

First Place Belongs to God

In Exodus 20, after identifying Himself as "your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" the Living God issued the first of ten statements which define His law to Israel. In verse three He commands, "You shall have no other gods before me." This is in accordance with His desire as stated in (Deuteronomy 6:5) "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Jesus emphasized this was still valid in (Matthew 22:37).

The Ten Statements spoken by God to Israel and called The Ten Commandments by men, *a study of Exodus through Deuteronomy show many commandments*, are divided into two sections: The first four have to do with a person's relationship and duty to God, and the remaining six have to do with a person's attitude toward and relation-ship to fellow humans. All but one of the ten are reworded and brought into the Gospel of the New Testament.

Mankind's duty to God stands first and lays the needful foundation for righteous respect and treatment toward all of God's creation. Let God slip out of first place in our hearts and neglect of family and neighbors will soon follow. Jesus stresses the authority of God in (Matthew 22:37-38); The first and great commandment is love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. If a person is completely filled with the love of God, there is no room remaining for love of the world. The desire of the heart becomes a need to learn what things God wants done and then do them.

Many are confused or astonished that there are many words between (Exodus 20:3), (Deuteronomy 6:5) and (Leviticus 19:18). One demanding preeminence, the second demanding first place in our lives, the third commanding Godly love and respect for those around us. All the rest of the words tell how to show respect for and live before God and to live with and care for our fellow creation. The Gospel of Christ and His example further tells and shows us how to do the same today.

The peer pressure of the world encourages us to reject the authority of God. To many, the authority of the government, tradition, fleeting fads, fashion or local morals are of prime importance. Conforming to those around them or accepting popular opinion makes them feel comfortable or at least, accepted

God's authority is based on three great facts:

- Foremost is the fact of creation (Psalm 19). He made us, we are his property: He owes us nothing, and we owe Him everything. All that we have is just borrowed from Him for a short time. He has the right to rule. No loyalty that conflicts with one's loyalty to God can ever be legitimate.
- Closely related to creation is the fact of redemption. In the Old Testament, God redeemed his people from bondage in Egypt and again from Babylon. In the New Testament, He sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem people of all ages from their sin. (Revelation 5:9) *"And they sang a*

new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..."

- Third is the fact of His gracious providence. As the children of Israel journeyed through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, God adequately provided for their needs. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out and they were supplied with food and water supernaturally. Today the God who feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies of the field continues to provide for those who both work and put their faith in him (Matthew 6:25-33)

Loyalty to our God should be complete, unmixed and unshared with anything else. We can have the true God only as we let lesser gods go. As we ignore or push Him away, He allows us to go our own way to destruction, (Romans 1:18-32). Do you give God first place in your heart and head and hand? Do you let him have the place that belongs to him in your home? Do you let him help you in your work or business?

God has demonstrated his love for us in the coming of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins so that nothing can prevent our fellowship with the eternal God. Be wise and give God first place in your life as Paul instructed Timothy, (2 Timothy 1:8-10) *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..."*