

Introduction: Debi said something to me the first year we were married that clarified the difference between the people of God and the people who are ignorant of Him and His ways. It is this: ‘You can NOT clean a fish before you catch it!’ Christianity is much more than a moral code. Every nation has some kind of a moral code. The problem of human nature is that no one has the power to always live by any moral code. Those who know and love Jesus, and want to obey all He commanded, must understand that only those who have surrendered to Him in humble faith can be enabled and empowered by God to live according to God’s instructions. People who are still living according to the values of those outside the family of God, will never be made clean by any moral code. No one can live by God’s instruction as given in His Word without first becoming a child of God, by His grace through the gift of faith he or she may receive from God. *** Jesus told four fishermen that they were to follow Him so they would literally ‘catch men to life’ (Luke 5:10b). Once a ‘fish’ (person) belongs to God, that ‘fish’ (person) can be made clean (by God). *** Today is the first of four messages on what we call the ‘Ten Commandments’. Literally, the Covenant God (Yahweh) spoke them to Moses as ‘Ten Words’ (Exodus 34:28, NJB). *** I have no objections to posting them in public places. They are God’s goals for all people. However, until someone becomes a child of God, it is impossible to live by these words. *** This is why we begin with Yahweh’s first words to Moses. These ‘commandments’ are addressed to people God has delivered from bondage to be His treasured possession. They were all called to be holy priests. Only such people can obey God’s words.

Only those delivered by God to be priests can obey His words

Let us now see in more detail what Yahweh and Jesus have to say about these ‘ten words’.

I. Yahweh directed Moses to say to Israel, ‘I carried you all to Myself; if you all will obey My Covenant, you all will be to Me a kingdom of priests; I brought you out of slavery.’ (Exodus 19:1-6, 20:1-2)

A. After Israel had gone out from Egypt, Yahweh told Moses, ‘I carried you all to Myself; if you all will obey My Covenant, you all will be to Me a kingdom of priests’. (Exodus 19:1-6)

1. On the third new moon after the children of Israel had gone out from the land of Egypt, on that day they had come to the wilderness of Sinai; when they departed from Rephidim and came to the wilderness of Sinai they camped in the wilderness, Israel camped there before the mountain. (Verses 1-2)

Time and place: They left at a full moon, so three and a half months have gone by. Rephidim means ‘resting places’, of which they would have stayed at many by this time.

Mountain camp: Sinai means ‘thorny’ and describes vegetation in the wilderness. They now set up camp at the foot of this mountain.

2. And Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called him from the mountain to say, ‘Thus you will say to the house (family) of Jacob, and you will tell the children of Israel’. (Verse 3)

Moses goes up: Moses started up the mountain and then the Covenant God called him.

Given words: Yahweh gave Moses words for His people, calling them first by their ancestor’s birth name and then by the name he was given after wrestling with God all night (Genesis 32:23-32).

3. ‘You all, you all saw what I did to the Egyptians, and then how I bore you all on the wings of eagles, and I brought you all to Myself’. (Verse 4)

Yahweh and Egypt: First, Yahweh sent ten horrible ‘plagues’ on Egypt, culminating in the death of all first born sons (Exodus 7:24-12:30). Then, He drowned the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-31).

Yahweh and Israel: None of the plagues affected the people of Israel, and they went through the Red Sea as on dry ground (Hebrews 11:29). Almost forty years later, Moses taught God’s people a song to always remember how He delivered them; and, one line compares this to a mother eagle teaching her young how to fly (Deuteronomy 32:11). Isaiah told God’s people if they wait for Him they will ascend on eagle’s wings (Isaiah 40:31). And, in the final battle, Israel will be given eagle’s wings to fly to a wilderness place to be nourished (Revelation 12:1-12).

4. ‘Now, if you all fully hear My voice and keep My Covenant, you all will be My treasured possession from all the people, for all the earth is Mine’. (Verse 5)

IF hear and keep: To fully hear Covenant God, is to obey Him. And, when people fully know God has delivered them, they can and will obey Him.

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Treasured possession: Again, almost forty years later Moses tells them they are a holy people, chosen by God to be His treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6).

5. ‘And you all, you all will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; these (are) the words which thou will speak to the children of Israel’. (Verse 6)

Holy priests: Those hearing and keeping God’s words will all be His holy priests. A priest makes sacrificial offerings as an intermediary between God and His worshipping people. Yahweh saw Abraham as a holy priest to his family (Genesis 18:16-19). Adonai Yahweh gave a word to the poor and broken-hearted that they would be called His priests in the year of His favor (Isaiah 61:1-6). And, in an incredible prophecy, He hinted He would select some people from all nations to be priests (Isaiah 66:17-21). Peter affirms this in a letter to first century Christians, calling them a chosen people and a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:4-10).

Application: So, all who have been saved by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus, The Savior, are called to be obedient priests for God, bringing people to God through the sacrifice of Jesus.

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- B. God spoke, 'I (am) Yahweh, who brought thee out of bondage'. (*Exodus 20:1-2*)
1. Then God spoke all these words to say, 'I (am) Yahweh, thy God'. (*Verses 1-2a*)
Identity: The Covenant God of Israel is speaking to Moses and, through him, to all Israel.
 2. 'I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt'. (*Verse 2b*)
Wrong place: Yahweh had told Abraham some four hundred years earlier that He would bring them out of a country of bondage (Genesis 15:12-16). He has now gotten them out of the wrong place.
 3. '... out of the house of bondage (servitude)'. (*Verse 2c*)
Wrong status: Yahweh wants His people to be free to serve Him, not to be bondservants to anyone.
Grace: Covenants in the second millennium before Christ began with a reminder of what the covenant maker had done to benefit his subjects. Here, as a result of His grace to give His people privileges, Yahweh expects them to take responsibility to obey Him as priests seeking to bring His deliverance to other people.

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II. Religious leaders ask Jesus to give the greatest commandment; He says, 'Love God with everything, and thy neighbor as thyself; on these all Scripture is hung'. (*Matthew 22:34-40*)

- A. The Jewish religious leaders send a representative to ask Jesus the greatest commandment. (*Verses 34-36*)
1. But the Pharisees, having heard that He silenced the Sadducees, were gathered together to themselves. (*Verse 34*)
Non-disciples: In public, none of the religious leaders were disciples of Jesus. In fact, they made it clear they thought Jesus was a false prophet.
 2. And he asked, one of them (lawyer), testing Him. (*Verse 35*)
Representative tests: This individual was an expert in all of God's Word, especially the Torah of God's instruction, which they called His 'law'.
 3. 'Master, which commandment greatest in the Torah (law)?' (*Verse 36*)
Great Question: He respectfully asks Jesus a great question about the Great Commandment.
- B. Jesus answers, 'Love the Lord thy God with all, the great and first commandment; second, love thy neighbor as thyself; on these, all instruction is hung, and prophets'. (*Verses 37-40*)
1. But The (One, He) was saying to him, 'Thou will love Lord, the God of thee, in (the) whole of thy heart, and in (the) whole of thy soul, and in (the) whole of thy mind'. (*Verse 37*)
Love Covenant God: Jesus quotes the first word Moses spoke to the generation of Israelites about to enter the land God told Abraham would be the permanent possession of his descendants after Moses reaffirmed that The Covenant God Yahweh was the one and only God (Deuteronomy 6:1-5).
 2. 'This is being the great and first commandment'. (*Verse 38*)
The great first: Jesus says all who have received God's love, must first wholeheartedly love Him back. To make this personal, more than anything, we all must understand that obedience to God's Word is predicated on receiving His deliverance with gratitude expressed in loving Him with all we have.
 3. 'But second, (is) the same to it: thou will love thy neighbor as thyself'. (*Verse 39*)
Neighbor as self: If we have a strong relationship with God based on the assurance He will forgive us in Jesus; and, we have received grace to obey Him in order to experience His love, joy and peace – we must be desiring and working for our neighbor to have this same assurance. We must share the salvation we have received in Jesus. This is how we love our neighbors!

We love our neighbors by sharing our salvation.

Application: Let us be grateful that The Covenant God has taken us out of the wrong place and wrong position on eagle's wings in order to free us. Now, let us join with Him to be used by Him to free others.

4. In these two commandments, the whole Law (Torah, instruction) is being hung, and the Prophets. (*Verse 40*)
Every Word of God: Jesus says every word of God's Scripture flows from these two commandments. All who have received God's deliverance from bondage to sin and self in Jesus are now able to obey all of God's Word, including the 'Ten Commandments', which we will begin to examine next week.

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Conclusion: After Yahweh carried His people out of bondage, He told Moses that if they obeyed His Covenant they would be to Him a holy kingdom of priests. Then He gave His people ten words of commands. Jesus later taught that the first and great command is to love God with everything; and then, to love thy neighbor as thyself. In other words, people who have a love relationship with God should be motivated to love their neighbors by sharing with them the salvation they have received.

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