



September 29–30, 2012

Exodus 20

“No Other Gods”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The ceremonial and dietary requirements from God are no longer binding, however, the moral code is still very much in vogue today. In other words, while God no longer requires us to practice the Feast of Tabernacles, he does require us not to take his name in vain, and even though he no longer forbids us to eat pork,¹ he does forbid us to cheat on our spouse.² Jesus, in The Sermon on the Mount, not only established the fact that the moral code was still in place; he raised the bar to include attitudes of the heart.^{3 4}

In this study, we’re going to learn about the historical and practical reasons God chose this Commandment to be number one. We’ll also learn about the ways many people in our culture still worship false gods with different names.

Historical

1. One of the reasons God placed this commandment first is that the Hebrew people had come out of an environment in Egypt in which they had been exposed to many false gods.

¹ [Mark 7:1-23](#)

² [Colossians 2:16-17](#) - “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

³ [Matthew 5:21-22](#) - ““You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not murder’... but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”

⁴ [Matthew 5:27-28](#) - “You have heard it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

2. The reason God specifically chose the plagues he inflicted on the Egyptians was because he used them to systematically debunk many of the false gods of the Egyptians not only for the sake of the Hebrews, but also the Egyptians!
 - a. He did this so the Egyptians would *“know that [he was] the Lord.”*^{5 6}
 - b. Another reason is because God wanted to remind them that he was the one who delivered them, rescued them, and saved them; not the Egyptian gods.
 - c. They were not only leaving a land of false gods, they were about to enter a land of false gods.
 - d. The Canaanites, Amorites and Sidonians worshiped idols, so God chose the first commandment to be – *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*
 - e. He didn’t do this because he had an ego, but because he had a heart for the people, after all, what kind of a God would allow his children to put their faith, trust, and confidence in man-made gods that weren’t able to help them?

3. The Israelites would eventually enter the Promised Land, but when they did they failed to completely drive out the pagan people who were occupying it, which meant the pagan gods were going to be a continual snare for the Israelites.
 - a. **Judges 3:5-6** – *“The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.”*
 - b. **Judges 10:6-7** – *“Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, he became angry with them.”*
 - c. The tragic and ridiculous part of their problem was that these man-made gods stole their time, their worship, their affection, their money, and even their children, who were offered as sacrifices.
 - i. Sadly, their life was no better, but despite that fact, they continued to serve the pagan idols which could not satisfy them nor could they save them.

4. One classic example of this is found in **1 Kings 18**.
 - a. Elijah called for a showdown with the priests of Baal and Asherah.⁷
 - b. Elijah taunted the priests by suggesting that their god was taking a nap or perhaps he was too preoccupied to answer them.

⁵ **Exodus 7:5**

⁶ **Exodus 14:4** – “*‘... I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.’*”

⁷ Baal and Asherah were the gods of the Canaanites. Baal was the male god of sex and fertility, and Asherah was his female counterpart.

- c. A more literal translation of what Elijah said is their god wasn't able to answer them because he relieving himself in the restroom!
 - d. If your god gets preoccupied, needs a nap or can't be found because he's in the outhouse, then he's probably not a good god to worship!
 - e. Elijah took the bull and cut it into pieces, arranged it on an altar, and he doused the sacrifice with water three times before he called on the name of the Lord.
 - f. When God sent down fire, not only was the bull burned, the stones were burned up as well, which caused the people of Israel to fall prostrate before God, crying out, *"The Lord – he is God, the Lord – he is God."*⁸
 - g. The false prophets were killed by the Israelites as a final judgment from God.
5. Other false gods included:
- a. Dagon was the god of the Philistines.⁹
 - i. [1 Samuel 5:1-4](#) – *"After the Philistines captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained."*
 - ii. If your god falls and can't get up, and you have to pick up your god and reassemble him, then he's probably not a good god to worship!
 - b. Molech was the god of the Ammonites.¹⁰
 - i. [Jeremiah 32:35](#) – *"They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin."*
 - c. Chemosh was the god of the Moabites.¹¹
 - i. [1 Kings 11:7](#) – *"On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites."*
 - d. Mammon was the Greek god of money and wealth.
 - i. [Matthew 6:21, 24](#) – *" 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... 'No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the*

⁸ [1 Kings 18:39](#)

⁹ Dagon had the body of a fish, and the head and hands of a man. The people believed him to be the father of Baal, and Dagon and Baal were considered to be gods of sex and fertility.

¹⁰ Molech was the god of pleasure, and worship of Molech included sacrificing children.

¹¹ Chemosh was the god of power.

one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.^{12, "}

Practical

6. God's Identity

- a. **Isaiah 45:5-6** - *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other."*
- b. God is loving, personable, knowable, all-powerful, all-wise, all-present, just, true, and full of grace and mercy.
- c. God condescended to our level, coming to earth wrapped in flesh. He felt our pain, experienced our sorrows, died for our sins, and rose again!
- d. He is not the God of the Koran.
- e. He is not the God of the Book of Mormon.
- f. He is not the God of the Watchtower Society.
- g. He is not the God of Scientology.
- h. God is exclusively, entirely, the True and Living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as revealed in the pages of the Bible.

7. Our Fidelity

- a. God gave us this command because he loves us enough to tell us: "Nothing and no one else can love you, satisfy you, help you, heal you, provide for you, comfort you, care for you, and save you, except me!"
- b. He tells us emphatically that he requires an exclusive relationship.
- c. The first Commandment literally translates: "No gods to be in my face!"¹³
- d. The first Commandments calls for total devotion and loyalty to the One True God, excluding all other gods invented by man.
- e. He is either exclusively God or he is not God at all.
- f. Our pluralistic and polytheistic society cannot understand this truth.

The Same Gods With A Different Name

8. We might laugh at the foolish and primitive people who lived thousands of years ago, and how they bowed down to worthless gods, like Baal, Asherah, Dagon, Molech, Chemosh and Mammon, who could not satisfy or save them.

¹² The KJV uses the word mammon.

¹³ In the original Hebrew, this verse reads: "Lo yeyeh lecha elohim acherim al panai!"

9. It's important, however, to point out the fact that these gods of sex, pleasure, power, and money are still around today, and people still bow down to them; it's just that they have different names.
 - a. Baal/Asherah are being worshiped through pornography, sex outside of marriage, child sex trafficking, etc.
 - b. Molech is still being worshiped in the aborting of innocent babies in the name of convenience; it's just called reproductive rights today.
 - c. Those who are obsessed with power and selfish ambition are still worshiping Chemosh.
 - d. Those who are greedy are still worshiping Mammon by gambling, playing the lottery, extortion, hoarding, stealing, etc.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Exodus 20:1-3](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss [Judges 3:5-6; 10:6-7](#).
 - a. What were some of the consequences the Israelites had to deal with simply because they did not rid the land of all of the pagan people groups as God had commanded?
4. Spend time talking about the false gods of the Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, and Greeks. (See #4 and #5 above)
5. How do non-Christians respond to the biblical truth that God is either exclusively God or not God at all?
6. What are some of the challenges you've experienced when trying to live this out when there seems to be an overwhelming majority of people shouting in the marketplace of ideas that pluralism and inclusiveness are to be embraced and valued above biblical truth?
 - a. Remember, the world would have you believe: that many paths lead to God; all religions basically believe in the same God; multiple faiths can coexist on the same path.
 - b. Remember, the world is offended and becomes angry when anyone suggests there is only one God, one way to Heaven, and one Savior who is God.

- c. Remember how offended and angry the world gets concerning the ideals of Objective Truth and Moral Absolutes, especially when there are conflicts with an individual's personal or lifestyle choices.
7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: recognize the “new” names for the pagan gods of Moses’ day (See #9 above); purpose in their heart to make sure God is exclusively God in their life.
- i. You shall have no other gods before me
 - ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol
 - iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
 - iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
 - v. Honor your father and mother
 - vi. You shall not murder
 - vii. You shall not commit adultery
 - viii. You shall not steal
 - ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
 - x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).