

**Shaping Worship that is Pleasing to God/ The Gloria/ Bible reading:
Exodus 20:1-11**

The Ten Commandments. 01 May 2022

No gods but God

Then God instructed the people as follows: I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. Do not worship any other gods besides me.

The first commandment is the foundation on which all the other commandments stand.

Because it's such a foundation stone, it is no accident Jesus was tempted over this commandment in the wilderness with Satan telling him he can have all the glorious land as far as he could see if he would only kneel down and worship him

But what does the commandment mean? Why will God settle only for an exclusive relationship with his people? In our series 'Ordering worship that pleases God' what does it mean to us that we worship Him alone.

To understand we need to look briefly at the framework of the Ten Commandments and in particular the concept of Covenant.

Make mistake of wrenching the Ten Commandments out of their context as though they were a series of unwanted, unsought, arbitrary demands with the threat that if they don't obey them they would be wiped out.

Yet not the case!

Given in a particular time and place, as part of the long relationship of God with the human race.

We cannot start reeling them off at verse 3 'Do not worship any other gods besides me...'

The first two verses are critical ' Then God instructed the people as follows: I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.'

Key to understanding this first commandments, all of the commandments ... much of the Bible is in the concept of Covenant.

- A solemn, binding agreement between two parties with duties and conditions on both sides usually around loyalty and obedience.
- For us today, the most familiar example we have is the traditional marriage ceremony: both parties solemnly pledge an exclusive, binding and permanent loyalty to each other in the presence of witnesses. The official record – the certificate and rings to act as a symbol of that covenant for both husband and wife.

The giving of the Ten Commandments fits into this pattern of covenant.

God gathered the people together before him
God said who he was
And outlined what he had done for the people of Israel already.
Then he announced the covenant and laid down the covenant conditions
The two stone tablets on which the commandments were written acted as both
symbol and certificate of the covenant.

So, God's side of the Covenant:

Who he is

God reveals himself – it's crucial to know truly who you are dealing with when you make a contract – same with a covenant

God tells them who they are dealing with. This is the same God we are dealing with today

For one thing he is God; the one who makes and upholds the universe, he is awesomely powerful and mighty. The people of Israel are being offered a covenant by the one who made everything and who knows everything. Israel could trust God to keep his side of the bargain because he could never be taken by surprise and because he was all-powerful.

He is not only God but he is also LORD. To us this may seem like a title.

Lord/Jehovah/Yahweh = name in which the covenant is made and act as as the personal name by which the people of Israel could know God.

Knowing God's private name gave them access to Him, the God they can relate to and know. A bit like when we are on first-name terms with someone.

This idea that God is knowable lies behind this First Commandment. The command to worship only God is given not by a remote unknowable God, but by a person who wants an exclusive relationship with us. One who can be offended and hurt when we his creation choose not to know him.

Secondly, God goes further than saying I am Yahweh your God you can trust me. He reminds them what he has done for them already 'I am the Lord your God who rescued you from slavery'

He comes to the covenant with a track record

Their recent history has shown the people that God could be totally trusted.

He showed he was a redeeming and rescuing God – all the dramatic events of the Exodus (remember the 10 plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea).

He showed he was more powerful than even the mightiest of the Egyptian gods. Loyalty to him was not going to be a risk.

So we see when it comes to God making a covenant with the people he doesn't just demand exclusive worship and total obedience. He gives Israel his personal name and reminds them what he has done for them.

Ie 'you know me, you can trust me, I have earned the right to have your exclusive trust and obedience.'

This is God today, the one who does not change. He does not demand that you and I bow before him without showing us first what he has done for us.

He has redeemed us out of the dominion of darkness into his glorious light.

HUMAN Side to the Covenant

There are two sides to every agreement/covenant. So God has announced who he is and what he has done for us:

And what God seeks is simple: For his people to agree that they will worship him and him alone. To enter into a relationship in which there are no third parties.

A wholehearted response and a commitment to his love.

He has revealed himself to his people and the condition for him to stay with his people is for them to be totally loyal to him.

Though they enthusiastically accepted the covenant, the rest of the history of the OT is that apart from short periods of loyalty, the people hankered after other gods, Rather than an exclusive covenant relationship, they wanted a sort of spiritually open marriage into which anything could be invited.

The prophets grieved over the failure of the people to keep the covenant. Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant not on stone but on our hearts must have struck a chord with many.

With Jesus the promised new covenant became a reality. A covenant sealed in his own blood. Around the table in the Upper Room, some of the great covenant themes return

Instructions to remember – to love one another as he loves us

Symbols of bread and wine

Instructions to remember the covenant

Yet although the covenant changed, the conditions stayed the same: We are to love God exclusively. WE are to put him before not just idols, but all our ambitions, our interests and every other person. We are to keep Yahweh's commandments not just outwardly but in our hearts too. Perhaps that seems even harder than the old covenant. Yet if we have come to a living faith in God through Jesus the Son than God has put his Spirit in us. We have God's power within us enabling us to fulfil the demands of the covenant.

Worship that pleases God, is worship that celebrates and praises this covenant and the One who has made it and what he has done for us. What might our worship look like if we worship the Lord in that way?

The psalmist tells us ' ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;

worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness'. Worship which gives the Lord the Glory and Honour which He is due is a fitting response.

Did you know we are inheritors of one of the oldest hymns sung by the Church? – The Gloria and it is still said or sung today. We often say it at the service of Holy Communion.

It's first line was sung by the angels the night that Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Although no one quite knows who composed the rest of the lyrics for the Gloria, we can trace the hymn back to the third century of the Church and its translation into Latin around 360.

A beautiful, ancient prayer

The Gloria is a beautifully ancient prayer that is meant to point our hearts towards God in a spirit of awe. It reminds us, gathered as Church, that we are called to praise and glorify the maker of our hearts and souls.

We are singing now for the same reason the angels sang; namely, that God has sent his Son among us born in our same flesh. Humble and lowly he comes among us , and so, struck with awe at this unexpected shape of the divine plan, as the angels themselves were, we cry out in a hymn to God's glory.

We sing the Gloria because it is a song of absolute joy and praise to God – what better way to worship God than to ascribe to him the glory!

Brothers and sisters, let's in humility and unity with one another say together:
Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

The glory of God is the magnificence, worth, loveliness, and grandeur of his many perfections, which he displays in his creative and redemptive acts in order to make his glory known to those in his presence.

SUMMARY

We are to give Glory to God in our Worship of Him and him alone. He is the Magnificent, worthy, lovely, almighty One who has rescued us from the dominion of darkness into his marvellous kingdom moving towards us in covenant-keeping love. His commandment is that we would worship Him alone: All Glory be to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let's just take a few moments to give God all the glory. Let's pray.