

Exodus 20B

- Last week we took a pause in our study of Exodus to understand the purpose of Law in God's plan for Israel and the believer in general
 - We learned three general principles for understanding and interpreting Law
 - The Law is a single entity given to Israel as part of a covenant
 - The Law was not given to provide personal salvation
 - The Law by itself cannot produce sanctification in the life of a saint
 - Secondly, we studied the ten purposes for the giving of the Law to Israel
 - Theological purposes
 - National purposes
 - Individual purposes
 - Lastly, we examined how a Christian should understand and apply the Law knowing we are living under grace
 - Because the Lord fulfilled the Law on our behalf, we are no obligated to keep the Law ourselves
 - Christ's perfect obedience under the Law is credited to us on the basis of faith
 - And therefore, we cannot improve on Christ's perfection, and are therefore under liberty instead of the burden of the Law
- It was at this point that I addressed an objection we commonly hear from Christians taught to believe the Ten Commandments still have authority over Christians
 - The objection was that if the entire Law were set aside, are we suggesting Christians are permitted to murder, steal, lie etc.?
 - The question tries to make a point by showing that since it's ridiculous to suggest murder is now OK, then the question by itself proves the Ten Commandments are still in effect
 - My response offered three arguments against this logic

- First, no Christian has ever felt a license to murder simply because they learn they are not under the OT Law
- Christians still know instinctively that these things are wrong
- So this tells us that we don't rely on the Ten Commandments simply to understand what is sin
- Secondly, I repeated one of our guiding principles, that the Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the other 603 Laws
 - Therefore if we argue that the Ten Commandments are still required, then we must also be willing to live by all 613 laws
 - As Paul said to the Galatians

[Gal. 3:12](#) However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

- Clearly, no Christian would argue for a return of the entire Law
- Finally, I said that preserving the Ten Commandments does nothing to prevent Christians from committing murder or sinning in any other way
 - In fact, scripture teaches the opposite

[Rom. 5:20](#) The Law came in so that the **transgression** would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

- Every Christian has broken every one of the Ten Commandments repeatedly in one form or another, whether by thought or action
- So we can't claim the Ten Commandments are key to leading Christians away from sin and toward righteousness
 - Laws by themselves only serve to name our sins, not reduce them
- Now as we move forward into the Law itself, we must set a framework for how we will study the Law
 - With 613 laws, the question naturally comes how will we study all of them in a timely fashion?
 - My approach will be methodical, though a bit unique

- First, we will address the law in sections grouped by purpose or theme
 - So in many cases we will read large sections at a time
 - Then we will summarize the requirements and purpose of these statutes in Israel's day
- Secondly, we will examine the text for its symbolic meaning,
 - In many cases, the OT Law provides pictures of Christ and His work of redemption
 - In other cases, we will see symbolic meaning in the way the OT Law foreshadows the greater sanctification available in the New Covenant
- In order to understand that last point, we need to cover one final preparatory topic: if Christians are not bound by the Law of Moses, how does God regulate our behavior today? What is the framework of our sanctification?
 - We find the answer in 1Cor 9, in a passage where Paul speaks about changing his lifestyle to accommodate the expectations of different groups of people

1Cor. 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;

1Cor. 9:21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

- When Paul lived among Jews, he acted as one who was "under the Law" (meaning under the Mosaic Law) because this was expectation of a God-fearing Jew
 - Jews were bound by their covenant to live under the Law of Moses
 - So Paul returned to a lifestyle of living according to the Law so he could be acceptable to Jews and gain a hearing for the Gospel
 - Nevertheless, notice that Paul says even when he lived this way, he still understood he wasn't required to keep the Law of Moses
 - It was a choice to further the needs of the Gospel

- He was choosing to live “as if under the Law”
- But then Paul says when he lived among Gentiles, he stopped living under the Law
 - This statement is further proof that Paul understood he had no requirement as a Christian to keep the law
 - If Paul had believed that Christians were bound to keep the Jewish Law, he would never have set it aside even for the sake of Gentiles
- But then Paul gives us a key point to remember
 - He clarifies that even though he wasn’t living under the Law of Moses when around Gentiles, Paul wasn’t without any law at all
 - As a Christian, Paul was always under the law of Christ
- All Christians are subject to a new spiritual law that regulates our behavior just as the OT Law regulated the life of an OT saint
 - Our law is called the law of Christ, Paul says in 1Cor 9:21
 - For believing Jews, this new law replaces the Mosaic Law
 - And for believing Gentiles, the Law of Christ is our first exposure to law and holiness
 - The Law of Christ is a better law than the OT Law, which we can summarize in three primary ways
- First, the Law of Christ was delivered in a better way
 - The Law of Moses came as part of a covenant mediated by angels
 - It was written on tablets of stone
 - It was delivered to us by a man, Moses
 - And because of the way it was delivered, the content of the Law was limited to the 613 commands written by the finger of God
 - But the Law of Christ came as part of a new and better covenant, mediated by Christ Himself
 - It is a code written on our hearts
 - It was delivered by God Himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit

- This new law written on hearts is the fulfillment of a promise God made to Israel and to every believer in the New Covenant

[Jer. 31:33](#) “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

- Secondly, the Law of Christ is greater than the OT law in scope
 - The Law of Christ incorporates every expectation of the old but then goes far beyond it regulating things the OT Law never addressed
 - For example, the OT Law said we cannot murder
 - But Jesus said that true holiness requires not even harboring hate for another person
 - The OT Law said nothing about hate
 - The OT Law forbid adultery
 - But the NT Law of Christ says that lusting in the heart is also sin
 - The OT Law said nothing about lusting
 - And the OT laws for sabbaths and sacrifices and other rituals are also represented in the Law of Christ, but in new and better ways (which we will learn as we examine the law in detail)
 - This is why the Law of Christ has never been written down or enumerated entirely
 - It is literally impossible for the Law of Christ to be completely written out on stones or otherwise
 - It’s statutes are too vast, too numerous; in fact its statutes are infinite
 - We can no more write out the Law of Christ than we could write down every possible number

- The Law of Christ has an infinite list of statutes because human experience - and therefore, the potential for human sin - is also limitless
 - While we can't catalog the Law of Christ, we can rely on the broad strokes reflected in Jesus' teaching and the Apostles letters
 - As John wrote:

[1John 3:24](#) The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

- Jesus did summarize his Law when asked

[Matt. 22:37](#) And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

[Matt. 22:38](#) "This is the great and foremost commandment.

[Matt. 22:39](#) "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

[Matt. 22:40](#) "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

- Finally, the Law of Christ is superior to the Law of Moses because it is accompanied with the spiritual power to compel our obedience
 - Our new new law is administered by the Holy Spirit, Who indwells us from the moment of faith
 - First he educates us concerning what is righteous

[John 14:26](#) "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach you** all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to **you**.

- And secondly, He gives us the power to overcome our flesh

[Rom. 8:2](#) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

[Rom. 8:3](#) For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

[Rom. 8:4](#) so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- Finally, He convicts us of sin, which causes us to conform ourselves to the Law of Christ

- The OT Law existed only as a witness to condemn men for their sin
 - And it did not have power to compel righteous behavior
 - It acted like a finish line that no man could ever reach, serving to remind us of our failures
- But the Law of Christ is like a wind to our back as we run
 - It pushes us along in the direction of holiness
 - This is the process of sanctification that produces fruit in a believer's life
- Ironically, the Law of Moses could be read and understood by anyone, but it was powerless to create righteousness in anyone
 - While the Law of Christ has the power to bring righteousness, but it cannot be seen and is only understood by a faithful heart
- Because the Law of Christ is experienced through faith by the Spirit rather than by following a list of commandments and rules, it is often called a law of liberty

2Cor. 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

- We have liberty in ways the OT saint never experienced
 - Since we are covered by the blood of Christ, we need not concern ourselves with animal sacrifices again
 - The temple, the priesthood, the tithes and the sabbaths of the OT Law are replaced with better things under the Law of Christ
 - Therefore, many restrictions of life imposed by the OT Law are removed by the Law of Christ
 - Moreover, this new Law of Christ, being accompanied by the Holy Spirit, affords us the power to act righteously
 - Whereas the old Law had no power except to reveal and condemn sin
 - The new law possess true power to bring sanctification
- So as we study the Law, we will take time to seek parallels in the NT Law of Christ

- We need to ask how does this holiness requirement translate into the life of a NT believer
 - For each stature of the OT Law, we will ask if the Law of Christ repeat the requirement?
 - Does it expand upon the requirement?
 - Or does it fulfill the requirement by transforming it into something new and better?
- With that background, we can move into the law itself, beginning with the first ten statutes, called the Ten Commandments
 - Moses has been standing at a distance from the people of Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai in the mountain range of Horeb
 - The Lord descended on the top of the mountain in a cloud with lightning and He speaks with a voice that sounds like thunder
 - In Exodus 19:24 the Lord told Moses to go down and tell the people of the warnings not to intrude past the barriers around the mountain
 - And then in that same verse, the Lord tells Moses to return up the mountain once he was done speaking to the people
 - That's where Moses stands as we enter chapter 20, at the top of the mountain with the people down below
 - As Moses enters into the presence of the Lord's Shechinah glory, he receives the first ten statures of the Law of God
 - The number ten means testimony, as so the first ten laws are given a special designation so they may testify
 - They testify to the holiness of God
 - And they ultimately testify to the sin of man
 - While the OT account doesn't specify how these Laws were delivered, our NT gives us that answer
 - The Lord used angels to deliver the Law to Moses, according to Galatians 3:19
 - Hebrews 2:2 also says the Law was spoken through angels to Moses

- When the NT says the Law was delivered “through angels,” it means that Moses took physical custody of the Law from an angel
 - Mostly likely, the physical tablets were created and transferred to Moses by angels
 - We’re told this at the end of the giving of the Law to Moses

Ex. 31:18 When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the **finger** of God.

- The transfer of these stone tablets was from the Lord to angels and then to Moses
 - Hebrews teaches that God used angels as mediators for this covenant because someone had to stand between God and sinful man
 - So God used lesser mediators for the covenant of Law
 - He reserved for His Son the honor of serving as mediator for the New Covenant in His blood
- These first ten commands are the best known of the 613 statutes, and they are the most sweeping in scope
 - In fact, these laws are unique in all the ancient world, in particular because they are stated in the second person
 - All other ancient laws we know were expressed in the third person
 - “A man shall...” or “no man shall...”
 - The third person tense reflects the way such laws were usually the product of a community of people or tradition
 - The laws were a reflection of what society itself considered best
 - But these laws were expressed in the second person, reflecting that they were authored by One in authority over those who must abide by them
 - They read “you shall” or “you shall not”
 - The laws themselves are not subject to the scrutiny of men

- Men didn't create them, so men are not free to change them or ignore them
- Let's read the first ten laws

[Ex. 20:1](#) Then God spoke all these words, saying,

[Ex. 20:2](#) "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[Ex. 20:3](#) "You shall have no other gods before Me.

[Ex. 20:4](#) "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

[Ex. 20:5](#) "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

[Ex. 20:6](#) but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

[Ex. 20:7](#) "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

[Ex. 20:8](#) "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

[Ex. 20:9](#) "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

[Ex. 20:10](#) but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

[Ex. 20:11](#) "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

[Ex. 20:12](#) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

[Ex. 20:13](#) "You shall not murder.

[Ex. 20:14](#) "You shall not commit adultery.

[Ex. 20:15](#) "You shall not steal.

[Ex. 20:16](#) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

[Ex. 20:17](#) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

- As chapter 20 opens, Moses says the Lord
 - As commonly as people may say the "ten" commandments, in reality there isn't universal agreement on what the ten commandments actually are or even how they were distributed on the two stone tablets

- The Jewish historical view saw the first commandment to be the statement in v.2 "I am the Lord your God"
 - This was considered a commandment in the sense that it was a truth to be remembered and honored
 - Then the second commandment runs from vs.3-6 and encompasses both not having other gods and prohibiting the worshipping of graven images
- The rest of commandments follow until the tenth commandment in v.17
 - In that verse, two forms of coveting are combined into a single commandment
- Furthermore, Jewish tradition holds that the first five commandments were written on the first stone while the second tablet contained the remaining five laws
- The Catholic tradition sees the first commandment as starting in v.3 and incorporating everything through v.6
 - So the instructions against idolatry and worshipping graven images are seen as a single commandment
 - Then to still arrive at ten commandments, Catholics divide v.17 into two separate commandments
 - Coveting a neighbor's wife is the ninth
 - Coveting a neighbor's property is the tenth
 - The problem with this approach is that it often results in truncating the first commandment
 - In any list of the ten, the first commandment is often abbreviated to simply state "have no gods before me"
 - The prohibition against graven images is omitted
 - Therefore, many Catholics never learn that God considers worshipping statues of saints or even of Jesus Himself to be a sin
 - Catholics also hold that each tablet contained five commandments each

- Finally, most Protestant traditions see v.3 to be a commandment of its own
 - Then the second commandment is the prohibition of worshipping images
 - And the tenth command is all of v.17, as in the Jewish tradition
 - Regarding the split of the commandments on the tablets, many Protestants see the first three laws on the first tablet and the remaining seven on the second tablet
 - The first three laws regulate our relationship with God
 - The next seven regulate man's relationship with man
- It is also possible that each tablet held a complete copy of the ten commandments
 - The Bible tells us that the tablets were written on both sides, front and back
 - Therefore, perhaps each tablet had all ten commandments
 - In that case, Moses was given two identical tablets so that by the testimony of two witnesses, all sin will be confirmed
 - The two tablets serve as two witnesses, so to speak, of man's sin
- We will follow the Protestant tradition in the course of examination of the tablets, so we will study the first commandment as v.3 alone
 - Israel is told to have no other gods before the Lord
 - The term "before" was not intended to suggest we can have multiple gods so long as Jehovah is first among them
 - The phrase means to have no gods apart from the Lord
 - Israel was commanded to be monotheistic
 - God was appointing a single people, and in return He demanded they acknowledge Him as the only true living God
 - Throughout their history, Israel has repeatedly violated this commandment
 - They have worshipped pagan gods of various kinds

- They have even sacrificed children to these false gods
- The Lord says Israel played the harlot in prostituting themselves to many suitors, though the Lord was husband to Israel

**Hos. 4:12 My people consult their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand informs them;
For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray,
And they have played the **harlot**, departing from their God.**

- The second commandment follows closely from the first in vs. 4-6
 - Israel was to make no image that could substitute for the Lord
 - Notice in v.4 the prohibition is against making any idol in the likeness of anything in heaven, on earth or under earth or in the water
 - That means Israel could not create idols to resemble God Himself or angels for the purpose of worship
 - And neither could a likeness of any earthly creature or created thing could be made for worship
 - Images themselves are not wrong, since Israel was later commanded to create images of angels
 - But these images were not to be worshipped
- Incorporating images in worship is related to the first commandment, because it is another form of idolatry
 - In the case of the first commandment, the issue was Who a man worships
 - In the second commandment, the issue is how a man worships
 - In v.5 the Lord adds that worshipping such things would invoke God's jealous anger
 - The Lord knew that incorporating manmade objects in worship necessarily diminished the Creator
 - And it opened the door to violating the first commandment by replacing the Lord altogether

- Christians have been given similar prohibitions in the Law of Christ, according to Christ's own teaching, but our standards reach even more demanding levels
 - First, we are told to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength
 - The word "all" emphasizes the exclusive nature of our relationship with Christ
 - If all our heart, soul, mind and strength is devoted to Christ, then there is nothing remaining for other gods
 - Secondly, we are told not to serve other masters, like money
 - And we are to guard ourselves from such things if they become idols, things that substitute for a dependence upon the Lord
 - John repeats this command in the New Testament

[1John 5:21](#) Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

- It's possible to trivialize the concept of an idol by calling any distraction or temptation an "idol"
 - It's true that many pleasures and worries of life can become stumbling blocks for Christians, as Jesus said

[Luke 21:34](#) "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

[Luke 21:35](#) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

- But it's another thing altogether to be taken away by an idol
- An idol is something that substitutes for the Lord in our life
 - That's a serious matter
 - Though many (all?) Christians fall prey to temptations and stumble at times in their walk with Christ, relatively few succumb to genuine idolatry
- We have one example in Paul's first letter to Timothy

[1Tim. 1:18](#) This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

[1Tim. 1:19](#) keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

[1Tim. 1:20](#) Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

- They rejected keeping the faith and suffered shipwreck
 - They committed idolatry, as evidenced in their blaspheming
- So the first commandment of the OT Law has a clear parallel in the Law of Christ for Christians
- The bigger challenge for most Christians, however, is the second commandment
 - According to the Law of Moses, men could never pray to a statue, even a statue of the Lord
 - Even paintings of Jesus would be outlawed by the Law of Moses for the same reason
 - But as we determined, the Christian is not under this Law
 - But what does the Law of Christ say on the matter of graven images?
 - The Law of Christ declares that we are not to rely on the physical - even physical locations - to focus our worship of the Lord

[John 4:19](#) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

[John 4:20](#) "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

[John 4:21](#) Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[John 4:22](#) "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

[John 4:23](#) "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

- The greater Law of Christ takes the second commandment regarding images and broadens the requirement to move worship entirely into the spiritual realm

- The Old Law prohibited graven images, and then it stipulated the days and places and even the manner of worship for the OT saint
 - The Law of Christ says that worship requires nothing more than the Spirit and the Truth
 - And in this way, worship becomes a daily activity and ever-present expression of every believer's heart
 - Days, places and even the form of worship make little difference in the age of the Spirit
- This is why Paul wrote:

[Col. 2:16](#) Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day –

[Col. 2:17](#) things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

- But when we regress back to placing form of worship above spirit and truth, we are moving in the direction of incorporating graven images into worship
 - We might not erect statutes in our sanctuaries or put pictures on the walls
 - But when we demand certain musical styles or liturgy programs in order to worship, we are committing a sin equal to worshipping graven images
 - We have taken the physical and placed it above the spiritual
 - We are worshipping manmade structures or the traditions of our denomination rather than worshipping the Lord through His Spirit and by His truth
 - And we are at risk of provoking a jealous God
- Finally, the second commandment includes an interesting statement from the Lord concerning the consequences of idolatry in Israel
 - When Israel committed idolatry, they were violating the covenant and turning their back on the Lord

- When Israel commits this sin, the Lord promises to visit this iniquity upon later generations
- This is a promise unique to the first and second commandments, insofar as it relates to idolatry
- Idolatry in all its forms is a sin so grievous that it will provoke the Lord to visit the consequences of that sin through multiple generations of families
 - This was a promise contained in the Law of Moses, so it is limited to the nation of Israel
 - We can see plenty of evidence of this promise played out in the history of Israel
 - Idolatrous generations of Israel were generally followed by generations that suffered the Lord's judgment
 - There is no direct parallel found in the New Testament
 - Nevertheless, we shouldn't test my conclusions