternally blessed and exceedingly grateful to God, is my oldest son who has finally discovered the truth of Jesus and is a born-again Christian.

Verse 13

“Thou shalt not kill”

Many “of the world” who have no interest or respect for God or His commandments will piously cite this one as their basis for condemning capital punishment. This, of course, is ludicrous from a biblical perspective. The translation would have been more correct to have used the other meanings of the Hebrew word “ratsach,” which is “murder”. That God ordains capital punishment is decreed in numerous places in Scripture. This makes it necessary to clearly understand what the word “kill” really means in this context. The word “kill” as used here comes from the Hebrew word “raqach” which can mean either “kill” or “murder”. It is used only two other times in all of Scripture. In the context of the whole of Scripture, it is evident that it is here best translated as “murder”. Little if anything more needs to be said regarding this commandment although much detail regarding its application will be found in later chapters. We will discover for instance, the cities of refuge, their purpose, and their application, as illustrations of how God set up the procedures for dealing with the difference between murder and unintended killing as it applied for the Israelite nation. I believe that this commandment applies to all times to the end of the earth.

Verse 14

Thou shalt not commit adultery”

In Genesis 2:24, God makes it clear that the sanctity of marriage is to be higher and more binding than that which exists between child and parent. This is about honoring the marriage and holding it sacred. Breaking this commandment was considered a capital crime (Lev.20:10, Deut.22:22). Adultery is robbery of what belongs to the adulter’s mate. (1Thes.4:5-8, Prov.6:20-35). However, even absent the death penalty, there are some sad, painful, earthly consequences of such actions which continue on one way or another through the rest of mortal life. David’s life after he committed adultery is a fine

example of this. Also, under this category of sin are bestiality, sodomy, whoredom, fornication and other related forms of filthiness. Jesus added, that even the thought associated with doing any of these things is sinful. Today, especially among the wealthy and the celebrities, many who are affectually “worshipped” as idols, adultery has become fashionable thereby making it more and more socially accepted. Fornication has become as common place as a kiss, even among young teenage youth, while sodomy is paraded as simply a different “lifestyle”. It is well known that the family unit is the foundation and strength of any society. That is why God made such a big deal of it. Those who realize this are not surprised to see our whole structure as a nation crumbling before our eyes. Satan’s attack on the family, through the promotion of these evil acts and abominations, has been eminently successful in his war to destroy mankind and any chances for eternal life.

Verse 15

Thou shalt not steal”

Stealing encompasses all manner of taking what is not yours including defrauding, embezzlement and robbery. This sin goes well beyond what most regard it to be. You steal from your employer when you give him any amount of time less than what you have agreed to give. Checking out the internet during working hours for your own self interest is stealing. Knowingly accepting more change than is due you because of a cashier’s mistake is stealing. Taking advantage of someone’s desperate condition to obtain his property below what it is actually worth is stealing. Charging more than you know something is worth to someone who doesn’t know the real value is stealing.

One could go on and on with examples of stealing that today, with our much calloused consciences are not at all considered wrong. Many will find these examples of stealing nitpicking, and perhaps outrageous, in as much as they are well established as acceptable and as common place as are “little white lies.” Do you know anyone who gives his employer eight full hours of service for the eight hours he agreed to work every day? Do

you do it? Again, this is an area of conduct like the “little white lie” where I believe the conscience of most people has been seriously seared. A born-again Christian who is actively in God’s “sanctification” program will have his or her conscience severely “pricked” when they engage in any of these things. Fortunately, sanctification is where the Holy Spirit not only reveals these sins, but gives you the power and the strength to eliminate them, if you will but confess them, ask for forgiveness and then sincerely resolves to remove them from your life. Doing so is almost impossible for those who are unavoidably involved in the world. However, the more diligently one tries, the fewer times one will backslide.

Verse 16

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”

False witness. This commandment is a prohibition of far more than simply lying. Surely, deceiving and deliberately telling an untruth is a violation of this commandment, but it goes much further than that. If we witness a lie, and have the opportunity to, but say nothing to rectify the situation, we have become participants in that lie. Speaking the truth and honoring promises is the cement that holds a healthy society together. In our present society the lie is spoken much, or even more often than the truth especially by government, the media, and most economic interests. Would you call ours a “healthy” society? Half truths are just as sinful as full lies. It is lying by omission when an incomplete truth causes misunderstanding. There is a commercial on “Christian radio” which I have heard repeated daily. It involves the selling of a particular water heater. The persuasion employed is that when buying the product from this particular store, the gas company gives you a \$600.00 rebate.

This falls into the category of a half-truth, or of being “a little white lie.” The fact is that the speaker is telling the truth, but omitting the fact that the rebate is provided regardless of where the heater is purchased! Is this deception or just clever advertising? It is both! I have read somewhere that Henry Kissinger once observed that the truth of a matter is

irrelevant. Only the perception that it is true matters. That is exactly the basis on which almost every aspect of our society operates. Today, the lie is more common than the truth, the consciences of most of us, even real Christians, has become calloused to many of the more subtle and devious aspects of a lie. We do the “a little white lie” stuff, the half truths, and the deceptions by omission, and don’t even realize that we are sinning. That is why we should all petition the Holy Spirit to sensitize our conscience and to reveal to us how and where we sin when we don’t recognize it as such. It’s this type of “minor” sin that keeps the Holy Spirit in us quenched. This in turn prevents Him from leading us to higher levels of sanctification. False witness also includes, slander, backsliding, scorning, and false accusations.

“Thy neighbor” was not limited to Israelites, nor is it presently limited to those who live next door. It applies to all of the human race as being our neighbors. How ridiculous it would be to interpret “neighbor” to apply only to the guy next door. For that to be the meaning, absent any further elaboration, we could assume that anything goes where non-neighbors are concerned.

Verse 17

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s”

What’s covet? It’s been so clearly stated by Matthew Pound that I have simply included his words of definition:

- *The inward and deliberate purpose and desire of a deceitful or violent taking away of another man’s goods.*
- *The greedy desire of that which is another man’s though it be without injury to him. Thus Ahab sinned in desiring Naboth’s vineyard, though he offered him money for it (1Kings 21:2)*

- *Or rather those inward notions of the heart, which from the foundation of original corruption do spring up in the heart, and tickle it with some secret delight, though they do not obtain the deliberate consent of the will.*

Weirsbe's commentary on this commandment is also, in my opinion, superb, so I have also included it here:

He calls it, Controlling Desires.

The first and 10th commandment deal with what's in the heart, while the other eight focus on outward actions that begin in the heart. Covetous people will break all of God's commandments in order to satisfy their desires, because at the heart of sin is the sin in the heart. (Matthew 15:19) To covet is to feed inward desires for anything that God says is sinful. It was this commandment that "slew" Saul of Tarsus and convinced this successful Pharisee that he was a sinner. (Romans 7:1-14), see Luke 12:5, Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5).

The Ten Commandments end with an emphasis on being a good neighbor, for the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34, Leviticus 19:18). If we love our neighbors, we won't covet what they have, steal from them, lie about them, or do any of the other things God prohibits in His Word. This is why love is the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:8-10). But only God can change our sinful hearts (Hebrews 10:14-18) and gives us the love we need to obey Him and to care for others (Galatians 5:22-26, Romans 5:1-5).

Wiersbe makes a critical point when he speaks of love as being the second greatest commandment. We don't find it here, but in Matthew 22:29 Jesus says that the second greatest commandment is like the first, because it commands us to Love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus goes on in verse 40 to say that loving God and loving your neighbor encompasses all of the 10 commandments. Surely if we have that love, none of the other commandments are necessary because that love will preclude our involvement in any of the other "do not's." How beautifully and simply Jesus put into one capsule all that is

needed to treat and care for all the maladies associated with sin! An agape love, sincerely applied for our neighbor (all people) can cure the sinful nature and heal the troubled soul.

Verses 18-22

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightenings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.”

After speaking to the people, God put on a frightening display of thunder, lightning, smoke and blasting trumpets. This put fear in their hearts and a desire to henceforth hear from God only through Moses. Then Moses explained that this was God’s ways of getting their full attention, and to impress on them the importance of His message and that fear of God is an appropriate feeling where lack of obedience is involved. What an experience! They had realized that God talked to them from heaven. They had heard His Holy voice, spoken to this million-fold multitude. What a momentous event! In verse 20 Moses explained it well. However, perhaps this is how he might have spoken in our present day way of expressing things: “Don’t be afraid of this manifestation of God. You just had a wonderful and rare experience to have had God speaking audibly and directly to you. This should leave no doubt in your mind of His existence, His power, His care and what He requires of you. Yes you should fear Him, but only to the extent you violate His commandments. You should fear the penalties of disobedience about which He has warned you. If you are obedient, you have nothing at all to fear from Him.”

In verse 21, we see that God is cloaked by a thick darkness toward which only Moses would move. God here says that they have seen that He talked to them from heaven. They didn't see Him, they only heard Him but believed that He spoke from the darkness before them, which by the way, He called heaven. Am I reaching too far to conclude that heaven must have been right there on Mt. Sinai? We could say that God is in heaven, and heaven is where God is. As He moved away, heaven would therefore move also. I have believed for some time that there is no extra-earthly place called heaven. Heaven is a place of spirits. Spirits take up no space even though they do have locality. Why should there be a special place somewhere else, in or beyond the universe, where God and His created spiritual beings need to reside? God's primary interest is here on earth, and centered around those He created in His image.

Since those, "in heaven" take up no space, why would He have chosen some other place to be His main base of operation? I believe that He is here with all His hosts within this solid and atmospheric earth, not somewhere far away. After all, didn't He choose the belly of the earth to be the bottomless pit where He cast some of the fallen angels and where Satan will spend a thousand years? Isn't Sheol also somewhere down in the belly of the earth where Jesus spent three days? All of the Old Testament saints had been waiting for Him to arrive there, so that He would clean away their covered-over sins, and then deliver them to heaven. I believe that it's likely that they and all of His angels are here all around us, but in different dimensionalities where we cannot detect their presence.

Verse 23

Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."

Again, consistent with the second commandment, God is warning against making images because these can become idols of worship. I suspect that the Son of God may have chose to reveal Himself in the form of a Theophany at Sinai, as He had done often in the past. Perhaps the message was more significant as it relates to Him. It was more likely

that they would make an image of the seen God than they would of the unseen God. There may be some credence to this observation in that otherwise, this verse seems way out of context with what precedes or succeeds it. An idol image of the Father seems more unlikely, because they had no image of the Father to go by. However, having seen the Son as He manifested numerous times as flesh and bone “image” of man, they did have an image to go by. In verse 33 we are told that “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speakekth unto his friend.” This doesn’t necessarily make it the “theophany”, because of the many ways “face” can be interpreted. However, I believe that it does mean to conclude that it was the Son of God Moses spoke to. Of course, it also speaks plainly of not making competitive gods of silver and gold.

This is actually a repetition of the second commandment. Forty years later, Moses reviewed the law with the new generation, and reminded them that their ancestors has seen manifestation of God’s glory and power and heard His words. But they saw no form of any kind. (Deuteronomy 4:15) God didn’t reveal Himself in any form lest they turn the living God into a dead idol.

Catholics worship before the cross with the dead Christ hanging on it. “*What likeness will you compare Him*” (Isaiah 40:18). These words of Isaiah seem to verify the fact that there was no evidence of His appearance by which anyone could now identify Him. I suggest that as the Spirit of God the Father could not have been seen by anyone even if they could have entered the cloud and lived. It makes sense to me that it was more of a problem of the unsanctified walking on hallowed ground. Moses was the exception, because he had been sanctified for that purpose. I believe that the thunderous voice that severely frightened the people was at that time the Father God. Again, it seems to me that Moses’ later encounter with God was more than likely with the Theophany. How else could it be when the Lord spoke unto Moses, face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend? Notice in the face to face conversation that it was the Lord speaking to His friend. IT wouldn’t have been written this way had it been Moses speaking to his friend, the Son of God Theophany. (Exodus 33:11) Scripture tells that no one could ever see God the Father and live. (Exodus 20:19 & Deuteronomy 5:25)

Verses 24-26

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.”

Worshipping altars had been made ever since Noah got off the ark. (Genesis 8:20) Apparently the worship altars made during their wilderness sojourn were made on a raised mound of dirt or stone and were accessed by either a ramp or steps. *“In all places where I record my name or where my name is recorded, that is where I am worshipped sincerely.”* Wherever God was sincerely worshipped He was there among them, and would bless them. We don’t build altars to sacrifice animals; however, I’m sure that when and where we worship Him in love and sincerity, He is there to bless us as well.

As long as they were on the move, a new altar had to be constructed at each new encampment. To serve such a large group, it was probably large enough to sacrifice several animals at a time, as compared with Noah’s altar for 8 people. God forbid carving the stones to make stone altars even where this might have been more appropriate due to the nature of the soil. Why? One possible reason is that, it could have led to engraving akin to graven images. Probably, it also was to keep it plain and simple and not an object of man’s wasting time on ornate workings. They were to be kept low so as to not expose the priest’s nakedness. What’s that all about? In those days, man wore long coats or gowns much like the women, with no other clothing under them. With an assembly of people at the foot of this altar looking up at the activity, it would be possible that as a man climbed the steps, or walk up the ramp, his genitals or “nakedness” could

be revealed. Later, the altar in Solomon's Temple was 10 cubits, or about 15 feet high. I've read that Temple Priests wore some form of britches under their gowns.

Much more could be said and probably has been said regarding this most important portion of the Book of Exodus. I pray that what is here written will be of some benefit to the dear souls who search the Scripture seeking a clearer understanding of what God has authored and provided us through the Holy Bible.