

# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#43** The Ten Commandments – freedom for Israel *and* us!

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1

## THE QUEST FOR FREEDOM.

**An entire nation** was enslaved by a tyrannical king, hopelessly trapped, and enduring ruthless oppression.

So the Egyptians appointed taskmasters over the Israelites to **oppress** them with forced labor. ... But the more they were **oppressed**, the more they multiplied and flourished; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

They worked the Israelites **ruthlessly** and made their **lives bitter** with **hard labor** in brick and mortar, and with all kinds of work in the fields. Every service they imposed was **harsh**.

Exodus 1:11a, 12–14 (BSB)

**As the burden of their oppression increased**, they cried out for deliverance.

The Israelites **groaned and cried out** under their burden of slavery, and their **cry for deliverance** from bondage ascended to God.

Exodus 2:23b (BSB)

2

**Their cry for deliverance was heard.** Help was on the way!

- Another king offered to deliver them.
- But it wasn't just *any* king... it was the King who had promised *their ancestors* that he would take care of them. *It was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

So God heard their groaning, and **He remembered His covenant** with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the Israelites and **took notice**.

Exodus 2:24-25 (BSB)

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the affliction of My people in Egypt. **I have heard** them crying out because of their oppressors, and I am aware of their sufferings.

**I have come** down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians ..."

Exodus 3:7-8a (BSB)

3

**More than that, the king offered to give them a land of their own** – a land who's inhabitants had *forfeited* their right to exist, because of their extreme wickedness.

"... and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, **a land flowing with milk and honey**—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites."

Exodus 3:8b (BSB)

God, in his mercy and kindness, had given those nations *centuries* of opportunity to repent. But they were unwilling to do so. He would *not* give the Israelites the land until those nations' iniquity had *completely* filled the land. As God told Abraham:

"In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, **for the iniquity of the Amorites** is not yet complete."

Genesis 15:16 (BSB)

4

**The King – the God who created all things – would offer to be their God**, and would fulfil in them all the promises he had made to their ancestors.

- *Would the people be willing to accept the offer?*

"Therefore tell the Israelites: **'I am the LORD**, and **I will bring you out** from under the yoke of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. **I will take you** as My own people, and **I will be your God**. Then you will know that **I am the LORD your God**, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

And **I will bring you** into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. **I am the LORD!**"

Exodus 6:6-8 (BSB)

5

**The people were willing, and the king kept his promise to deliver them** – and he did so in ways that have never occurred at any other time in world history.

Indeed, ask now from one end of the heavens to the other about the days that long preceded you, from the day that God created man on earth: **Has anything as great as this ever happened or been reported?**

Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking out of the fire, as you have, and lived? Or has any god tried to take as his own a nation out of another nation—by trials, signs, wonders, and war, by a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors—as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt, before your eyes?

Deuteronomy 4:32-34 (BSB)

All this was *just the beginning* of something that would change the course of world history ... *for all eternity*.

6

**The King offered them a lot!  
But one of the requirements for all this to happen was that they would have to make a treaty (or "covenant") with this king.**

- ✓ **He would** give them the land and continue to abundantly bless them in every way.
- ✓ **They would** have to recognize him for who he was, and have unswerving loyalty to him.

**The treaty would contain:**

- An acknowledgement of who the king was, and what he had done for them.
- The duties and responsibilities of the people.
- The blessings that would occur if they remained loyal to him.
- The consequences ("curses") that would occur if they broke the treaty. (After all, doing so would be treason.)

7

**And so, God offered to make a treaty with them. Would the people agree to it?**

⇒ **Yes!!**

"This is what you are to tell the house of Jacob and explain to the sons of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

Now **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasured possession** out of all the nations—for the whole earth is Mine. And unto Me **you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** "

Exodus 19:3b-6a (BSB)

And all the people answered together, **"We will do everything that the LORD has spoken."**

Exodus 19:8 (BSB)

8

**Since the people agreed to it, God presented them with the treaty.**

- He *spoke* it to them, giving them the basic treaty, his voice coming out of the cloud on Mount Sinai. This part of the treaty is called the "Ten Commandments."
- Additional instructions were given through Moses – some basic applications of these commands. (More instructions – to teach how these commands applied to life – would be given later.)
- *The people accepted the treaty* – the Ten Commandments and the additional instructions – and promised to obey it.

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people, who replied, **"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."**

Exodus 24:7 (BSB)

- The treaty was then ratified with blood, and the leaders shared a meal in God's presence – Exodus 24:8-11.

9

**In the centuries that followed, many things happened.**

- ✓ **The people kept violating the terms of the treaty.** Over and over again, they kept abandoning their God and pursuing the gods of the surrounding nations. *They committed treason and reaped the consequences.*
- ✓ **Eventually, God would replace the treaty (covenant) with a new one.** It would not include *everyone* in the nation, but only *those who were willing* to be loyal to God: God would embed the laws within their hearts, so they would *want* to obey him. (The unwilling Jews would be "cut off" – see Romans 11:11+.)
- ✓ **This new covenant would give an unprecedented opportunity to non-Jews!** They could share in the blessings that God had promised the Jews. And *God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled!*

"... and **all the families of the earth** will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:3b (BSB)

10

**We Gentiles (non-Jews) can now share in the blessings that were originally given to Israel!**

- When the unfaithful Israelites were "cut-off," God gave *Gentiles* the opportunity to be "grafted into" Israel!

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in ...

Romans 11:25b (NIV)

- This is not because we Gentiles deserved it, but because those Jews who refused to trust God were cut-off. (We should take this as a warning, and watch our own attitudes – Romans 11:17-24.)

Now if some branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others ...

They were **broken off because of unbelief**, but you stand by faith.

Romans 11:17a, 20b (BSB)

11

**We Gentiles (non-Jews) can now share in the blessings that were originally given to Israel!**

- This refers to New Covenant Israel. It *excludes* the Jews who committed treason under the *Old Covenant*, and *who refused the king's gracious offer to forgive all who were willing to repent!*

[In the past] **you were separate** from Christ, **excluded** from citizenship in Israel and **foreigners** to the covenants of the promise, **without hope** and **without God** in the world. **But now** in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one ...

[Now] you are **no longer foreigners and strangers**, but **fellow citizens** with God's people and also **members** of his household ...

Ephesians 2:12-14a, 19 (NIV)

**Our** sin (as Gentiles) is no better than the Jew's sin; for **all** sin against the King is *treason*. The question is... *Are you willing to repent?*

12

**We must be aware that, under the New Covenant, some of the blessings of this citizenship will have to wait until Jesus returns.**

- In this present life (under the New Covenant), we are not promised a country of our own. Such a country is coming... but it will come *after* the resurrection!

But our **citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

- In this matter, we are in good company. Even *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob* are looking forward to this!

Instead, they were longing for **a better country—a heavenly one**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared **a city** for them.

Hebrews 11:16 (NIV); called the "heavenly Jerusalem," in Hebrews 12:22.

13

**Though certain blessings must wait until later, *living* as a citizen of the New Covenant, begins *now*!**

- If we are citizens, the terms of the covenant are embedded within our hearts *now*. We want to obey God's laws *because* we are citizens.
- We can learn much from the Old Testament about how we are to live; but the New Testament helps us to understand the *changes* that have occurred (due of the change in covenants).
- We will see that the Ten Commandments are just as *relevant* (and obligatory) to us as they were to people living in the Old Testament era. We will also be able to understand that these commandments represent "categories" of conduct, including attitudes and motives.
- We will be *able* to agree with what Paul says... So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Romans 7:12 (NIV)

14

**How then should we live? What do the commands teach us?**

✓ **A good place to start is with the first command!** This command requires us to have a *willingness* to have this king – God, the Creator – as *our* king. If we don't accept the *first* command, *we have no part in his kingdom*. (In that case, we still belong to the kingdom of Satan.)

**Our goal:** To look at a variety of ways that this treaty applies to life. This will include:

- At least some of the ways it applied to Old Testament Israel, under the *Old* covenant. (Some of these might not apply to us.)
- A greater focus on some of the ways it would apply to us living under the *New* Covenant. (The New Covenant doesn't *remove* the *obligation* to obey God's laws ... but *embeds* within us the *desire* to obey them.)

15

**The nature of the commands.**

*These commands were given in an easily-recognizable form* that was most appropriate to them *as a nation*.

**At the same time, each command has a much broader significance.**

- They apply to *individuals*, as well as to *groups* (such as nations).
- Each represents a *category* that applies to both actions and attitudes.
- Each implies both what we *should* do, and what we *shouldn't* do.

**When we recognize this**, it becomes easier for us to understand how it can apply to all dimensions of life – individuals, groups, families, government, organizations, etc. *No entity is exempt from God's law*.

16

**Is it a "treaty" or a "covenant"?**

(The Old Testament Hebrew word can be translated either way.)

**The Old Covenant** was a "treaty" – an agreement between the King and his subjects. (It can also be called a "bilateral covenant.")

- Though the Ten Commandments are actually a duty for *all* people *everywhere*, the people of Israel *agreed* (promised) to obey, in exchange for special privileges as God's *treasured possession* (Exodus 19:5a).

**The New Covenant** is a "promise" made by the King. It focuses on what *he* will do. (It can also be called a "unilateral covenant.")

- In this promise, God (the King) says that he will embed the desire to obey these commands within the hearts of the individuals.
- These individuals are *not working* to attain the King's favor (so that they can *receive* this promise), but are simply *trusting* him to do what he promised.

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**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: THE INTRODUCTION (PART 1).**

And **God spoke** all these words: ...

Exodus 20:1 (BSB)

**This is the treaty of the Great King.** It came directly from him.

- This phrase emphasizes the fact that it was his very own *spoken words* that communicated it.
- Other passages tell us that the stone tablets, which were given to the people, contained his very own *writing*.

The tablets were the work of God; the writing was **the writing of God**, engraved on the tablets.

Exodus 32:16 (NIV)

Moses broke the two original tablets, when he saw the people worshipping the golden calf. Later, God told him to chisel out two new stone tablets... but the writing was *still* done by God – Exodus 34:1.

18

### THE INTRODUCTION (PART 2).

"I am **the LORD** your God, ..."

Exodus 20:2a (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:6a.

This identifies *which* God was the author of this treaty.

- It wasn't any of the gods of Egypt, nor of Canaan, nor any god from anywhere else.
- It was the one God who created all things. His name is: יהוה (the Hebrew letters for "yhwh"), which can be translated as "Yahweh" (or "Jehovah"), or represented by the word "LORD" (usually all capital letters). Its meaning is apparently a reference to God's *absolute self-existence and unchangeableness*.
- There may be many "gods" – whether created entities (demons) or the imaginations of people – but both Old and New Testament tell us that there is *only one* God who is the Creator of all things.

19

### THE INTRODUCTION (PART 3).

"... who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of **the house of slavery**."

Exodus 20:2b (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:6b.

This identifies *what* this God has done for us.

- For Israel (as a nation), it was deliverance out of the land of Egypt – a land controlled by foreign gods. It was delivery out of slavery to Pharaoh, the ruler, the supposed representative or "son" of the chief Egyptian god, "Ra." (The word "pharaoh" means "great house.")
- For us (and for the saved in O.T. Israel), it involves deliverance from slavery to *sin*.

... that we should **no longer be slaves to sin**.

Romans 6:6b (BSB)

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### COMMANDMENT #1.

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."

Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

**We are to have 100% loyalty to this God.** Not 99<sup>44</sup>/<sub>100</sub>% ... or *anything else* below 100%.

- Having "no other gods before Me" means: Absolutely NONE *instead of me, next to me, in front of me, besides me, in competition with me, etc.*

⇒ Has *anything* ever gotten between you and 100% loyalty to God (referring specifically to the Creator God who has revealed himself in the Bible)? *If so, then you have broken this commandment.* You have committed treason, and deserve to die.

⇒ We **ALL** have broken this command. This alone is sufficient proof that we cannot earn salvation by obeying the Law! (It can only *kill* us.) Only by trusting God to save (and change) us is there hope!

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**As we look at these commands, we are going to learn some important things:**

- ✓ **Our obligation is 100% obedience to these commands!** *No* exceptions are allowed.
- ✓ **These commands show us our sinfulness!** *None* of us have obeyed them 100%. *All* of us have failed. (Our tendency is to suppress what they teach us, because we don't like to admit the truth.)
- ✓ **They show us our need for Christ!** He is our *only* hope. He, who has obeyed the law 100%, has offered to change us, so that we can have an *internal* desire to obey these commands. (We must be willing to repent and to trust him to make this change in us.)
- ✓ **They teach us how to live as followers of Jesus!** As we grow in understanding these commands, we will learn better how to love God and neighbor. Life will become a process of *growing* in the truth, and *living* according to it (enabled by God's grace).

22

## OUR MISSION!

**The King who delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt has offered to deliver us from a worse slavery!**



**If the desire to be a follower of God exists in you, make it your goal to GROW in your understanding of the Ten Commandments.**

**As you do so, you will GROW in your ability to love God and neighbor. And you will discover that you are GROWING in your freedom in Christ!**

Just as Israel had an obligation to obey the King's commandments, **so do we**. The big difference is this: When God saves us, he embeds within us a desire to obey. This "embedding" occurs in *individuals*, and was *not* a part of the covenant that Israel (as a *nation*) received on Mount Sinai.

23

Christ obeyed the law 100%, and has offered to give us the righteousness that was his! (2 Corinthians 5:21)

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