

The Ten Commandments

The First Commandment

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
Exodus 20:3

The Foundation

- Verse 2 is the foundation of all Ten Commandments, but especially the First.
- We have the source of the authority – “I am the LORD thy God”.
- We have the identity of the authority – “the LORD thy God”
 - LORD - *Jehovah* – “the personal, self-existent, eternal, ever-acting One” - Boardman
 - God - *Elohim* – “the infinite, all-powerful God who shows by His works that He is the creator, sustainer, and supreme judge of the world.” – GotQuestions.org
 - *Elohim* is the general name for God and *Jehovah* is the specific name of God.
- We have the relationship of the authority – “thy God”
- We have the right of the authority – “which have brought the out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”
 - God had redeemed the people unto Himself.

The Commandment

- It is straightforward: God is to be worshipped exclusively.
- It is the essence of monotheism – ONE GOD
- “before me” – literally “before my face or presence”.
 - Defies atheism by stating that God is real and present.
 - Defies agnosticism by being knowable revelation of an identifiable God.
 - Defies deism by having a God that is active and aware.
 - Defies polytheism by allowing for only one God.

Historical Application for Israel

- The foundation for the commandment is that God had redeemed the nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt to be His chosen people.
- This is the first stipulation of God’s covenant with Israel: required that His people worship Him exclusively – no additions or substitutions.
- God was had worked to bring Israel to this point and also working to protect it.
 - God had called Abraham out of a polytheistic Ur – Joshua 24:2-3,14
 - God had delivered Israel out of polytheistic Egypt – Exodus 12:12

- God was giving them a land inhabited by polytheistic Canaanites – Joshua 24:15, Judges 2:12
- A corollary to this command to worship God *solely* is to also worship Him *purely*, not just as any another deity was worshipped.
- This commandment is restated in the *Shema* – Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Practical Application for Today

- Christ approved the authority of this commandment - Matthew 4:10.
- Paul and John repeat its teaching – I Corinthians 8:4-6, I John 5:7
- God has redeemed us from the bondage of sin and called us to be a holy people – I Corinthians 6:20, Titus 2:14
- God desires that we worship Him in His rightful place, that is exclusively – Matthew 22:37
- This goes far beyond just not worshipping other idols/deities, as we see that warnings against:
 - loving money – Luke 16:11-13, I Timothy 6:17
 - loving the world – I John 2:15.
 - loving our selves (selfishness) – II Timothy 3:2
 - Expressed in loving attention/praise – Mark 12:38
 - Expressed in self-indulgence – Philipians 3:19
 - Expressed in loving pleasure – II Timothy 3:4
- The positive restatement of this commandment: “You will have Me, Jehovah, as your God.”

Concerning the Trinity

- This command does not deny the existence of a Triune Godhead.
- The fact of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) is clearly taught in Scripture – e.g.: Genesis 1:1 (*Elohim* is plural), 26; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14.
- “The doctrine of the Trinity is not self-contradictory. This it would be only if it declared God to be Three in the same numerical sense in which He is said to be One. This we do not assert. We assert simply that the same God who is one with respect to His essence is three with respect to the internal distinctions of that essence, or with respect to the modes of His being. The possibility of this can not be denied, except by assuming that the human mind is in all respects the measure of the Divine. The fact that the ascending scale of life is marked by increasing differentiation of faculty and function should rather lead us to expect in the highest of all beings, a nature more complex than our own.” – *Christian Theology*, Bancroft. p.74

