

# Exodus 19

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[ 0 : 00 ] Covenant with the people of Israel by speaking to them of their deliverance from Egypt. He reminds them what he had done for them before he requires anything of them.

! Notice the initial phrase in verse 4. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. This phrase recalls God's judgment upon Egypt. It speaks to God's incomparable working of justice and of his wrath toward his enemies that Israel would fear God and hear his good commandments to them.

It reminded them of the wrath of God that they had escaped. Secondly, the phrase, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, shows Israel's role in their deliverance as entirely passive.

God's interpretation of his deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians does not run contrary to Israel's understanding of the same.

[ 1 : 18 ] They understood it was God who delivered us. We took no part in this. God has brought us out of Egypt. In Exodus chapter 15, Miriam sings to Israel of Israel's deliverance after crossing the Red Sea.

And there is recorded for us, she sings, sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

So they understood, right? It is God who judged Egypt. It is God who has delivered us from their hand. Thirdly, the phrase, and brought you to myself, teaches us that God did not save Israel for her own sake, but for a particular relationship with him.

A relationship that he expounds upon in the following verses. Now, if we rightly understand the Exodus story, we find in it a foreshadowing of the deliverance to come.

So we ought to, as those found in Christ, delivered from the death of sin to life in Christ, can connect here at this point with what God is saying to his people.

[ 2 : 44 ] Verse 5 begins with the phrase, Now, therefore. So, in response to my deliverance, because of who I am to you, here is who you are to be to me.

God goes on to define Israel's calling. What it will mean for them to be God's people. So God begins with this reminder of his deliverance.

I delivered you. I bore you on wings and I brought you to myself. And then he goes on to expect something of them.

So grateful obedience. And he gives them this calling. And he first says, The Hebrew term translated in our text as treasured possession is used elsewhere in the Bible to refer to a king's personal wealth.

Israel was to be a special people. A highly valued people among all peoples. God is saying, God is saying, I possess all peoples.

[ 4 : 21 ] And you are to be a special people for the sake of all peoples. And this idea is further developed in the next phrase at the beginning of verse 6.

God says of Israel, And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests. The people of Israel as a whole were meant to fulfill priestly duties.

It's a rather interesting Hebrew phrase. Both here this idea of kingdom of priests as well as later on in the verse, holy nation. These phrases are only found in this place in the Old Testament, which makes it difficult to translate and understand.

We can also understand, and I think more rightly, rather than ESV rendering this kingdom of priests, a priestly kingdom.

That they were as a whole meant to fulfill these priestly duties. The priests were to be representatives of the Lord to Israel.

[ 5 : 30 ] And the priests were meant to be representatives of Israel to the Lord. The presence and service of the priests made possible a relationship between God and Israel.

And this is the way that Israel is meant to function for the peoples of the earth. And while not expressly stated here, from a broader understanding of the narrative of God's dealings and purposes for His people, we can know that Israel was meant to serve this way for all peoples to the ends of the earth.

Recall, as a simple example, the story of God sending Jonah to the Ninevites to go and preach what? Repentance. Turn from your sins and turn to the one true God.

Finally, God says that Israel is to be a holy nation. They were to be a people set apart in holy living as a nation amongst nations.

If this were not coming from the mouth of the Lord Himself, it would seem so very blasphemous. But God is placing this calling on His people.

[ 6 : 44 ] He will give to them good commands. Commands that are not burdensome and aimed at their flourishing. Jesus repeats such an expectation of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 5 and verse 48, where He says, You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

perfect. So, God has a purpose for Israel, and it is a missionary purpose, to display His glory to the world in holy living.

This is still God's purpose for His people. His purpose for us. And we can know this so clearly, because the Apostle Peter borrows language from the beginning of Exodus 19 to make the expanded point to the church.

In 1 Peter 2 and verse 9, He wrote, and I hope your brains are just already pinging to the cross reference, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

So, as those who have been made righteous in Christ, we are to be keepers of the law. Not obedient so that we will be accepted by God, but accepted by God, and therefore gratefully obedient.

[ 8 : 20 ] And we are to give all of ourselves to grateful obedience for the sake of God's glory amongst all peoples. This is why a study of Exodus 20 matters for the church.

God expects of us whole person righteousness. A righteousness that we find ultimately in Christ. The one who was without sin, who kept the law perfectly, but yet, having been clothed in His righteousness, and left here on this earth, we are meant to pursue obedience for the sake of His name.

Every bit, every bit of our being. This morning's Spurgeon quote on your bulletin, Spurgeon once said, Obedience rendered without delight in rendering it is only half obedience.

God wants all of us given in worship to Him for the praise of His name amongst all peoples. So, with all of that in mind, let's look together at the first three commandments.

We're going to do that by using a historical document. I mentioned it to you previously, and again, my sincerest apology if you don't have a bulletin in your hand with something stapled to the back of it.

[ 9 : 42 ] We're going to look at a number of the questions and answers from the Westminster Larger Catechism. I gave you some history of that in previous weeks. 1648 is when it was adopted.

Now, I want to be clear. So, hear this please. Historic creeds, confessions, and catechisms are helpful to us, but only insofar as they are consistent with the Scriptures.

I believe that the Westminster Larger Catechism on this matter is, and therefore, can give us a helpful framework for which to think through the law and our obedience to it.

As we look at the following catechism questions, I will intersperse a bit of text that the Westminster divines employed in writing their answers, but we do not have time to proof out everything that they said.

So, I want you to be encouraged to spend some more time with this document. I want you to see it in front of you read, and again, I'll try to read carefully if you don't have a copy of it in front of you, but spend some more time looking at this historic text and at God's inspired Word where they're pulling together this idea systematically for us.

[11:04] You can easily access copies of the Westminster Larger Catechism with all of the Scripture proofs online. Very simply. I would have loved to have included all the Scripture proofs for you on this, and I tried, but it was going to make eight pages instead of two.

So, I retracted down to just the text that the Westminster divines wrote. I also want to remind you of a question and answer from the catechism that we discussed last week.

Okay, so before we get into these present questions and answers, from last week, we looked at question 99, which just asked this, what rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?

And the answer, in part, they say for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed, and we talked about six of them. The third one is the one I want to remind you of, that one and the same thing in diverse respects is required or forbidden in several commandments.

So, you're going to hear, as we look at these, some divergent commands, both for or against particular activity, and that's okay.

[12:18] It works out like a Venn diagram. There's some overlaps in some places, and you'll note that as we look at these matters together. Once again, we really could take on each of these commandments a week.

We're going to tackle the first three today, Lord willing, the fourth commandment next Sunday, and then we'll try, we'll see the final six, the Lord's Day after that, and then we'll get back into the Sermon on the Mount following.

So, the first question is question 103. Skip 102 for now. Question 103, which is simply, what is the first commandment?

And we find this in verse 3. The first commandment is, you shall have no other gods before me. So, what does this mean? Question 104 begins to answer, what does the first commandment require? We're going to see both requirements and things being forbidden. The first commandment requires us to know and recognize God as the only true God and our God.

[13:33] 1 Chronicles 28, in verse 9, David says, And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind.

For the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you. But if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.

So, the very beginning, we are to recognize God as God and to seek Him as our God. And the answer goes on, and to worship and to glorify Him as such.

Psalmist of Psalm 95, verses 6 and 7, O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

So, we're meant to worship Him as our God by valuing, meditating on, remembering, highly regarding, honoring, adoring, preferring, loving, desiring, fearing, believing, trusting, hoping, delighting, and rejoicing in Him.

[14:56] How wonderfully exhaustive, right? All of us, right? All of our intentions, all of our emotions, given to the worship of this God.

Deuteronomy 6, 5, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. This is a verse that Jesus cites in Matthew 22, in verse 37.

Psalm 73, 25, Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth I desire. besides you. And Paul writes in Philippians 1, verse 21, For to me, to live is Christ. My very being is Christ.

And to die is gain because I am with Christ. The answer goes on, We must also be zealous for and call on Him, giving Him all praise and thanks, completely obeying and submitting to Him and our whole person.

[16:03] Jeremiah 7, in verse 23, But this command I gave them, Obey my voice and I will be your God and you shall be my people and walk in all the way that I command you that it may be well with you.

In James 4, verse 7, James writes, Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Finally, the answer goes on, We must walk humbly with Him, being careful to please Him in everything we say and do and being genuinely sorry when we offend Him.

1 John 3, verse 22, And whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. And Psalm 119, verse 136, My eyes shed streams of

tears because people do not keep your law.

So in summary, what does it require of us? Everything. All of us bent toward, fixed upon the one true God who is our God.

Question 105, What particular sins does the first commandment forbid? And I love how exhaustive these are.

[17:26] I'm going to read it for our benefit. And I know there's a danger in doing this that you're not going to pay attention to what I'm reading. But beloved, we are all guilty probably of all of these things if not at least most of these things.

And I want you to see that the Ten Commandments set up a framework for us which all of the commandments of the moral law fit underneath. So if we can rightly understand these commandments, it will help us to walk rightly before our God.

To do this work of walking holy and bringing about praise of His name to all peoples. So let me read it in its entirety. Particular sins the first commandment forbids.

The first commandment forbids atheism. Denying or not believing in God. Idolatry. Believing in or worshiping any other gods along with or other than the one true God.

Not having and affirming Him as God and our God. Failing or neglecting to do anything this commandment requires relating to God. Ignorance of Him.

[18:40] Forgetting Him. Misunderstanding Him. Untrue opinions about Him and evil or unworthy thoughts about Him. Irreverent curiosity about an inquiry into His secrets.

All godless desecration. Hating God. Self-love. Self-interest. And all other disorderly or excessive attention.

Mental, willful, or emotional to things that divert our attention partially or completely from God. Also included are worthless beliefs, lack of faith, heretical beliefs, wrong belief, not trusting God, spiritual despair, refusing correction and resisting God's judgment, hardness of heart, pride, willfulness, worldly complacency, putting God to the test, using unlawful means to an end, trusting even in lawful means of grace rather than God, indulging in pleasures of the flesh, depraved, blind, or improperly directed zeal, being lukewarm, spiritual deadness, deserting and forsaking God, praying to or worshiping saints, angels, or any other created being, making an agreement with, consulting or following suggestions of the devil, making men the rulers of our faith and conscience, slighting and despising God and His commandments, resisting and grieving

His spirit, and finally being dissatisfied and offended by the things God provides in our lives, ignorantly blaming Him for the evils He inflicts on us, as well as attributing the credit for any good thing we are, have, or can do to luck, idols, ourselves, or any other created being.

And when, I'll say when, not if, when you look this up with all of the Scripture proofs, behind every one, just before every comma, there will be a little number which will work out for you the text that these Westminster divines got together and pulled all of this understanding together for our benefit.

[21:00] Oh. Praise the Lord for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have transgressed the law of God and we have only begun to look at it.

A couple of New Testament places for you. Titus chapter 1 and verse 16, they profess to know God but deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Romans 1 and verse 30, slanders, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents. Hear that, children?

Colossians chapter 3, verse 2 and verse 5, set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

We are to give all of ourselves in worship to God. Question 106. What do the words before me in the first commandment specifically teach?

[22:18] What do they specifically teach? And the answer is, the words before me or, it could also be translated, before my face in the first commandment teach us that God who sees everything takes special note of and is very offended by the sin of having any other God.

These words emphasize then how important it is to obey this commandment and how disobeying it insolently provokes God. They also urge us to be just as mindful of the fact that God sees everything we do as we are of doing things in His service.

That's to say, we all live, whether we recognize it or not, *quorum Deo*. It's Latin for in the presence of God. Everything that we do, every awry emotion or intention that we have is seen by God and is

an offense to Him.

Just as, the very end of the answer says, praise the Lord, those things we do that are pleasing to Him, He also sees and is pleased with us.

Psalms 44, verse 20 and 21, the psalmist says, if we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign God, would not God discover this? Rhetorical question.

[ 23 : 41 ] For He knows the secrets of the heart. And so the first commandment is a weighty, weighty commandment.

And the case could be made that the other commandments flow from it, right? If we were to accurately keep the first commandment, I think we would find ourselves keeping each and every of the other commandments.

But God is gracious to us in being more specific. So question 107 says, what is the second commandment? This is verses 4 through 6.

We're familiar, and for the sake of time, I'm not going to read the entirety of it, but this is the idolatry commandment. You shouldn't make graven images, but it has more to do with our worship itself.

So question 108 says, what does the second commandment require? The second commandment requires us to receive, respectfully perform, and preserve completely and purely all the regulations for religion and worship that God has established in His Word.

[ 24 : 51 ] We believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. I know we have a number of guests this morning, and our gathering might seem a bit odd to you, and I can understand that.

we are laboring by grace to arrange our church in a way that is consistent with the way the Scriptures have commanded us to arrange our church, to strip away those extra things that are often added to the worship of God, and to faithfully do those things that we are commanded to do. And sometimes, in our culture, that can make us seem strange. Deuteronomy 12, verse 32, everything that I command you you shall be careful to do.

You shall not add to it or take from it. And the Westminster answer goes on. These include, and by the way, adults were meant to memorize this, prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ, the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word, the administration of and receiving the sacraments, church government and discipline, the administration and upkeep of the church, religious fasting, swearing by the name of God and making vows to Him, also included our disapproving, denouncing, and opposing false worship and doing our best in accordance with our position and calling in life to eliminate it in all forms of idolatry.

So we are to rightly gather together for the worship of God and do what we can to eliminate false worship of God. And then question 109 asks, what particular sins does the second commandment forbid?

[ 26 : 37 ] The second commandment forbids, and I just want you to take a moment and put in your mind the American church, even our church, please be critical, it's okay. The second commandment forbids imagining, recommending, demanding, practicing, or in any way approving any religious worship not established by God Himself.

Creating any likeness of God as the Trinity or as any one of His three persons, either internally in our minds or externally in the form of any kind of image or representation of a created being. There are all kinds of skip ministries that just got blown out of the water. Any worship of such created likeness as if God were in them or as if they were a means to worshipping Him, the creation of any likeness of invented gods, any worship of them or serving relating to them, and all superstitious contrivances.

Also forbidden are any departure from the true worship of God by adding to or taking away from it, whether by our own invention or received from some other tradition, and whether justified by antiquity, custom, devotional practice, good intentions, or any other excuse.

Simony, which is the selling of religious benefit, and anything sacrilegious, and finally, any neglect of, contempt for, hindering, or opposition to the worship and regulations established by God.

[ 28 : 06 ] What a task before us to gather as the church and to rightly worship Him. Praise the Lord. We have good command, right, to help and direct us for our benefit and for the glory of God in the world.

To be a people set apart for His name in our gathering so that we can be a people set apart for His name in our going. Question 110.

What reason is added to the second commandment emphasizing how important it is to obey it? And that reason is that God is a jealous God.

Right? And that idolatry will be punished and faithfulness will be rewarded. Beloved, I hope that we are those finding ourselves rewarded by God in faithfulness.

Question 111. I'm picking up pace because I see the time. What is the third commandment? Verse 7. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

[ 29 : 22 ] This commandment has been oversimplified to simply think of using God's name as a curse word and it means that to be sure. But it means so much more.

Look at the answer to question 112. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use in our thoughts, meditations, words, and writings of God's name, titles, qualities, regulations, word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, casting lots, His works, and anything else by which He makes Himself known.

His name is His person. This treatment will be reflected in holy affirmations of our faith and conduct that matches our affirmations to the glory of God and the good of ourselves and others.

And that's why we're instructed by Jesus in Matthew 6, 9 to pray like this, our Father in heaven, hallowed, revered, be your name.

And why we're warned in places like Ecclesiastes 5, in verse 2, be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God.

[ 30 : 46 ] For God is in heaven and you are on earth and you are not is what the writer is saying. Therefore, let your words be few.

Be very careful in the words that you utter. Our words are meant to be reverent about our God.

Question 113, what particular sins does the third commandment forbid?

The third commandment forbids not using God's name as is required, the abuse of it through ignorance, empty or unholy treatment, irreverence, superstition, or any wicked reference to His titles, qualities, regulations, or works, blasphemy, perjury, all sinful cursing, oaths, vows, and casting lots, violating our oaths and vows, if lawful, and keeping them if aimed at unlawful things, complaining and quarreling about or misapplication of God's decrees and acts of providence as well as unwarranted curiosity about them, misinterpreting or misapplying God's word or perverting all or part of its meaning in any way.

Boy, we shudder at that point. Blasphemous mockery of His word, pointless arguing, meaningless talk, or supporting false doctrines, abusing God's name, His creatures, or anything included under His name in the practice of magic or to promote sinful desires and activities, maligning, scorning, reviling, or opposing in any way God's truth, grace, and actions, pretending to be religious or using religion for evil purposes, being ashamed of God's name or ashamed to it by stubbornly refusing to obey Him and by living unwisely, unfruitfully, or in such a way as to offend Him or backslide away from Him.

I find that we are guilty, again, of the third commandment. And what reasons are added to the third commandment?

[ 32 : 57 ] The reasons are in these words, the Lord thy God and the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name. Because He is the Lord and our God, His name must never be treated as unholy or misused by us in any way, particularly since He is so opposed to acquitting or sparing those who break this commandment that He will not allow them to escape His righteous judgment, even though many who do break this commandment escape human condemnation and punishment.

Leviticus 19 and verse 12, You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

We ought to be careful, beloved, how we speak about this God, what we understand to be true of Him. We will end today's study by looking briefly at question and answer 102.

What is the essence of the first four commandments that cover our obligations to God? We've talked about three. I understand. What is the essence of the first four commandments that cover our obligations to God?

And the answer is this. The essence of these four commandments is to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind.

[ 34 : 23 ] To set our affections, our desires, our love on Him. Beloved, we are a people called apart for God's own possession, for our good, and so that His glory would be known in all the world.

world. So as those who have been made righteous in Christ, we are to be keepers of the law, not just outwardly, but with all that we are, working with all His energy that He powerfully works within us.

Standing confident in the fact that if we have placed saving faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ, we are secure in Him. Praise the Lord that He is our righteousness.

righteousness. Because we have not and we will not perfectly keep this law. It's given to us to labor in it, to press on into it for the sake of His name, for our good, but we will not keep it perfectly.

So praise God that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But hear me so clearly. We have all transgressed God's law.

[ 35 : 39 ] And if you are not in Christ this morning, then there is great condemnation for you. There is death and eternal hell awaiting you.

But by faith in Christ, you can put on His righteousness and stand in this non-condemnation place.

We have been given the Spirit of God to lead us into all truth and to cause us, those who have been delivered from sin to walk in His ways.

And we should do so. Let's pray together. Thank you.