

# God's Covenant with Israel – Teaching Notes

(Exodus 20:1-6, 7-11; 9/12/10)

**Introduction:** A key idea in today's lesson is God gives His people commandments to obey. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to obey God's commandments to us.

## **Body:**

### **Read Exodus 20:1-6**

**I. The Only God.** God begins to share what we call the Ten Commandments with Moses. The first is concerned with not having any gods in front the real God. The concerned with not having any images or worship of the images of God. God talks about His jealousy and His wrath.

### **Applications -**

- **God's goodness.** Notice in vs. 2 that God talks about how good He has been to His people. It is sad that as good as God is that we forget His goodness and how we should respond to such. Out of appreciation for the good that God has already done for us, we should obey His every command. Think about how God has blessed Blacks to be free from official slavery, from "Jim Crowism," and free to make such great contributions to our society today (e.g., Black President of the U.S.A.). *Let's respond to God's goodness with obedience.* At the core of obeying God are the issues of loving Him, ourselves, and others.

- **God only.** Notice in vs. 3 that God commands that there be no other gods before Him. This means no other god should be put in first place. And it means that no other good should even be put in the presence of God. Since God is everywhere then there is no room for polytheism or other gods. In other words, God demands to be both number one and the only one in the lives of His people. Romans 6:16 supports the idea that we are servants to the one we obey. Too many are servants to materialism, instead of to God. This shows up in our unwilling to pay our tithes and give our offerings. It shows up in our unwillingness to deny and dedicate ourselves to God's directions for our live. *Let's work on obeying God like He is the only one in our lives.* This should include a self examination about serving the Lord as best we can, as opposed to simply at a level that is convenient for us.

- **Images of God.** Notice in vss. 4-5 that God doesn't want any images made of Him, nor does He want any worship given to such images. Because God is so much bigger than we can grasp, any representation of Him would fall short. Furthermore, we would be tempted to give the image too much attention and thereby give God too little attention. *Let's stay away from making any sacred images of God that would tempt us to drift from God.* The icons of the Catholic Church get dangerously close to what God prohibits in this text. As for art renderings where God is pictured reaching down to a human hand reaching up, the Pastor thinks this is further away from our text than the Catholic icons. Art may be more a matter of one's conscious than a scriptural demand.

- **Punishment and blessings.** Notice in vss. 5-6 that God uses wrath and blessings as motivators for His people to obey Him. On one hand, if the people will not obey, God is subject to punish. And the results of the punishment may be felt for generations. But on the other hand, if the people obey, God has all kinds of mercy and blessings. *Let's work on being in the blessing line, by obeying God, instead of being the punishment line, by not obeying God.* As for the

generational punishment, the commentator gives an interesting comment about our text being more descriptive than prescriptive. The Pastor says work on obedience, and we will not have to worry about it one way or the other. It is sad that the previous blessings of God are not strong enough motivators for us. God still uses carrots (i.e., blessings) and sticks (i.e., punishment) to get us to obey, because the death of His Son and our Savior is not enough in most cases.

### **Read Exodus 10:7-11**

**II. God's Name and the Sabbath.** The third and fourth commandments are given. The third is concerned with not using God's name in vain. The fourth is concerned with keeping the Sabbath holy.

#### **Applications –**

- **Using God's name in vain.** Notice in vs. 7 that God prohibits the vain usage of His name. Not only is profanity with God's name wrong, but not keeping our word, after we have sworn by God's name is wrong. The commentator talks about how to use God's name in oath means that the oath maker will be held accountable for keeping the oath. As for swearing in court, the court often gives people a chance to "affirm," if the word swearing is religiously offensive. *Let's work on staying away from the vain usage of God's name.* We should consider the promises that we make, if not in God's name, surely in God's presence. Think about marriage vows and the Church Covenant. Instead of trying to find a way to take God out of marriage vows and the Church Covenant, we should work on keeping our word.

- **Sabbath principle.** Notice in vss. 8-11 that God prohibits the desecration of the Sabbath. God wants His people to take a day off, every seven days to rest and to worship. For Christians (i.e., remember Exodus is written with Jews in mind), we tend to use Sunday as our holy day. We do this primarily because we believe that Jesus rose on Sunday, and we are following the Early Church's example. However, with so many Christians working on Sunday, we may do well to remember the Sabbath principle, more than simply a Sabbath day. The principle is that we must make time to rest and worship, in obedience to God. If Sunday is not your day, or if Saturday is not your day (i.e., as in the text), then make sure you take a day, even if it is several pieces of several days. *Let's work on living by the Sabbath principle.* It is sin to work, work, work and disobey God's command to rest and worship for one day a week, especially week after week.

**Conclusion:** Let's work on obeying God's commandments to us. God has much for those who obey His will.