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As I said, I like to teach using a series of messages. This message is from my series on the Ten Commandments. There are so many applications in this commandment that we can only touch the hem of the garment of the Word of God. I have sliced and diced this particular lesson to fit it into our time frame today. This message and others on the ten commandments can be found at biblicalexaminer.org/updates

The Altar of Atonement

Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

The Second Commandment is basic to the command to ***be ye holy even as he is holy***. (Lev 20:17, 1 Peter 1:15, 16)

Failure to be holy, that is, failure to live up to our name Christian takes the Lord's name in vain.

The Second Commandment

Westminster Larger Catechism.

Question 108: What are the duties required in the second commandment?

Answer: The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has instituted in his Word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him: as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

Question 109: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature: Whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of

ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense: Whatsoever; simony (**trafficking in ecclesiastical offices**) ; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God has appointed.

Question 110: What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it?

[Why the strong statement attached to the second commandment in order to enforce it?]

Answer: The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words, For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments; are, besides God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, **his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom; accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations; and esteeming the observers of it such as love him and keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations.**

The responsibility of every man speaking in the name of Christ today is to keep pure the religious worship as instituted by God himself. The duty of every man who speaks in the name of God is to expose the *ravening wolves in sheep's clothing* who are out to devour the souls of men. I am to present a clear understanding as to the proper means of worship of and approach to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It would be so enjoyable develop what these divines of old said in the Confession, but we only have time to quickly develop one point: THAT IS, the **Altar and the proper manner of worship** of our Redeemer God, as found in **Leviticus 1:4** *And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

Under the old covenant, the shed blood for atonement only covered sin. Under the New Covenant, the shed blood of Christ *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* (He 9:26.)

So let us examine the Altar, as it reveals the only acceptable manner of approaching the Father.

There are many religious assemblies gathered today that profess great love for the Lord, yet it is obvious they are meeting in rebellion to the Second Commandment.

Proverbs 28:4, John 14:15, John 15:10.

Man's commitment to God's Command-word determines his love or hatred toward God; if we love him, we will keep his commandment.

The Second Commandment tells us that the vast majority of those who profess Christ and who are meeting today hate the Christian God. Their worship is according to their vain imaginations, and violates the second commandment.

Note that God always equates love with keeping his commandments, not only to himself, but also toward

our neighbor.

The second commandment is more detailed than the first, and is given in two parts:

First, no image to be made, and no worship of forbidden images.

Second, the promise of blessing or curse.

Basically, the Second Commandment deals with the proper manner of approaching the Heavenly Father. It covers the Old Testament Tabernacle, all of its furnishings, the altar, and how each of those things applies to Christ, and to His Gospel Church.

The Wise Man told us to seek God's wisdom and understanding as one seeks silver and hid treasures. Multitudes of godly men have sought God's wisdom in the commandments, and have spent lifetimes recording the treasures they found. The best book I have found is Rushdoony's "Institutes of Biblical Law, vol. I."

We will only look at the key portion of the Second Commandment, the **preaching of the Gospel of Christ**, which is the very foundation of the Father's promise to the Son that all will be subdued under the Son's footstool.

The obvious meaning of the Second Commandment is that there can be no imaginative ideas, no idols, no graven images, nor religious relicts used in the worship of God. I will only mention **one idol** as we quickly pass through:

Leviticus 19:4 *Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.*
Leviticus 20:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: 5 Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.

Unto Molech

Moloch means king. R.J. Rushdoony shows that Moloch worship is sacrificing our children to the state's education system. (*Institutes vol. I*. Pp. 30-40. Ross House.)

R.L. Dabney gives an excellent explanation of how this nation was forcefully turned to Moloch worship after the Unitarians won the war of Northern Aggression. (Dabney, *Discussions*, vol IV. Sprinkle Publications. Dabney: the Presbyterian chaplain, chief of staff, and biographer to Stonewall Jackson.)

Discussions contains several 1876 letters by Dabney to the Virginia Superintendent of State Schools concerning THE STATE FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM. Dabney's warning have proved more than true.

In Deuteronomy 4:15-19, we see that the second commandment deals with images that represent a god, such as **Buda**. But it especially forbids images or pictures that are meant to represent the true God. God did not appear to the people in a visible form to prevent them from being able to make some kind of image.

This law does not forbid engravings, pictures and artwork in general. It forbids using these things as an aid in worship.

The second commandment emphasizes that man the sinner can only approach the Holy Father in heaven on God's terms. There can be no other mediator between God and man except that which is ordained by God, ***the man, Christ Jesus***.

We know that if a man can determine for himself how to approach God, then he can determine for himself the terms of his life and prosperity. But the only lawful approach that will produce life and prosperity is clearly established in the Second Commandment.

Satan has convinced man that he can be his own god, and because he believes he is god, he **can have total control of even nature itself**. He foolishly believes that if he can develop the right combination of laws, and by conforming everyone into his system of laws, he can produce peace and good will on earth. His faith says that he can restore the paradise Adam lost.

The many hurricanes this year confirm God's judgment against men who think they can control God's natural forces.

We fail to understand the depth of man's commitment to his anti-Christ faith that says he can produce paradise. Man's faith in himself is so strong that he will gladly kill multitudes of people to accomplish his dream of paradise on earth.

His faith is much stronger than the faith of many professed Christians.

His greatest enemy **has always been and is** those who believe God and are committed to walk according to the law of God.

The Second Commandment clearly lays out our responsibility is to defend God's total law-word by developing and applying sound Biblical truth and wisdom.

THE ALTAR,

Let us examine what took place in Exodus 20:

In vv. 1-17, the Lord gave the law.

In vv. 18-21, the people had a glimpse of the holiness and terribleness of Lord God, and they **feared** to approach him.

18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. 20 And Moses said

unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. 21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

God revealed his power and holiness in a terrifying way. Even Moses said the sight was so terrible that he feared exceedingly. (Hebrews 12:21)

Vv. 18-22, after seeing and hearing the Divine Majesty and the holiness of the law, they feared for their lives. They feared that this great fire would consume them if they continued to listen to the voice of God. Being fearful and unable to bear what they heard and saw, they asked Moses to mediate for them.

We are told that the ***fear of God is the beginning of wisdom***. Godly wisdom seeks a mediator between the Holy God and sinful man.

Adam Clark tells us that “This teaches us the absolute necessity of that great Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, as no man can come unto the Father but by him.”

Exodus 20:22-25. After revealing His terrifying power and the holiness of His law, the Lord tells Moses how the people can approach him:

*V. 24 **An altar of earth** thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. 25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*

The second commandment was the basis of the Tabernacle. Everything in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and especially the Altar, clearly and unmistakably tell us that there is no approach to God the Father for salvation nor approach in prayer apart from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Everything points to him and his work for redeeming His people.

The Second Commandment and the altar is the very basis of the Christian faith.

V. 24, *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me* **teaches us:**

First, One must see his sinfulness according to the Divine law before he can see his need of the Mediator. He must realize his sinfulness, and recognize the holiness and judgment of God.

Romans 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Romans 4:15, 5:13. Realization of sin comes from hearing his law. It is not man's laws, but God's law that reveals the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man.

Acts 2:37 *Now when they heard this, they were pricked **or pierced** in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

Calvin point out that not only did the power of the Spirit produce “diversity of tongues, but also in their hearts which heard.”

That is to say, the same Holy Spirit that produced tongues in Acts 2:3 was the same Holy Spirit that used

the word of God to **pierce the hearts** of Peter's hearers. It is the Spirit who must produce godly repentance; repentance without which no man shall see God. (Heb 4:12)

Second, the context of Exodus 20 shows that when they realized the holiness of God and their own sinfulness, they feared God, even to the death. So they asked for Moses to mediate between them and the fearful God they experienced on the Mount.

In Deut 18:15 & Acts 3:22, 7:37, Moses prophesied of a man like unto himself who would be their mediator.

Third, v. 24, without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin. (He 9:22) Thus, the shedding of the blood of an innocent victim had to be shed in place of those who feared God, and realized their sinfulness.

Forth, v. 25, the Altar had to be made of natural stone, with no work of man upon that stone.

God gave very specific details concerning the Altar, and he warned Moses not to deviate from God's design.

The Temple Altar had stood for over a thousand years. The purpose of the letter to the Hebrews was to persuade the Hebrews who had served God through the Temple Altar to leave that Altar and those now useless ordinances and sacrifices. They now had the true Altar and Sacrifice, and any return to the old manner of worship was **fearful apostasy** from the new Christian faith they had embraced.

Hebrews 13:10 *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

Fifth, the Catechism tells us that the Second Commandment reveals "his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom; accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations; and esteeming the observers of it such as love him and keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations."

Thus, the Second Commandment required the death penalty against any sin of false worship, for worship apart from the *one mediator, the man Christ Jesus* is treason against the Kingdom of God. Treason calls for God's righteous wrath against the guilty. (Ezekiel 20:13)

18 U.S. Code § 2381 is the law against treason, subversion or sedition against the US. Treason requires death, or imprisonment and fine of \$10,000 in 1948 money. It also bars the guilty from holding any US office. Many politicians over the past several years have openly committed treason, yet they avoid punishment or even censure which they so justly deserve. However, there have been a few "little people" in the game who have been sentenced for treason.

Any attempt to approach the Father other than through the Son is treason against the Kingdom of God, and the King will judge righteous judgment.

The natural man hates the **Law of the Lord** which was given for life. He hates any idea that says *the wages of sin is death*. Because there is no sin without the commandments, he must remove them from public consciousness. According to Rom 10:3, his desire is to establish his own righteousness.

Sixth, the second commandment requires the proper sacrifice:

Leviticus 1:1 *And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. 3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. 4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

In Leviticus 1:1-5, we are told that the sinner had to bring his required offerings to the only acceptable location which was appointed by God, or it the offering meant nothing. (Deut 12)

In John 4, speaking to the woman at the well, Christ changed the location of the altar and sacrifice. Both the Altar and the Sacrifice is now found in Him.

In John 1:29, when Christ first presented himself publically, the Baptist told his hearers that Christ was the Passover Lamb of God, sent by God take away the sin of the world.

Seventh, the Leviticus law of the substitutionary sacrifice was not new. According to John 8:56, the gospel of the substitutionary work of the sinless sacrifice of Christ was preached to Abraham. Abraham was either shown or knew the Gospel of Christ in Genesis 22 where he was told to sacrifice "*thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.*" (Gal 3:8, 9, Hebrews 11:13, 39, 1 Peter 1:10-12.)

Noah and Abraham were both alive for 58 years, so no doubt knew each other.

Lev 1:4 *And he, the sinner, shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him...*

The sinner under the first covenant who wanted forgiveness knew that he had to come to the altar as a sinner. There he would by faith place his hand on the sacrifice. By faith, he trusted that sacrifice to cover the penalty for his sin until the promised Mediator would come. Though that animal sacrifice became the bearer of his sin before God, it could not purge his conscience from his dead works.

The Apostles applied the requirement of Lev 1:4 to Christ,

Romans 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

Upon hearing God's word against sin, the Holy Spirit **must pierces the heart** of the sinner, and according to Gal 2:8, 9, God then gives him the supernatural gift of faith to believe, or trust in the Lamb of God to pay for his sins. Christ said that no man can come to the Father unless the Spirit draws him.

Revelation 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the*

prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

(1 John 3:4, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 2:24, 3:18, Heb 9:9, 14, 9, 10:2, 22)

Only through the Altar of Hebrews 13:10 can a sinner be accepted by the Thrice-Holy God, the God of the Israel of the New Covenant.

Eighth, the Altar reveals God's demand for justice. Godly peace requires justice and judgment against sin.

In Rev 6:10, the Saints under the altar cry out to God, "How long O Lord will you withhold your vengeance our blood?"

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done" is our prayer for God's judgement against sin. Isaiah 26:9 tells us that God's judgments in the earth will teach the inhabitants righteousness.

However, faith does not set aside the requirement of righteousness and justice for his people. Rather, they are given grace and power to please God. They have a new heart and love for the law of God. (Ps 119, Philip 2:13.)

Sadly, many times our clear conscience leads to easy sin and disregard for God's requirements upon his people.

It is his Grace that gives the desire and power to glorify him with our every thought and action.

Ninth, the **second commandment** requires restitution and atonement before God.

When the civil authorities set aside restitution and the death penalty, they promote evil. Wicked men are now rewarded to rob, rape, kidnap and kill. Their reward is free room and board, education and medical care for life, at the cost of about \$65,000 a year. The state's attitude toward lawlessness means that good men are denied their right to live. (Numbers 35:33, 34)

Showing unjust mercy to the law-breaker is a death sentence upon the law-keeper. "Mercy" cannot be shown to both the law-breaker and the law-keeper.

Those who reject the Commandments reject God's means of atonement, for atonement must be according to the Law and precepts as established in Exodus 20.

Finally, tenth, the good news is that Second Commandment promises God's mercy and blessings upon many following generations of those who love him and keep his commandment.

In my current study of the "Selfie Generation" and the Fabian Socialists, I am being reminded that the wicked plan ahead for many generations. They know that what they are doing will take many generations to accomplish, but that only encourages them to work harder. We also know that in God's time, even the wicked will subdued by the Kingdom of God.

Exodus 20:4-6. The second commandment requires the worship the one true God. That worship can only

be accomplished through the way required by the Father, which is the altar of the sacrifice of the innocent victim, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Might our worship be found pleasing to the Lord our God.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for calling us to be part of your covenant people. We thank you for the altar and sacrifice you provide in your Son. We pray for your grace to have the desire and power to glorify you in all we say and do.

Numbers 6:24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.