

EXODUS 19–20 — THE COVENANT, SINAI & THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 19 — Israel Meets God at Sinai

Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel arrives at **Mount Sinai**. God reminds Israel of what **He has already done** before telling them what they must do:

“I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.” — **Exodus 19:4**

Chuck highlights a beautiful progression:

Past: *I delivered you.*

Present: *Obey My voice and keep My covenant.*

Future: *You shall be My special treasure—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

Israel wasn't merely rescued **from Egypt**; Israel was rescued **for God**. They were intended to represent God before the nations.

A Kingdom of Priests

Chuck describes the priest as standing in both directions:

People → God and God → People.

Moses temporarily occupies this mediatorial role, but Chuck immediately connects it to **Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest and the one Mediator between God and man.**

New Testament connections:

- **1 Timothy 2:5** — “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
- **Hebrews 4:14–16** — Jesus is our Great High Priest.
- **1 Peter 2:5, 9** — remarkably, Peter applies Sinai-like language to believers: a “royal priesthood” and “holy nation.”

- **Revelation 1:6** — Christ has made believers “kings and priests unto God.”
-

Preparing to Meet God

Israel must sanctify themselves, wash their clothes, and prepare for the third day.

Chuck stresses that the washing was outwardly symbolic of an inward reality—**cleansing and setting oneself apart for God.**

Then Sinai erupts:

Thunder. Lightning. Fire. Smoke. Earthquake. A thick cloud. An increasingly loud trumpet.

The people tremble.

God establishes boundaries around the mountain because sinful humanity cannot casually enter the presence of a holy God.

New Testament Connection — Hebrews 12

Chuck specifically references **Hebrews 12:25–26**, which looks backward to the shaking of Sinai and forward to another shaking:

“Whose voice then shook the earth...”

But Hebrews makes an even larger comparison in **Hebrews 12:18–24**:

Sinai: fire, darkness, tempest, fear, separation.

Christ: Mount Zion, heavenly Jerusalem, Jesus the Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling.

The contrast isn't that God became less holy.

Christ provided the way for sinful man to approach the Holy God.

Exodus 20 — The Ten Commandments

Before giving a single commandment, God establishes **who He is and what He has done**:

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt..."

Grace precedes command.

God redeemed Israel **before** giving them the Law.

And now I think we add exactly the layer you suggested:

The Ten Commandments Through the New Testament

#	Commandment	New Testament Fulfillment / Heart Application
1	No other gods before Me	Matthew 4:10 — "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 22:37 — Love God with <i>all</i> your heart, soul and mind.
2	Do not make or worship idols	1 Corinthians 10:14 — "Flee from idolatry." 1 John 5:21 — "Keep yourselves from idols." Colossians 3:5 goes deeper: <i>covetousness is idolatry</i> .
3	Do not take God's name in vain	Luke 6:46 — "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Matthew 7:21 — merely saying "Lord, Lord" does not demonstrate submission to Him.
4	Remember the Sabbath	Mark 2:27-28 — "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Colossians 2:16-17 — Sabbath days are described as a shadow, with the substance belonging to Christ. Hebrews 4:9-11 develops the greater theme of entering God's rest.
5	Honor father and mother	Ephesians 6:1-3 explicitly repeats the command and calls it "the first commandment with promise." Colossians 3:20 — children are instructed to obey their parents.
6	You shall not	Matthew 5:21-22 — Jesus takes murder into the heart: unrighteous anger against one's brother places one under

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| | murder | judgment. 1 John 3:15 makes it even more explicit: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." |
| 7 | You shall not commit adultery | Matthew 5:27–28 — Jesus says the man who looks upon a woman lustfully "hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." |
| 8 | You shall not steal | Ephesians 4:28 — "Let him that stole steal no more," followed by the positive transformation: work honestly so that you can give to someone in need. |
| 9 | Do not bear false witness | Ephesians 4:25 — "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." Colossians 3:9 — "Lie not one to another." |
| 10 | You shall not covet | Romans 7:7 — Paul specifically says he came to recognize coveting as sin because the Law said, "Thou shalt not covet."
Luke 12:15 — Jesus warns, "Beware of covetousness." |

The Pattern Is Fascinating

The New Testament repeatedly moves from:

External → Internal

Murder → Hatred

Adultery → Lust

Idolatry → Covetousness

False witness → Truthfulness

Stealing → Generosity

Having no other gods → Loving God with your entire being

Jesus wasn't merely making the Law harder.

He was revealing **what the Law had always been measuring—the human heart.**

Chuck's Major Point — The Law Cannot

Save

This may be the theological centerpiece of Chuck's entire narration.

The Law was **not given to make sinful people righteous**.

Chuck argues that if righteousness could be achieved through keeping commandments, **Christ's death would have been unnecessary**. Instead, the Law exposes humanity's inability and points us toward Christ.

That directly connects to:

Galatians 2:21 — If righteousness comes by the Law, “then Christ is dead in vain.”

Galatians 3:24 — “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

Romans 3:20 — “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Romans 7:7 — Paul uses the tenth commandment specifically: *I would not have known covetousness was sin unless the Law said, Thou shalt not covet.*

And Chuck specifically mentions Paul's remarkable testimony:

Philippians 3:4–9 — outwardly, Paul could consider himself blameless regarding legal righteousness. Yet he ultimately abandoned confidence in his own righteousness for **the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ**.

So:

The Law reveals the disease.

Christ provides the cure.

The Old Covenant and New Covenant

Chuck makes another important distinction.

At Sinai:

"If YOU will obey..."

The covenant exposes the problem of **man's faithfulness**.

Chuck contrasts this with the New Covenant established through Christ, which rests upon **God's faithfulness and His promise**. The answer isn't therefore lawlessness; Chuck immediately stresses that believers receive the Holy Spirit, empowering a transformed life.

Important supporting Scriptures:

- **Jeremiah 31:31–34** — prophecy of the New Covenant.
 - **Luke 22:20** — Jesus: "This cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood."
 - **Hebrews 8:6–13** — Jesus mediates the better covenant.
 - **Romans 8:3–4** — what the Law could not accomplish because of human weakness, God accomplished through Christ and the Spirit.
-

Chuck's Fascinating Observation About Idolatry

Chuck spends considerable time on Commandment #2.

His argument is essentially:

**Man creates a god in his own image →
the created god becomes less than man →
man worships that god →
man eventually becomes like what he worships.**

He connects this with the Psalms: idols have eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear, mouths but cannot speak—and **those who make them become like them**.

Scripture reference: Psalm 115:4–8 (also compare **Psalm 135:15–18**).

That gives us a powerful principle:

We become like what we worship.

Taking God's Name “in Vain” — More Than Profanity

One of Chuck's strongest practical observations is that taking God's name in vain is broader than merely using God's name as profanity.

If I call Jesus “**Lord**” but refuse His lordship over my actual life, Chuck argues that I have taken that title upon myself emptily—*in vain*.

He connects this directly with Jesus:

Luke 6:46 — “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Chuck therefore warns against a Christianity consisting of words, church attendance, or Sunday acknowledgment without surrender throughout the rest of life.

The Rich Young Ruler — The Commandment He Didn't Know He Broke

Chuck makes a really interesting connection to the **Rich Young Ruler**.

The man believes he has kept God's commandments.

Jesus tells him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Him.

Why?

Chuck interprets Jesus as exposing **Commandment #1**:

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

The man's possessions had become his god.

When forced to choose between **Christ and possessions**, his heart revealed which one

occupied first place.

See **Matthew 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23.**

WHAT MOST PEOPLE MISS

1. Israel was redeemed before Israel received the Law.

God didn't say:

Keep the commandments → I'll rescue you from Egypt.

He rescued them first.

Then:

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out..." → therefore, this is how My redeemed people should live.

That order matters enormously.

2. Sinai explains why we need a Mediator.

The people ultimately tell Moses:

You talk to God. Then you talk to us.

They are terrified of approaching Him directly.

That prepares an enormous biblical theme:

Moses → mediator of the Old Covenant

Jesus → Mediator of the New Covenant

Compare **Deuteronomy 18:15–19, 1 Timothy 2:5, and Hebrews 12:24.**

3. The Tenth Commandment reveals that God's Law was always

concerned with the heart.

This one is especially important.

You can potentially create outward evidence that someone murdered, stole, committed adultery, or lied.

But:

“Thou shalt not covet.”

How do you police **desire**?

You can't.

The tenth commandment enters the invisible realm of the heart—which is precisely why **Romans 7:7** says this was the commandment that exposed Paul.

So when Jesus moves adultery toward lust and murder toward hatred, He isn't suddenly inventing an inward Law.

The inward dimension was already there.

4. Jesus summarized all Ten Commandments with two commands.

Matthew 22:37–40

Love God with all your heart, soul and mind.

→ **Commandments 1–4**

Love your neighbor as yourself.

→ **Commandments 5–10**

And Jesus concludes:

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

The Ten Commandments therefore aren't merely ten arbitrary prohibitions.

They describe what rightly ordered **love toward God and love toward people** looks like.

5. Sinai and Pentecost create an extraordinary biblical parallel.

This one goes slightly **beyond Chuck's narration**, but I think it belongs in our “Most People Miss” section.

At **Sinai**, God descends in **fire**, accompanied by supernatural manifestation, and gives His covenant instruction to Israel.

At **Pentecost (Acts 2)**, the Holy Spirit descends with manifestations including **tongues “like as of fire,”** and God's people begin proclaiming His works.

That creates a beautiful canonical movement:

Sinai → God's Law before His people

New Covenant → God's Law written within His people

Compare **Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26–27, Acts 2:1–4, and 2 Corinthians 3:3.**

Not merely commandments written **on stone**—

but God's Spirit working **in the heart**.

6. Even the altar had to keep the attention on God.

At the end of Exodus 20, God commands Israel not to turn His altar into a showcase of human craftsmanship. Chuck's application is that worship should direct attention toward **God rather than the accomplishments or personalities of men.**

That fits beautifully with:

1 Corinthians 1:29 — “That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

The Big Picture of Exodus 19–20

Exodus 19:

A Holy God calls a redeemed people to Himself.

Exodus 20:

A Holy God reveals His standard.

The Law then accomplishes something profound:

God's holiness → exposes man's sin → man's sin reveals his inability → inability creates the need for a Mediator → the Mediator brings us to Christ.

Or, as Paul eventually explains it:

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." — Galatians 3:24

And I think that gives us the central teaching statement for this week's lesson:

The Law shows us what God is like, reveals what we are like, and ultimately shows us why we need Jesus.