

**THE PREFACE TO THE 10 COMMANDMENTS**  
**February 9, 2020**  
**Exodus 20:1-20**

**“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20:2**

God led the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Until that time the Israelites had been governed by the laws of Egypt. Now they were an independent nation, yet without a government, code of laws, police or courts. Moses was their leader, yet the people had already exhibited rebellion against him. Their worship of an image at Mt. Sinai revealed their proneness toward idolatry. They needed a code of laws that would cultivate civility. More than this, they needed a legal system that would promote a right standing with God.

To that end, God gave them a simple but profound legal code, the Ten Commandments. It reached beyond mere civility, and focused upon the very heart of spirituality. It addressed first man’s relationship with God, and then his relationship with his fellowman.

But given the rebellious and idolatrous nature of the people, how could this law be established authoritatively? Who can give such commandments? From where does he derive the authority to issue them? What entitlement does the giver have to “lay down the law”? What means does he have to enforce his commandments? Why does he issue such commandments? Why should Israel give any heed to his commandments? And why should I give heed to these commandments?

Moses, though powerful among his people, was not the answer to any of these questions. Already, the people had shown their resistance to him, and he had no natural force to correct them or to enforce his word.

It was not Moses who was giving these law. To make that certain, God prefaced the Ten Commandments with a brief, immeasurably powerful statement regarding the source of the commandments. “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2).

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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. “I am the <b>Lord</b> ”         | “JEHOVAH,” self-existing One                             |
| 2. “I am the Lord <b>thy</b> God”  | “thy God,” contrasting with Egypt’s gods                 |
| 3. “I am the Lord thy <b>God</b> ” | The strong one, almighty                                 |
| 4. “which have brought thee out”   | Attentive and responsive to their cry, he delivered them |
| 5. “out of the land of Egypt”      | Separating & sanctifying them for Himself                |
| 6. “out of the house of bondage.”  | Liberating them                                          |

With these credentials; with this record, He is authorized to establish the law by which His people will be governed, yea, by which all men will be judged. Having established this foundation of authority, the 10 Commandments stand. This moral law will endure throughout time. And by it everyone will be judged.

*Westminster Larger Catechism*

Question 101: What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?

Answer: The preface to the Ten Commandments is contained in these words:

**"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Exodus 20:2**

**I. "Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being JEHOVAH,**

- A. the eternal,**
- B. immutable,**
- C. and almighty God;<sup>437</sup>**

<sup>437</sup> Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (Isaiah 44:6)

- D. having his being in and of himself**

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (Exodus 3:14)

- E. and giving being to all his words<sup>439</sup> and works:<sup>440</sup>**

<sup>439</sup> And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. (Exodus 6:3)

<sup>440</sup> God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands... For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (Acts 17:24, 28)

**II. "and that he is a God in covenant,**

- A. as with Israel of old, so with all his people;<sup>441</sup>**

<sup>441</sup> And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. (Genesis 17:7)

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. (Romans 3:29)

- B. who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom;<sup>442</sup>**

<sup>442</sup> That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. (Luke 1:74-75)

**III. "and that therefore we are bound to**

- A. take him for our God alone,**
- B. and to keep all his commandments.<sup>443</sup>**

<sup>443</sup> But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation....

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. (I Peter 1:115, 17-18)

Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 18:30)

Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:37)